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

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 by

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The pre-filled country factsheet was not reviewed by country experts.

The country factsheet includes chapters on:

1 definition

2 governance

3 strategies/policies

4 legislation

5 cancer specific eHealth solutions

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

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

1 DEFINITIONS

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

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 information available.
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 ».[2]	No information available.
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 ». [3] 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. »[4]	No information available.
telehealth	The WHO defines telehealth broader than telemedicine « as it includes computer-assisted telecommunications to support management, surveillance, literature, and access to medical knowledge. »[5]	No deviation from definition.[6]
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 information available.
teleconsultation	PAHO describes teleconsultation (also sometimes referred to as remote consultation or telehealth), as « interactions that happen between a clinician and a	No information available.

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

[2] 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)

[3] Events - Smart4Health

[4] Digital health EURO (who.int)

[5] Telehealth – DigitalHealthEurope

[6] https://www.ehealthireland.ie/ehealth-functions/community-health/telehealth-programme/ehealth-telehealth-programme-overview/

[7] Telemedicine – DigitalHealthEurope

Term	Definition	Deviation
	patient for the purpose of providing diagnostic or therapeutic advice through electronic means. »[8]	
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 information available.

2 GOVERNANCE

Table 2 : Overview on eHealth governance - Ireland

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a Ministry or State Secretariat explicitly in charge of eHealth/dHealth? If so, which Ministry ?	Yes	The Department of Health is responsible for eHealth initiatives and policies.
Does the Ministry who oversees health care also have a specific Department or Unit in charge of eHealth/dHealth	Yes, via HSE	The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the national health service provider in Ireland, responsible for the delivery of health and social care services to the Irish population. The HSE has also overall responsibility for eHealth initiatives and is the primary agency responsible for the development and implementation of eHealth services at a national level. Within HSE, eHealth Ireland is the unit who drives the implementation of Ireland's eHealth Strategy. [9]
Is there a national eHealth governance board?	Yes	The eHealth Telehealth Program is governed by the National Telehealth Steering Committee.[10]
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	The Health Service Executive (HSE) has overall responsibility for eHealth initiatives and is the primary agency responsible for the development and implementation of eHealth services at a national level. eHealth Ireland is the implementing division, and as such covers several eHealth solutions as well as IT infrastructure to support the move towards a digitized healthcare system.
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.	N/A	Residents in Ireland are entitled to a range of health services free of charge or at a reduced cost. Ireland also has many private healthcare options, which in some cases come with some user payment. [11]

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[8] https://www3.paho.org/ish/images/docs/covid-19-teleconsultations-en.pdf?ua=1

[9] https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/ireland-digital-health and https://www.ehealthireland.ie/ and https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/

[10] https://www.ehealthireland.ie/ehealth-functions/community-health/telehealth-programme/governance/

[11] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/3/acutehospitals/patientcare/outpatientservices/ and
https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health_system/entitlement_to_public_health_services.html and https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/ireland-healthcare

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Are dHealth / eHealth tools in the inpatient sector automatically covered in your benefits package or do you need to pay extra (e.g., for telehealth consultations or telereha) compared to standard treatments?	Yes	The HSE has implemented a telemedicine service called 'Telehealth' which allows healthcare professionals to provide remote consultations to patients via video conferencing or telephone. The HSE provides funding for this service, and it is available to eligible patients who are referred by their healthcare provider. Services such as local GP clinics may offer videoconference appointments or other telehealth services, and a partial refund for the cost of the appointment may be claimed back. Telehealth services are also provided privately by medical clinics, health insurers and non-insurance businesses. There are several private health insurers who offer telehealth services as part of their package to policy holders and the provision of this service is covered by the premium.[12]
Are there any comprehensive cancer centres focusing on eHealth or telehealth treatments? If yes, which ones and for which specific fields?	No	Ireland has two OECI-certified cancer centers – Trinity St. James Hospital and Beaumont Hospital. Neither of the centers have a strategic and independent focus on eHealth or telehealth. Beaumont Hospital Cancer Research Centre has a research group on 'Epidemiology and Pan-cancer' that investigates the psychological, social, physical, and economic issues associated cancer, beyond the diagnosis and treatment phases. However, it is not clear if that involves telehealth.[13] On a side note: eHealth Ireland has been a partner in developing the National Cancer Information System (NCIS), which is a patient centered ICT system. Teleconsultations are not a part of the program yet.

