THE STATE: A DIGITAL META-PLATFORM FOR EVERYONE?

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France is lagging behind in digital health deployment

France is somewhat falling behind in its attitude towards digital health, particularly in comparison with its European counterparts. It is also confronted with growing competition from the GAFAM companies (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft), which are threatening the healthcare industry with Uber-like transformations.

The French Government must therefore take a stance in this field in order to increase the quality of service, reduce sanitary risks and save medical time, all whilst reducing costs. The potential for wealth creation is thus evaluated to be between 16 and 22 billion euros per year within the next 5 to 10 years.

The pandemic is revealing the most glaring shortcomings, while at the same time making room for progress

In this context, the pandemic has slowed down the digital transition while exposing weaknesses such as the lack of a National Health Identifier, which hinders efforts aimed at fighting the spread of the virus. Conversely, it has also given traction to innovations, as exemplified by remote consultations skyrocketing, as well as initiatives such as maladiecoronavirus.fr, providing patients with instructions regarding adequate level of care.

The state is positioning itself as a digital meta-platform

As for the latter example, the French state is taking up the position of a meta-platform in relation to digital health stakeholders. Thus, it provides the digital infrastructure, controlled access to health data and visibility to digital actors who wish to develop in this industry. It also offers citizens direct access to their health data and to the Shared Medical Record (Dossier Médical Partagé) via the France Connect identifier and the Digital Health Space (Espace Numérique de Santé). In return, it requires compliance with ethical and cybersecurity standards as well as complete transparency in the use of health data.

Examples within Europe

In addition to the Scandinavian countries which are the reference in this field, Estonia has developed an integrated system based on three pillars:

- ▶ Bridging the digital gap within the country

- ▶ An E-Identity for each citizen, allowing them to share in a simple and ergonomic way data and relevant documents with professionals all along their medical care course

- ▶ A single digital portal to guarantee the interoperability of IT system

A co-construction drive involving all the actors in the health care community

In order to catch up, the French government has set itself on a clear path, supported by a €2 billion budget, for the purpose of working in co-construction with the healthcare community. Private companies, first of all, through a combination of incentives and assistance as well as by imposing a series of norms and standards, all built around the Health Data Hub initiative. In doing so, it can draw on the example of Israel, which has developed strategies to provide financial incentives to private partners through capitation based financing, as well as by setting up a state-sponsored incubator to help small businesses in their development.

Lastly, it will mobilize citizens, notably around ethical issues such as the sharing of health data with third parties, through workshops modelled after the work of the citizens' convention on climate change.

Priority projects for the State itself

The state itself takes an active role on specific short-term issues:

- ▶ Improvement of Ameli.fr and its 36 million users by simplifying the procedures available on the website while improving access to information and prevention

- ▶ Extension and support of the Shared Medical Record

- ▶ Deployment of the Digital Health Space

- ▶ E-vital card

- ▶ E-Prescription

- ▶ Secure messaging solutions for professionals

Lastly, it has committed to bridging the digital gap, and thus the number of people excluded from the digital sphere due to a lack of infrastructure or training, which in 2018 was estimated around 14 million people.