

# eHealth

priorities and strategies  
in European countries



**Fact sheet**

# Sweden

March 2007

Towards the Establishment  
of a European eHealth  
Research Area





# Sweden

## Strategic perspective

eHealth solutions in Sweden were until recently developed via co-operative voluntary arrangements between national and regional authorities (counties) and without a national eHealth Strategy. The link between regional initiatives, advancing the use of IT in healthcare was entrusted to the organisation “Carelink” which was established in 2000. The members of its board of directors are representatives from municipalities, counties, the National Board of Health and Apoteket AB (Swedish Pharmacy Chain).

In 2005 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Medical Products Agency, the National Corporation of Swedish Pharmacies, and Carelink established a National High Level Group for eHealth to work towards a national eHealth strategy. This strategy was published in March 2006 and established a common vision of how eHealth should be used to support and improve healthcare. Social care is also included in the National Strategy for eHealth, and will be a focal area for the next step in the work carried out nationally.

The work to be jointly undertaken is grouped into six action areas with the following objectives:

- Bring laws and regulations into line with extended use of ICT,
- Create a common information structure,
- Create a common technical infrastructure,
- Facilitate interoperable, supportive ICT systems,
- Facilitate access to information across organisational boundaries,
- Make information and services easily accessible to citizens.

The first three are concerned with establishing better basic conditions for ICT in health and elderly care. The last three are about improving eHealth solutions and adapting these to patient needs. Education, training and research initiatives are crucial to all six areas.

The strategy entails commitments of the parties involved, and encourages the formulation of local operational strategies to guide the process and direction of change. This local focus helps the principals involved to ensure that the local measures taken can be placed in a national perspective and that ICT use will function efficiently and effectively from a strategic operational perspective.

## Implementation perspective

Since 2002 all hospitals and primary care centres have been connected via Sjunet, the joint telecommunication network administered by Carelink and dedicated to health care. This network also links together county councils and regions, pharmacies and several other healthcare enterprises. Currently it connects all 80 public hospitals, 800 primary care centres, 950 pharmacies and a number of private health care institutions.

Sjunet is a fibre-optical network separate from the Internet which allows for the secure and reliable exchange of confidential data, including images. It also incorporates the possibility for video conferencing. Other features include order entry, a national phone directory, a knowledge database, clinical care planning and remote diagnostic services (some of these diagnostic services are currently in the preparatory phase). The scalability of Sjunet makes it simple to connect new institutions and organisations. Sjunet won the eEurope award for eHealth in 2003. In 2004 the Sjunet broadband infrastructure reached about 85% of the population.

Different eServices supported by Sjunet include the ePrescription system which is quickly spreading. The percentage of ePrescriptions reached 55% in April 2006. The ePrescription system is being further developed by Apoteket AB with the addition of a national database of medicines sold on prescription. Telemedicine has been tested and/or used in over 100 applications and more than 75% of hospitals have tested or are already using telemedicine applications.



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On the regional level electronic catalogues of and about service providers are being developed and linked nationally through a services address register (HSA catalogue). A secure email system is also in use in many counties.

In addition to these, several other major projects or activities were initiated and undertaken on a regional and/or national level during the last five years covering different aspects of eHealth applications and/or services. Among these are:

- An ongoing review of legislation on the handling of information in the health care sector by the Patient Data Inquiry.
- The InfoVU-project which is devising nomenclature, classifications and quality indicators to be used in care documentation. (The national Board of Health and Welfare has established a National Centre for Patient Classification Systems).
- Suitability assessment of SNOMED is being supported by the government.
- A National Patient Summary has been piloted and is being diffused into use and broadened.
- The CarelinkPLUS project has developed a reference architecture (map of interfaces to services) to enable the communication of systems in different organisations.
- The Carelink RIV project is establishing common standards for eMessages in the health care sector.
- The SITHS-project has developed secure IT authentication solutions for health care professionals.
- The National Patient Advice project has developed a Health Portal for citizens.
- e-Lak, a network led by Carelink is supporting the further development of electronic communication between the health service, care and pharmacies.

## Future activities

The eHealth strategy published in 2006 is regarded as the first step in a long-term undertaking towards more cooperation on the national level. The strategy has been approved by the government and the responsibilities for following and implementing it have been assigned. Support has been gained for the strategy from county and municipal councils and other stakeholders, as has as agreement on scope, scheduling, financing and decision making in connection to the implementation of the strategy. On the basis of the discussions, the National High Level Group for eHealth will take a policy position on the planning, implementation and financing of future work on ICT issues at national level. A report is expected to be published in March 2007, on how to proceed in the focal areas. The strategy implementation plans will be followed, and problems identified during its application will be considered in further modification of the strategy. This work will be undertaken by members of the National High-Level Group for eHealth.

## Core resources

**National Strategy for eHealth. S2006.019, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, May 2006**  
<http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/06/43/24/f6405a1c.pdf>  
**Plan of Activities The Swedish Government Strategy Group on IT Policy. Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, December 2005**  
<http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/02/24/11/167f9ce7.pdf>  
**Sjunet -The Swedish healthcare network**  
[http://www.itsweden.com/docfile/31930\\_Sjunet\\_the\\_swedish\\_healthcare\\_network.pdf](http://www.itsweden.com/docfile/31930_Sjunet_the_swedish_healthcare_network.pdf)  
**Carelink home page**  
<http://www.carelink.se/>

## About eHealth ERA

This fact sheet is the outcome of research in the context of the *eHealth ERA* project (Towards the Establishment of a European Research Area). The project is implemented by empirica GmbH (coordinating partner, Germany), STAKES (Finland), CITTRU (Poland), ISC III (Spain), CNR (Italy) and EPSRC (United Kingdom), based on a Coordination Action contract with the European Commission.

The European Commission, Directorate General Information Society and Media, supports this project to contribute towards greater transparency across Member States and other participating countries on eHealth strategies as well as innovation-oriented research and technology development (RTD) initiatives, including the coordination of Member States' eHealth strategy formulation and implementation.

The fact sheet is an excerpt from the report "eHealth priorities and strategies in European countries", published by the European Commission in April 2007. The complete report is available for download at [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=3346](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3346).

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