

POLICY MAPPING ON EHEALTH POLICIES AND INITIATIVES (INCLUDING ON CANCER CARE) IN **AUSTRIA**

This Country Factsheet was prepared for the eCAN Joint Action. It is prefilled with publicly available information and was sent for review to country experts on eHealth and cancer care. The Country Factsheet serves as the basis for the preparation of an overview of eCAN relevant policies and initiatives in all EU and EEA countries.

eCAN is a Joint Action (JA) of 16 partners in EU-Member States on 'Strengthening eHealth including telemedicine and remote monitoring for health care systems for cancer prevention and care'. eCAN aims to bring the benefits of eHealth to all citizens and patients across EU-Member States (MS) focusing on cancer prevention and care. There is a need to harmonize telemedicine regulations and to explore the efficacy of teleconsultation programs and telemonitoring in the cancer field.

This country factsheet has been **pre-filled** with publicly available information and pre-reviewed by

- Kathrin Trunner, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH)
- Katharina Habimana, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH)
- Johannes Weiss, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH)
- Claudia Hahl, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH)
- Alexander Degelsegger-Márquez, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH)

The pre-filled country factsheet was **reviewed** by

- Stefan Sabutsch, Managing Director, Austrian eHealth Agency (ELGA GmbH)

The country factsheet includes chapters on:

1 definitions

2 governance

3 strategies/policies

4 legislation

5 cancer specific eHealth solutions

Any questions? – Please get in touch via ecan@goeg.at.

POLICY MAPPING ON EHEALTH POLICIES AND INITIATIVES (INCLUDING ON CANCER CARE) IN **AUSTRIA**

1 DEFINITIONS

Table 1 : Deviations in the use of international definitions for eHealth terms - Austria

Term	Definition	Deviation
eHealth	The WHO defines eHealth as « the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for health ». It also says that « eHealth is the transfer of health resources and healthcare by electronic means. » ¹	No deviation from definition. ²
mHealth	« Mobile health (mHealth) is defined by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Observatory for eHealth as « medical and public health practice supported by mobile devices, such as mobile phones, patient monitoring devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and other wireless devices ». ³	No deviation from definition.
dHealth	The EU defines digital health (dHealth) and care as referring to « tools and services that use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and management of health-related issues and to monitor and manage lifestyle-habits that impact health ». ⁴ The WHO defines digital health as « the field of knowledge and practice associated with the development and use of digital technologies to improve health. Digital health expands the concept of eHealth to include digital consumers, with a wider range of smart-devices and connected equipment. It also encompasses other uses of digital technologies for health such as the Internet of things, artificial intelligence, big data, and robotics. » ⁵	No deviation from definition.
telehealth	The WHO defines telehealth broader than telemedicine « as it includes computer-assisted telecommunications to support management, surveillance, literature, and access to medical knowledge. » ⁶	No deviation from definition.
telemedicine	The EU Commission defines telemedicine as follows (EU Commission definition, COM(2008)689) : « Telemedicine is the provision of health care services, through the use of ICT, in situations where the health professional and the patient (or two health professionals) are not in the same location. It involves the secure transmission of medical data and information, through text, sound, images, or other forms needed for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of patients. » ⁷	No deviation from definition. ⁸
teleconsultation	PAHO describes teleconsultation (also sometimes referred to as remote consultation or telehealth), as « interactions that happen between a clinician and a patient for	No deviation from definition.

¹ [6. eHealth, Factsheet for European Parliament \(who.int\)](#)

² [eHealth \(sozialministerium.at\)](#)

³ World Health Organization *Frequently asked questions on Global Task Force on digital health for TB and its work.* [2017-02-27]. <http://www.who.int/tb/areas-of-work/digital-health/faq/en/> *webcite*. In *mHealth Assessment: Conceptualization of a Global Framework - PMC (nih.gov)*

⁴ [Events - Smart4Health](#)

⁵ [Digital health EURO \(who.int\)](#)

⁶ [Telehealth – DigitalHealthEurope](#)

⁷ [Telemedicine – DigitalHealthEurope](#)

⁸ [Telemedizin \(sozialministerium.at\)](#)

Term	Definition	Deviation
	the purpose of providing diagnostic or therapeutic advice through electronic means. » ⁹	
health app	Essén et al. 2022 define health apps as « a computer program or software application (designed to run on a mobile device) “intended to be used specifically for managing, maintaining, or improving the health of individual persons, or the delivery of care” (ISO https://www.iso.org/standard/78182.html (2021), p 5). »	No deviation from definition.

