

eHealth

priorities and strategies
in European countries



Fact sheet

Norway

March 2007

Towards the Establishment
of a European eHealth
Research Area





Norway

Strategic perspective

The first national action plan for IT development in the health and social sectors, called "More health for each bit", was issued by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in 1997. This was followed by a second plan, called "Say @h!", in 2001. "Te@work 2007", the latest eHealth roadmap, drafted by the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs and published in 2004, gives an outline of governmental measures to promote greater electronic interaction in the health and social sectors. The vision of Te@work 2007 is that patients and clients, i.e. a person using the services of a social services agency, always experience continuity of care when using the services. The fundamental idea behind the 2004 – 2007 strategy is that things will be done properly and completely in two main priority areas:

Improving the flow of information in the sector. This involves work on technical infrastructure, information structure, information security, electronic patient records, exchange of electronic messages and access to professional support.

Greater inclusion of new actors and services in electronic interaction in the sector. This involves expanding electronic interaction to ensure access to relevant information by patients, clients and relatives, and target service agencies such as pharmacies, municipal health and social services. ePrescription is the main new service.

For the period 2007 – 2010, the Ministry for Health and Care Services is responsible for a National Health Plan, covering continuity of care and eHealth.

Implementation perspective

Infrastructure: Norway has a dedicated healthcare network which interconnects the five regional health networks. Norsk Helsenett AS (Norwegian Health Net Ltd), which is owned by the regional health authorities, runs the network to ensure stability, up-time and confidentiality. It also provides a number of basic services like



eMail, web, catalogues and registries of personnel. The network can be used for several services such as telemedicine and Electronic Data Interchange.

Telemedicine: Operational solutions are in place in a variety of medical disciplines and care situations. Some examples are:

- Sounds, images and videos recorded by the primary care doctor and transmitted to a specialist.
- Telepathology – remote pathology diagnostics support for hospitals lacking this capacity.
- Teleradiology – for consulting in emergencies, for second opinions and for consultations between the hospital and the primary healthcare sectors.
- Videoconferencing for psychiatry and cancer care.

Electronic Patient Records (EPR): A national EPR standard was released in 2001, mainly covering issues related to architecture, archiving and security. With few exceptions, all General Practitioners and private specialists have fully operational EPR systems and have built up practical experience over many years. All hospitals have, or are introducing, EPR systems, with current coverage at 97%.



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A requirement specification for infirmaries and general healthcare in primary schools, and another similar requirement specification for community care, are based on the EPR standard. Since 2003 there is a test and acceptance scheme provided by the Norwegian Centre for Informatics in Health and Social Care (KITH) to ensure that supplied EPR systems conform to the standards.

Electronic information exchange: After a decade of experience in structured exchange of information via electronic messaging, data messages now cover a variety of applications, such as referrals and discharge letters, requests for results from medical services such as laboratory and radiology departmental reports to central authorities, and transfer of EPR information.

Future activities

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Norwegian Health Net organisation provides a sector network for effective cooperation between the different service sections in the sector. Initiatives are in progress to harmonise the services from the five previous regional networks and establish a nationwide communications network with the potential for “seamless” communication across regions and between all the different actors.

TELEMEDICINE

Telemedicine solutions will be brought into use throughout the country to ensure a greater availability of home-based services. To achieve this, two types of measures are given priority:

- The stimulation of broadband development between hospitals, and between hospitals and the primary health services.
- The clarification of responsibility, rules, guidelines and costs in connection with telemedicine consultations.

EXTENDING EHEALTH IMPLEMENTATION TO SOCIAL CARE

Developments in this field will be co-ordinated and focused on topics that are currently considered most urgent; i.e. updated information on the use of medicines, co-operation on individual plans (a right to long term, coordinated care plans), well-functioning communication between the sectors when patients move from health to social care services and support from specialised health services to municipality based care.

LEGISLATION ASSESSMENT

Legislative research commenced in spring 2006 to describe ways in which the Norwegian Personal Data Act, the Health Registries Act and other acts are hindering progress in eHealth. This may lead to proposals for new legislation. In August 2006 the Directorate launched a code of conduct defining how the different health care organisations should treat patient and health information in order to comply with the national and European Data Protection Act.

OTHER AREAS OF ACTIVITY

- Portals: Implementation of a national eGovernment information portal serving all sectors, including health – in the first phase information about one's family doctor, ability to change the family doctor, and possibly access to ePrescriptions. Parallel work is ongoing to establish a nationwide PKI based authentication facility for the portal.
- ePrescription (eResept in Norwegian): Transfer of electronic prescriptions to pharmacies from General Practitioners and hospitals; ePrescription database to ensure free choice of pharmacy to collect drugs; electronic identification of patient, prescriptions and drugs at pharmacies; warnings and reminders, decision support and knowledge support is planned for the country's EPR systems. ePrescription is a collaboration between the Directorate for Health and Social Affairs, the National Insurance Service, the Norwegian Medicines Agency the Pharmacies Association, the Regional Health Enterprises, Doctors' Association, and



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relevant national competence centres.

- Electronic Health Record: Research project started at the Norwegian centre for Electronic Health Records at the University in Trondheim to examine a collaborative patient summary concerning primarily medication information in a municipal setting.
- Multi-national cooperation in the field of eHealth. Cooperation with the other Nordic countries is well established at the level of national competence centres, and recently there has also been strengthened Nordic cooperation at political and governmental levels regarding eHealth. Expansion to cross-border networks, as demonstrated, for example, through the Baltic eHealth project, could be a future step in eHealth developments. Norway has also been active in broader international collaborations, through initiatives such as the Northern Dimension, the Co-operation Programme for Health and Related Social Issues in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region 2004 – 2007, and the World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre activities.

Core resources

Te@mwork 2007, National strategy 2004 – 2007 for Norway.

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Affairs, 2004

http://www.shdir.no/vp/multimedia/archive/00010/IS-1267_E_10176a.pdf.

National Health Plan (2007 – 2010),

Ministry of Health and Care services, 2006

<http://odin.dep.no/hod/english/048091-430009/dok-bn.html>

Ministry of Health and Care Services

<http://odin.dep.no/hod/english/bn.html>

Norwegian Directorate for Health and Social Affairs

<http://www.shdir.no/>

Norwegian Board of Health

http://www.helsetilsynet.no/templates/sectionpage_____5499.aspx

About eHealth ERA

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