3 STRATEGIES/POLICIES

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

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	The eHealth Strategy for Ireland from the Department of Health was published in 2013 and last updated on 26 October 2020.[14]
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting the national eHealth strategy?	Several	In a section of the eHealth strategy[15] its development is described as the following: The strategy was developed through a process of: • Review of publications and literature from various academic and policy organizations. • Review of industrial literature and case studies including an assessment of methodologies.

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[12] https://www.ehealthireland.ie/ehealth-functions/community-health/telehealth-programme/ehealth-telehealth-programme-overview/ and https://www.dlapiperintelligence.com/telehealth/countries/index.html?t=04-costs-of-telehealth and https://www.imt.ie/news/gp-fees-remote-covid-19-consultations-agreed-20-03-2020/

[13] https://www.oeci.eu/Accreditation/Centres.aspx?type=CERTIFIED and https://www.imt.ie/features-opinion/advancing-cancer-care-through-integrated-digital-solutions-06-04-2022/ and https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/profinfo/medonc/projects/mocisproject.html and https://beaumontrcsicancercentre.ie/researchprogrammes/research-programmes/

[14] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6b7909-ehealth-strategy-for-ireland/

[15] https://assets.gov.ie/16174/092e7c62f97b472b83cdb6dfdcdfd5c7.pdf

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
		• An analysis of international eHealth strategies, deployment, and implementation experiences. • An analysis of the potential economic benefits of eHealth. From these sources a set of best-practice guidelines were developed. Input was obtained from specific domain specialists and the initial drafts and final strategy were subject to peer review and an iterative consultation process. It was published by the Department of Health and Health Service Executive.
Are there regional eHealth strategies? If so, can you indicate whether in all regions or only some? Can you provide some (exemplary) documents ?	N/A	No further information available.
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting such regional strategy/ies?	N/A	No further information available.
Are there strategy/ies explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	No	Cancer is not named in the eHealth strategy document.
If not, are there discussions ongoing to develop a national eHealth strategy?	N/A	No further information available.
Is there a National Cancer Plan? And does it refer to eHealth?	Yes	The national cancer strategy 2017-2026 is the National Cancer Plan for Irelend. In section 17.3. it includes information on 'eHealth and Cancer data.' The focus is on the development of infrastructure like EHR.[16]
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	There is no official statement on the EU's "Beating Cancer Plan." However, there have been several events with high level Irish stakeholders, which leverage the Beating Cancer Plan.[17]
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	The National Cancer Control Program relies on activity and key performance indicator data from the designated cancer centers to monitor and develop cancer services. No indicators related to eHealth were found.[18]
Are there any other cancer care specific eHealth initiatives, f.e. by other stakeholders than policy makers / public authorities?	Yes	A transnational initiative with a focus on eHealth and cancer has been established. The all-island eHealth Hub for Cancer is an all-island partnership on the island of Ireland that is building software and data platforms using best practice open science international health data standards to unlock and share health data, to grow clinical cancer research and improve cancer care.[19]

[16] https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a89819-national-cancer-strategy-2017-2026/ and https://www.ipaac.eu/res/file/outputs/wp10/national-cancer-control-plans-survey.pdf

[17] https://www.imt.ie/features-opinion/beating-cancer-a-roundtable-discussion-on-the-european-strategy-12-04-2023/ and https://www.iiea.com/podcast/europes-beating-cancer-plan-and-the-future-of-irish-cancer-care-and-policy and https://irishbusinessfocus.ie/health/eu-beating-cancer-plan-paves-way-for-irelands-labelling-of-alcohol/

