

EUROPE LAUNCHES ITS HEALTHCARE DATA EXCHANGE PILOT[E-mail to a Friend](#)[Print](#)

Europe launches its healthcare data exchange pilot

October 08, 2008 | Bernie Monegain, Editor

A project involving 12 European countries and supported by the European Commission is taking the lead in ensuring healthcare interoperability in Europe.

The project is akin to the building of a nationwide health information network, or NHIN, that is under way in the United States.

Europe has launched the European Patient Smart Open Services (epSOS) 'large scale pilot' on interoperability of national e-health systems, involving 12 EU countries. It is set to run for three years.

Every member country has its own system of storing healthcare information, yet these systems often can't 'talk' to each other. Anyone who falls ill in one country should have access to his or her health information in other European countries, the epSOS team noted.

"The challenge of the increasing mobility of European citizens in the context of healthcare has been addressed by the European Commission," said Fabio Colasanti, European Commission director general in charge of information society and media. "Together with the launch of its proposal for a 'directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, the issue of its July recommendation on the cross-border interoperability of electronic health record systems and the start of the epSOS pilot, the European Commission is laying the groundwork for improved healthcare options for traveling EU citizens."

"Interoperability is obviously a key factor in this, and some countries struggle with interoperability within their own state, let alone beyond their borders," Colasanti said. "With the epSOS large-scale pilot, we are trying to identify, then test, the relevant tools to make things happen."

The Swedish health ministry has been fundamental in setting up the epSOS pilot, he noted.

The goal of the epSOS pilot is "to improve patient safety. Citizens should be able to trust any healthcare system in any country they visit or work in," said Daniel Forslund, head of the section on e-health in Sweden's Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

The countries involved in the epSOS project are Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

The plan is to connect what already exists. The countries will look at all of their systems for electronic health records and see what can be shared.

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