2 GOVERNANCE

Table 2 : Overview on eHealth governance - Austria

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a Ministry or State Secretariat explicitly in charge of eHealth/dHealth? If so, which Ministry ?	Yes	The Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection oversees eHealth. ¹⁰
Does the Ministry who oversees health care also have a specific Department or Unit in charge of eHealth/dHealth	Yes	There is a ‚health telematics‘ (Gesundheitstelematik) department in place at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. ¹¹
Is there a national eHealth governance board?	Yes	The subgroup on eHealth of the Federal Target Based Governance Commission is the national eHealth governance board for Austria. Within the governance structure of the Federal Target Based Governance Act (‘Bundeszielsteuerungsvertrag’), there is a body responsible for eHealth (composed of representatives by the three decision-making stakeholders), the Federal Target-Based Governance Commission (‘Bundeszielsteuerungskommission’). This is where work programmes implementing the Target -Based Governance Act are decided upon and reviewed.
Is there a public eHealth agency such as ELGA GmbH in Austria or ANS in France? At which level (national, regional)? Which functions does this agency cover?	Yes	ELGA (‘elektronische Gesundheitsakte’, electronic health records) provides ELGA participants (patients) and authorised ELGA health service providers, e.g. doctors, pharmacies, hospitals and care facilities, access to their resp. their patients electronic health data (e.g. prescriptions issued) regardless of location and time. ¹²
Are dHealth / eHealth tools in the outpatient sector publicly paid or covered in your benefits package (e.g. by sickness fund or national health service). If yes, please describe how.	Yes	General services such as ELGA are covered by public funding. Depending on the region and sickness funds further tools can be covered.
Are dHealth / eHealth tools in the inpatient sector automatically covered in	Yes	The reimbursement of telemedical consultations is now included in the tariff agreements/fee schedules of the health insurance funds (since Corona).

⁹ <https://www3.paho.org/ish/images/docs/covid-19-teleconsultations-en.pdf?ua=1>

¹⁰ [eHealth sozialministerium.at](https://www.ehealth-sozialministerium.at)

¹¹ [Geschäftseinteilung des BMSGPK - Abteilung VI/B/8, Gesundheitstelematik \(ldap.gv.at\)](https://www.gesundheitstelematik.at)

¹² [ELGA: Startseite](https://www.elga.gv.at)

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
your benefits package or do you need to pay extra (e.g. for telehealth consultations or telereha) compared to standard treatments?		Telemedical services are reimbursed at the same rate as if the service was provided on site without the aid of telemedical methods. In Austria there are over 100 projects in the field of telemedicine and AI (covering pilots and projects in regular operation).
Are there any comprehensive cancer centres focussing on ehealth or telehealth treatments? If yes, which ones and for which specific fields?	Y, e.g. CCRI	St. Anna Children's Cancer Research Institute (CCRI) is currently implementing the digital Survivorship Passport (SUPA) within the course of an EU funded project (PanCareSurePass). ¹³ CECOG offers a Virtual Transborder Tumor Board Platform. Apart from those two examples above there are other CCCs in Austria like the Comprehensive Care Center Vienna ¹⁴ , Vienna Cancer Center ¹⁵ or Universitäres Comprehensive Cancer Center Graz ¹⁶ . But no information was available on eHealth / telehealth treatments concerning those CCCs.

3 STRATEGIES/POLICIES

Table 3 : Overview on strategies and policies for eHealth and cancer care - Austria

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	The Federal Target Management Contract for Health ¹⁷ is a partnership-based target management system established in 2013 to manage the structure, organization, and financing of Austrian health care between the federal government, the provinces, and the social insurance system. The contract for 2022 and 2023 includes operational objective 5 - Targeted use of ICT for patient care, system control and innovation. The implementation of a working group for the development of a national eHealth strategy has already been approved and the group will start its work soon.
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting the national eHealth strategy?	Differs	For the Federal Target Management Contract: Policy/Decision Makers. For the new working group different experts.
Are there regional eHealth strategies? If so, can you indicate whether in all regions or only some? Can you provide some (exemplary) documents ?	Yes	Regional strategies are in place, e.g., in Vienna ¹⁸ and Styria ¹⁹ .
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting such regional strategy/ies?	Differs	Different, depending on the strategy (mostly regional decision makers, but also academia, etc.).

