

Benchmarking eHealth in the European Union: Observations Relating to Security and Data Protection

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Introduction and background: eHealth is of increasing importance to the European Union. Surveying eHealth use is recognised to be of crucial importance [1]. During 2010, European acute hospitals were questioned about their use of a wide variety of eHealth applications in a benchmarking study commissioned by the European Commission [1]. Hospitals in the EU27 as well as Croatia, Iceland, and Norway were covered by the survey, and its initial findings were published in mid-2011. General findings: Some 1200 hospital chief information officers and medical directors were interviewed. Among the general findings are insights into: the availability of electronic medical applications (gathered from chief information officers), and ICT use, investment priorities, and barriers to implementation including during implementation (from medical directors). In more detail, the survey looked at the way in which the current state of electronic data exchange, and data protection and security is handled in Europe's hospitals. Focus on security and data protection: 2012 was a year of growing preoccupation with regard to ICT-based critical infrastructures [2], and during which the European Union declared its intention to reform its data protection legislation. As a result, this paper re-examines the original survey findings to focus on: security and data protection, enterprise archive strategies, long-term data storage, data recovery, and the security and privacy of electronic patient medical data. The key strengths of the hospital systems in these areas, their gaps, and the characteristics of hospitals in a number of example Member States are explored. Future considerations for European hospitals in relation to security and data protection are highlighted. References [1] European Commission (2011). eHealth Benchmarking III. SMART 2009/0022. Final Report. Deloitte & Ipsos Belgium. 13th April 2011. Brussels [2] M.D. Hercheui, D. Whitehouse, W.J. McIver Jnr. & J. Phalamohlaka (editors). (2012). ICT Critical Infrastructures and Society. HCC10 2012. IFIP AICT 386. IFIP International Federation for Information Processing. Springer-Verlag: Heidelberg and Berlin

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