



Uachtaránacht na hÉireann ar
Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh
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Speech to e-Health Conference on "Exploiting the potential of e-Health" by EU Commissioner for Digital Agenda Neelie Kroes

Dublin Convention Centre

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First of all I would like to thank Minister Reilly and the Irish Presidency for hosting the Ministerial conference at this eHealth Week 2013. The eHealth Week is approaching its teenage-years – this year is the 11th – so we should embrace the teenager attitude: full of enthusiasm and energy, ready to discover and innovate. Dublin is an excellent place for this approach, being a hotspot for technology and start-ups.

Today life expectancy often exceeds 80 years. Your children and grandchildren can expect a longer life: that's a triumph. An armoury of thousands of medicines and treatments contribute to that achievement, helping us address the vast majority of diseases.

Those are all positive things. But they also bring challenges which we must respond to. We must care for that ageing population, and ensure they stay active, healthy and happy. Our healthcare model is under pressure, in a world where there's more chronic and degenerative conditions. And yet those same health systems, like so much else at the moment, face up to a lack of resources.

There's a huge potential in eHealth:

- To help people stay active and independent for longer.

- To offer better public services at less cost.
- But also to stimulate a strong EU market that could serve our citizens – and compete globally.

We already have a good knowledge-base and great capacity for innovation on eHealth; with the right political support we can use those assets.

The Commission eHealth Action Plan, adopted in December, is about going further, looking ahead to 2020, making eHealth really happen, and addressing some remaining challenges for eHealth, such as:

- Interoperability: how can we make eHealth tools and services work together within and between regions?
- Research and development: how the new EU programme Horizon 2020 will support ICT-enabled innovation, on new health tools, treatments and systems centred on users.
- Deployment: including through EU funding like the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme and the European Regional Development Fund, and possibly the future Connecting Europe Facility.
- Improving digital skills and health literacy, as well as improving the evidence base about the impact of eHealth.
- International cooperation: this Wednesday, there will be a second workshop on the EU–US Memorandum of Understanding, right here in Dublin.

These are all relevant issues in our pursuit of our common aim: to encourage eHealth to be deployed and used more widely, and more effectively.

Now we need to implement the actions identified in the eHealth action plan, and we take that very seriously.

We continue to work on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing. It's a great way for those directly involved to get together, share their experiences and learn; you'll hear a lot about it in the coming days.

Another very relevant area is mobile apps for mobile health and wellbeing, which empower people to easily take control of their own health; the Commission is working on a Green Paper which will launch a public debate on that issue.

On research and innovation, the Commission is currently negotiating proposals for eHealth funding under EU research Framework Programme 7; and from June it will be evaluating proposals under the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

That's just a flavour of what we're doing from the Commission. But that's not the whole story. Often, the right instruments lie in other hands: from Finance Ministers to regional governments; researchers to carers; insurers and venture capitalists to digital entrepreneurs.

And of course, you: national Health Ministers. So really our plan is about us working together: this is the key to our common success. I hope we can put that into practice over the coming days.

Thank you