

## Digital Single Market

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# Interview with Dr. Athos Antoniadis, scientific coordinator of the Linked2Safety project

A secure medical information space for interconnecting anonymous Electronic Health Records (EHRs). This is what the FP7 Linked2Safety research project has been working on with good results. We talked to scientific coordinator Dr. Athos Antoniadis from the University of Cyprus.



[1]

### What has your project achieved?

Dr. Antoniadis: "Our project has developed a platform that enables the joint analyses of medical records from different institutions generating knowledge that can lead to increased patient safety quickly and efficiently, while still respecting the legal and ethical rights of patients. Patient safety is at the core of Linked2Safety."

### Did you experience any difficulties?

"The biggest difficulty was: Researchers need to access data to provide new solutions while patients need to see their privacy and ethical rights respected. How do we make sure these two needs find adequate answer?"

Most institutions that hold data, in fact, are not always willing to allow other researchers to analyse

them. Furthermore, gaining access to data from as many subjects as possible would increase the statistical power of the analyses and enable independent replication test of the findings.

That's why we worked on Linked2Safety as a way to address the legal and ethical concerns of institutions that hold data so that we could enable the joint analyses of large datasets based on our analytic approaches."

### **How did the project succeed in respecting the rights of patients?**

"The Linked2Safety platform succeeded in addressing the legal and ethical concerns by enabling the analyses of aggregate data in the form of data cubes, which allows respecting the privacy of the users.

With this system, in fact, most analysis use aggregate data with no personal information but still give us similar results as what we would get if we had the actual pseudo-anonymized data."

### **What is the status of Linked2Safety now?**

"The evaluation of the project is still ongoing, but preliminary results indicate that there is sufficient overlap between phenotypic variables, treatment options, and genetic markers from the different partners to enable both an exploratory analysis and tests for replication of findings from the analyses performed on just one site. This means that the likelihood of discovering new information is very high!

Keeping our basis in Cyprus, this project has also given us the unique opportunity to work with partners from all over Europe, establishing new collaborations in an interdisciplinary team with a tremendous complementarity of expertise.

We have created synergies through this project that we hope will help us not only expand our research in the field, but especially through the key corporate partners in the project, transform our scientific findings into products that positively impact European society as a whole."

### **Thank you.**

*Linked2Safety ([www.linked2safety-project.eu](http://www.linked2safety-project.eu) [2]) provides a secure medical information space for semantically interconnecting anonymous EHRs to advance clinical practice, to accelerate medical research, to improve the quality of healthcare, and to enhance patients' safety.*

*Duration: 2011-2014*

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[2] <http://www.linked2safety-project.eu>