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REPORT

Report of the European Health Tech Summit

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The first-ever "European Health Tech Summit", hosted by MEP Dr. Stelios Kympouropoulos, EPP Coordinator in the Special Committee for Covid-19 (COVI) and EPP Vice-Coordinator in the Committee for Public Health (SANT), was successfully completed, in the European Parliament, from March 21st to March 23rd. The summit was composed of 4 multi-stakeholders panel discussions, all dedicated to the role of technology in health. Distinguished representatives of the public and private sector, technical experts, as well as academia, offered their unique perspectives and constructed a fruitful dialogue.

The Summit's inaugural panel on **"Pandemic Management and Preparedness - Telemedicine and the Role of Innovative Technologies in Securing a Safer Future"** focused on the lessons learned from the pandemic, the best practices used telemedicine and the evolution of digital health, the challenges and opportunities, as well as future prospects.

In the second panel, co-hosted by MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos and MEP Dennis Radtke on **"Future-proofing health professionals' skills for the digital transition"**, panellists and MEPs touched upon the necessity of creating a life-long learning culture and the challenges EU faces, as a leader of innovation in medical devices, towards providing quality upskilling and reskilling opportunities for health care workers.

The "European Health Tech Summit" second day continued on Wednesday, 22nd of March, with a four hours panel discussion including **showcases of artificial intelligence and extended reality technologies in the health sector**, co-hosted by MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos and MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho. Well-renowned speakers answered the question of how technology can help detect or tackle a disease.

On the third and last day of the "European Health Tech Summit", experts, patient and industry representatives and health care professionals had the opportunity to shed light on the benefits of health data from the real world, as part of the panel, titled: **"Better Decision-Making for Better Outcomes: a Call to Action on Harnessing the Power of Real-World Evidence"**. MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos in his welcome speech noted that the use of Real-World Evidence can help us make more informed decisions about the safety and effectiveness of treatments and invited to support a Call to Action on better use of RWE in policy and regulatory decision-making. MEP Tomislav Sokol, as the Rapporteur on the file of the European Health Data Space gave a detailed account of the undergoing report. The panellists emphasised the crucial role World-Evidence plays in supporting better health outcomes in the field of influenza, rare diseases and oncology.

The **first panel**, co-organised by the European Alliance of Medical and Biological Engineering & Science (EAMBES) focused on innovation and technology as the path to a safer and healthier future. One of the key topics discussed was telemedicine, which was presented as an innovative tool for pandemic response and a way to overcome geographical and social barriers to accessing health services. The speakers discussed the steep increase in telemedicine from 2019 to 2022 and the potential it has to change healthcare delivery through AI, developing clinical protocols, legal frameworks, and change management. Several case studies were presented, including the use of telemedicine in the Cyclades in Greece and the oral health programs aiming to improve access to oral healthcare through e-health and teledentistry.

During the panel, the importance of widespread cooperation in pandemic management was, also, highlighted. The Quintuple Helix Innovation Model was presented. This model involves collaboration between academia, the economy, media/culture, the natural environment, and politics. The speakers referred to the PandeVITA platform, which seeks to understand legal and ethical boundaries, user needs, and vulnerabilities in pandemic times. The platform features three case studies, including information and knowledge by helix, macroeconomic indicators, and topical, geospatial, and emotional features.

Another topic discussed was the impact of COVID-19 on the medical technology sector, which highlighted the transition to online consultation and remote monitoring through digital platforms. A representative of the

European Commission (DG SANTE) pointed out the need for European strategic autonomy in medical devices and the importance of implementing EU legislation, including EU 2017/745 and EU 2017/746, which aim to improve transparency and enhance economic operators.

Finally, the panel addressed the need for global pandemic management, through the access to medical devices, including In Vitro Diagnostics (IVDs). The speakers highlighted the significance of cooperation and drawing lessons from past experiences to attain operational preparedness and all-encompassing and long-lasting management. Overall, the conference provided valuable perspectives on the difficulties and prospects arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and underlined the role of innovation and technology in handling pandemics and securing a safer and healthier future for everyone.

