



## **COCIR Contribution to the EC proposal for Digital Europe<sup>1</sup>**

### **1) Introduction**

COCIR welcomes the European Commission proposal for Digital Europe and fully supports the introduction of this new programme, Digital Europe, focused on technology deployment and scaling up. As communicated recently through a joint industry paper on innovation we consider critical to focus on large-scale digital health deployment in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

COCIR shares European Commission Vice President A. Ansip's analysis when stating that Europe needs this programme:

- *"to support EU industry as it goes digital;*
- *to raise the competitiveness of EU business;*
- *to allow European companies to be at the global forefront of progress in technology;*
- *and to continue improving the daily lives of all Europeans."*<sup>3</sup>

COCIR is happy to share additional recommendations which are summarized in this paper.

### **2) Executive Summary**

COCIR supports the priorities set in the EC proposal, namely: 1) high performance computing 2) Artificial Intelligence (A.I) 3) Cybersecurity 4) Advanced digital skills 5) digital transformation of areas of public interests 6) Digitisation of industry.

In addition, COCIR, recognizing the high value of the Digital Europe Programme proposal, have the following recommendations focusing on Health Care:

1. Based on the central role played by the digital industry in transforming Health & Care through integrated Care, more funding needs to support our industry to ensure **Europe keeps a pole position on innovation.**
2. To operationalise the existing European Interoperability Framework (IHE profiles and PCHA Guidelines) and its adoption and extension, it is critical to support the establishment of a **European coordinated interoperability conformity assessment process** as recommended by the EuroCAS project to ensure consistency among the **national conformity assessment programmes** in health
3. Member States should get support to ensure an **appropriate IT infrastructure** in their regions and country.
4. There is a need to **increase awareness** of what **digital solutions** can provide during Health Care curricula but also through continuous learning tools for **Health Care practitioners, users and citizens.**

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<sup>1</sup> [Regulation Proposal - Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027](#) – COM (2018) 434 final

<sup>2</sup> [Joint industry contribution on the Multiannual Financial Framework Beyond innovation – supporting large-scale digital health deployment in Europe](#)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/ansip/announcements/statement-vice-president-ansip-digital-europe-programme\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/2014-2019/ansip/announcements/statement-vice-president-ansip-digital-europe-programme_en)



### 3) Detailed Briefing

#### 3.1 Role of digital in the Health sector

COCIR appreciates the numerous references to the Health sector in the proposal. Health is a key parameter of quality of life. Digitisation of Health Care is crucial for improving safety, quality, accessibility and efficiency of Health Care in Europe.

Health Care is and has to become more and more digital. In Europe with an aging population, Health Care issues are increasingly pressing. Digital solutions will be a key element to meet the increasing needs in terms of human and financial resources.

Digital Health services will play a critical role in the delivery of integrated care<sup>4</sup>. Integrated care means managing and delivering Health services in a way that allows people to benefit from a continuum of Health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, disease-management, rehabilitation and palliative care services. This should traverse the different levels and sites of care within a Health system, according to people's need, throughout the life course. From a process perspective, integrated care consists of multi-agency and multidisciplinary collaboration, focused on meeting the medical, social and practical needs of each individual in a coordinated way. These include Electronic Health Records, information sharing and care team collaboration tools, personal connected services and tools for citizens, risk stratification systems as well as decision support systems

In this respect, **based on the central role played by the digital industry in transforming Health & Care through integrated care, more funding needs to support our industry to ensure Europe keeps a pole position on innovation.**

#### 3.2 Importance of Interoperability and Connectivity

COCIR has always highlighted the need for greater connectivity and interoperability of systems and devices across borders<sup>5</sup>.

Rightfully, the European Commission expresses in the proposal and in its 25 April 2018 communication<sup>6</sup> on Health in the DSM that the difficulties to achieve interoperability between clinical Health Care IT applications is a major barrier to quality and efficiency improvement, in particular as we evolve towards a more patient centred Health Care system based on an Electronic Health (Care) Record.

The slow deployment of interoperable digital Health solutions across European countries remains a barrier for scaling-up integrated care.