¹³ [PanCareSurPass – Implementing the digital Survivorship Passport to improve Person-Centered Survivorship Care](#)

¹⁴ [Comprehensive Care Center Vienna](#)

¹⁵ [Vienna Cancer Center](#)

¹⁶ [Universitäres Comprehensive Cancer Center Graz](#)

¹⁷ [Federal Target Management Contract for Health](#)

¹⁸ [Wiener eHealth Strategie 2023/2024](#)

¹⁹ [eHealth-Strategie_DigitalesGesundheitssystemSTM19.pdf \(gesundheitsfonds-steiermark.at\)](#)

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Are there strategy/ies explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	Yes	The Austrian National Cancer Plan (2014) includes the implementation of the SurvivorshipPassport as one of the operational targets for the target group of children and adolescents and the implementation of the electronic vaccination pass as measures to avoid virus-associated tumour types through vaccination.
If not, are there discussions ongoing to develop a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	Yes, there a process has been initiated to develop an Austrian eHealth strategy.
Is there a National Cancer Plan? And does it refer to eHealth?	Yes	A National Cancer Programme is in place ²⁰ . See also above (question on strategy referring to eHealth cancer care).
In the light of the EU „Beating Cancer Plan” – are there any recent plans to update or modify existing plans? If yes, what is the timeline?	N/A	No further information available.
Are there any indicators in eHealth policy or national programmes on cancer care measuring the progress of the use of eHealth in cancer care?	No	No further information available.
Are there any other cancer care specific eHealth initiatives, f.e. by other stakeholders than policy makers / public authorities?	Yes	Projects like e.g. eSMART (remote monitoring system for oncology patients at the medical university Vienna), or INERACCT (improve communication between doctors and patients in a playful way).

4 LEGISLATION

Table 4 : Overview on eHealth and cancer legislation - Austria

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
How would you evaluate the current state of legislation of eHealth in your country in general?	Evaluate	The GTelG basically reflects the technical status of 2012 and is quite rigid. All new data, functions and applications must be made possible via an amendment. A change towards generic definitions and flexibilization appears necessary.
Is there legislation on how to use telemedicine in general?	Yes, but no separate law ²¹	There is no separate law regulating the field of telemedicine. The general legal framework is provided, among others, by the Health Telematics Act 2012, the Hospital and Spa Act, the Medical Devices Act 2021 and the European Medical Devices Regulation as well as the Data Protection Act and the European General Data Protection Regulation.
Is there legislation explicitly referring to cancer prevention?	No	To support the Federal Minister of Health a National Screening Committee for Cancer, a body under Section 8(1) of the Federal Ministries Act 1986, was established at the beginning of 2021.
Is there legislation explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	No	There is no disease-specific eHealth legislation in Austria (neither for cancer nor for other diseases). eHealth legislation in AT, cancer care is an intramural health service and therefore a matter of the regions.

²⁰ [Nationales Krebsrahmenprogramm \(sozialministerium.at\)](https://www.sozialministerium.at)

²¹ https://www.sozialministerium.at/dam/jcr:d087b205-4ec4-4290-afaf-d60d34f69bb7/Telemedizin_Landschaft_final_BF.PDF

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
If yes, which of these legislation(s) do you consider most important in the context of eHealth and cancer care? And why?	N/A	No further information available.
If no, are there any reasons or barriers to the fact that there is no or only limited cancer specific eHealth legislation (i.e., discussions still ongoing, conflicting opinions or other).	N/A	No further information available.
What could be improved or would need to be done to improve these legislation for eHealth in cancer care in your country?		According to current legislation, the storage period for documents in ELGA is only 10 years - possibly too short for lifelong important information

