



14TH EHEALTH NETWORK 13 NOVEMBER 2018, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
COVER NOTE BY EHEALTH NETWORK SECRETARIAT

Agenda point 4d: State-of-play on EU Common Semantic Strategy (CSS) in eHealth

Issue at stake

“Proposal document/information paper to eHealth Network about Common Semantic Strategy “

The main purpose of this document is to provide information on work conducted to advise the eHealth Network on future steps on semantics. Namely, reiterate and structure the proposal for the creation of a sub group on semantics and the drafting of an EU Common Semantic Strategy in eHealth to be adopted in May 2019. Our ambition is to promote better semantic interoperability in the EU through the alignment of eHealth standards, focus in mechanisms to increase the alignment and convergence between ways Member States document clinical processes.

Summary

Following on from past attempts, on the 13th eHN meeting in 15th May 2018, the agenda point 2 topics was on Discussion note on eHealth interoperability and policy actions to improve semantic interoperability in the EU. , The objective is to initiate a constructive discussion with the eHealth Network, with the objective to further improve semantic interoperability in the EU. Despite acknowledging the need for eHealth interoperability for over a decade and the related actions done to improve, mostly in EC funded projects and other short-term initiatives, relatively short stable grounds have been established.

The use of commonly agreed eHealth standards is an essential tool and important step towards enhanced semantic interoperability and not just for cross-border exchange, but also for internal national regional and local needs.

During the 13th eHealth Network meeting on 15 May 2018, there was a proposal¹ to set up a sub-group consisting of semantic experts who will be responsible for defining an EU-level strategy on semantic interoperability. The recommendation for the creation of a permanent cooperation between national interoperability and semantic experts, as a subgroup of the eHealth Network, will have the responsibility to bring the topic semantic interoperability forward and come up with concrete actions for the next eHealth Network meeting. However, this proposal was not adopted by the eHealth Network. It was then decided that the eHMSEG and eHAction would take, at different levels, steps to further advance the efforts of launching or deepening semantic EU-wide cooperation in the area of eHealth.

¹ Cover Note by eHealth Network Secretariat

https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/ehealth/docs/ev_20180515_co02_en.pdf

The main purpose of this document is to provide information on work conducted to advise the eHealth Network on future steps on semantics. Namely, reiterate and structure the proposal for the creation of a sub-group on semantics and the drafting of an EU Common Semantic Strategy in eHealth to be adopted in May 2019.

The aim of such a sub-group would be to strive for better semantic interoperability in the EU through the alignment of eHealth standards, focus on mechanisms to increase the alignment and convergence between the ways Member States document clinical processes.

This document matured after the 1-2 October workshop, to which all Member States were invited to send their respective semantic experts. The purpose was to bring strategic understanding of semantic interoperability those experts.

The relationship between this effort (CCS) and the eHMSEG Task Force and the Work Group for the EHRxF were explored and clarified. The eHMSEG planning focusses on connecting the national infrastructure from each Member State with cross-border. The CSS and EHRxF have interdependencies, making it essential that communication between them is built in. Semantic should however be separated from the EHRxF due to its high level of structuration which show the differences between them. No (or minimal) national interference should be done (standard for EU). The eHR is interdependent of semantics and interoperability, being essential that both develop together along the same path, thus the exchange format and semantics cannot be dissociated.

The timeframe should be approximately 5 years to implement, but up to 10 years is a realistic period. Specification on general objectives and methods for interoperability, general processes and description, European semantic tools should be defined by the governance. The practical part is the scope specification in ST and LT strategies in the level of uses cases. Other projects, like Antilope should be taken into account.

The stakeholders should comprise professional associations, IT companies, Ministry of IT technologies, vendors, government, clinical hospitals/IT area, statistics agencies, training of developers, health care professionals' training organization, scientific data science, opinion makers/public and regional authorities. With a plural contribution, the improvement of this project will be more solid, leading to a structured development.

Format of procedure in the eHealth Network meeting

The Member State co-chair will present the results from the 1st workshop on the Common Semantic Strategy (CSS), in Lisbon on the 1st and 2nd of October

Discussion about the principles, scope and ambition of this activity by the eHealth Network Members is welcomed by the Member State co-chair.

The eHealth Network is invited to support the next steps in the form of:

1. Discuss the presentation and document for discussion concerning the proposal to draft an EU Common Semantic Strategy for eHealth
2. Approve the following proposal:
 - a. Propose to the eHealth Network to discuss and suggest further work under the umbrella of the eHAction until May 2019;
 - b. Discuss and possibly create an eHealth Network sub-group in the eHealth Network in May 2019 meeting;
 - c. Adopt of a Common Semantic Strategy in November 2019.

Concerning the way forward, at least two members from the eHMSEG will support the Semantic task force, in order to smooth the know-how sharing and improve the development in association of both initiatives.