To advance the European Single Digital Health market, the European Commission has referenced standards (including a selection of Continua Design Guidelines and IHE Profiles) in its eHealth European Interoperability Framework1 (2013, refined

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<sup>4</sup> [Multi-Stakeholder Digital Health Roadmap to support Integrated Care](#) – ICA – May 2018

<sup>5</sup> “[ADVANCING eHEALTH INTEROPERABILITY](#)” – COCIR, IHE, PCHA - May 2017

<sup>6</sup> [Communication on enabling the digital transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market: empowering citizens and building a healthier society](#) COM(2018) 233 final



2015). One has also to note that national and regional governments have the prerogative of choosing to endorse open international standards, by referencing them when directly procuring digital Health solutions via tenders, or by encouraging procurers to do so.

**To operationalise the existing European Interoperability Framework (IHE profiles and PCHA Guidelines) and its adoption and extension, it is critical to support the establishment of a European coordinated interoperability conformity assessment process as recommended by the EuroCAS project to ensure consistency among the national conformity assessment programmes in health**

### **3.3 Need for IT Infrastructure**

Europe is at a comparable level with Japan and the USA when it concerns research but is far behind in technology deployment. Lack of access to cutting-edge and expensive infrastructure can be a drawback for developing and being able to use innovative solutions. When funding Digital Innovation Hubs, a special attention should be paid to the ones specialized on Health to ensure the deployment and scaling-up of Digital Health across Europe and companies of all size.

In order to stimulate job creation and achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the European Union needs an up-to-date, high-performance infrastructure to help connect and integrate all the regions.

More precisely, to allow deployment and upscaling of Digital Health solutions there is a need to improve the infrastructure and technology facilities of the network of Digital Innovation Hubs to ensure access to digital capacities to any business in any region across the EU, especially in Health. In this sector, access to digital infrastructure are very uneven across Europe and companies.

It is crucial to ensure that hospitals, main providers of public services and digitally intensive enterprises have access to future-oriented broadband connections (1 Gbit/second). The importance of the overall connectivity of the European territories, including that of the outermost regions, to the Internet, has to be stressed too.

Although aware, it mainly relates to CEF Programme, we would like to make the the following recommendation.

**Member States should get support to ensure an appropriate IT infrastructure in their regions and country.**

### **3.4 Ensuring eSkills and ICT Education**

Technology is moving so fast that to ensure efficient use of those innovations, appropriate education must be delivered to users including Health Care professionals and patients.

COCIR cannot agree more with Mariya Gabriel's statement when being interviewed by Euronews at the World Mobile Congress 2018 (February 2018 – Barcelona). She said *"In 2018 I have already initiated the European information campaign on media*



*literacy, on cyber literacy. It is really important not only to focus our efforts on our young people.”<sup>7</sup>*

When referring to the industry in general, during 2016, among the 8 % of EU enterprises recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists, 48 % of companies that recruited or tried to recruit ICT specialists in 2016 reported difficulties in filling vacancies<sup>8</sup>. At hospital level, data becoming more and more important, they find extremely hard to hire data specialists that would enable these institutions to benefit from all digital Health Care solutions.

Still today we observe, doctors and other carers have been reluctant to use ICT services/products. Doctors and medical student European representative organisations have already expressed the need for digital training.

Improvement of patient well-being and shortage of human and financial resources in Health Care are issues that can be answered by a more efficient use of digital solutions. The users, especially the elderly ones, need to be familiarized with ICT products/services to enjoy their full benefits.

Here are some examples of projects that could be funded:

- ICT education to medical curricula (medicine / HP, nursing ...)
- ICT education programs for health professionals
- Education programs for users of health ICT
- Programs for promotion of usability, simpler E/U interfaces and use of AI for better usability

**There is a need to increase awareness of what digital solutions can provide during Health Care curricula but also through continuous learning tools for Health Care practitioners, users and citizens.**

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sfgate.com/news/media/EU-Commissioner-Mariya-Gabriel-calls-for-a-1205681.php>

<sup>8</sup> [Eurostat - ICT specialists - statistics on hard-to-fill vacancies in enterprises](#)