5 CANCER SPECIFIC eHEALTH SOLUTIONS

Table 5 : Overview on cancer specific eHealth solutions in use – Austria

Area of application/ type of solutions	Login Websites	Apps	Webinars	Multi-disciplinary teleconferences (HCP-HPC)	Teleconsultation (HCP-patient)	Telemonitoring via devices	Other, please specify
Ecosystem	Yes, through ELGA currently providing for: discharge letters from public hospitals, laboratory results, radiology results, medication data	Yes, app stores for individuals	Yes, e.g. Cancer School of the CCC (Medical University Vienna)	-	Yes, teleconsultation possible. Reimbursement now included in the tariff agreements/fee schedules of the SHI funds (since the COVID-19 pandemic)	-	Yes, currently establishment of an eHealth application/ePatient Decree planned. Registers of lawyers and notaries will be connected; living wills will be set up on the application and forwarded to the electronic application. GDAs (intramural, extramural, also nursing homes if connected to ELGA) can then query via the ELGA infrastructure whether a living will exist and view it.
Prevention of Cancer	-	Yes, but only commercial apps like skin cancer screeners, risk calculators etc.	-	-	-	-	-
Treatment of Cancer	-	Yes, but only commercial apps like medication reminders and one from the Austrian Cancer Support (KrebsHILFE) in cooperation with CCC (Medical University Vienna)	-	Yes, tumorboards, e.g. tumor center in Upper Austria; Virtual Transborder Tumor Boards from CECOG: Tiger Tumor board, which covers all tumour entities and a Breast Cancer Tumor Board.	-	-	-

Area of application/ type of solutions	Login Websites	Apps	Webinars	Multi-disciplinary teleconferences (HCP-HPC)	Teleconsultation (HCP-patient)	Telemonitoring via devices	Other, please specify
'Living with cancer'	-	Yes, commercial apps and one from the Austrian Cancer Support (KrebsHILFE) in cooperation with CCC (Medical University Vienna)	-	-	-	Yes, e.g. eSMART (Electronic Symptom Management System Remote Technology) ²² ; INTERACCT e-health platform in development ²³ . Telemonitoring in paediatric oncology at the Tyrol Clinics. ²⁴	Yes, implementation of Survivorship Passport at CCRI currently ongoing
Rehabilitation from Cancer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Palliative Cancer Care	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

²² Patients with breast, bowel and blood cancer can use it to document their symptoms daily during and after chemotherapy using a specially developed self-assessment questionnaire. The symptoms are then assessed by a computer-based algorithm and healthcare professionals are notified if support is needed. Patients thus receive information and advice in real time while at home, without the need for a trip to the hospital.

²³ <https://interacct.cs.univie.ac.at/index.php?item=participants>; A multinational telemedical study in which MedUni Vienna is involved with a special focus on young HSCT (haematopoietic stem cell transplantation) patients is currently being designed and subsequently developed. ASyMS (Advanced Symptom Management System), a mobile phone-based remote monitoring system, is being used. The main task of INTERACCT is to improve the communication between patients and doctors, and thus to be able to recognise life-threatening complications more quickly. Compliance with therapy instructions and frequent description of the current state of health are essential for successful follow-up treatment.

²⁴ <https://www.i-med.ac.at/mypoint/news/764423.html#:~:text=An%20der%20Innsbrucker%20Univ.,aus%20Tirol%2C%20Vorarlberg%20und%20S%3BCdtirol>

Table 6 : Number of eHealth solutions available and in use – Austria

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
How many eHealth solutions (in the sense of medical devices and thus ‘authority approved/certified’) solutions are existing currently in your country in the context of cancer care/treatment?	Yes	Approved as medical device: eSMART . ²⁵ Two further examples on telemonitoring in paediatric oncology at the Tyrol Clinics ²⁶ and INTERACCT at St. Anna Kinderspital are still in the project or study stage.
Is there a website or other information on solutions that are recommended to the public for use (e.g. a selection of health apps that are recommended to cancer patients or in general)?	No	There is no official recommendation list for apps, not even specifically for cancer.
Can you give an estimation on how the split between private and public apps are available? Give an estimate percentage of public solutions.	Yes	Around 80% public, 20% private solutions.
How can providers and patients assess if the apps are reliable? Is there a certification or quality approval procedure in place? If yes, which kind of procedure?	No, not yet	No further information available.
How many Health Care Providers use such solutions? Which sector uses rather which types of solutions?	Yes	Medical university Vienna dept. Haematology, Children's Oncology Medical University Innsbruck, Children's Oncology St. Anna

Further information:

- In addition to discharge letters, pathological findings are particularly necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. They are not yet available in ELGA and are therefore missing for useful projects (such as PanCareSurPass). Also, outpatient clinic findings (e.g. oncology) should also be made available comprehensively.
- There is currently no binding timetable for the ePatient Decree project.

²⁵ <https://www.medmedia.at/ahop/die-erste-onkologische-ehealth-ambulanz/>

²⁶ <https://www.i-med.ac.at/mypoint/news/764423.html#:~:text=An%20der%20Innsbrucker%20Univ.,aus%20Tirol%2C%20Vorarlberg%20und%20S%2C3%BCdtirol>