

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who was this spring invited by the European Commission to chair the European Union e-health working group, organised the second meeting of the work group today in Kadriorg.

The objective of the working group is to draft a report based, according to the proposals of the experts of several countries, on the alternatives for establishing a e-health system, which would cover all the European Union Member States and give the citizens of the European Union access to high-quality health care everywhere.

“Free movement of people within the European Union also means that we may find ourselves in the position of being a patient outside our own country. Therefore, we require the free movement of health information within the European Union, which is safe and forwarded in such a way that the privacy of people will be protected,” President Ilves emphasised.

“Estonia’s X-tee (X-path) and experiences with digital prescriptions or problems with cyber security clearly demonstrate that safe solutions are also possible in e-health. From the experiences of a single country, we must now progress to the level of the European Union as a whole,” said the Estonian Head of State. “Since the integration programme of Robert Schuman, democratic Europe has been able to reach a consensus on very complicated issues for more than a half of century and I have no doubt that we will also be successful in shaping the common future of our e-health.”

According to him, the use of opportunities offered by information communication technology is necessary for the 21st century and is an inevitable aspect of contemporary organisation of health care in the interest of patients.

For the purposes of the innovative organisation of health care, in the word ‘information communication’, ‘info’ would stand for medical records, ‘communication’ for safe use and distribution of this information in the interest of patient while ‘technology’ would mean to use IT in general health care, President Ilves explained.

“E-health should be observed not as a project but as an integrated strategy that is poised to

change the organisation of health care,” assured the Estonian Head of State, who went on to define a question that is important for the European Union e-health work-group: “Where and how could the European Union move in the sphere of e-health, once the Member States have all created their own national networks, as we can see it today in Estonia, for example?”

In spring of this year, President Ilves accepted the proposal of the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, Vice President Kroes and representative John Dalli, to chair a working group of high level consultants, which would shape the future of e-health in the European Union. The first meeting of the working group took place in May in Budapest.

At the end of 15 months of activities, the working group, consisting of health care experts, representatives of patients, medical, pharmaceutical and ICT industries, legal experts and politicians, will make proposals to the European Commission on using the opportunities offered by e-health for reaching a safer, patient-focused and more efficient organisation of health care, including the sphere of diagnostics, prevention and treatment. Estonia is represented by one of the experts and promoters of e-health, GP Madis Tiik, in the work-group.

“Our task is to look further than 2020,” President Ilves stated.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone 631 6229