

Survey takes pulse of e-Health in Europe and prescribes wider ICT use among doctors

The European Commission today published a pan-European survey on electronic services in healthcare (eHealth) that shows 87% of European doctors (General Practitioners) use a computer, 48% with a broadband connection. European doctors increasingly store and send patients' data such as lab reports electronically. In using such eHealth applications, doctors and medical services have already improved healthcare in Europe through, for example, more efficient administration and shorter waiting times for patients. The report also highlights where doctors could make better use of ICT to offer services such as telemonitoring, electronic prescriptions and cross border medical services.

"Europe is starting to reap the benefits of broadband connections in the eHealth Sector. I welcome the efforts made by healthcare administrations and doctors to work more efficiently," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "This diagnosis also shows that it is now time to use these electronic services much more widely as they have the potential to bring extraordinary benefits to all patients, all over Europe."

eHealth applications have a growing role in the doctor's practices, according to the 'Benchmarking ICT use among General Practitioners in Europe' survey presented today by the Commission. However, there remain significant differences in their availability and use across Europe. About 70% of European doctors use the Internet and 66% use computers for consultations. Furthermore, there are wide differences across countries: Denmark has the highest broadband penetration among General Practitioners (91%), Romania the lowest (about 5%).

Administrative patient data is electronically stored in 80% of general practices: 92% of these also electronically store medical data on diagnoses and medication; 35% electronically store radiological images. European doctors often transfer data electronically with laboratories (40%), but less to other health centres (10%).

The survey shows that the countries most advanced in ICT access and connectivity are more likely to use them for professional purposes. For example, Denmark, where high-speed internet is most widely available in Europe, sees extensive use of email communication between doctors and patients in about 60% of practices (the EU average is only 4%).

The survey also highlights areas for improvement and further deployment, such as electronic prescriptions (e-Prescribing), which is practiced by only 6% of EU General Practitioners. This is widely used in only three Member States: Denmark (97%), the Netherlands (71%) and Sweden (81%).

Telemonitoring, which allows doctors to monitor a patient's illness or manage chronic diseases remotely, is only used in Sweden (where 9% of doctors provide telemonitoring services), the Netherlands and Iceland (both about 3%). The Commission plans to report later this year on the potential and development of telemedicine.

Exchange of patient data across borders is also rare, done by only 1% of the EU's General Practitioners, and with the highest usage rate in the Netherlands (at 5%). This year the Commission plans to make recommendations on cross-border interoperability of electronic health record systems and will launch, with several countries, a project on cross-border eHealth services for patients traveling within the EU.

A majority of European doctors agree that ICT improves the quality of healthcare services that they provide. Doctors not using ICT cite a lack of training and technical support as major barriers. To spread eHealth, they ask for more ICT in medical education, more training and better electronic networking among healthcare practitioners wanting to share clinical information.

Background:

In 2004, the European Commission adopted an Action Plan to develop the use of ICT in the Health sector ([IP/04/580](#)). As a result, all Member States put in place strategies to accelerate e-Health deployment (www.ehealth-era.org). eHealth is part of the Lead Market initiative for innovation launched by the Commission in 2008 ([IP/08/12](#)).

The results of this survey, which involved almost 7,000 General Practitioners in the 3rd quarter of 2007, are related to these policy initiatives. The results will be presented in the forthcoming European eHealth Conference in Slovenia on May 6-7 (<http://www.ehealth2008.si>).

For more information:

29 Country profiles and the final report are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eeurope/i2010/benchmarking/index_en.htm

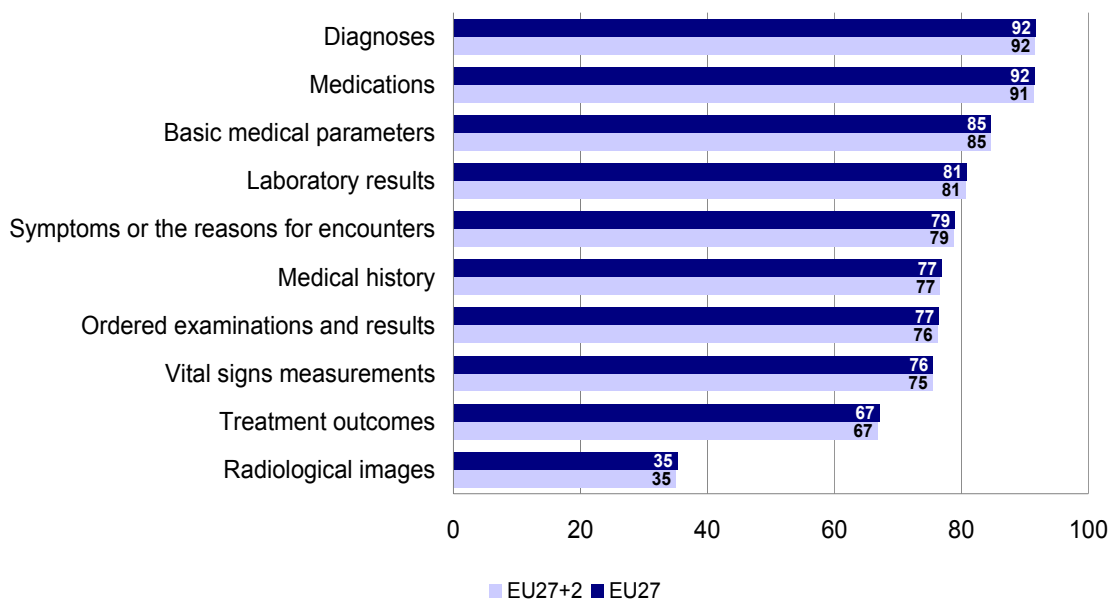
Use of computers in European general practices

