Brussels, 29 April 2013

3ʀᴅ ᴇHᴇᴀʟᴛʜ ɴᴇᴛᴡᴏʀᴋ 14ᴛʜ Mᴀʏ 2013
Cᴏᴠᴇʀ ɴᴏᴛᴇ ʙʏ sᴇᴄʀᴇᴛᴀʀɪᴀᴛ

Subject: **Topic 3 - Report on progress on Interoperability**

Issue at stake / request to eHealth Network
The eHealth Network was supposed to adopt a road map on semantic and technical interoperability during this meeting, as stated in the Multiannual Work Programme. The preparations for the road map are however delayed. Based on the conclusions during the 2nd eHealth Network Meeting, the eHGI did refine the proposed policy actions and recommended measures towards their implementation. These measures will be included in the final road map on interoperability. The eHealth Network members are requested to: – discuss and comment on the proposed measures for the implementation of policy actions to achieve semantic and technical interoperability.

Summary of document
This policy paper gives further specifications of the measures that the eHealth Network adopted in November 2012. These measures are: 1. Encourage a greater cooperation between Member States 2. Encourage a greater cooperation between national authorities 3. Enable the recommendation of standards and (harmonised) profiles 4. Use purchasing power of public sector 5. Foster data portability 6. Link and harmonise coding systems 7. Facilitate access to existing standards and medical vocabularies 8. Stimulate usability engineering for structured and encoded data 9. Consider incentivisation of healthcare providers

Format of procedure
Short introduction by co-chair Clemens Auer, followed by a discussion on the paper presented.

POLICY PAPER

ON SEMANTIC AND TECHNICAL INTEROPERABILITY

Proposed by the eHealth Governance Initiative

Date: 14th May 2013

In November 2012, the eHealth Network endorsed the discussion paper on semantic and technical interoperability. Furthermore, the eHealth Network mandated that the eHealth Governance Initiative (eHGI) refine the proposed policy actions and recommend measures towards their implementation.

This paper is submitted by the eHGI to the eHealth Network as a basis for discussion and decision. It recommends measures for the implementation of policy actions towards semantic and technical interoperability.

Semantic and technical interoperability is a challenge requiring policy decisions at European and national level while respecting national initiatives and the principle of **subsidiarity**. All measures should be implemented on a **voluntary basis.**

1. Encourage greater cooperation among Member States

Meetings of the eHealth Network shall be extended by one day for civil servants and experts from Member States[1].

A **standing coordination group[2]** shall act as an intermediary for a greater cooperation between Member States.

As a first step, the eHealth Network shall mandate the eHGI to conduct a review of the strategies already implemented by Member States in order to provide the Network with a descriptive comparison of how open issues are currently being tackled.

2. Encourage greater cooperation among national authorities and standardisation bodies

The **standing coordination group** shall act as an intermediary for greater cooperation among national authorities and standardisation bodies. In consultation with Member States, the European Commission shall organise a **strategic review[3] of all EC-funded standardisation organisations** (in particular CEN) and refine its standardisation strategy in eHealth.

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[1] This proposal is not limited to semantic and technical interoperability.
[2] The proposal of the standing coordination group is being introduced in a separate document.
[3] This review shall focus on existing standardisation organisations and take into account the results of Mandate 403 and former reviews.

3. Enable the recommendation of standards and (harmonised) profiles based on selected use cases

Based on (selected) use cases, **the standing coordination group** shall be in charge of

a) the evidence-based selection of use cases

b) the recommendation of standards and profiles for these selected use cases.

Particular consideration should be given to those use cases mentioned in articles 11 and 14 of the Directive 2011/24/EU on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.

The eHealth Network shall finally endorse these use cases, standards and profiles based on proposals submitted by the standing coordination group.[4] Endorsed eHealth profiles shall be submitted to the ICT Multi-Stakeholder Platform for '*identification*'.[5]

4. Use purchasing power of the public sector as enabler for semantic and technical interoperability

Member States are encouraged to establish a rule in their national policy stipulating that **suppliers of public sector bodies[6]** must comply **with eHealth standards and profiles** endorsed by the eHealth Network. The European Commission shall require EU-funded projects and actions to comply **with eHealth standards and profiles** endorsed by the eHealth Network.

5. Foster data portability

5a Data portability for healthcare providers

Vendors and vendors' associations shall sign **a code of conduct** to prove that their products contain an import/export function to enable data portability. Member States are encouraged to establish a rule in their **national policy** that suppliers have to provide an import/export function.

The import/export functions shall comply with standards and profiles endorsed by the eHealth Network in order to facilitate the re-hosting of medical data.

Member States and the European Commission are encouraged to support **open source implementations and open interfaces**.

5b Data portability for patients

Article 18 of the '**Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Data protection**' introduces the right of a citizen (data subject) to transfer data from one electronic processing system to and into another in a structured and commonly used electronic format. Vendors and healthcare providers are encouraged to provide patients access to their data (in particular images, lab results, health records) in an electronic format that complies with **standards or profiles endorsed by the eHealth Network**.

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4   Domain experts, experts from industry and end users should be involved in the selection process of use cases and recommendations.

5   Article 13 of the 'Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Standardisation' enables the identification of technical specifications that could be referred to in public tenders.

6   'Public sector body' means the State, regional or local authorities, bodies governed by public law as defined in article 1 (9) of the Directive 2004/18/EC.

6. Link and harmonise coding systems

The **standing coordination group** shall act as an intermediary for a greater cooperation among Member States, organisations responsible for the development and maintenance of coding systems as well as the European Commission for the purpose of linking, harmonising and converging coding systems in healthcare.

7. Facilitate access to existing standards and medical vocabularies

The European Commission in conjunction with the standing coordination group shall enter into negotiations with the IHTSDO[7] to **provide access to Snomed CT** (or parts thereof) in all Member States[8]. Member States agree that license costs shall be funded by the European Commission.

8. Stimulate usability engineering for structured and encoded data

The European Commission shall issue a call for **a study to develop a research and development strategy**[9] to ease the entry of structured and encoded data for healthcare professionals.

9. Consider incentivisation of healthcare providers

The European Commission shall issue **a call for a study**[9] to identify and calculate the value proposition of healthcare providers with regard to interoperability and to assess sustainable incentivisation schemes that would encourage healthcare providers to provide data in an interoperable way and to invest in interoperable software.

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[7] International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation
[8] As requested by Portugal during the last eHealth Network meeting.
[9] Priority should be given to the consolidation of existing knowledge in Member States.