4.O. Workshop: Using data to save lives in times of COVID-19 and beyond

Organised by: DG Sante
Chair persons: Massimo Fagnini (European Commission)
Contact: Massimo.FAGNINI@ec.europa.eu

This presentation will comprise three notable European initiatives on the use and re-use of health data to save lives in times of COVID-19 and beyond the pandemic.

Building a European Health Data Space and infrastructures supporting it:
The Commission will put forward a legislative proposal on European Health Data Space, supporting the use of data for healthcare, for research and policy making.

As part of the European Health Data Space, it will also support the infrastructure allowing patients to share their health data with healthcare professionals when travelling abroad, in the language of the professional, thus avoiding repeating costs or diagnostic and medication errors stemming from misunderstandings.

While aiming at creating a vibrant data ecosystem in the European Health Data Space, the Commission is exploring ways to overcome cross-border challenges on re-use of health data for policy, regulatory and research activities. Leveraging on the know-how and experience of national health data permit authorities and established data infrastructures, the EHDS pilot initiative aims at setting up a demonstrator for an overarching federated infrastructure enabling cross-country, cross-domain (health domains: mental health, genomic, cancer, rare diseases, etc.) re-use of health data.

A set of use cases (observational studies) will be piloted to assess the value and impact that such overarching infrastructure would entail for EU-wide health data analytical studies.

The European Digital COVID Certificate:
Following the start of the vaccination campaign in December 2020, a lot of hope was placed in the use of vaccination certificates as a potential tool for supporting the gradual lifting of travel restrictions. Later, test and recovery certificates were added in the scope of the system, named EU Digital COVID Certificate. A legal proposal was prepared by the Commission, and fast-tracked by both the Council and the European Parliament. Current state of play on the use of EU Digital COVID Certificate will be presented.

A common European approach for digital contact tracing:
One of the key challenges during the early weeks of the pandemic was the establishment of an effective tracing system given the testing capacity limitations. Several research teams, in the EU and across the globe, started early on developing digital systems for contact tracing that would preserve privacy of users. This led soon to the deployment of the first contact tracing and warning applications that allow automatically alerting users at risk of COVID-19 infection. There are currently over 20 national contact tracing applications rolled out in the EU, and almost all of them are connected at European level enabling citizens to rely on a single mobile application when travelling across the connected countries.

Speakers/Panelists:
Ioana Gligor
Digital Health and European Reference Networks, DG Sante, European Commission
Licinio Kustra Mano
Strategic Advisor, EU Cross-Border eHealth Services, European Commission
Konstantin Hypponen
Policy Officer, DG Sante, European Commission
Ander Elustondo Jauregui
Policy Officer, DG Sante, European Commission