

EU Regional Policy at work, an example in Finland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Scotland (UK)

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Healthcare goes electronic under northern skies

The modern face of healthcare is rapidly taking shape in the Northern Periphery, notably to the benefit of the elderly and young families. Technological developments, innovation and research are already part of eHealth services and telemedicine provided to people living in remote, isolated areas. In parts of Sweden, remote speech therapy has seen increased use, while in northern Norway, teledialysis is now a routine service. The Competitive Health Services project (2008-2010) aims ultimately to launch and test new pilot eHealth services in all countries taking part.

The region's healthcare providers have until recently been spending large amounts of time and money treating those living in sparsely populated areas. However, telemedicine and eHealth innovations now offer more cost-effective and efficient alternatives, with a focus on primary care, chronic conditions and remote specialist services. The first phase of the project has been completed - good eHealth practices and innovative solutions have been mapped and identified in partner countries along with service needs and gaps analysis.

Taking the pulse out in the field

Four countries in the project (Finland, Sweden, Scotland and Norway) are currently in the process of examining potential pilot sites to see whether or not they are actually ready to provide eHealth services that have been successfully implemented in one of the other partner countries. This second phase of the project involves the combined work of representatives from the public sector, universities and businesses. The work takes account of regional differences and needs and also the methodological approaches suitable for specific regions.

“Residents of remote and rural communities in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Scotland will benefit from improved access to eHealth services such as teledialysis, speech therapy, remote monitoring of biosignals, a mobile eye-screening service and a remote wound clinic.”

Minna Mäkinen, Project Coordinator, Northern Ostrobothnia Hospital District, Finland

Voices echo across the miles

Innovations being considered for possible transfer include remote speech therapy from Sweden, teledialysis from Norway, mobile eye screening for diabetes and glaucoma from Finland, remote ECG transmission from Scotland and The Bag - a unit for remote monitoring of physiological data - from Sweden.

EU funding

€933 011 is being allocated from the ERDF to the Competitive Health Services project over the period January 2008 to December 2010.

Two notable innovations, remote speech therapy and teledialysis are already proving beneficial for patients in remote regions. Video-conference systems provide a vital link in this care process, connecting sufferers of aphasia, dyslexia or Parkinson's disease with the main hospitals. Similarly, teledialysis has seen proven success, with better quality patient follow-up and reduced travel time for nephrologists and patients.



More about this project can be found at:
www.ehealthservices.eu



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