

Supporting the Czech Republic in its efforts to set up a National eHealth Centre

The healthcare system in the Czech Republic

The healthcare system in the Czech Republic (today often known as Czechia) is based on a **Bismarckian health insurance system**¹. The national model of care is regulated by the **Ministry of Health**. In the country, there are **seven healthcare insurance companies** that provide healthcare services to all citizens on an equal basis, free of charge. The insurance companies agree contracts with healthcare providers on a yearly basis. **Social care is independent from healthcare** in all aspects, including planning, financing and provision of social care. As a result, the current models of health and social care in the country are rather fragmented. The provision of **home care is delivered only on a small scale**.

eHealth in the Czech Republic

There have been at least two attempts to introduce eHealth in the Czech Republic (which took place in 2009 and 2012). Further renewed efforts in 2016 led to the **adoption of a National eHealth strategy** by the Czech government². Since 2016, the development of the strategy is ongoing, although in a limited manner.

The national eHealth strategy foresees **the creation of a National eHealth Centre** as an essential building block; the Centre's mission would be to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the national eHealth strategy across the whole country.

A few **national or local eHealth initiatives exist**. They include:

- An **Electronic Prescription**³ system has been deployed nationally, and is now in operation since January 2018.
- A few **telehealth services** have been deployed locally such as the Telehealth for heart failure patients service^{4,5} of the University Hospital of Olomouc.

The **creation of the Centre is key to the expansion of eHealth initiatives** in Czechia.

¹ <https://www.scirocco-project.eu/regions-self-assessment/experience-olomouc/>

² http://www.nsez.cz/En/dokumenty/czech-national-strategy-of-ehealth-preliminary-translation_13521_32.html

³ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/egovernment/document/electronic-prescriptions-czech-republic>

⁴ <https://www.scirocco-project.eu/c3-olomouc-region-czech-republic-telehealth-service-for-patients-with-advanced-heart-failure/>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/eip/ageing/repository/telehealth-service-patients-advanced-heart-failure_en

Technical assistance to the creation of the National eHealth Centre (NeHC) of Czech Republic

To create the centre, the Ministry of Health has submitted an application for **technical assistance** to the European Commission and its **Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS)**⁶. As a result of the submission, the Agency for Economic Cooperation and Development (AED) of Austria was contracted for a two-year period (March 2018-March 2020), in partnership with the Austrian Ministry of Work, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Rights and **EHTEL to support the process**.

The first key deliverable of this process was **an in-depth analysis** and a report on how eHealth Competence Centres have been created in **nine European Member States or Regions**⁷.

The analysis of the competence centres covered institutions such as Elga (Austria), MedCom (Denmark), NHS Digital (England), THL (Finland), gematik (Germany), Lombardia Informatica (Italy), Agence eSanté (Luxembourg), NICTIZ (Netherlands), and NHIS (Slovakia). Most of these nine have had a close working relationship with EHTEL over the years.

"There is considerable diversity among competence centres, influenced by their healthcare systems and other unique national factors" reported Rachelle Kaye, EHTEL Director and main author of the analysis report. "At the same time, there are clear commonalities, as well as lessons to be learned, from the experience of each centre. [An] overview of all of them can provide valuable guidance for the structure and operating principles of the planned Czech Republic eHealth Centre."

On the basis of this analytical report, the staff of the Czech Ministry of Health, together with the invited experts, have sketched out **an Implementation Roadmap for the National eHealth Centre (NeHC)**. They also included **the creation of a National eHealth Board (NeHB)** which aims at facilitating the indispensable stakeholder engagement.

A preliminary stakeholder meeting was organised in December 2018, and the NeHC was officially created in January 2019.

Communication priorities in 2019

Throughout 2019, AED and EHTEL have assisted the NeHC in planning future activities, drafting the terms of reference of the future NeHB, and initiated the development of a **national communication and engagement strategy**. International experience in communication was sought.

"Making digital health understood by all and explaining them how digital health can contribute to the necessary transformation of the healthcare system and improve population's health is a prerequisite for successful adoption of eHealth" underlined Adria Garcia Font, Communication Officer of TicSalut Social in Catalunya (Spain).

⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/structural-reform-support-service_en

⁷ <https://www.ehtel.eu/media-room/latest-news/36-the-upcoming-national-ehealth-centre-of-czech-republic-explores-good-practices.html>

A **Delphi survey** of local key stakeholders will be launched in 2020 to serve as baseline for a **local communication agency** developing the communication and engagement strategy.

With the support of Austrian colleagues, assistance has also been provided for the development of a **National Health Portal**.

Next steps, in 2020

An **informal stakeholder consultation mechanism** and a **national eHealth conference** are planned for early 2020 and this will serve as foundation for the future NeHB.

A **technical assistance contract extension** is under consideration for 2021 and 2022.