







PROCare4Life Policy Brief



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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

The policy brief discusses the PROCare4Life PG, a group of four EU-funded projects collaborating to raise awareness and promote digitally-enabled integrated care solutions in the eHealth market. The challenges addressed by the provision of integrated care include the increasing and changing demands of complex care in ageing societies, growing workloads and shortages of health and care providers, and lack of communication between different specialities, providers, and levels of care.

The European Union invests in funding, legislation, and policy initiatives to ensure European leadership and autonomy in critical technologies. The digital transformation of health and care is being promoted with a human-centric model of innovation that prioritizes fundamental European values, including equality and digital inclusion for all EU citizens, particularly those living with chronic conditions.

The EU's eHealth strategy has identified three priorities: citizens' secure access to their health data, personalized medicine through shared European data infrastructure, and citizen empowerment with digital tools for user feedback and person-centred care. Establishing the European Health Data Space regulations seeks to facilitate health data sharing in the EU while respecting citizens' data rights set out in GDPR. This framework is vital for promoting health research and business and improving citizens' health.

The European Care Strategy ensures quality, affordable, and accessible care services across the European Union. It improves the situation for both care receivers and those caring for them, professionally or informally. The policy brief recommends promoting the secondary use of health data for research purposes at the EU level, developing

a robust business model to commercialize digital health solutions, and investing in the deployment and adoption of digital solutions for integrating health and care silos for real-world contexts.

The policy brief emphasizes the need to prioritize people-centred care and digital transformation in health and care to enable individuals to remain autonomous for longer. It uses adequately secured and protected eHealth tools from sharing their data among multidisciplinary care teams. This is interesting not only for academia but also for other stakeholders involved in providing integrated care solutions.













1. Introduction

PROCare4Life PG is composed by PROCare4Life, eSMART, ADLIFE and ValueCare EU funded projects. These four projects funded by the European Commission are collaborating to raise awareness on and promote digitally- enabled integrated care solutions in the eHealth market, leveraging on their diverse capabilities . These include multifunctional and integrated capabilities, chronic disease specialisation, and the co-development and test, with health and care providers and a diverse range of end users of different care models enhanced and enabled by ICT solutions.

1.1. Topic

The most common challenges addressed in the provision of integrated care are:

-  Increasing and changing demands of complex care in ageing societies.-
-  Growing workloads and shortages of health and care providers
-  Lack of communication between different specialities, providers, and levels of care.
-  Lack of tailored technologies to monitor medical symptoms and behaviour
-  Lack of access to patient information for multidisciplinary care teams to support integrated care provision.
-  Existence of data silos across the continuum of care
-  Lack of deployment and adoption of digital solutions for integrating health and care silos for real-world contexts
-  Low level of real-time communication and remote monitoring and reporting between patients and care providers.
-  Lack of appropriated business models to commercialise digital health solutions, and clinical risk algorithms
-  Absence of integrated architectures mature enough for the collection, collation, sharing and storage of health-related data, allowing for data exploitation in an efficient and cost-effective way.

1.2 Policy challenges

PROCare4Life PG aligns with some of the key current priorities of the EU, specifically the Digital Economy and Society. ¹ The EU is investing in funding, legislation, and policy initiatives to ensure European leadership and independence in critical technologies.. The digital transformation of health and care is being promoted with a human-centric model of innovation that prioritizes fundamental European values , including equality (and equity) and digital inclusion for all EU citizens, particularly those living with chronic conditions.² .

As European populations age and health-related costs continue to rise, digital transformation in health and care can support individuals living with chronic conditions and their care

1 See <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies>, 20th October 2022






2 [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)



ecosystems. The goal is to promote people-centered integration of care and enable individuals to remain autonomous for longer, using properly secured and protected eHealth tools to share their data among multidisciplinary care teams.. The EU's eHealth strategy has identified 3 priorities:

- 1. citizens' secure access to their health data, including across borders**, enabling citizens to access their health data across the EU;
- 2. personalised medicine through shared European data infrastructure**, allowing researchers and other professionals to pool resources (data, expertise, computing processing and storage capacities) across the EU;
- 3. citizen empowerment with digital tools for user feedback and person-centred care** using digital tools to empower people to look after their health, stimulate prevention and enable feedback and interaction between users and healthcare providers.

Additionally, a recent communication to the Commission has marked 5 strategic objectives for EU digital strategy³:

-  Foster a digital culture.
-  Enable digital-ready EU policymaking.
-  Empower business-driven digital transformation.
-  Ensure seamless digital landscape.
-  Sustain a green, secure and resilient infrastructure.

The EU Digital decade aims at harnessing the benefits of digital transformation for both people and businesses. Digital citizenship prioritises individual freedom, safety and security of the digital environment, solidarity and inclusion, participation and solidarity.⁴ The 2030 Policy Programme “Path to the Digital Decade” is currently being proposed to advance this agenda⁵.

