

epSOS project to extend to 2014

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18 Mar 2010



Coverage from World of Health IT 2010, Barcelona

Smart Open Services for European Patients, which aims to enable a summary of a patient's electronic medical record to be shared across European country borders, is likely to be extended.

The €23m project, which is co-funded by the European Commission, was originally meant to be in place for three years, finishing in June 2011.

However, Fredrik Linden, project coordinator for epSOS, told E-Health Europe that it is likely to be receive extra funding and be extended for an additional two and a half years.

Linden said: "Initially, it's most likely to be extended by another six months and we are also working on a proposal to ask the commission for an additional extension of 24 months.

"The goal is to continue the process both politically, legally and organisationally with the aim to continue to provide a permanent service after the contract has ended."

Linden added that while the project is making significant progress, the original three years that were allocated for it were not enough.

"The extension is about being able to doing the things we want to do in the first 36 months that we cannot do due to time constraints.

"For example, with ePrescription, there are four more user cases that need to be explored, so that we can show that we can send prescriptions and prescription dispensing," he said.

epSOS is now working with member states on the proposal to the Commission which is due to be submitted at the beginning of June, with an outcome expected at the end of the year.

Linden added that the extension would also allow the project to meet several more objectives, including extending the content of the patient summary and getting more European countries involved. Currently, there are 12 states signed up.

He said: "We want to get five more countries involved, but it's difficult because you need to have a process where joining countries need to be able to bring something to the table.

"The plan from the beginning was to develop practical pilots, and many countries feel that they do not have a practical pilot as there is a lack of understanding about what a practical pilot can be."

Linden said there are several candidates lined up to join the project, including Finland, which has recently sent in its pilot site and had it accepted by epSOS.

The project is now getting closer to allowing national solutions to "talk to each other" with pilot stages of implementation due at the beginning of 2011.

Linden said: "There around approximately 36 pilot sites from the participating countries, which are divided into three different scenarios of patient record summary, ePrescription and eDispensing."

The pilots are expected to go live at different times throughout 2011 and will run for 12 months.

Sarah Bruce

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