



13TH EHEALTH NETWORK 15 MAY 2018, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
COVER NOTE BY EHEALTH NETWORK SECRETARIAT

Agenda point 2: Discussion note on eHealth interoperability and policy actions to improve semantic interoperability in the EU draft

Issue at stake

The eHealth Network decided at its 12th meeting not to adopt the proposed recommendations deriving from the JAseHN deliverables 5.4.2 regarding a *policy paper proposing actions to promote the use of common standards* and deliverable 5.5 concerning a *report on European semantic interoperability in eHealth*. The main concern expressed by two delegations was that there were many recommendations proposed of which none provided a clear way forward. As the topic addressed by these deliverables continues to be of great importance and where still much progress must be made at EU level, the Commission (DG SANTE) was asked to put forward a discussion note on interoperability – with a particular emphasis on eHealth standards.

This discussion note is meant to initiate a constructive discussion with the eHealth Network with the objective to further improve semantic interoperability in the EU.

Summary

The discussion note first explains that the notion of improving eHealth interoperability in the EU is not new but goes back a decade ago. Since then the strategic importance of eHealth interoperability has shifted towards full political importance in 2015 with the adoption of the Digital Single Market Strategy of the European Commission as a way to improve competitiveness.

Despite acknowledging the need for eHealth interoperability for over a decade and the related actions done to improve, it still proves to be very challenging to accomplish. The use of commonly agreed eHealth standards is an essential tool and important step towards enhanced semantic interoperability.

The discussion note particularly focus on the recommendation aiming to advance semantic interoperability in the EU:

- Define a collaborative EU-level semantic interoperability strategy and translate this into concrete semantic interoperability standard needs.

Furthermore, the JAseHN adopted a report (D5.4.3.2) including recommendations for the Rolling Plan on ICT standardisation. These recommendations should be seen in light of the discussion on semantic interoperability.

It is suggested that the eHealth Network sets up a sub-group consisting of semantic experts who will be responsible for defining an EU-level strategy on semantic interoperability.

Format of procedure in the eHN

The Commission co-chair opens the topic and gives the background of the discussion before giving the floor to the eHealth Network. The Commission co-chair will then open the floor for the eHealth Network for discussion on the following questions:

- Does the eHealth Network support the analysis that semantic interoperability through eHealth standards are an essential tool to achieve national and cross-border interoperability?
- Are there any other follow-up actions needed to advance semantic interoperability in the EU? If so, what actions and how?
- Do you agree to set up a sub-group for this task and would you be interested in joining it?

After the discussion, the Commission co-chair will summarise the topic and invite the eHealth Network to adopt the recommendation **Create a permanent cooperation between national interoperability and semantic experts as a subgroup of the eHealth Network** in the discussion note and to set-up a sub-group that will have the responsibility to bring the recommendation forward and to come up with concrete actions for the next eHealth Network meeting.