

***e*-HEALTH FOR EVERYBODY - CHALLENGES FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS**

First of all, Forum III worked on a definition of the term eHealth:

The use of new information technologies should improve the organisation of health services for both patients and doctors. The patient can inform himself on the Internet and thus change his relationship to the doctor towards partnership and play an active role concerning the alternatives of treatment. The patient is no longer a patient alone, he is also a consumer, John Beun (Dutch Patients Consumers Federation, NPCF) stressed, and the doctor has to accept him as such. Medical professionals have access to comprising information about the patient and his illness, further on, the possibilities of fast and uncomplicated information exchange between GP's and the hospital are enhanced. Besides, health care personnel can use the Net for further education. The Internet does not change the system, but it can be utilised for new perspectives in health care.

The use of new information technology nevertheless bears some risks for health care: patients and medical professionals have to be distinguished definitely and doubtlessly to avoid false treatment. The safety and confidentiality of the patient's data has to be guaranteed, especially when information is exchanged internationally. Concerning the eEurope Action Plan, Leo Vollebreght (HISCOM, Belgium) remarks, that the Smart Cards ask for standardisation of content, meaning and appearance of data.

Reinhold Mainz (KBV, Germany) states, that eHealth opens new markets through world-wide accessibility of high-quality medicine: highly specialised doctors can trade with their know-how in the Internet, adversely patients have the possibility to ask experts from all over the world for consult. Also for developing countries new solutions could arise: if the industrial countries find a compromise concerning the financing, information about health-relevant issues could e.g. help to fight Aids in Africa.

Health care leaves the national stage through eHealth and gains a global dimension. Cross-boundary solutions for health care require the guarantee of quality and reliability through international agreements. Michelle Thonnet (Health Ministry, France) requests to collect the results on a regional and national level, to be able to contribute to co-operations with other countries. A new orientation of health care, which is possible through eHealth, will furthermore result in financial advantages for the governments on the long run. Administration can be reduced to a minimum, which means that the doctor has more time to talk to the patient, on the other hand additional means for treatment are supplied. The short-term expense for health would rise , because of the necessary instalments, afterwards a reduction of costs would follow.

The claims of the participants are directed towards the European Commission, which is asked to support and quicken the process of standardisation and harmonisation and to promote international exchange of experience and co-operations. The liberty of moving and settling for EU-citizen has also consequences for health care: regulations and laws for providing and payment of services have to be compiled.