Subsequently, on Tuesday afternoon, MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos and MEP Dennis Radtke, as co-hosts, took the lead for the **second panel** into a productive discussion under the topic "Future-proofing health professionals' skills for the digital transition".

MEP Dennis Radtke, as EPP Coordinator in the Committee on Employment and Social Rights, underscored the importance of a mutual European Strategy defining European Standards for patients' care on the one hand and the health workers' working conditions on the other. He also highlighted the challenges Member States are facing. There is severe lack of healthcare professionals in EU, which is creating problematic working conditions along with the increasing rate of population aging and thus caregivers aging. Further investments in EU Member States' healthcare systems and equipping health workers with the right skills for the green and digital transition are a necessity. MEP Kympouropoulos underlined that providing the right skills to health workers is a key challenge in order to enable the EU to fully harness the potential of technology in healthcare, while emphasising the need for a truly multistakeholder approach and adequate national and European funding.

One of the main topics that the speakers touched upon, was the use (and barriers) of skills intelligence in health workforce policymaking, presenting initiatives and experience from Greece. The COVID-19 pandemic was brought into the spotlight, from the aspect of public and economic policy. It was said that the pandemic gave the opportunity to experts to comprehend the great importance of a highly skilled workforce that can adapt rapidly to changes in circumstances and environments. The world is changing and it is changing fast. Digital and green transition of the economy can be achieved with investments in human capital by financing tools targeted to upskilling and reskilling.

The audience had the chance to learn about BeWell and EUVECA, two multi-stakeholders projects at EU level directly from their representatives. They made special reference to the cornerstones of their actions; all centred in the European Year of Skills 2023. They talked about their goals, their expertise and the 21st century tendencies that need to be followed. Furthermore, experts demonstrated showcases of advanced training and use of innovative technologies. The importance of advanced training in the use of innovative health care technologies lies at the outset ensuring patients' safety.

Additionally, the value of advanced training lies in the improvement of healthcare quality, in the enhancement of patient experience by a more patient-centred and personalised healthcare system, and by all means in advancing healthcare innovation by developing better and specialised tools and techniques.

The discussion continued on Wednesday, 22nd of March, in the second day and the **third panel** of "European Health Tech Summit" with a variety of interesting views. MEP Stelios Kympouropoulos and MEP Maria da Graça Carvalho confirmed the prominent role and significance of digital innovation in the health sector. MEP Carvalho highlighted that health technology offers new avenues for disease prevention and treatment. Thus, it requires continuing investments in research and development at the national, regional and EU levels. Regarding the latter, initiatives like Horizon Europe are key. Representatives from the Commission marked that digital tools are important for modernizing healthcare provision in Europe and making it more efficient. As far as digital technologies are concerned, they allow for the modernization of science, supported by data analytics. During the discussion it was highlighted, that the European Union prioritizes digital transformation in healthcare through various funding initiatives (e.g. Horizon Europe, European Innovation Council and the European Research Council.), as well as legislative proposals including the European Health Data Space Regulation. One of the main subjects speakers had to deal with, was the use (and barriers) of skills intelligence in health workforce policymaking, presenting initiatives and experience from Greece. The COVID-19 pandemic was brought into spotlight, from the aspect of public and economic policy.

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Panellists presented the initiatives and projects taking place in the area of medical developments in digital devices

and the use of artificial intelligence algorithms. Following, holographic, virtual and augmented reality technologies were brought into the forefront. The next point to consider, and part of Wednesday's agenda is the assistive technologies and vision. According to the speakers, Artificial Intelligence proves to be useful in the early detection of visual impairments in children, which is crucial in preventing economic and social burdens in their future lives. Furthermore, AI provides an affordable and accessible solution to a shortage of paediatric ophthalmologists. Also, AI can assist visually impaired persons and complement the work of the dog guide, in a more economically affordable and easier accessible solution, enhancing the quality of life and independence of the disabled person.

