



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

**THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES**

AND

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

ON

**COOPERATION SURROUNDING HEALTH RELATED INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

- (1) The United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) represented by the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and the European Commission (EC) represented by its Vice-President Neelie Kroes:

recognize the importance of health-related information and communication technologies (eHealth/health IT) in promoting individual and community health while fostering innovation and economic growth;

wish to facilitate more effective use of health-related information and communication technologies in health care delivery including disease-prevention and health-promotion services; and

intend to strengthen their relationship and support global cooperation in the area of health related information and communication technologies.

- (2) The overarching goal of eHealth/health IT is to support health of population including healthy ageing, healthcare, and innovation activities. Such activities would include effective universal provision of electronic prescribing and clinical decision support, as well as to enhance the capacity and use of eHealth/health IT to support and advance other critically important health related activities such as clinical research.

- (3) This Memorandum of Understanding outlines an approach to foster mutual understanding of challenges faced by both sides in advancing the effective use of eHealth/health IT.

- (4) The approach outlined in this Memorandum of Understanding is in accordance with the following general objectives and principles:

The scope of this Memorandum of Understanding is cooperation on topics directly pertaining to the use and advancement of eHealth/health IT, in pursuit of improved health and health care delivery as well as economic growth and innovation.

Any cooperative activities related to the scope of this Memorandum of Understanding that the parties may choose to undertake will be conducted on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefits.

This Memorandum of Understanding is intended to support and strengthen relationships currently established as well as to facilitate creation of new relationships in areas of mutual interest.

- (5) Intending to strengthen the existing linkages between them, the US Department of Health and Human Services and the European Commission anticipate pursuing the following actions for the identified areas of cooperation:

- (a) Discuss development of a global conceptual framework that articulates how health-related information and communication technologies support improved health. This framework is also expected to address the assessment of the economic benefits of eHealth/health IT, and the promotion of continuous innovation.
 - (b) Identify the challenges, shared goals and potential actions of mutual benefit in activities which are viewed as having the potential to support innovation and economic growth by supporting improved health. Shared understanding in these areas would facilitate specific actions and could be the basis for future international cooperation.
- (6) The following issues are mutually viewed to hold immediate importance and potential for the HHS and EC shared goals.
- (a) Development of internationally recognized and utilized interoperability standards and interoperability implementation specifications for electronic health record systems that meet high standards for security and privacy protection.
 - (b) Strategies for development of a skilled health IT workforce and of eHealth/health IT proficiencies in the health professional workforce such that these clinicians can fully utilize the technology's potential to enhance their professional experience and performance.
- (7) The potential activities foreseen within the framework of this Memorandum of Understanding include the following:
- (a) exchanges of information on ongoing activities that are carried out directly by the HHS and the EC and that are relevant to the goals at hand, with the information potentially exchanged in various forms convenient to the HHS and EC and effective for the purpose of the exchange, to include minutes of meetings, and economic and technical reports produced within or related to such ongoing activities relevant to the goals at hand;
 - (b) exchanges of delegations and specialists, selected with the endorsement of the HHS and the EC, with such delegations to be set up within existing consensus-building initiatives involving the HHS and the EC, as for example the EC's eHealth Governance Initiative;
 - (c) establishment of joint working groups to identify specific strategies for achieving shared goals, members of which would, as in previous point, be selected with the endorsement of the HHS and the EC; and
 - (d) collaboratively organized meetings, scientific conferences, workshops and/or symposia.

- (8) All activities undertaken pursuant to this Memorandum of Understanding are subject to the applicable laws and regulations in the USA and the EU and subject to the availability of respective resources.
- (9) This Memorandum of Understanding is effective from the day of its signing.
- (10) This Memorandum of Understanding may be modified at any time by mutual written consent of the HHS and the EC.
- (11) This Memorandum of Understanding does not constitute an international agreement and does not create rights and obligations governed by international law.

Signed, in duplicate, at Washington, DC this seventeenth day of December, 2010.

**FOR THE US DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

/Kathleen G. Sebelius/

Kathleen G. **SEBELIUS**
Secretary of Health and Human Services

/Neelie Kroes/

Neelie **KROES**
Vice-President