Germany Joins '1+ Million Genomes' Initiative

EU countries agreed to cooperate in linking genomic data across borders

Germany has become the latest signatory to the [EU Declaration](#) 'Towards access to at least 1 million sequenced genomes in the EU by 2022.' Launched in 2018, the declaration is aimed at having at least 1 million sequenced genomes available in the EU by 2022.

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Since its launch, 21 EU countries[1] and Norway have joined the '1+ Million Genomes' initiative, and they meet on a regular basis. The signatories focus on three main use cases:

- Cancer
- Rare diseases
- Common and complex diseases.

The goal of this cooperation is to set mechanisms by which genomic databases containing sequenced genomes across Europe can be accessed and linked for analytical purposes. This is hoped to result in improved disease prevention, increased personalised treatments and support of new clinically impactful research.

As is [stated](#) in the European Commission policy description, wider access to genomic data could lead to the development of more targeted personalised medicines, therapies and interventions; enable better diagnostics; boost prevention; optimise resources use and improve the effectiveness, accessibility, sustainability and resilience of health systems in the EU.

The Signatory countries have various objectives, including:

- Development of appropriate technical infrastructure all over the EU.
- Addressing ethical and legal implications of genomics.
- Informing the general public and policy makers in Member States and signatory countries on Genomics-related issues.

Many EU member states have genomic sequencing data sets, but those need to be interlinked and made accessible in a secure way. This will facilitate the research on innovative solutions for precision medicine and public health.

Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, welcomed Germany's step noting that it 'will contribute to advancing research and the development of new treatments.'

Germany Turns to Digitalising Healthcare

With the current initiative being part of the EU's [agenda for the Digital Transformation of Health and Care](#), it is not the only step towards digitalisation in healthcare that Germany has made recently.

The country is the world's second largest healthcare market after the U.S., while its digitisation levels are [one of the lowest](#) among developed countries.

You may also like: [German Doctors To Prescribe Health Apps in 'World First'](#)

However, in November 2019 the parliament passed the so-called Digital Healthcare Act (DVG), which substantially expands the application of digital tools in the country's healthcare system. It covers prescription of digital health apps to patients, reimbursement for providing online consultation to patients, promoting e-prescriptions and introducing electronic health records (EHRs) for certain categories of patients by 2021. The law has been drawing criticism in relation to its handling of patient data, but German lawmakers promise to deal with this issue with separate legislation.

Earlier that year the Federal Ministry of Health also launched the Health Innovation Hub (HIH) "to further explore the possibilities of digitisation and to develop ideas and concepts for the design of care and for the digital transformation."

Source: European Commission

Image credit: European Commission

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[1] Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK. Six countries are official Observers: Belgium, France, Denmark, Ireland, Poland and Switzerland.

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