	Total	Size of practice		
		Single GP	2-3 GPs or physicians	4+ GPs or physicians
EU27	87.4	83.8	90.6	92.6
EU27+2	87.5	83.8	90.7	92.8
BE	86.1	80.8	96.4	96
BG	97.1	95.3	100.0	100
CZ	82.2	81.7	85	85
DK	98.9	96.9	100.0	100.0
DE	98.8	99.4	97.6	100
EE	100.0	100	100	100.0
EL	79.4	74.2	96	96.1
ES	77.2	68.2	74.3	87.1
FR	82.8	78.3	89.4	100
IE	73.4	58.5	88.4	100
IT	86.2	82.6	95	98
CY	69.4	74	100	56
LV	88.1	90.0	83	87
LT	57.4	61	60.3	56.5
LU	79.7	75	95	67
HU	100.0	100.0	100	100
MT	65.2	71	33	63
NL	98.5	96.2	99.1	100.0
AT	83.6	77.3	91	98.6
PL	71.5	61.3	75.9	78.7
PT	88.0	55.4	92.2	100.0
RO	65.8	71.3	56.4	60
SI	97.1	100	78	98.5
SK	95.8	95.5	96	97
FI	100.0	100	100	100.0
SE	99.6	96	100	100.0
UK	97.3	87	100.0	100.0
IS	99.0	100	94	100.0
NO	98.0	83	100.0	100.0
Source	empirica, Pilot on eHealth Indicators, 2007.			

Use of broadband in European general practices

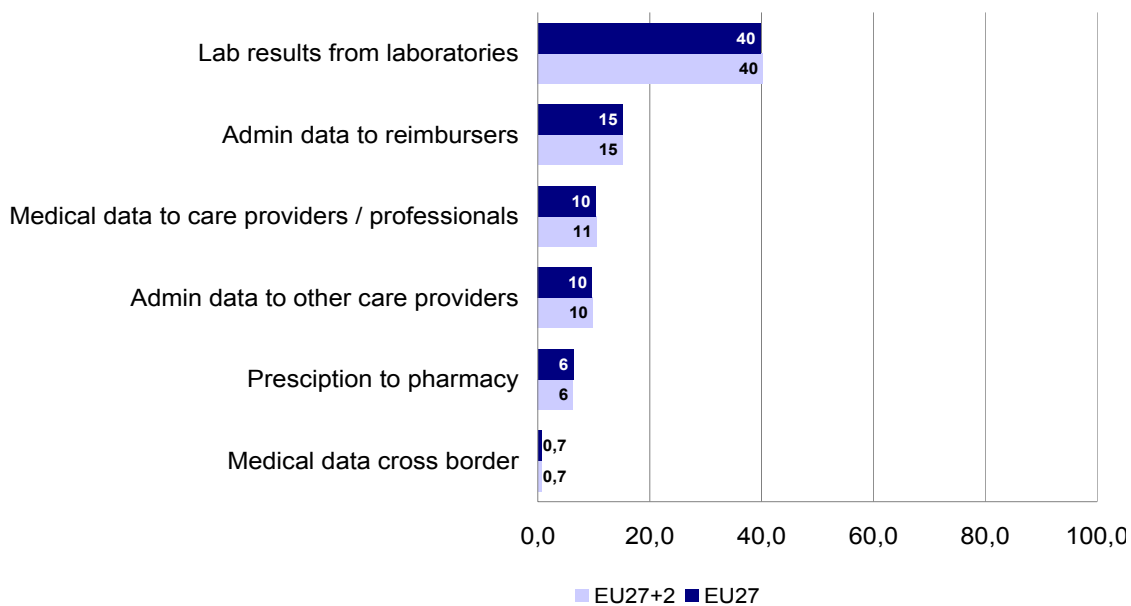
	Size of practice			
	Total	Single GP	2-3 GPs or physicians	4+ GPs or physicians
EU27	47.9	41.1	53.4	59.1
EU27+2	48.1	41.1	53.7	59.7
BE	79.5	74.9	88.7	88.1
BG	23.0	25.0	17.9	30.0
CZ	38.5	37.2	46.9	45.5
DK	91.0	86.8	93.8	93.3
DE	40.0	38.0	39.5	80.0
EE	72.0	59.4	76.0	84.0
EL	43.8	38.2	61.9	66.7
ES	35.8	21.3	49.2	42.5
FR	59.1	54.9	67.0	55.6
IE	44.3	28.9	61.3	81.3
IT	48.8	46.2	47.2	64.1
CY	31.9	35.7	25.0	26.1
LV	58.3	58.8	62.1	33.3
LT	32.7	15.0	29.8	36.6
LU	61.5	54.1	84.3	33.6
HU	35.7	38.6	41.9	16.7
MT	50.6	52.1	25.0	52.0
NL	81.6	82.7	82.3	80.0
AT	36.8	27.9	46.7	71.1
PL	32.1	29.2	28.8	38.7
PT	32.1	13.8	32.5	43.5
RO	5.3	6.0	4.2	4.5
SI	54.0	59.3	44.4	52.9
SK	15.3	16.0	13.0	13.3
FI	92.7	80.0	91.7	94.6
SE	88.1	78.3	81.3	91.9
UK	72.6	46.4	79.7	76.1
IS	85.7	83.3	83.3	87.0
NO	73.8	34.8	75.9	83.5
Source	empirica, Pilot on eHealth Indicators, 2007.			

Store of identifiable patient data



Source: empirica, Pilot on eHealth Indicators, 2007.

Purposes for electronic patient data transfer



Source: empirica, Pilot on eHealth Indicators, 2007.