[18] https://www.ehealthireland.ie/knowledge-information-plan/roadmap-for-delivering-the-new-capabilities/ and https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/pubs/intelligence/kpis.html and https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/pubs/reports/7-year-report.pdf

[19] https://ehealth4cancer.org/about.html

4 LEGISLATION

Table 4 : Overview on eHealth and cancer legislation - Ireland

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
How would you evaluate the current state of legislation of eHealth in your country in general?	N/A	No further information available.
Is there legislation on how to use telemedicine in general?	No	Telehealth is not specifically regulated in Ireland. However, there are several legislative and regulatory schemes which apply to the practice of virtual medicine, such as consumer and data protection by way of general application, and tailored legislation for medical professionals. An example of this is the Health Act 2004 and the Health Act 2007, which apply to medical services. Healthcare practitioners involved in telehealth will be subject to the applicable regulations and codes of practice for their profession and in some cases, they are specific to the use of telehealth. [20]
Is there legislation explicitly referring to cancer prevention?	Yes	There are preventive measures related to consumption of alcohol and tobacco. As a part of the implementation of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026, the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 was signed into to the law. There were also legislative measures to standardize retail packaging of tobacco. In addition, there are measures to develop a national skin cancer prevention plan and strengthening the cancer screening program.[21]
Is there legislation explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	No	No legislation explicitly referring to eHealth and cancer care was identified.
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?	N/A	No further information available.

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[20] https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2021-10/The-need-for-reform-of-the-health-information-system.pdf and https://www.dlapiperintelligence.com/telehealth/countries/index.html?c=IE&t=02-regulation-of-telehealth
[21] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/prevention/cancer-prevention.html and https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/30218/ and https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/30218/1/NCS-Implementation-Report-2018.pdf and https://assets.gov.ie/9315/6f1592a09583421baa87de3a7e9cb619.pdf

5 CANCER SPECIFIC EHEALTH SOLUTIONS

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

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	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prevention of Cancer	-	Yes, e.g., Breast Aware – BCI. Developed by Breast Cancer Ireland. It brings awareness to breast cancer.	Yes, e.g., HSE National Cancer Control Programme provides a free e-learning programme on 'Reducing Cancer Risk' for health and social care professionals. The programme consists of eleven short course modules on modifiable cancer risk reduction factors.[22]	-	-	-	-
Treatment of Cancer	-	Yes, e.g., West Cancer Center app providing information on cancer support services and resources available in Ireland.[23]	-	Yes, e.g., Virtual Molecular tumor board.[24]	-	-	Yes, e.g., Oncoassist app, a Cancer Clinical Trial app. Developed together with Cancer Trials Ireland[25]
'Living with cancer'	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rehabilitation from Cancer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Palliative Cancer Care	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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[22] https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/prevention/cancer-prevention.html https://www.hseland.ie/dash/Account/Login

[23] https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/west-cancer-center/id1594767901 and https://www.cancercarewest.ie/

[24] https://www.cancertrials.ie/molecular-tumor-board/

[25] https://www.cancertrials.ie/ and https://oncoassist.com/

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

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?	Unclear	All the clinical systems will need a certification similar to FDA/CE-certification. For example, diagnostic imaging equipment, EHRs etc. However, it is unclear if there are any certified eHealth solutions that are directed to towards the patient's use.
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	HSE has a reference to some mobile health apps. They are not used for cancer patients specifically. No official website with an overview of health apps was identified. A GPs website provides an overview of different mental health apps that are recommended. No selection criteria nor guidelines were presented.[26]
Can you give an estimation on how the split between private and public apps are available? Give an estimate percentage of public solutions.	N/A	No further information available.
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	There is no certification of apps in place. There is no organization like ORCHA in place.[27]
How many Health Care Providers use such solutions? Which sector uses which types of solutions?	N/A	No further information available.

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[26] https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/about-social-inclusion/translation-hub/mobile-health-apps/ and https://wellsense.ie/mental-health-apps/
[27] https://orchahealth.com/