

Title Mandate proposal eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability
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Executive summary

- Proposal for mandate of the eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability;
- Strategic policy advice and recommendations to the eHN on the technical levels of interoperability;
- Complementary to and in close collaboration with the eHN Subgroup on Semantics;
- Fast response to unforeseen healthcare challenges, such as COVID-19; Agile approach of these challenges;
- Focus on current and future “technical” challenges such as security and privacy, workflow support, application interfaces, infrastructural architecture, new technologies and other interoperability developments;
- We request approval by the eHN to endorse this proposal for mandate.

Introduction

From the minutes of the 17th eHN meeting, June 3rd, 2020:

“... In conclusion, it was agreed in the eHealth Network meeting that a **technical subgroup** should start working with focus on the COVID-19 use cases, **similar to the Semantic Subgroup**, with whom it should work hand in hand (including for the revision of Patient summary guidelines). Later on, a broader strategy for a **medium-term** approach to standardisation and interoperability could be designed. Member States are invited to nominate technical experts for this subgroup. The chair of this group will be selected upon the first meeting...”

From the minutes of the Subgroup on Semantics:

“As you will see, there is already a particular topic where the Semantics subgroup need the competence and insight from the Technical Interoperability subgroup. The eHN guidelines for Patient Summary includes some technical provisions that we believe the Technical subgroup would be in a much better position to address.”

Context

The road to realisation of the three pillars of the Digital Single Market Health and Care strategy is long and convoluted. Tough decisions must be made on *what* information must be exchanged, but also on *how* this information can be shared safely, reliably, trustfully and timely. Aspects such as data security, privacy and consent, care process coordination, end-user empowerment, connectable applications and infrastructural requirements, in particular in relation to the European Health Data Space, are preconditional to the safe and interoperable exchange of health information. Choices regarding these often interlinked aspects require a combination of overview and expertise. The eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability provides this integrative perspective to assist the eHN in making well-weighed choices towards accelerating eHealth interoperability in the EU.

Purpose

Based on the decision of the eHealth Network (2020-06-03), a subgroup is to be established that addresses technical interoperability, in parallel with and complementary to the already existing

eHealth Network Subgroup on Semantics. The eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability will work closely together with its “sister” subgroup, providing advice and vision on healthcare IT issues at a strategic level, on the more technical levels of interoperability. The subgroup will provide expertise and guidance whenever the eHN requests policy advice on data protection, implementation challenges, testing and certification, architectural choices, data mapping et cetera. The strength of this subgroup lies in the combined perspective and the integrative approach of these topics.

Alignment and collaboration with the eHN Subgroup on Semantics

The Subgroup on Semantics welcomes the formation for this subgroup, with the purpose to provide integrated policy advice on implementable interoperability challenges in the EU. The alignment between the two subgroups has already started, with a clear division of tasks and the intention to work in close collaboration. As the two subgroups are complementary, we propose that the governance, organisational structure and mandate of the Subgroup on Technical Interoperability will mirror that of the eHN Subgroup on Semantics as much as possible. The rules of Procedure will be aligned accordingly.

In order to align the work of the two Subgroups the following joint working method is proposed:

- The Country-Co-Chair or the rapporteur of one Subgroup participates in each regular meeting of the other Subgroup
- Both Subgroups have access to the working documents of both groups in order to allow for collaboration and commenting of work without delay
- In case of arising new tasks that require immediate action, the Co-Chairs of the two Subgroups agree on which group will take the lead on the arising topic and on how the work should be shared between the two Subgroups.

Mandate and status of the eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability

The mandate of this SG covers the following topics:

- to support the eHN in reaching substantiated decisions, strategies and measures on technical interoperability issues, to facilitate growth and innovation of the EU eHealth landscape;
- to provide expert policy advice on technical interoperability aspects, recommend on interoperability issues concerning the eHDSI and possible other European eHealth Services, including short term solutions (e.g. for COVID-19). Also, to advise on harmonisation issues arising from different implementation strategies in the eHN and/or its MS either at cross-border, national or regional level;
- to work out strategies to improve adoption and implementation of interoperability standards in MS, including aspects such as technical obstacles, market readiness, suitability, costs, timeline, that will support the eHN to formulate a well-substantiated roadmap for future development;
- to find synergies in sharing best practices and assets related to interoperability in eHealth;
- to closely work together with the eHN Subgroup on Semantics.

The duration of the subgroup will mirror as much as possible that of the subgroup on Semantics. The subgroup on Semantics will have a review of their mandate in 2 years. Therefore, the eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability proposes to have an equal mandate of 2 years, with an evaluation on November 2022 by the eHN. After the 2-year mandate it is to the eHN to decide on an extension of the mandate, depending on the needs.

Activities of the Subgroup

2020:

- October: Review of the Patient Summary Guidelines v03;
- November: advice to the EHN on short-term and medium-long term solutions for COVID-19 related information exchange (laboratory and images);
- Coordinate with the eHN Subgroup on Semantics on collaboration, division of tasks and combined responses;

2021-2022:

- Produce cover letter and rules of procedures, for adoption of the Subgroup on Technical Interoperability by the eHN, possibly in combination with that of the eHN Subgroup on Semantics;
- Act on emerging topics with strategic advice to the eHN;
- Set up outlines for a long term strategy on technical interoperability challenges, including those related to COVID-19.

Question to the eHealth Network

We ask the eHealth Network to award the eHN Subgroup on Technical Interoperability a mandate of 2 year with an evaluation moment by the eHN in November 2022.

Sincerely yours, kind regards,

Ioana-Maria Gligor, EC co-chair

Vincent van Pelt, MS co-chair

Andreas Grode, rapporteur