

## POLICY MAPPING ON eHEALTH POLICIES AND INITIATIVES (INCLUDING ON CANCER CARE) IN **MALTA**

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 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](mailto:ecan@goeg.at).

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## 1 DEFINITIONS

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

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. » <sup>1</sup>	No deviation from definition.
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 ». <sup>2</sup>	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 ». <sup>3</sup> 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. » <sup>4</sup>	The abbreviation ‘dHealth’ is unusual and not used by the Ministry for Health. No deviation from the EU and WHO definitions of ‘digital health’.
telehealth	The WHO defines telehealth broader than telemedicine « as it includes computer-assisted telecommunications to support management, surveillance, literature, and access to medical knowledge. » <sup>5</sup>	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	No deviation from definition.

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

<sup>2</sup> 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/> *websites*. In [mHealth Assessment: Conceptualization of a Global Framework - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Events - Smart4Health](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Digital health EURO \(who.int\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Telehealth – DigitalHealthEurope](#)

Term	Definition	Deviation
	and information, through text, sound, images, or other forms needed for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up of patients. » <sup>6</sup>	
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. » <sup>7</sup>	No deviation from 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 <a href="https://www.iso.org/standard/78182.html">https://www.iso.org/standard/78182.html</a> (2021), p 5). »	No deviation from definition.

## 2 GOVERNANCE

Table 2 : Overview on eHealth governance - Malta

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a Ministry or State Secretariat explicitly in charge of eHealth/dHealth? If so, which Ministry ?	Yes	The Ministry for Health and Active Ageing (MHA) is responsible for eHealth/digital health. <sup>8</sup>
Does the Ministry who oversees health care also have a specific Department or Unit in charge of eHealth/dHealth ?	Yes	Several units within the Ministry deal with eHealth/digital health related topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Management Unit (IMU); eHealth Strategy and Projects section within the Information Management Unit<sup>9</sup></li> <li>• Department of Healthcare Services – Health Informatics<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• Directorate for Health Information and Research<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>
Is there a national eHealth governance board?	Yes	There is a Digital Health Steering Committee (DigiComm), established by the Ministry for Health in 2022.
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	There is no specific institution apart from the Ministry for Health in charge of eHealth/digital health matters. Several bodies working in the fields of health and data protection are important for the implementation and use of electronic health records. Rather, several bodies working in the fields of health or data protection are relevant. <i>‘These include the Ministry for Health, in particular its Information Management Unit, the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) and the Information and Data Protection Commissioner’.</i> <sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> [Telemedicine – DigitalHealthEurope](#)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www3.paho.org/ish/images/docs/covid-19-teleconsultations-en.pdf?ua=1>

<sup>8</sup> <https://health.gov.mt/ministry/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Information\\_Management\\_Unit\\_Freedom\\_of\\_Information.pdf](https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Information_Management_Unit_Freedom_of_Information.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://health.gov.mt/public-body/health-informatics/>

<sup>11</sup> [Data Protection Policy.pdf \(gov.mt\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Interim Report prepared by Milieu Ltd for the European Parliament under Service Contract IP/C/PETI/IC/2008-042 \(europa.eu\)](#)

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
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, infrastructure	National eHealth/digital health services / tools including the myHealth portal are funded by taxpayers and managed by the Maltese government (the Ministry for Health). <sup>13</sup> <i>'Through the myHealth record system patients and the physicians they choose can access key parts of personal health records through any computer connected to the Internet. The patients must have a working Government electronic identity (e-ID) for their data to be available.'</i> <sup>14</sup>
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, infrastructure	
Are there any comprehensive cancer centres focussing on eHealth or telehealth treatments? If yes, which ones and for which specific fields?	Yes	<p>The National Cancer Platform (NCP)<sup>15</sup> supports new technologies, research, and innovation. A new <b>Knowledge Centre on Cancer</b> will be launched to help coordinate scientific and technical cancer-related initiatives at EU level. A <b>European Cancer Imaging Initiative</b> will be set up to support the development of new computer-aided tools to improve personalised medicine and innovative solutions. A particular focus will be paid to children, through the launch of the <b>'Helping Children with Cancer Initiative'</b> to ensure that children have access to rapid and optimal detection, diagnosis, treatment, and care. Finally, to identify trends, disparities and inequalities between Member States and regions, a <b>Cancer Inequalities Registry</b> will be established in 2021.</p> <p>The Sir Anthony Mamo Oncology Centre (SAMOC) which is the only Oncology Centre in Malta is developing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mosaik which is the main Oncology system which primarily serves as a Radiotherapy record and verify system. It is a patient management system helps to efficiently manage all aspects of Radiation and Medical Oncology throughout the patient pathway in SAMOC. Various processes and documentation from the patient file are being digitised and incorporated within the Mosaik system to include patient notes, referrals, scanned and system generated documents, assessments, user tasks and notifications, automated workflows, schedules. The system also has several interfaces with MDH systems to include CPAS, Sofia, Patient Dashboard. Future projects will further expand on these interfaces to improve communication and data sharing.</li> <li>2. Fast-Track System. This is a system that has been developed with all stakeholders including consultants and GPs. Individual e-forms have been created for different types of cancers. GPs who enrol to use this system can send urgent e-referrals that include signs and symptoms for that specific suspected cancer and may also attach investigation results while having the ability to follow the patient's progress. The Fast-Track</li> </ol>

