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Draft Minutes of the Regional Webinar “European mHealth Hub Support – share experience with Western Balkan Economies on digital solutions developed by the Hub”

28th September 2020, Online Webinar

The regional webinar was convened by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), European Innovation and Knowledge mHealth Hub and South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) with the aim to introduce and support Digital Connectivity in health-related aspects, discuss on needs in digitalization of e-services and use of digital tools and apps to facilitate access to health services. The webinar gathered together representatives from different line ministries from the Western Balkan (WB) region, European Commission (EC), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Andalusian Regional Ministry of Health, Spain (SSPA, by its acronym in Spanish).

The regional webinar was welcomed and addressed by Ms. Handjiska-Trendafilova from Regional Cooperation Council, Ms. Mira Jovanovski-Dasic from SEEHN, Mr. Hamilton from World Health Organization and Mr. Ponder from ITU, highlighting the importance of e-services in the health sector, calling on the need for regional actions on the subject, reiterating the readiness of their respective organizations to support Western Balkans in this regard, stressing the importance of e-services in health sector in particular after the COVID-19 outbreak, etc.

The webinar continued with the second session on overview of the implementation European mHealth hub, with introduction of Ms. Birgit Morlion, from EC. Ms. Morlion presented how this mHealth project started in 2017, together with ITU, WHO and, since 2019, SSPA (Andalusian Regional Ministry of Health in Spain) as leading partners, as a result of combining technological support to health care delivery and health in care services on one side, and implementing, upscaling and using it in health strategy and in health delivery on other side. The aim of the project is to set up one stop shop for mHealth, to provide implementation support and provide guidance to integrate digital health in the health systems. Ms. Morlion pointed out that it is very important to have knowledge sharing and learn from each other, and that cross-border aspects are important as well. She offered support in further digitalization of health systems and deploy mobile health services on national and European level.

The session continued with the presentation of the European mHealth Hub on the project overview, its implementation in terms of framework, management, content technology, evaluation and operationalization of the implementation of the mHealth program.

SSPA from the mHealth Hub Team presented a short overview of the implementation of the project that is funded by EC. The team is continuously working on developing several toolkits (mHealth Assessment Frameworks; national implementation of specific mHealth intervention focused on diabetes; integration of mHealth into health systems), contributing to the policy framework, services portfolio on mHealth, and ethics on mHealth. They informed about the launch of a COVID-19 apps repository, with currently around 80 apps.

ITU representatives presented the key messages about the European mHealth Hub, which are, among others, to respond to increased demands from countries on how to implement and scale digital health in their countries, how to make use of integrated set of knowledge tools to provide guidance to countries, facilitate sharing of experiences between European countries and the learning process from these experiences. They emphasized the impact that digitalization can have on national digital health system, and the importance of institutionalization of knowledge and expertise on digital health.

Further, WHO representatives explained in detail the opportunities for economies engagement with European mHealth Hub, through three types of levels/options, pointing out that there is a number of toolkits that can be shared with the region. For each option, that contains several actions, it has been provided additional explanations on implementation and scaling up of disease specific national mHealth programs as outlined in Hub toolkits, piloting European mHealth Hub knowledge tools (assessment frameworks, implementation toolkits, policy guidance), provide input and feedback to ensure guidance is appropriate and covering country's needs, co-creation of knowledge tools, sharing lessons learned from existing national mHealth programs, with conclusions as next steps.

Ms. Mirela Strandzheva, from National Center of Public Health and Analyses from Republic of Bulgaria, presented their mHealth pilot project "Using mHealth to empower patients to take control of their diabetes-the experience of Republic of Bulgaria" through the use of mHealth technologies. The Pilot project covers three aspects, diabetes self-management, mHealth technology and designed within the framework for the implementation of actions. The aim is to promote self-management and empowerment for patients with diabetes via momentary and daily assessments, with the help of a mobile application as a mean towards sustainable and scalable care.

Representatives from the Ministry of Health from Serbia, informed on current developments in the digital sphere related to health. They are using an official website of the ministry for the activities related to COVID-19, while the new website is under construction. They created an algorithm for handling the person who suspect to have the virus symptoms, and well as information on obligation of medical doctor on primary health care centers related to COVID-19 surveillance, and also ensures direct communication with the chosen doctor. Mobile application is under construction, and will have similar function as the website. They expect help and support on regulation issues, on policy level and privacy, as well as on law enforcement on different levels.

Mr. Stevan Ljumovic, representative from the Ministry of Health from Montenegro, briefly presented the use of ICT in the field of health. He informed that numbers of projects have been started and that in the last few years they have undertaken several activities on their implementation. One project has been emphasized, electronic health recorder or electronic health card. They believe that this project will contribute to the further improvement and development of digital health and mHealth in Montenegro. With mentioned project and mHealth solutions

citizens will be able access to their health data at anytime and anywhere, which means that the citizen is the owner of their health data.

Mr. Agim Kukaj, representative from the Ministry of Economy and Environment, and Component Contact Point for Digital integration in Kosovo*, pointed out the importance of the presented methodology, policy development and project Plots, as they showed the way how to develop digital health in the economies. He emphasized that more stakeholders need to be involved, as well as the importance of the strategic support.

Conclusions:

- RCC, together with SEEHN, will continue coordinating efforts and following up with European mHealth Hub Team (WHO, ITU, SSPA, and all other partners). They will further support the development of digital health programs in WB economies.
- This Webinar is the beginning of a European mHealth Hub/RCC/SEEHN cooperation for introducing and supporting Digital Connectivity in health-related aspects, boosting Western Balkans economies' efforts for Digitalization of Services, specially the benefits regarding mHealth.
- This webinar marks within formalization of the network of experts responsible for digitalization and health services of the Western Balkans, to be further strength and better utilization of digital tools and eservices. Key needs in each Western Balkan economy need to be addressed, including but not limited to cross-border aspects in the area of eHealth and regional actions that needs to be undertaken with regards to data protection and privacy.
- Follow-up actions can be taken in two main directions: economies' engagement with European mHealth Hub, following the presented options, tools and mechanisms, and in-depth assessment of the needs for an additional instrument of support (technical or financial) for WB economies.
- The assessment of potential needs to be performed according to the economy goals and priorities for help includes economy maturity level in digital health, political assessment, and strategic orientation of the programme, between others.
- Next steps for economies' engagement with European mHealth Hub: Feedback to mHealth Hub Knowledge Tools; Select a knowledge tool to support; Prepare expression of interest letter from government; Follow-up with European mHealth Hub to discuss next steps by sending an email to info@mhealth-hub.org specifying the option for engagement and/or countries' interests/needs, together with a short to mid-long plan for implementation if already available.
- WB economies are kindly invited to commit to common possibilities for future partnerships, in order to jointly support WB Economies' tailored needs in implementing mHealth programmes together.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.