Another key effort underway is the establishment of the European Health Data Space regulations⁶, which seek to facilitate health data sharing in the EU while respecting citizens' data rights as set out in GDPR. This framework is seen as a vital tool for promoting health research and business, as well as improving citizens' health..^{7,8} Margaritis Schinas, said:

“I am proud to announce the first common EU data space in a specific area. The European Health Data Space will be a ‘new beginning’ for the EU’s digital health policy, making health data work for citizens and science. Today, we are laying down the foundations for secure and trustworthy access to health data that is fully in line with the fundamental values underpinning the EU.”

3 Brussels, 30.6.2022 C(2022) 4388 final COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION European Commission digital strategy Next generation digital Commission.

4 See https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/europes-digital-decade-digital-targets-2030_en, 20th October 2022

5 See https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:6785f365-1627-11ec-b4fe-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF, 20th October 2022

6 See https://health.ec.europa.eu/ehealth-digital-health-and-care/european-health-data-space_en, 20th October 2022

7 See https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en, 20th October 2022

8 Strasbourg, 3.5.2022 COM(2022) 197 final 2022/0140 (COD) Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Health Data Space.

The EU's non-communicable diseases initiative, launched in December 2021, is an important piece of the policy context.⁹ The initiative covers years 2022-2027, addressing 4 priorities: health determinants; cardiovascular diseases; diabetes; chronic respiratory diseases; mental health and neurological disorders. Cross cutting priorities are health equity dimensions to reduce health inequalities across countries and regions in the EU. In addition, cancer-related actions are covered in the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.¹⁰

More recently, in September 2022, the EC presented the European Care Strategy, which ensures quality, affordable and accessible care services across the European Union and improve the situation for both care receivers and the people caring for them, professionally or informally.

This strategy presents recommendations at the level of long-term care, seeking to be accessible and affordable strategies to empower people who, due to old age, illness and/or disability, depend on help for daily activities, to maintain their autonomy and live with dignity. The strategy also aims to find solutions that make the conditions of Health and Care Professionals fairer.

9 See https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases_en, 20th October 2022

10 See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_342, 20th October 2022



2. Recommendations

As discussed in the previous section, there is already a significant amount of policy that has been implemented or is currently under negotiation pertaining to our project group. With this in mind, this policy brief puts forward a series of recommendations for consideration.

2.1 Promote the secondary use of health data for research purposes at EU level

GDPR has been a great protection for EU citizens' rights in relation to their data, creating an environment in which they could advance their safe, secure sharing of health data. Nevertheless, these very much needed regulations have been often interpreted in a very restrictive way to protect people and organisations, creating data silos that are affecting negatively Europe's capability to advance in this new Digital world. For that reason, an important challenge to achieve integrated care is connecting data silos across the continuum of care. Additionally, secondary use of data for research purposes should be regulated to favour it, making the sharing of databases created with public funds compulsory after 6 months, as is regulated in other international countries. This could bring EU research forward.



2.2 Health databases should include decision and policymaking indicators

Policy and decision makers at EU level should take advantage of from the wealth of evidence derived from the increasing amount of clinical and clerical data shared through the new Digital Health Space. To ensure informed decision-making, it is essential that shared databases contain sufficient information. The integration of new technologies in primary healthcare, hospital, residential care, will depend on decision makers' trust in eHealth solutions, based on evidence. Otherwise, innovations risk being underutilized due to a lack of evidence regarding their benefits, especially when compared to other European evidence..

2.3 Prioritise Standards and interoperability to advance healthcare in Europe

Advancing on sharing standards for data and for sharing them will be key for the future European Health Data Space to be successful and for the results of our projects to be implemented in current healthcare systems. Currently data are fragmented across various health care provision organisations, data registries such as those existing for cancer, research results, clinical trials. Integration of all EU health data with common standards and interoperability procedures is only possible through policymaking at the EU level. Therefore, policymakers must prioritise developing and implementing robust standards for data sharing to enable the full potential of the European Health Data Space and advance healthcare in Europe.

2.4. Reinforce the Digital Health Literacy for citizens and Healthcare Professionals

To assure equal access and adoption of new health digital tools, personalised training will be essential for citizens living with chronic conditions, their caregivers and healthcare professionals. The current workload of healthcare professionals makes it sometimes challenging for them to find the time for accepting innovative tools in their health practice, especially when they don't fully understand how the results are provided.. Similarly, citizens need to understand the benefits of using digital solutions and have easy-to-follow guidelines for their use.

2.5 Equity and integration of care, a must for citizens

To ensure that the Digital Space being created promotes access for all and reduces inequalities, it is essential for the EU to implement cross-cutting measures in line with the previous recommendations.. eHealth solutions should be designed to be accessible through devices that citizens already possess, such as mobile phones or computers.. It is imperative to address hardware legacy issues to prevent European citizens from being excluded from the new digital health landscape. Furthermore, the Digital Space should aim to facilitate easier navigation of the healthcare system, with a focus on putting people at the center of care. Coordination and continuity of care among multidisciplinary teams should be enhanced, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of life for European citizens, especially those living with complex health and care needs.



3. Project Group

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[www.strath.ac.uk/science/
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es/esmart](http://www.strath.ac.uk/science/computerinformationsciences/esmart)



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