



COCIRⁱ contribution on the 'Consultation on the Future EU 2020 Strategy'¹

COCIR welcomes the publication of the EC President's 2020 consultation on the future "EU 2020" strategy and the opportunity to comment upon it and help shape future EU policy.

As the organisation representing Europe's radiology, electromedical and healthcare IT industries, COCIR and its members are very interested, and active, in all areas of policy affecting health and healthcare of EU citizens. Since establishing the link between health and wealth, our industry has worked with the EU on various high-level programmes and initiatives focusing on developing and deploying innovative technologies in areas such as ehealth, telemedicine, preventative and earlier diagnosis, and disease screening in areas such as cancer, all of which are enablers of sustainable healthcare², which is a key element of sustainable growth. For these reasons we believe that the **Commission must place greater emphasis upon health and healthcare in its 2020 strategy.**

COCIR's key recommendations to The Commission are:

- Support **investment in health infrastructure** as a mechanism through which Europe can meet economic and social objectives. A measure for immediate consideration would be to **postpone or temporarily suspend the need for partial financial commitment from Member States able to access EU Structural Funds,**
- **Encourage the development and adoption of integrated care pathways and processes** for the benefit of improving healthcare efficiency and quality of care for patients,
- Place greater **emphasis on developing and implementing policies that promote the use and uptake of healthcare IT and telemedicine.** The age and life-style related increase in chronic diseases, merits more emphasis. This is an area in which **technological innovation can drive solutions** not only for improving outcomes in hospitals, but also to support independent living for people to be cared for in their own home,
- **Nurture and promote an innovative business sector** in healthcare IT, **embracing many businesses and SMEs** in Europe, as this will benefit the overall EU economy.

1. General comments

We believe the paper fails to recognize the importance of Health to a country's economy. The health domain currently employs 10% of Europe's workforce, representing approximately 9% of the EU-15's economy, and is expected will triple by 2020 to reach 16% of GDP. In line with this, the number of jobs in the sector is increasing, contributing to economic growth. Societies that have in place health infrastructure, processes and skills,

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/eu2020_en.pdf

² Refer to COCIR White Paper on Sustainable Healthcare (http://www.cocir.org/uploads/documents/-34-cocir_wp_on_sustainable_hc_-_released_on_19_nov._2008.pdf)



which improve health and support strategic objectives of prosperity solidarity and security, benefit from higher productivity, increased labor supply and better education, all of which contribute to sustainable long-term economic growth. Alternatively poor health provisions lead to economic losses, threaten growth, competitiveness and employment.

A modern healthcare system, delivering high-quality care is increasingly being recognized as one of the major building blocks required for the economic development of any region, country and Europe as a whole.

COCIR members are pleased to see in the consultation the continued recognition of innovation as a key driver for sustainable growth in what will be a very challenging period. There are many aspects of COCIR Members' technologies and services that will help deliver sustainable healthcare. However, in respect to a major, high level EU wide strategy for change, COCIR believes that ensuring the sustainability of European health systems should be a key priority. Sustainable growth in Europe towards 2020 will require a paradigm shift in healthcare, where we see the need to inter-connect healthcare systems, healthcare entities and healthcare practitioners, and to responsibly manage the movement of care out of hospitals into the patient's home. This can only be achieved through wide scale adoption of healthcare IT systems and related telemedicine technologies throughout the Member States.

Information Technology platforms, with related high-tech service products, have supported growth in many industrial settings for many years. However, within healthcare the potential benefits from IT, coupled with advances in engineering, biomedical research and interactive consumer-directed health products, have still to be realised for a number of reasons with which the Commission is familiar.

2. Specific comments

a. [Section "Recognising constraints and facing new challenges"](#) (page 3)

- Paragraph 2: "The financial and economic crisis (...)"

We agree with the need to reshape public spending programmes balanced with the recognition that forward-looking areas such as education and research are essential. We would also include health and healthcare within this. As the Tallinn Charter highlighted, "health means wealth" and Europe needs both healthy citizens and an economically healthy healthcare sector for future economic growth.

- Paragraph 4: "We also need to recognise the challenge (...)"

The Commission rightly highlights the challenges of changing demographics within the EU. However COCIR would suggest the **resultant major health implications, particularly the increase in chronic diseases, merits more emphasis**. This is an area in which technological innovation can drive solutions not only for improving outcomes in hospitals, but also to support independent living for people to be cared for in their own homes – a solution that can deliver social and economic advantages during a period where shortfalls in healthcare professionals are also expected.



We suggest Paragraph 4 be amended to read:

"..The crisis has exacerbated the long-term social challenges Europe faces today, such as the integration of an increasing immigrant population, social exclusion and child poverty, **increases in life-style and age related chronic diseases**, and solidarity between generations in the context of an ageing society."

b. Section "Key priorities for EU 2020" (Page 3-4)

- Paragraphs 4 to 6: "The Commission considers that the key drivers (...)"

