

Briefing Paper on the Communication from the Commission on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market

This briefing paper is a summary of the European Commission's [Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market; empowering citizens and building a healthier society](#), intended to promote the use of **digital innovation in health** and social care by addressing **user's needs** and making it easier for have **equal access** to high quality care.

Context

The communication argues that the use of digital innovations can help reform health and social systems and their transition to new care models, shifting from hospital-centred to community-based systems that attend to people's needs. The ageing of the population and the growing burden of chronic conditions are increasing demand for health and care. This means health and social care systems have to develop a **different approach** to enable more effective care adequate to the complexity of different services. **Digital solutions for health and care are still slow and they vary a lot across Member States and regions**. For this reason, the Commission proposes **action at EU level**.

Proposed future actions

The Commission proposes to set out **further action in three areas**:

1. citizens' secure access and sharing of health data across borders;
2. better data for research, disease prevention and personalised health and care;
3. digital tools for citizen empowerment and person-centred care.

To deliver integrated services based on people's needs, the communication points out **some crucial transformations**: the need of new care models, the use of technology assessment for attaining greater quality and sustainability of the services, the involvement of multi-disciplinary care teams with new or redesigned roles for care professionals, a workforce of sufficient capacity and appropriate skills, the active cooperation between care professionals and users, and the utilisation of digital solutions for the delivery of efficient and cost-effective care.

Recognising the complexity of this change, the European Commission asks for collaboration with different actors, namely service providers. The Commission also points out the financial pressure that the health and social systems are under, reiterating the need of financial investment for these transformations to occur. The funding should encourage collaboration between Member States and between regions and the Commission take actions to raise awareness of financing opportunities and promote innovative procurement.

Conclusion

This Communication intends to be a starting point in **improving** health and **social care services** using the available **digital innovations**. Being social care one of the big working areas of Social Services Europe, there's a clear window for SSE to get involved, pushing for innovation in our sector.

- I. Across the communication we can see a mix-up between “health” and “health and social care”, without explicit references to the importance of social care. Even though there are many synergies between the sectors, for a multi-disciplinary approach, “social care” should be more evident in the text.
 - ✓ ***Social Services Europe has an important role of advocating the relevance of digitalisation for our sector. In fact, the changes proposed by the Communication of the Commission cannot be achieved without innovation in social services.***
- II. These measures will be **financed** by Connecting Europe Facility and Horizon 2020 programmes. The new “Digital Europe” fund in the MFF could also be an opportunity of financing.
 - ✓ *The Commission recognises the underinvestment in social care and shows a clear intention to finance measures that will improve the use of digital tools in our sector. This is a clear **opportunity for Social Services Europe to engage with the Commission and other relevant actors, reiterating the importance of financing innovation in social care.***

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