

**eHealth**

priorities and strategies  
in European countries



**Fact sheet**

# Austria

March 2007

Towards the Establishment  
of a European eHealth  
Research Area

eHealth

eHEALTH ERA



# Austria

## Strategic perspective

The legal basis for eHealth in Austria is the Health Reform 2005 Act, including the "Health Telematics Act" which aims at the secure exchange of individual health data, and the "E-Government Act" of 2004. Promoting the use of information technologies in healthcare is one of the defined priorities in the Austrian Health Reform Act 2005. As the Austrian health system is organised federally, common goals need to be agreed between the different levels of responsibility. The main coordination body responsible for promoting the use of information technologies and for planning, financing and guidance mechanisms is the Ministry of Health.

eHealth is understood as a new set of business models and tools to improve health services by delivering the efficiency and cost-control priorities of the Austrian Health Reform Act 2005. To these purposes, the Austrian eHealth Initiative committee, officially launched in April 2005, issued their first conceptual draft National eHealth Strategy in early 2006. A public consultation process to discuss and finalise the strategy commenced in September 2006.

In accordance with the goals of the i2010 initiative of the European Commission, Austria has also set up an overall information society programme which includes eHealth as an important application field. There is a strong commitment to harmonise applications mechanisms common to eHealth and eGovernment, e.g. the Austrian focus on identity management. The Austrian Citizen Card, launched by the Federal Government in November 2000, is now deployed nationally and was recently acknowledged as one of the leading eIdentity implementations in Europe.

## Implementation perspective

Several cooperative regional and bilateral eHealth solutions have been or are being implemented. However, the



flagship projects are mainly focused around the "e-card" (Health Insurance Card) system. The nationwide roll-out of the "e-card" to more than 8 million insured citizens and 12,000 general practitioners was successfully completed in 2005. In this first step the "e-card" is used to verify health insurance entitlement. In the next phase, starting from 2006, the hospital information systems will be integrated and an additional range of functionalities will be offered progressively to all "e-card" users.

For example: The eMedication System previously offered on a voluntary basis is being extended to an ePrescription System for which the "e-card" system will provide the network and security infrastructure. One of the critical issues impacting patient mobility in Austria, especially for temporary visitors availing themselves of Austrian health services, is the question of health insurance reimbursement. The national "e-card" is compatible with the NETC@RDS project which aims to improve the access of mobile citizens to trans-European health services by using advanced Web-oriented applications based on a combination of IT systems and smart cards.



# Austria

The most significant medium-term eHealth project is the implementation of a National Electronic Health Record (Elektronische Gesundheitsakte, ELGA). Initial steps, to be completed in 2006, include a feasibility study and the formation of the ELGA project office. It is envisaged that additional legislation, or adjustment of existing legislation, will also be necessary.

Public health service institutions, and other organisations, are using the internet as a communication channel to disseminate information on risk prevention and health promotion. For example, the Austrian Ministry of Health runs a website with a broad variety of themes related to health. In addition there are several other internet portals (many are public, some are private) which provide useful health information for the citizens and health professionals.

## Future activities

The implementation of the National eHealth strategy will require activities on organisational, legal and technical level. It also requires steps to strengthen awareness among the Austrian population. Topics which present major challenges to be mastered include:

- Basic requirements for the National Electronic Health Record ELGA (agreement between the Länder on architecture, registers, indexes).
- Collaboration and achievement of required levels of interoperability and standardisation.
- Processes to ensure trust and privacy in common identification of patients and of healthcare-providers rights and responsibilities in management of the patient electronic health care record.
- Secure and trusted long-term archival strategies and capabilities.
- Use of common terminology for better regional and national monitoring of requirements, treatments and comparison of health service provision.
- Citizen focused National Health Portal (emphasis is on prevention and on citizens' participation in their own health awareness and well-being).



- Network and infrastructure for integrated health care and social services.
- Telemedicine projects for homecare and to serve remote and disadvantaged communities.

## Core resources

### Austrian Citizen Card:

[http://www.buergerkarte.at/index\\_en.html](http://www.buergerkarte.at/index_en.html) , also  
<http://www.egov-goodpractice.org/download.php?PHPSESSID=e2743e623ff205022598c05ec23500ef&fileid=787>

### Austrian E-Government Act:

[http://www.a-sit.at/pdfs/e-govg\\_engl.pdf](http://www.a-sit.at/pdfs/e-govg_engl.pdf)

### e-Card:

<http://www.chipkarte.at/>.

## About eHealth ERA

This fact sheet is the outcome of research in the context of the *eHealth ERA* project (Towards the Establishment of a European Research Area). The project is implemented by empirica GmbH (coordinating partner, Germany), STAKES (Finland), CITTRU (Poland), ISC III (Spain), CNR (Italy) and EPSRC (United Kingdom), based on a Coordination Action contract with the European Commission.

The European Commission, Directorate General Information Society and Media, supports this project to contribute towards greater transparency across Member States and other participating countries on eHealth strategies as well as innovation-oriented research and technology development (RTD) initiatives, including the coordination of Member States' eHealth strategy formulation and implementation.

The fact sheet is an excerpt from the report "eHealth priorities and strategies in European countries", published by the European Commission in April 2007. The complete report is available for download at [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=3346](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3346).

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