

Priority 3.3: Fostering digital health literacy and equity

Promote health equity, social justice and social rights. Access to health is unequal in Europe, which is in stark contrast to the EU's pledge to be "a Union of Equality". This requires inequities in health access to be addressed, especially for marginalised groups. The next Parliament should commit to:

- **3.3. Promoting digital health literacy and digital skills by inclusive representation of patients and healthcare professionals in discussions on digital health tools and promoting ethical use of health data and AI in healthcare. This implies facilitating epidemiology data collection, and cross-country secure data sharing in line with the European Health Data Space.**

Societies and health systems are undergoing digital transformation, for instance, with the development of the European Health Data Space (EHDS). It is important for this transition to be inclusive. It should go hand in hand with a strengthening of (digital) health literacy across the EU.

Promote inclusive and ethical digital health

Digital health policy needs to be inclusive and ethical to ensure nobody is left behind in the digital health transformation:

- The **protection of health data** from citizens should be ensured. A secure and harmonised framework and interoperability standards should be established in the implementation of the EHDS for secure health data sharing across EU Member States while upholding privacy and data protection regulations. Data should also be protected from non-ethical and commercial uses.
- Guidelines for Member States to systematically collect **equality and intersectional data** should be developed, with the participation of civil society. This should support the harmonisation of equality data across agencies, Member States and civil society.
- Clear and comprehensive **ethical guidelines** for the use of health data and AI in healthcare should be developed in collaboration with civil society, patients, marginalised groups and healthcare professionals. These guidelines should address issues such as data privacy, consent, transparency, and accountability to ensure responsible and trustworthy practices.
- **Digital health ethics training** should be included as a mandatory component of healthcare professionals' education and continuous development. This will equip them with the skills to navigate ethical dilemmas arising from AI and data-driven healthcare, and support mitigating biases and ensure equitable outcomes for all patient populations.
- The development of **ethics boards and certifications** should be considered to review and approve digital health tools and AI applications, ensuring that they are not only safe and effective, but that they also adhere to ethical guidelines and patient-centred principles.

- The digital provision of (mental) health care needs to be **value based** and not cost based. The decision regarding which care works best should be made by the service user, supported by health professionals, not by service providers or health insurers.

Foster (digital) health literacy

Health literacy should be at the core of an inclusive digital health policy:

- (Digital) health literacy and digital skills should be promoted through the **inclusive representation** of patients and healthcare professionals in discussions on digital health tools. Literacy measures should focus on building awareness, understanding, and proficiency in using digital health tools effectively and safely, and should in particular reach marginalised groups, ensuring that no one is left behind.
- **Awareness-raising measures should be taken to show** the benefits and potential risks of digital health tools and AI in healthcare. These measures should also inform the public about their rights regarding data privacy and encourage active participation in shaping digital health policies.
- Healthcare professionals and patients should know how **AI-driven decisions** in healthcare are made and how they impact diagnosis, treatment, and care.



EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE (EPHA)

Rue de Trèves 49-51 | 1040 Brussels (BELGIUM) | +32 (0) 2 230 30 56

www.ephah.org | ephah@ephah.org



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