

Global strategy on digital health 2020-2025



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The development of the global strategy on digital health underwent a two-year co-creation journey before its adoption at the Seventy-third World Health Assembly (WHA). The initial draft of the strategy document was drafted and disseminated for comments through an internal consultation in early 2019. An outline of scheduled consultations was then communicated to Member States at an information session held in Geneva in March 2019, followed by a global public consultation from March to May of the same year. Various consultations with Member States were held between June and October 2019, including a global consultation convened in Geneva and a series of discussions during the regional committee meetings.

The strategy was presented as part of the agenda item (EB146/26) in the Executive Board in February 2020. Having considered the report on the draft global strategy on digital health, the board decided to recommend an adoption of the document to the Seventy-third WHA. In responding to the recommendation by the Executive Board, the secretariat conducted another two rounds of Member States consultation in February and July 2020 to further refine the language in the strategy document.

Under the leadership of Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, and Bernardo Mariano, Director of Department of Digital Health and Innovation, Sameer Pujari and Yu Zhao oversaw the development, coordination and consultation of the strategy document. The technical coordination was provided by (In Alphabetical order) Housseynou Ba, Patricia Codyre, Marcelo D'Agostino, Jun Gao, Clayton Hamilton, Mark Landry, Ahmed Mandil, Mohamed Nour and Diana Zandi. Additional inputs were received from Flavio Aggio, Onyema Ajuebor, Virginia Arnold, Ayman Badr, Navneet Bahl, Maryam Bigdeli, Philippe Boucher, Marie-Charlotte Bouesseau, Craig Burgess, Kenneth Carswell, Giorgio Cometto, Valeria De Oliveira Cruz, Joan Dzenowagis, Gaya Gamhewage, Sebastian García Saisó, John Grove, Biswamber Gurubacharya, Celine Hazbun, Robert Jakob, Christopher Jones, Maki Kajiwara, Edward Kelley, Tarek Khorshed, Hans Kluge, Rameshe Krishnamurthy, Veerabhadra Kuchimanchi,

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INTRODUCTION

1
See documents EB146/26 and EB146/REC/2, summary records of the thirteenth meeting, section 2.

2
United Nations General Assembly resolutions 73/218 (2019) and 70/125 (2016).

3
Resolutions WHA58.28 (2005), WHA66.24 (2013), WHA69.24 (2016) and WHA71.7 (2018); various resolutions of the regional committees include EM/RC53/R.10 (2006), AFR/RC56/R8 (2006), AFR/RC60/R3 (2010), CD51.R5 (2011), AFR/RC63/R5 (2013) and WPR/RC69/8 (2018).

In 2005 the World Health Assembly through its resolution WHA58.28 on eHealth urged Member States “to consider drawing up a long-term strategic plan for developing and implementing eHealth services...to develop the infrastructure for information and communication technologies for health...to promote equitable, affordable and universal access to their benefits.” Countries and stakeholders were urged to direct their efforts towards creating a consistent eHealth vision in line with a country’s health priorities and resources, developing an action plan to deliver the proposed vision, and creating a framework for monitoring and evaluating eHealth implementation and progress. More than 120 Member States – including low- and middle-income countries – have developed such strategies and policies.

In 2013, the Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA66.24 on eHealth standardization and interoperability, which urged Member States “to consider developing ... policies and legislative mechanisms linked to an overall national eHealth strategy”.

Drawing on these resolutions and recognizing the need to strengthen digital health implementation, in May 2018 the Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA71.7 on digital health, in which it requested the Director-General “to develop ... in close consultation with Member States and with inputs from relevant stakeholders ... a global strategy on digital health, identifying priority areas including where WHO should focus its efforts”. The strategy was developed through a consultative process launched in March 2019 that included discussions in online public forums, technical consultations, meetings of the WHO regional committees and the Executive Board at its 146th session¹. The global strategy on digital health 2020–2025 was endorsed by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in decision WHA73(28) (2020).

The global strategy on digital health builds on resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly² and the World Health Assembly,³ related WHO global and regional

4

WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. Regional strategy for strengthening ehealth in the South-East Asia Region, WHO (2014-2020). Manila: Regional Office for South-East Asia; 2015 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/160760>); World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. From innovation to implementation: eHealth in the WHO European Region. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2016 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/326317>); PAHO. Strategy and plan of action on eHealth: final report. Document CD56/INF/17 (2018) (https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&category_slug=56-directing-council-english-9964&alias=45846-cd56-inf-17-e-strategy-poa-ehealth-846&Itemid=270&lang=en, accessed 17 December 2019).

5

ISO. Part 1 - Health informatics: capacity-based eHealth architecture roadmap. Part 2 – architectural components and maturity model. TR 14639-1. Geneva: International Organization for Standardization; 2014.

6

WHO, ITU. National eHealth strategy toolkit. Geneva: World Health Organization and International Telecommunication Union; 2012 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/75211>) (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/752119>, accessed 17 December 2019).

reports,⁴ regional strategies, the two-part report of the ISO Technical Committee on Health Informatics on eHealth architecture,⁵ the resolution on ICD-11 and the WHO Family of international classifications and terminologies, the three-part National eHealth strategy toolkit,⁶ Member States' current digital health situation and status, actions, strategies, policies and investments, and recommendations of various United Nations panels on digital and innovation topics.



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