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.gov.mt/en/Life Events/Pages/Healthy Living/Healthcare-entitlement.aspx](https://www.gov.mt/en/Life%20Events/Pages/Healthy%20Living/Healthcare-entitlement.aspx)

<sup>14</sup> [Interim Report prepared by Milieu Ltd for the European Parliament under Service Contract IP/C/PETI/IC/2008-042 \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> [National Cancer Platform](#)

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
		<p>System coordinators process the received e-referrals evaluate them and process them to get assist in getting timely dates for 1st hospital Consultations or 1st diagnostic tests to diagnosis and treatment.</p> <p>3. Nurse Navigator data base: This is documentation systems that includes all actions related to care given by Nurse Navigators. It also includes data of dates of e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> investigatin,1<sup>st</sup> treatment and other data of the patient journey. Getting precise timeframes however remains a challenge as in Malta we have private practice that may disrupt the acquisition of e.g., precise Day 0. It is planned that this system will also be integrated within the MDH Dashboard.</p> <p>The long-term ideal plan would be that all systems of Mosaik, MDH Dashboard and Nurse Navigator database would be communicating with each other and be fully integrated.</p>

### 3 STRATEGIES/POLICIES

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

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	There is an unpublished national ‘Digital Health Strategy for Malta 2018-21’ and a draft ‘Digital Health and Health Data Strategy 2030’ that is close to finalisation. The National Health System Strategies (2014-2020 and 2023-2030) include and mention eHealth aims as well as digital health projects. In addition ‘Malta was one of the first EU countries to successfully implement cross-border eHealth services, in 2019.’ <sup>16</sup>
If yes, which stakeholder groups have been included in drafting the national eHealth strategy?	Various	Digital health professionals, public health professionals, health service managers, University of Malta, other digital health stakeholders.
Are there regional eHealth strategies? If so, can you indicate whether in all regions or only some? Can you provide some documents ?	Not applicable	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?	Yes	<i>‘The National Health Systems Strategy adopted in 2014 highlights the importance of further developing the use of ICT in the Maltese health system.’</i> <sup>17</sup> The National Cancer Plan (page 61) also highlights this objective.
If not, are there discussions ongoing to develop a national eHealth strategy?	Yes	A Digital Health and Health Data Strategy 2030 is in its final stages of development and is expected to be finalised in Q1 2024. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2023 - 2030 Investing Successfully for a Healthy Future EN.pdf \(gov.mt\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> Azzopardi-Muscat N, Buttigieg S, Calleja N, Merkur S (2017). Malta: Health system review. Health Systems in Transition, 2017; 19(1):1–137. HiTs and HiT summaries are available on the Observatory’s website (<http://www.healthobservatory.eu>)

<sup>18</sup> [A National Health Systems Strategy for Malta 2023 - 2030 Investing Successfully for a Healthy Future EN.pdf \(gov.mt\)](#)

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
Is there a National Cancer Plan? And does it refer to eHealth?	Yes	The 2017 (to 2021) National Cancer Plan was and is still the National Cancer Plan for Malta. <sup>19</sup>
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	The 2017 National Cancer Plan outlined three broad priorities for progress in cancer care: reducing cancer incidence, improving cancer survival, and improving cancer patients’ experience and quality of life. Reducing incidence relies heavily on preventive strategies such as promoting healthy lifestyle adoption, increasing health literacy of citizens and clinicians alike to improve the likelihood of early diagnosis, and more rigorous screening. Improvements to survival rates and the patient experience involve strengthening care integration, coordination, and patient rehabilitation. The National Cancer Plan aligns with the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, which sets out a new EU approach to tackling the entire disease pathway. <sup>20</sup>
Are there any indicators in eHealth policy or national programmes on cancer care measuring the progress of the use of eHealth in cancer care?	Yes	Monitoring carried out by Information Management Unit and Digital Health Steering Committee.
Are there any other cancer care specific eHealth initiatives, f.e. by other stakeholders than policy makers / public authorities?	Yes	Primary HealthCare has set up two new telemedicine support centres which are being run 24/7 from Monday to Sunday. This service is run by a team of general practitioners (GP) and GP trainees. <sup>21</sup> Cancer Care spans the whole patient pathway from screening or initial referral for a symptom to cancer diagnosis to treatment followed by survivorship, palliative care, or end-of-life care and therefore, this requires continuous improvements in patients’ experiences and outcomes across the cancer journey. Cancer Care Pathways are fast tracking services so that referrals of suspected cancer sent by General Practitioners are fast-tracked to a timely appointment for their first Consultation at hospital. <sup>22</sup> There is a fast-track electronic referral ticket system for the following types of cancers: FT Colorectal, FT Lung, FT Breast, FT Haematology, FT Prostate, FT Upper GI, FT Head and Neck, FT Skin.

