

Contact: Pauline Constant: +32 (0)2 789 24 01
Date: 25/04/2018

Online access to health data: EU Commission new plan benefits consumers

The EU Commission plans to improve consumers' access to their own health data, whether they are checking it online or when they need it when abroad. Today's plans aim to improve electronic health, or 'e-health'. The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) applauds the move as 90% of consumers would like to manage their own health data.¹

These e-health plans also set out how the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – which will take effect on 25 May – will apply to the health sector. As required by the GDPR, consumers should be able to take their personal data from one health provider to another and be in tighter control of how companies use it. That is exactly what the new plans aim for.

Monique Goyens, Director General of BEUC, commented:

"It can prove helpful that the health data of all EU consumers is available in an online database. Say a Belgian breaks his leg while on a trip to Portugal, the doctor could find the medical history of this patient in just a few clicks. This is not only quick but also safer as the doctor can prescribe a treatment fully compatible with the patient's previous surgeries or potential allergies for instance.

"What consumers want is more control over their health data. They should be able to easily access and manage their information and even update it when necessary. It is also crucial that consumers can transfer their file from one provider to another, if they want to change dentist or gynaecologist for instance. We expect the tool that the Commission proposed today will make all this a reality.

"Consumers accept to share their health data provided it advances research that will help develop new treatments and prevent diseases ranging from allergies to cancer.² Of course, the collection of such sensitive data must meet the strict standards of the EU's new data protection law. It is vital that consumers' data is only accessible to authorised parties, for non-profit purposes and made anonymous as much as possible."

ENDS

For more information:

[BEUC's response to the EU Commission's public consultation](#) on transformation of health and care in the Digital Single Market, October 2017.

¹ [See the EU Commission consultation](#) on the Transformation of Health and Care in the Digital Single Market. In Norway, 78% of consumers say they want more control over decisions concerning their own health data. See [report](#) from Norwegian consumer organisation Forbrukerrådet, April 2018.

² A 2017 survey by Danish consumer group Forbrugerrådet Tænk showed that 73 % of consumers would like their data to be used for research. 56 % of them would like to be asked the permission beforehand.