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

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.

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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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1 DEFINITIONS

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

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]	The term "eHealth" as defined by WHO is not widely used in Latvia; in this context the term "digital health" is used. However, the name of the national digital health system and patient portal is E-veselība (E-health).
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]	Not a commonly used term in Latvia.
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 deviation from the EU definition, the recently approved Digital Health Strategy till 2029[5] defines digital health as following: tools and services that use ICT to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and health and lifestyle management. Digital health has the potential to introduce innovations, improve the quality and access to healthcare and implement preventive measures, as well as increase the overall efficiency of the health sector.
telehealth	The WHO defines telehealth broader than telemedicine « as it includes computer-assisted telecommunications to support management,	Not a commonly used term in Latvia.

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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] Digital Health Strategy till 2029 (in Latvian): https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ca84fcc7-3f49-4ac1-a75a-418b6da1f483

Term	Definition	Deviation
	surveillance, literature, and access to medical knowledge. »[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 deviation from the EU definition. The Medical Treatment Law[8] sets the following definition of telemedicine: Telemedicine - provision of remote health care service, by using information and communication technologies. It includes safe resending of medical data and information necessary for medical treatment in the form of text, sound, pictures or other. The recently approved Digital Health Strategy till 2029[9] defines telemedicine as following: the provision of health care services by using ICT in situations where the health care provider (one or more) and the patient (or another health care provider) are in two different locations. It involves the secure transmission of information and medical data exchange through text, sound, image or other forms for prevention, consultations, diagnosis and treatment. Telemedicine has several forms, such as telemonitoring, telemanipulation and teleconsultations between doctor and patient or between two or more health care specialists with the aim of consulting on medical issues.
teleconsultation	PAHO describes teleconsultation (also sometimes referred to as remote consultation or telehealth), as « interactions that happen between a clinician and a patient for the purpose of providing diagnostic or therapeutic advice through electronic means. »[10]	No definition for teleconsultation; understood as remote consultations as one form of telemedicine (see previous definition).
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 (20 21), p 5). »	No definition.

2 GOVERNANCE

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[6] Telehealth – DigitalHealthEurope

[7] Telemedicine – DigitalHealthEurope

[8] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/44108-medical-treatment-law

[9] Digital Health Strategy till 2029 (in Latvian): https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ca84fcc7-3f49-4ac1-a75a-418b6da1f483

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

Table 2 : Overview on eHealth governance - Latvia

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 Health has a Deputy Secretary of State for Digitization and Change Management[11]. In addition, issues of e-health are dealt with by the National Health Service.[12]
Does the Ministry who oversees health care also have a specific Department or Unit in charge of eHealth/dHealth?	No	The structure of the Ministry of Health does not include a unit dealing with e-health; mostly, the Cross-Sectoral Policy Division is responsible for issues related to digital health. There is a Deputy Secretary of State for Digitization and Change Management (see above).[13]
Is there a national eHealth governance board?	Yes	The Digital Health Council is a consultative institution, the purpose of which is to involve health sector specialists, state and local government institutions, information and communication technology experts and organizations representing patients' interests in the creation and development of an open digital health ecosystem oriented towards patients and other users in order to improve the quality of healthcare, accessibility, cost-effectiveness and convenience for those involved at all levels of healthcare.[14]
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?	No	The issues of e-health are dealt with by the National Health Service, which is also the controller of the national digital health information system and patient portal[15]
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	The eHealth portal is publicly funded, therefore there is no extra cost for the patient. Remote consultations are included in the list of publicly funded procedures.
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	On the eHealth portal[16], residents can currently: • view information about family doctor; • indicate contact information and contact person for communication; • determine the access of other E-health users to their medical information; • access the health data of their children or wards; • view and print e-prescriptions , e-disability sheets, etc. issued to a patient or dependents; • access e-referrals; • view data on Covid-19 vaccination. Since 2024 all health care institutions are obliged to register all vaccination data electronically and provide them in the national eHealth portal; • access visual diagnostic examination results (partially); • access laboratory examination results (partially). Since 2024 all health care institutions are obliged to provide laboratory results in the national eHealth portal, • apply for the European Health Insurance Card;

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[11] https://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/veselibas-ministrijas-vadiba

[12] https://www.eveseliba.gov.lv/

[13] https://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/veselibas-ministrijas-strukturshema

[14] https://www.vm.gov.lv/lv/digitalas-veselibas-padome

[15] https://www.eveseliba.gov.lv/

[16] https://eveseliba.gov.lv/

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
		• manage permits for the use of organs and tissues for transplantation, use of the body after death, dissection;
Are there any comprehensive cancer centres focussing on eHealth or telehealth treatments? If yes, which ones and for which specific fields?	No	Currently, there are no comprehensive cancer centres in Latvia, however there are oncological treatment centres

3 STRATEGIES/POLICIES

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

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	Digital Health Strategy till 2029[17] was approved on 15.08.2023.
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting the national eHealth strategy?	Yes	Pharmacy Association; Association "Resource Center for People with Mental Disorders "ZELDA""; Digital Health Association; HIV Patient Association; Association of Disabled People and Their Friends "Apeirons"; Latvian Association of Pharmacy Owners; Latvian Medical Association; Latvian Organization for Cooperation of People with Special Needs SUSTENTO; Latvian Pharmaceutical Association; Latvian General Practitioner Association; Latvian Young Doctors Association; Latvian Rural Family Physicians Association; Latvian Association of Large Hospitals; Latvian Nurses Association; Latvian Network of Patient Organizations; Latvian Association of Local Governments; Latvian Pensioners Federation; Latvian Rare Disease Alliance; Latvian Hospital Association; Latvian Association of Universities; Latvian Parents Organization "Moms and Dads"; Latvian Dental Association; Oncoalliance; Health Care Employers Association, Children's Clinical University Hospital, Ministry of Economics, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Welfare, Office of the President of Latvia, University of Latvia, National Health Service, World Health Organization, Cross-Sectoral Coordination Center, Riga City Council, Riga Stradins University, Riga Technical University, Center for Disease Prevention and Control, Health Inspectorate, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development.
Are there regional eHealth strategies? If so, can you indicate whether in all regions or only some? Can you provide some documents ?	No	Latvia has not identified a need to develop different strategies for regions.
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting such regional strategy/ies?	N/A	Latvia has no regional digital health strategies.

