

# Financing eHealth



## Boosting investment in eHealth across Europe

**Discover new insights on wise decision-making, sources of financing, and good practices for securing success and sustainability of eHealth investments. In order to give stakeholders the opportunity to learn from existing experience, the Financing eHealth study examines investments in eHealth across Europe.**

## Supporting and boosting investment – eHealth on the European political agenda

According to the European eHealth Action Plan, by 2010 the European Union will be well placed to measure the impact of eHealth in terms of better access, better, more efficient services, and higher productivity. By then, eHealth will have become commonplace for health professionals, patients and citizens and be adequately resourced in healthcare budgets. **The Action Plan commits Member States to collaborate to support and boost investment in eHealth.**

## Why invest in eHealth?

Demand for healthcare always outstrips the resources available to supply health services, often driven by factors such as ageing populations, increasing incidence of chronic diseases, and rising expectations. As a result, the overall healthcare investment challenge is to continuously improve the performance and capacity of the supply side to meet some of the growth in demand. Studies, such as eHealth Impact ([www.ehealth-impact.org](http://www.ehealth-impact.org)), illustrate that eHealth can play an important role in improving the performance and capacity of healthcare systems, and thus help address this healthcare investment challenge.

## eHealth as a mainstream investment

Realising benefits from eHealth is not a trivial task. Too often, eHealth seems to be regarded just as an investment in information and communication technologies (ICT) that can be left to ICT specialists to pursue. Yet ICT alone is not designed to, and will not deliver the improvements in health service quality and capacity. Success requires eHealth to be part of the strategic change needed to improve health service delivery. Often, the most important benefits derive from the changes that help to improve healthcare, and not from ICT itself.

Many eHealth investments adopt the narrow, ICT approach and support healthcare from outside the mainstream strategic context, and do not release the full potential of eHealth. This underlines the general position that modern eHealth is not yet widely recognised across the whole healthcare sector as a significant part of the core health policies, strategies, and services. It is essential that eHealth investment is integrated into mainstream strategic decisions on total healthcare development. Net benefits will be realised over a reasonable timescale and eHealth financing will be fully justified only when this integrated investment is established.

**“It is essential that eHealth investment is integrated into mainstream strategic decisions on total healthcare development”**

## How the Financing eHealth study helps

The Financing eHealth study was commissioned by DG INFSO and Media, unit ICT for Health. The aim is to assess different financing opportunities against the financing needs of eHealth investment. The study focuses on providing insights and specific recommendations on:

- ♦ developing the supply side of eHealth finance to optimise the use of resources available for boosting investment in eHealth, including ways to add value through collaboration between Member States; and
- ♦ placing eHealth investment in an integrated strategic context to enhance and refine the demand for eHealth in improving healthcare capacity and performance.

The recommendations will help close the gap between supply of, and demand for, eHealth financing, and thus help Member States and the European Commission to support and boost investment in eHealth.

## Building on world-class expertise and experience

The Financing eHealth study team, led by TanJent Consultancy and supported by empirica, analyses real-life eHealth investment activities, focusing on decision-making, financial needs and solutions to meet those needs. The knowledge and experience of world-class experts representing all relevant stakeholders is being combined to aid and develop future eHealth investments. The study team is at the stage of interviewing representatives of different stakeholder groups, including investors, GPs, hospitals, ministries, third party payers, and national and international funding organisations.

### Links:

Study website: Financing eHealth [www.financing-ehealth.eu](http://www.financing-ehealth.eu)

eHealth Studies: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/health/studies/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/health/studies/index_en.htm)

### For further information:

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A workshop on “Innovative Approaches to Financing eHealth Solutions” was held at the World of Health IT conference in Vienna on 25th October 2007, with contributions by healthcare decision-makers from Europe and North America, as well as international health provider and funding organisations. The results of the discussions are an important input to the Financing eHealth study ([www.financing-ehealth.eu](http://www.financing-ehealth.eu)).

## Find out more – Financing eHealth at the eHealth Conference 2008 in Slovenia

Interim findings of the Financing eHealth Study will be presented next month at the European Union “eHealth without frontiers” conference 2008 in Portorož, Slovenia. The latest insights on strategic eHealth investment decisions, as well as initial findings of the DG INFSO and Media study on the benefits of interoperable electronic health record (EHR) systems and ePrescribing will be illustrated using the case study of the computerised patient record system at the University Hospitals in Geneva, Switzerland. The session will be shared with the EHR IMPACT study ([www.ehr-impact.eu](http://www.ehr-impact.eu)), which focuses on evaluating the economic potential of interoperable EHR and ePrescribing systems.



First results from the study are available on the Financing eHealth website. One of the reports describes the conceptual framework in which eHealth investments are and should be made. The other contains preliminary insights on international sources of financing eHealth, as well as brief analyses of different financing arrangements to be considered by investors in eHealth.