As a part of the discussion on the topic of "Showcases of innovative technologies and medical applications". Academia shared their knowledge and experience reassuring that AI does not and should not replace experts. Undoubtedly, it can assist them in making their work more efficient and precise. AI in health can have a far-reaching impact to medicine and efficiency of healthcare systems, mainly in the automation of big data tasks.

In the framework of discussing AI, reference was made to holomedicine. Holomedicine is the use of augmented, mixed and virtual reality in order to improve the delivery and practice of medicine. Healthcare experts underlined that the impact of augmented and virtual reality in healthcare in areas such as cardiac surgery and dental health has seen increased usage in the past few years. The audience, joining with physical presence, had the opportunity to be introduced to such innovative medical technologies through interactive demonstration and testing.

Technology is the key to addressing the most pressing healthcare challenges, promoting well-being, and ensuring health. Innovation and digital technologies are crucial in order to achieve these goals. In that panel distinguished experts proved that extended reality technologies can enable treatment from one side of the world to another or even in space. Panellists agreed that technology advances radically but stronger collaboration with stakeholders aims to drive sustainable innovation in healthcare, bring cutting-edge technologies to the healthcare sector, and drive positive impact on people's lives.

The **last event** of the series of European Health Tech Summit, Better Decision-Making for Better Outcomes: Harnessing the Power of RWE, hosted by MEP Kympouropoulos with the support of CSL Seqirus focused on the importance of using Real-World Evidence (RWE) in healthcare. The panel also coincided with the launch of a Call-to-Action asking for more systematic use of RWE to deepen understanding of medicines (including vaccines), enhance policy decisions and facilitate the access of EU citizens to effective medicines.

MEP Tomislav Sokol, the EPP Raporteur on EHDS, expressed his aim to finalize negotiations on the EP report by the end of the year, including the opt-out mechanism proposed in his draft report.

The implementation of the opt-out mechanism is crucial for enabling patients to have control over their data and privacy rights. This will ensure that patients are fully aware of how their data will be used for research purposes.

MEP Kympouropoulos highlighted that RWE can be particularly useful in the area of rare diseases. Manufacturers face a challenge in the research and development of orphan drugs, as it is challenging to find patients to participate in clinical trials. RWE is beneficial for monitoring the performance of a product in the real world, especially for patients with rare diseases. Clinician access to RWE in prescribing treatments to patients with rare diseases will lead to better outcomes, timely treatment, and more efficient healthcare systems.

During the panel discussion, speakers emphasised that RWE is particularly important for influenza vaccines, noting that a holistic understanding of the effectiveness, impact, and safety of flu vaccines requires a balanced approach to considering the full evidence base of Randomised Control Trials (RCTs) and RWE. RWE helps measure the effectiveness of vaccines and how they reduce the healthcare and economic burden of the disease over longer time periods. This longitudinal view is critical given how often the circulating influenza virus strains and four vaccine strains change. The harmonization of RWE usage is necessary, especially for governments to allocate resources and assess the efficacy of their national vaccination strategies as well as make policy decisions.

In the last part of the panel, speakers stressed that RWE can further play a fundamental role in the development of personalized cancer care and support regulatory approval for life-saving treatments and clinical decision-making. The results from RWE are an essential complement to results from Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs), often providing information that cannot be obtained through RCTs.

The speakers concluded that there needs to be a stronger common action to unlock the real potential of RWE. The European Health Data Space (EHDS), presents a unique opportunity to make health data available to researchers, policymakers, and developers, leading to innovation, cost-savings, and healthier European citizens.

To know more about Speakers, click here: https://resource-cms.springernature.com/springer-cms/rest/v1/content/25393150/data/v1.

Call to Action:

https://kympouropoulos.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Call-to-Action-RWE.pdf.

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