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[17] Digital Health Strategy till 2029 (in Latvian): https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ca84fcc7-3f49-4ac1-a75a-418b6da1f483

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Are there strategy/ies explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	Yes	There is no strategy particularly dedicated to eHealth cancer care, however Digital Health Strategy till 2029[18] includes two tasks related to digitalisation of cancer care: 1.2.2.1 Develop Oncology Patient Registry; 2.5. Ensure electronic processing of oncology patient treatment data in a structured format and data exchange between clinical university hospitals.
If not, are there discussions ongoing to develop a national eHealth strategy?	No	No such plans now, since Digital Health Strategy till 2029[19] was approved only recently.
Is there a National Cancer Plan? And does it refer to eHealth?	Yes	Health care services improvement plan in the field of oncology 2022-2024,[20] which includes the following direction of action: 5. Improvement of oncological disease data platform and health care infrastructure solutions.
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?	No	Health care services improvement plan in the field of oncology 2022-2024 is prepared in the line with EU „Beating Cancer Plan". Ministry of Health is tasked to prepare a report on the impact assessment and implementation of the current plan by November 1, 2025.
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 such indicators.
Are there any other cancer care specific eHealth initiatives, f.e. by other stakeholders than policy makers / public authorities?	No	The Ministry of Health does not collect such information .

4 LEGISLATION

Table 4 : Overview on eHealth and cancer legislation - Latvia

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
How would you evaluate the current state of legislation of eHealth in your country in general?	N/A	The Medical Treatment Law[21] sets the framework for the operation of the national eHealth system. The framework for data processing is determined by the Law on the Rights of Patients[22] and the Personal Data Processing Law[23]. The Rules on the unified electronic information system of the health sector[24] further describe the data exchange and data categories to be exchanged. The legislative framework matches the level current technological development of eHealth. However, the current legislation is about to be amended, supplemented, as Latvia is starting to implement the Digital Health Strategy till 2029.

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[18] Digital Health Strategy till 2029 (in Latvian): https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ca84fcc7-3f49-4ac1-a75a-418b6da1f483
[19] Digital Health Strategy till 2029 (in Latvian): https://tapportals.mk.gov.lv/legal_acts/ca84fcc7-3f49-4ac1-a75a-418b6da1f483
[20] http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/documents/7428
[21] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/44108-medical-treatment-law
[22] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/203008-law-on-the-rights-of-patients
[23] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/300099-personal-data-processing-law
[24] https://likumi.lv/ta/id/264943-noteikumi-par-vienoto-veselibas-nozares-elektronisko-informacijas-sistemu

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there legislation on how to use telemedicine in general?	Yes	The Medical Treatment Law states that health care is the complex of measures implemented by health care service providers, including telemedicine and activities with medicinal products and medical devices for ensuring, maintaining and renewal of a patient's health. Remote consultations are included in the list of state-funded procedures.
Is there legislation explicitly referring to cancer prevention?	No	Regulation of Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 555 (28.08.2018.) "Procedures for the Organisation of and Payment for Health Care Services"[25] determine the measures of state-organized cancer screening.
Is there legislation explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	No	No specific legislation on eHealth cancer care, however Rules on the unified electronic information system of the health sector[26] stipulate that electronic data is provided by medical institutions, in accordance with Annex 23 of these rules "Cancer patient card".
If yes, which of these legislation(s) do you consider most important in the context of eHealth and cancer care? And why?	N/A	There is no specific legislation.
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 this legislation for eHealth in cancer care in your country?	N/A	More work must be done to further develop general eHealth and telemedicine solutions. This would pave the way for cancer specific solutions.

5 CANCER SPECIFIC EHEALTH SOLUTIONS

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

Area of application/ type of solutions	Login Websites	Apps	Webinars	Multi-disciplinary teleconferences (HCP-HPC)	Teleconsultation (HCP-patient)	Telemonitoring via devices
Ecosystem	-	-	-	-	-	-
Prevention of Cancer	-	-	-		Yes	-
Treatment of Cancer	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	-
'Living with cancer'	https://onkoalianse.lv/ https://www.dzivibaskoks.lv/	-	-		Yes	-
Rehabilitation from Cancer	-	-	-	Yes	-	-
Palliative Cancer Care	-	-	-	Yes	Yes	-

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[25] https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/301399-procedures-for-the-organisation-of-and-payment-for-health-care-services

[26] https://likumi.lv/ta/id/264943-noteikumi-par-vienoto-veselibas-nozares-elektronisko-informacijas-sistemu

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

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?	N/A	The Ministry of Health does not collect such information.
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	No additional information available.
Can you give an estimation on how the split between private and public apps are available? Give an estimate percentage of public solutions.	No	The Ministry of Health does not collect such information.
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 or quality approval procedure in place.
How many Health Care Providers use such solutions? Which sector uses rather which types of solutions?	N/A	The Ministry of Health does not collect such information.