

The President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, accepted the proposal of the President and the Vice-President of the European Commissions, Mr. José Manuel Barroso and Mrs. Neelie Kroes, and Representative, Mr. John Dall, to take the lead in a group of high-level advisers to shape the future of e-health of the European Union.

The first meeting of the working group will take place tomorrow in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, which holds the current Presidency of the European Union, and where all the EU health care ministers will meet.

“The usage of information and communication technology (ICT) solutions is a natural and inseparable part of health care organisation in the 21st century,” said President Ilves, who arrived in Budapest today. “In this sense, information means health records, while communication stands for their safe distribution serving the interests of patient, as our health care organisation also needs to adapt itself to the freedom of movement as one of the fundamental rights in the European Union, while technology must determine how IT can be widely used in health care.”

According to the Estonian Head of State, in the 21st century, ICT is a pre-requisite for successful and patient-centred health care, not just a tool for health care funds to calculate bills.

“Information in the service of health” is an appropriate motto for our working group, which was convened by the European Commission,” President Ilves told.

Health care specialists and representatives of patients, pharmaceutical companies, medical supplies and ICT industries, legal experts and politicians from numerous European Union Member States are involved in the e-health working group, which assesses the contribution of ICT to health and social care and gives recommendations for accelerating innovation for the benefit of patients, doctors, nurses and the health care sector as a whole.

Mr. Madis Tiik from the Estonian E-Health Foundation is also taking part in the work of the working group. According to him, e-health has, to date, been mostly treated as a project in the European Union, not a complete strategy that changes the organisation of health care.

The e-health working group, led by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, was convened to submit to the European Commission, in July 2012, proposals for using the opportunities made available by e-health for a safer, better and more efficient health care in the European Union, the sphere of diagnostics prevention and treatment included.

President Ilves admitted that one of the biggest strengths enjoyed by Estonia is linked to our X-tee (X-way), as its new version supports linking to similar safe data exchange platforms of other countries, which is highly important after full implementation of cross-border EU health care services.

“In Estonia, for example, 70 per cent use of digital prescription was achieved within 9 months, while in other countries it will take a minimum of three to five years to achieve the same level,” President Ilves said.

“X-tee and Estonia’s experiences with either solving or anticipating cyber security problems confirm that safe solutions are possible in e-health,” emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

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