



Impressions from the Committee on Robotics, a.i. & Precision Medicine

The first plenary session of the third European Health Parliament is over, and boy is it going to be an exciting seven months! Fifty-six young Europeans active in healthcare, divided over five committees and all committed to making Europe a healthier place.

Our committee is the Committee on Robotics, A.I. and Precision Medicine, and possibly the most interesting of them all – though admittedly we're biased.

Rapid developments in robotics mean that surgeons in Krakow may soon be able to operate on a patient in Lisbon. Advances in diagnostic testing now allow healthcare practitioners to very precisely prescribe medicines to a patient by analysing their cells, molecules and even genes. Meanwhile, machines are becoming increasingly capable of carrying out tasks that hitherto required human labour, ranging from helping an older person getting out of bed to prescribing drugs for cancer treatments.

These developments are all incredibly exciting. Yet they also raise important questions about the future of health in terms of viability, access and ethics. For instance, does Europe possess the infrastructure required for robotic surgery? How can we ensure that these new, improved precision medicines will be accessible to all? And can we assign responsibility to an A.I. if something goes wrong? These questions are on the minds of European policymakers everywhere, not only in Brussels but also in national capitals and the regions.

As a committee, our goal is to seek answers.

[Who are we?](#) We are twelve in our committee, hailing from twelve different countries with twelve very different backgrounds. We are professionals and entrepreneurs working in health technology, big data and health consulting. We are patient advocates, students of EU policy and researchers developing the technologies of the future, including regenerative medicine and 3D printing. We are active in R&D, sales, policy, communication and advocacy. But most importantly, we are ready to help shape the future of EU health policy.

Over the coming months, we will delve into the intricacies of digital health policy. What is happening, what is missing, and what is preventing us from realising the promise of digital health? We will conduct research into the underlying causes. We will meet with EU officials, members of parliament, NGOs, industry and the media to understand their goings-on. We will talk to patients to understand what they need. We will draft a report and test our recommendations on their urgency and realism across Europe. And, ultimately, we will present our vision for a better European health policy through robotics, A.I. and precision medicine.

Looking ahead to the second plenary on 5 December, where we are expected to share our focus, we are currently narrowing down the scope of our work. The EU has followed a “Health in all Policies” approach since 2006, and that extends to all things digital. However, ‘digital’ encompasses many aspects and is understood to mean even more depending on whom you talk to. Our first task is thus to identify which issues most urgently require our attention.

To this end, our committee has already had an intensive brainstorm where all members their first thoughts on where the committee should be headed. Two additional sessions are planned before the next plenary in December. Individual members are already doing research to identify the gaps in existing policies.

In the meantime, committee members have also started to reach out to policymakers and their own network to solicit input on our work. Meetings have been planned with MEPs in Brussels and MPs elsewhere. Researchers have been approached, think tanks identified and start-ups contacted to understand the barriers they’re facing.

A key consideration for our committee is to involve stakeholders as much and as early as possible, since writing a report on as cutting-edge a topic as eHealth from an ivory tower renders its content meaningless. If you are working in this field and have something to share, please do reach out to one of our members.

In a rapidly digitalising world, the challenge is to ensure that “Health in all Policies” also applies to digital policy, including the digital single market and cross-border healthcare.

Our goal is to help the EU and any other national government to develop policies that harness the promise of robotics, A.I. and precision medicine to make Europe a healthier place.

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Will that be possible? Stay tuned and follow our committee's activities on Twitter, Facebook or the EHP website to find out.

Our recommendations are due in April 2018.

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