We believe that health and healthcare related issues will have a significant influence on two of the Commission's thematic priorities of EU 2020 highlighted on page 4. Macro knowledge-based economies are reliant on the prosperity and productivity of human capital which places a particular onus, and demonstrable benefit on public health expenditure.

In addition, the theme of "empowering people in inclusive societies", when applied to a major social provision such as healthcare, has the potential to drive greater economic efficiencies and better patient outcomes through relatively simple IT enabled data exchanges. Health is a person's most valuable asset and increasing numbers of people are looking to IT to gain a greater understanding of their health. Enabling further empowerment, by accelerating the implementation of ehealth solutions, for people to take more individual responsibility for their health decisions, should result in collective economic benefits.

c. Section 1. "Creating value by basing growth on knowledge" (Page 5-6)

We suggest paragraph 1 on page 5 be amended as follows:

"Knowledge is the engine for sustainable growth. In a fast-changing world, what makes the difference is education and research, innovation and creativity, **and a healthy workforce.**"

- Paragraph 4: "An efficient, effective and well-resourced (...)"

Innovation programs for medical and information technology are too limited, fragmented, and often lack direction. Various programs exist with different rules, directions, objectives and insufficient funding. There is very limited funding for clinical and IT research and few incentives for speedy clinical and IT uptake of innovative products. This situation slows access of European patients to better healthcare, puts European companies at a competitive disadvantage, and drives development and commercialization outside Europe and into areas of the world aggressively competing with EU.

- Paragraph 6: "Building on its strengths in technology (...)"

The importance of information and communication technology (ICT) progress in the healthcare domain was recognized as a pillar for European prosperity in the 2006 Aho report on "Creating an Innovative Europe", which identified eHealth as a "lead market" with considerable potential, and the need for specific and timely attention. We would recommend



the **Commission to pursue efforts in this field to the benefit of healthcare systems, and large and small/medium companies.**

d. Section 2. “Empowering people in inclusive societies” (page 6)

- **Paragraph 3: “Skills are the key element (...)”**

Life-long learning and professional skills enhancement is particularly important in areas such as healthcare where the appropriate use of major innovative breakthroughs, coupled with advances in IT, continue to expand clinical capabilities, enhance quality of care and deliver greater efficiencies. Maximising the use of technology through Professional training and skill improvement programmes will be essential if we are to plug the predicted resource gap of healthcare professionals.

e. Section “Making it happen: starting with a successful exit from the crisis” (Page 8-9)

- **Paragraph 2: “Financial resources have come under pressure (...)”**

We agree with the Commission’s comments regarding the importance of a successful exit from the economic crisis, which will require access to credit and availability of capital. A measure for immediate consideration would be to **postpone or temporarily suspend the need for partial financial commitment from Member States able to access EU Structural Funds**. At present, there is evidence to suggest that EU monies available for improving healthcare infrastructure are not being taken up by some Member States as they do not have the money to allocate to projects that would qualify for structural fund support, or they do not have money for ongoing operational costs. This situation is preventing monies already allocated by the EU for improving healthcare in certain Member States from being used, thereby denying EU citizens better health. A temporary easing of the financial contribution could stimulate greater take-up of funds, and in so doing accelerate recovery infrastructure programmes within Member States.

ⁱ **General information about COCIR:**

Founded as a non-profit trade association in 1959, COCIR represents the Radiological, Electromedical and Healthcare IT industry in Europe. As such, our members play a driving role in developing the future of healthcare both in Europe and worldwide. COCIR is committed to supporting its members and communicating with its partners in Europe and beyond on issues which affect the medical technology sector and the health of EU citizens. COCIR also works with various organisations promoting harmonised international standards and fair regulatory control that respects the quality and effectiveness of medical devices and healthcare IT systems without compromising the safety of patients and users. We encourage the use of advanced technology to support healthcare delivery worldwide. COCIR’s key objectives include promoting free worldwide trade of medical devices and maintaining the competitiveness of the European health sector.

ⁱ **COCIR Company Members:** Agfa-Healthcare, Aloka, Bosch, Canon Europe, GE Healthcare, Hitachi Medical Systems Europe, IBA Ion Beam Applications, IBM, Intel, Isoft, Carestream Health, Fujifilm, Elekta, Konica, Medison, Microsoft, Philips Healthcare, Siemens Healthcare, Shimadzu, Toshiba Medical Systems Europe

COCIR National Associations Members: AGORIA (Belgium), AMDM (Hungary), Assobiomedica (Italy), SNITEM (France), ZVEI (Germany), SPECTARIS (Germany), HHT (Netherlands), FENIN (Spain), Swedish MedTech (Sweden), AXREM (UK), FiHTA (Finland), TipGorDer (Turkey)