



European Commission
Information Society and Media

Innovative Approaches to Financing eHealth Solutions

Invitation only workshop at the World of Health IT 2007 conference in Vienna

Thursday, October 25, 13:00-17:00

Level U2 (Lower Level), Hall K

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Context

eHealth solutions have proven to improve quality of care, efficiency and productivity if combined with proper organisation and skills. Health delivery systems worldwide have not yet fully realised the potential of eHealth solutions such as electronic health records, regional health information networks and services, and telemedicine services. There are many reasons for that, which have been extensively analysed in the literature and discussed in hundreds of conferences during the last decade. One of the major factors, that will be subject of this workshop, is the lack of financing or improper financing models for the “set up” and the “keep up” of eHealth services.

The European Union eHealth Action Plan (COMM 356 (2004))¹ indicates that for eHealth to become commonplace it has to be “adequately resourced also within healthcare budgets, and [thus will] contribute to boosting wider objectives, such as competitiveness, jobs and cohesion”.

As part of the Action Plan itself, there is a commitment for Member States to undertake a collaborative approach to “supporting and boosting investment in eHealth”.

The 2006 Aho Report², “Creating an Innovative Europe”, identified eHealth (also referred to as ICT for Health) as an example of a key area, where a market for innovation can flourish and public policy should have a significant role in fostering it. The European Commission subsequently proposed a **Lead Market Initiative (LMI)**³ to facilitate the creation and marketing of innovative products and services. One of the major objectives of LMI is to examine financing mechanisms as well as procurement practices that could support innovation friendly eHealth market.

¹ Commission of the European Communities – COM (2004) 356: Communication to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: e-Health - making health care better for European citizens: An action plan for a European e-Health Area, Brussels, 2004-04-30, p.23, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/doc/qualif/health/COM_2004_0356_F_EN_ACTE.pdf

² Esko Aho (2006): Creating an Innovative Europe: Report of the Independent Expert Group on R+D and Innovation Appointed Following the Hampton Court Summit, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/download_en/aho_report.pdf

³ Commission of the European Communities - Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 13 September 2006 "Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU" [COM(2006) 502 final], www.europe-innova.org/exportedcontent/docs/6/6206/en/EN%20502%20-%20original.doc



Goals

The goals of this workshop are

- to exchange real-life experience of key institutions in the field of financing eHealth investments at local, national, and international levels
- to present insights from the supply side that provides funding, and the demand side that has disparate financing needs
- to identify frictions and barriers, including trust related issues, but also facilitators like benefit-cost analysis, for closing the gap between supply and demand of eHealth investment funding, and
- to identify and learn about good practices in addressing this gap.

The outcomes are intended to support local, regional and national activities in Member States in meeting the funding needs for successful eHealth deployment.

Structure of discussions

In order to achieve these goals, the workshop is structured around four sessions:

- procurement and financing of national eHealth infrastructures
- experiences of international financial institutions, including lessons learned from public-private partnerships and collaboration in the health sector
- challenges encountered by healthcare providers
- cases from regions and industry - panel and plenum discussion on financing eHealth.

Outcome and next steps

The results and conclusions of the workshop will be made public by the European Commission in its role as organiser. This will aid political activities in Member States towards addressing the financing needs of successful eHealth investments, including encouragement for inter-Member State collaboration. The organiser hopes that the exchange and discussions will help to promote innovative and collaborative approaches towards designing funding schemes as part of the eHealth Action Plan objective of “supporting and boosting investment in eHealth”.

In particular, the outcomes and lessons learned will be disseminated to relevant EU and International organisations such as European Commission services, the i2010 eHealth Subgroup and the Stakeholders groups, the Lead Market Initiative Task Force, financial institutions and venture capital groups and various eHealth procurers in EU and beyond.

The results of the workshop will also feed into the DG INFSO and Media’s ongoing study “Financing eHealth” to provide an assessment of the financing opportunities available to Member States to support and boost investment in eHealth. The study focuses on providing insights and specific recommendations on:

- developing the supply side of eHealth finance to optimise the use of resources available for boosting investment in eHealth, including ways to add value through collaboration between Member States
- effective and efficient management of eHealth investment to support health services providers, i.e. the demand side.

These recommendations aim to help **close the gap between supply of and demand for eHealth financing**, and thus aid Member States and the European Commission in their efforts.

More information on the study is available on www.financing-ehealth.eu.

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