EU-US eHealth Cooperation Initiative

Summary

Health related information and communication technology (most usually referenced as "eHealth" in Europe and "health IT" in the US) is an important and growing sector in the United States and the European Union. It is a rapidly developing and highly innovative area. It has considerable potential to promote individual and community health while fostering innovation and economic growth.

Both the United States and the European Union are currently working to encourage more effective use of ICT and ICT in general, in delivery of health services, including disease prevention and health promotion. The Transatlantic Economic Council has therefore decided to make a critical contribution to this development by promoting interoperability of health related information and communication technology (eHealth/health IT) products and services, gaining improved mobility and consistent proficiency recognition for a professional workforce, and by helping to prevent unnecessary regulatory divergences.

We have decided to implement specific cooperative action plans for the following high-priority areas:

- Advancing eHealth/health IT Interoperability – we will collaborate to accelerate progress towards the widespread deployment and routine use of internationally recognized standards that would support transnational interoperability of electronic health information and communication technology; and

- eHealth/health IT Workforce Development – we will work together to identify approaches to achieving our common goals for achieving a robust supply of highly proficient eHealth/health IT professionals and assuring health care, public health, and allied professional workforces have the eSkills needed to make optimum use of their available eHealth/health information technology. Equally, we will identify and address any competency and knowledge deficiencies among all staff in healthcare delivery, management, administration and support to ensure universal application of ICT solutions in health services.

The cooperative action plans anticipate robust participation by relevant experts and stakeholders, across the public, private and academic sectors. The public sector participants expect to confer with academic stakeholders, and to convene, catalyze and support creative collaborations among capable and willing private and academic sector participants, while offering guidance consistent with their policymaking responsibilities. All participants, and particularly the private-sector participants, in specific projects and initiatives under the action plans will identify solutions consistent with best practices in relevant fields (such as information science and workforce development).

Over time, we expect to update the priority action plans to reflect progress made and new opportunities identified in the course of their implementation. We also recognize that, as work progresses and circumstances evolve, we may later want to develop cooperative action plans for additional areas and potentially involving additional participating public- and private-sector entities and/or different roles for entities also participating in the eHealth/health IT Interoperability and Workforce Development cooperative action plans.