

Speech of Dr. Hellmut Körner

Mister Chair Bent Hansen, dear colleagues and guests, ladies and gentlemen.
“eHealth can improve access to healthcare and boost the quality and effectiveness of the services offered”. These are the introducing words of the European Commission to its Action Plan for a European e-Health Area in 2004.

Some 20 years ago the health sector was merely an arbitrary part in the more global effort to enhance IT in Europe. Meanwhile we seem to have reached consensus on realising the potential of eHealth.

However, in the past hospitals and healthcare networks often developed very specific local requirements, resulting in the need for tailor-made products. So we often have extremely expensive procurements and subsequent implementations.

In addition suppliers in the healthcare sector ensured their market against competitors by the use of exclusive technical solutions or software interfaces.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to improve the cooperation between the health professionals and the other partners in the health care system, a far better communication structure is of crucial importance. And the key for better communication today is “eHealth”.

In nearly all partner countries of our meeting today we had many projects on eHealth. But despite some progress, the outcomes very often were still primarily technical single solutions without a lasting influence on the health care sector as a whole.

Based on the experiences in our countries, in the years to come, we will have to connect the isolated islands [of care, information, knowledge and organisation].

In Germany the key element for the development of a national eHealth structure will be the electronic patient card that will lead us to electronic patient files.

The State Government of Schleswig-Holstein supports the development of an electronic patient card in a project in which we emphasize that the definition of the content, the technical structures and the procedures must be a common effort of all partners in the health sector. We make good experience with the cooperation of health professionals, insurance companies, developer of medical software and producer of electronic chip cards and card readers.

In this project besides the commitment of many others, we have very helpful active support by the AOK namely by Thorsten Beck, who is also involved in the eHealth for regions. I therefore appreciate very much, that Mr. Hans-Jürgen Ahrens, chairman of the German Association of AOK agreed to join the strategic board on eHealth as an associated member.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have in our countries a lot of knowledge and experience in eHealth. We will hear more about this today.

But we have different solutions and different procedures. And I suppose we have more or less different perceptions for the future.

Today we will sign a letter of intend to form a strategic board on eHealth.

It is the project “eHealth for regions” which is the point of origin. In this project our experts in the health sector already share know-ledge and experience in providing good treatment and care for patients across borders by using the potentials of eHealth.

I appreciate very much the opportunity to extend this framework to a network to share our views on the further development of eHealth all in all. I am convinced, that collaboration across borders in this field can be established in a constructive way for the benefit of citizens and health professionals.

I am full of hope that this network can also help to strengthen the role of the Baltic Sea Region as a site for innovative and exemplary development in the health sector in Europe. And therefore I want to stress the willingness of the State Government of Schleswig-Holstein to support this network if possible beyond the duration of the eHealth for regions – project.

But today our issue is the starting signal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Health policy discussion is cost driven. To improve the quality of health care and to comply with cost effectiveness we have to encourage innovation.

For the Land of Schleswig-Holstein the Baltic Sea Region provides great opportunities for innovation and development cross border, especially in the health sector.

The EU Commission wants to support cross border medical care and centres of reference and will release new ESF guidelines in December. For all of us this is a great chance to increase our cooperation. One example could be the use of proton therapy that is to be built up at the Kiel University hospital. There has already been made contact to a Danish insurance company as well as to partners in Norway and Sweden. I like to invite you to join this innovative project.