

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, began his address at the international e-health conference in Kiruna by introducing some of the conclusions from the report of the work group that advised the European Commission, stating that an efficient health care information system should be patient centred.

People must remain owners of their health records; they must maintain an overview of the information that is being maintained on them in the system, and on who uses the information. Secure electronic identity between the information system and its users will be required to achieve further trust, and this is currently absent in a number of European countries; in Estonia, this role has been fulfilled by the ID card since 2002.

The Estonian Head of State also spoke about the need to shift the focus of the health care system from diseases to health.

"Health records are especially required in the prevention of diseases. Future health information systems should primarily focus on the collection and recording of information about health, and only then about diseases," he admitted.

The compatibility of different information systems will be the focus of attention for the purposes of data collection, as this will facilitate a more integrated approach to human health; the willingness of health care institutions and medical specialists to share such information is also going to be important. Even today, people can play a part in collecting their health care information by using different information technology tools, such as using various smart devices to observe their blood pressure or heart rate.

The use of IT tools in health care in Europe, compared to other spheres, lags at least ten years behind in terms of the implementation of IT solutions. "The use of information technology tools would help reduce some of the health care expenses in Europe that are associated with its ageing population. Today, such expenses account for about 6-15 % of government expenditure in European countries," President Ilves admitted.

The e-health conference at Kiruna brought together several hundred regional level European

politicians and entrepreneurs. The conference at Kiruna was organised by the Assembly of European Regions and Norrbotten county government.

Link to the conference: <http://www.nll.se/alec>

Link to the report by the work group led by President Ilves that advised the European Commission: <http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/eu-task-force-ehealth-redesigning-health-europe-2020>

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