**Further information:**

Importance of integrating different systems of IT in the hospitals of Malta and Gozo as well as in community care, to enhance MDT communication and working on developing further telemedicine are emphasized.

<sup>19</sup> [National Cancer Plan 2017-2021](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Country Cancer Profile 2023](#)

<sup>21</sup> <https://health.gov.mt/phc/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://health.gov.mt/public-body/cancer-care-pathways/>

## 4 LEGISLATION

Table 4 : Overview on eHealth and cancer legislation - Malta

Question	Answer	Comments/Experience
How would you evaluate the current state of legislation of eHealth in your country in general?		There is no specific digital health legislation currently in place. Legislation has been drafted to provide a legal basis for the full operation of the National Electronic Health Records platform. The (yet unpublished) Digital Health and Health Data Strategy 2030 foresees the drafting of a Digital Health Act to regulate specific aspects of digital health services such as telemedicine.
Is there legislation on how to use telemedicine in general?	No	The processing of personal health data in digital health systems in the Ministry for Health is carried out in compliance with the provisions of the EU General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act (Chapter 586 of the Laws of Malta). <i>'Malta has set up two eHealth portals, one providing more general information (called "eHealth") and one specific for online access to health records (called 'myHealth'). There is <b>currently no comprehensive eGovernment or eHealth legislation in place.</b> Provisions in general legal instruments such as the Health Act and Data Protection Act and several documents referring to Malta's eHealth strategy, support electronic health record (EHR) systems.'</i> <sup>23</sup>
Is there legislation explicitly referring to cancer prevention?	N/A	No further information available.
Is there legislation explicitly referring to / including eHealth cancer care?	No	No further information available.
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).	No	No particular reasons identified.
What could be improved or would need to be done to improve this legislation for eHealth in cancer care in your country?		If the need for specific legislation arises, there is no legal or policy impediment.

<sup>23</sup> [Interim Report prepared by Milieu Ltd for the European Parliament under Service Contract IP/C/PETI/IC/2008-042 \(europa.eu\)](#)

## 5 CANCER SPECIFIC eHEALTH SOLUTIONS

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

Area of application/ type of solutions	Login Websites	Apps	Webinars	Multi-disciplinary teleconferences (HCP-HPC)	Tele- consultation (HCP-patient)	Tele- monitoring via devices	Other, please specify
<b>Ecosystem</b>	Yes, <a href="#">myHealth portal</a> <sup>24</sup> <a href="#">The Malta National Cancer Registry</a>	Yes, e.g., <a href="#">myrisk.eu</a> (web app for breast cancer detection)	-	Yes, e.g., <a href="#">Annual International Multi-Disciplinary Conference</a>	Yes, e.g., <a href="#">Telemedicine support centres</a> <sup>25</sup>	Yes, e.g., <a href="#">Connected Care</a> <sup>26</sup>	-
<b>Prevention of Cancer</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Treatment of Cancer</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>'Living with cancer'</b>	-	-	-	-	Yes	-	-
<b>Rehabilitation from Cancer</b>	-	-	-	-	Yes	-	Yes, e.g., <a href="#">Electronic referral form</a>
<b>Palliative Cancer Care</b>	-	-	-	-	Yes	-	

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

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	No further information available.
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	In Malta, there are no public or commercial websites or other resources that are recommended to cancer patients or the general population. Information leaflets are however publicly available online. <sup>27</sup>
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?	N/A	No further information available.
How many Health Care Providers use such solutions? Which sector uses rather which types of solutions?	N/A	No further information available.

<sup>24</sup> An interactive website allowing Maltese citizens and residents to view a selection of their electronic health records, identifying, and authenticating themselves by means of Maltese e-ID. The portal provides to patients to view their case summaries; upcoming appointments; details of past episodes; Pharmacy of your Choice (POYC) scheme entitlement, prescriptions, and dispensing records; vaccination records; laboratory results; medical images; and medical imaging reports. Patients can link with doctors to give the doctors access to their data through the myHealth portal.

<sup>25</sup> Daily consultations during which the doctors give medical advice, reassurance for patient symptomatology, general guidance on quarantine protocols, and address all health needs of patient contacts whilst guiding patients to access all services currently available.

<sup>26</sup> Services range from "safe at home" devices to GPS trackers, mobile phones, and remote monitoring of the vital signs.

<sup>27</sup> <https://healthservices.gov.mt/en/SAMOC/Pages/SAMOC-TICC-Publications.aspx>