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2024 DIGITAL DECADE EHEALTH INDICATOR STUDY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A study prepared for the European Commission, DG Communications, Networks, Content and Technology by

Capgemini  invent

CNECT/2022/OP/0036

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
Directorate H – Digital Society, Trust and Cybersecurity Unit H.3 – eHealth, Wellbeing and Ageing

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INTERNAL IDENTIFICATION

SMART number: CNECT/2022/OP/0036

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With special thanks to Flory van der Steuijt, Olivier le Blanc, and Nathan Jonker from Capgemini Invent for their contributions to the study.

The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of all the respondents from the EU/EEA Member States who have been involved in the study through the survey.

The authors are grateful to Renata Palen, Konstantin Hyppönen PhD, and Michiel Sweerts from the European Commission, Directorate General Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) for their guidance and continuous support.

EN PDF DOI: 10.2759/202086 Catalogue number: KK-05-24-388-EN-N ISBN: 978-92-68-16591-1

Manuscript completed in May 2024

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

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Executive summary

As one of the targets in the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, facilitating 100% of EU citizens with access to their electronic health records by 2030 is a key priority and ambition for Europe's digital transformation. This report presents the state-of-play of the EU-27 as well as Iceland and Norway towards the Digital Decade target on eHealth. This report is the first follow-up monitoring exercise after the 2022 baseline study 'Digital Decade e-Health Indicators Development' that developed the methodology.

In brief, the **methodology** involves:

- Gathering data through an online survey completed by the competent authorities in each participating country. Responses reflect the state of play as of 31 December 2023. For countries with regional electronic record access services, the survey collected data for each region.
- Analysing survey responses in terms of 12 sub-indicators that define the key performance indicators of the eHealth target. These 12 sub-indicators capture the concept of 100% of EU citizens having access to their electronic health records by outlining what types of health data, from which suppliers, through what modes of access, and with what access requirements represent technical access by citizens to their electronic health records online. Each sub-indicator contributes equally to the overall composite eHealth score.
- Transforming survey responses into maturity scores according to a pre-defined scoring scheme. The response options are allocated scores between 0% and 100% to create a maturity scale for each sub-indicator.

Overall eHealth maturity scores in 2023:

- A total of 22 Member States increased their maturity score on the eHealth composite indicator compared to 2022. Iceland and Norway also achieved increases in overall maturity scores. Furthermore, two Member States decreased in score, and three remained the same.
- The composite eHealth score for the EU-27 averaged 79%, an increase of seven percentage points from 72% in 2022.
- The top five most mature countries in the EU-27 are **Belgium** (100%), **Denmark** (98%), **Estonia** (98%), **Lithuania** (95%) and **Poland** (90%).
- The biggest climbers are **France** (+25 points), **Portugal** (+23 points), **Slovakia** (+20 points), and **Germany** (+17 points).

The sub-indicators are grouped into **four thematic layers** for conceptual analysis:

1) Thematic layer 1: implementation of electronic access services for citizens

- All participating countries report having some form of online access service for electronic health records.
- Twenty-three Member States (89%) report providing access to electronic health records through a centralised access service. The remaining four Member States (**Ireland**, **Italy**, **Spain**, and **Sweden**) report having regional services. In **Sweden**, there is a nationally available portal for citizens to access their information, which is jointly owned by the regions and municipalities and not by the national government. Health data is supplied by the regions.
- **Ireland** newly reports that a large hospital group in one of its six regions provides access to electronic health records for private insurance patients. At the moment, a more universal nationwide solution is not in place; however, the representatives from Ireland describe that a national application for public patients is under development that will provide access to information on medications that are dispensed and paid for by the state.

2) Thematic layer 2: categories of accessible health data

- The most mature category of health data is ePrescriptions and eDispensations.
- The most mature data types in electronic records summaries are data about identification, personal information, and current and relevant past medicines. The least mature is data about medical devices/implants.
- The category of health data with the lowest maturity is electronic results and reports. In particular, only seven Member States have medical images available to access for citizens.

3) Thematic layer 3: access technology and coverage

- In 2022, only 13 Member States reported using a (pre)notified eID compliant with the eIDAS Regulation and having a Level of Assurance classified as 'high' or 'substantial' to authenticate logins to the online access service. This number increased to 17 Member States (63%) in 2023. Only three Member States report using neither a (pre)notified eID nor a nationally notified eID scheme based on two-factor.
- All Member States, except **Ireland** (96%), provide an online portal and 14 Member States (52%) make access available through a native mobile application in addition to the online portal. The access service for one of Ireland's regions uses a mobile application.
- Twenty Member States (74%) report that 80–100% of the national population is technically able to access their electronic health records through the provided access service.
- On average, in the EU-27, private healthcare providers are less connected (55%) than public healthcare providers (74%). However, there has been an increase in the number of private healthcare providers who are connected. Nonetheless, this sub-indicator still scores below the EU-27 average in terms of maturity.

4) Thematic layer 4: access opportunities for certain categories of people

- Twenty-one Member States (78%) facilitate access for legal guardians to their wards' health data, both in terms of legal provisions that grant access rights and technical functionality that grants access.
- Twenty Member States (74%) also report having legal provisions and implemented mechanisms to provide assistance for using the online access service for those who seek it.
- By contrast, only 14 Member States (52%) offer functionality with a legal basis for citizens to authorise other persons to access their health data and perform authorised actions on their behalf. A further eight Member States (30%) have the legal provisions in place but have yet to implement the technical mechanism for citizens to exercise the provision.
- Compliance with web accessibility guidelines (which are required by the Web Accessibility Directive) increased by 22 points from only 52% to 74% in 2023. Six additional Member States report following the guidelines, leaving only seven Member States whose access services must still be aligned with the guidelines.

Outlook:

Accessing one's electronic health records online is comparable to accessing other public services. It is in the interest of citizens themselves and the public in general. Access to electronic health records online will provide individual citizens, their next of kin and/or caregivers with easier access to their health data and health status, aiding them in managing and improving their health while increasing the patient's role in their care and their autonomy. It is therefore highly likely that access to such health data will enhance the quality of care and treatment throughout the EU. It is important to note that online access to health data is not mandatory for citizens; they can choose to what extent they wish to engage.

To reach the eHealth target, it is important for Member States to take the following actions. Firstly, population-wide coverage reflects a core ambition of the eHealth target. Member States should prioritise universal access to electronic health record data, ensuring that all citizens have the ability to access their electronic health records online. Secondly, the online access service should be populated with diverse categories of data, reflecting the diverse health data collected about patients during their interactions with healthcare services. Thirdly, such data should be supplied by the several categories of healthcare providers

used by citizens. Finally, these efforts should be supported by digital products and services that are secure and accessible by design, such as using authentication methods based on (pre-)notified eIDs, following guidelines on web accessibility, and implementing further measures to ensure that the online access service can be used equitably by all citizens.



DOI: 10.2759/202086

Catalogue number: KK-05-24-388-EN-N

ISBN: 978-92-68-16591-1



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