Connecting Scotland - how the Scottish Government and its agencies engage internationally

NHS 24

1 Introduction

1.1 **NHS 24** is a Special Health Board responsible to Scottish Ministers through the Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates. Its role as Scotland's national provider of telehealth and telecare services is to deliver the NHS Scotland 2020 vision for health and social care and to contribute to the achievement of the Scottish Government’s primary purpose of **increasing sustainable economic growth** by aligning its aims and objectives with the Scottish Government’s published Economic Strategy and National Performance Framework.

1.2 The Scottish Centre for Telehealth and Telecare (SCTT) is part of NHS 24 and was established to support and guide the development of telehealth and telecare throughout Scotland.

1.3 The Centre’s role is to provide support and advice to all key stakeholders and help evaluate the potential benefits of new technologies, with the aim of making Scotland a recognised global leader in telehealth and telecare.

1.4 There is very strong alignment between the European Commission’s strategy for Health and Scottish Government policy. Scotland is the only European Region to have introduced legislation to integrate Health and Social Care and, as such, we are regarded not only as sector leaders in this field, but also as an important case study to inform future EU developments.


2.1 NHS 24 strongly welcomes the continuing efforts of the European and External Relations Committee (EERC) to ensure that Scotland has a coherent, consistent and ambitious strategy to optimise Scotland’s engagement at European and International levels.

2.2 We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the revision of the Scottish Government’s strategies for International and EU engagement through this call for evidence.

2.3 NHS 24, through SCTT, leads the Scottish Government’s representation in the area of Digital Health and Care, in Europe. We have been actively engaged at EU level since 2011, and we believe that our experience, both in terms of strategic engagement and in delivery of EU funded projects, can inform and improve the Scottish Government’s revised strategy for European Engagement.
2.4 NHS 24 has a portfolio of ten EU funded projects, covering five funding programmes (FP7, Interreg, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, Health Programme and Horizon 2020) with a total project value to Scotland of some £20m (2011-14) and a further £5m (2014-17) to date, with further projects under development.

2.5 The Scottish Government’s ambitions for the integration of Health and Social Care, the creation of two Innovation Centres in Health (Digital Health Institute and Stratified Medicine) and the continued developments in Telehealth and Telecare offer significant opportunities for Scotland within the EU’s programmes for 2014-20.

3 Summary of Recommendations:

3.1 The EERC call for evidence identifies three core questions for its inquiry. The NHS 24 response will be confined to matters relating to the EU strategy, which is our area of engagement.

3.2 *Is there a clear, coherent and well-resourced strategy for European engagement within the Scottish Government and its agencies?*

- Since the launch of the Scottish Government’s Strategy for EU Engagement, there has been a clear improvement, in terms of focus and direction, from the Scottish Government, but it is limited in scope and not specific enough in terms of impacts and outcomes.
- The main EU Strategy, developed in 2009, does not recognise Health as a key area for European Engagement. The Annexe of August 2014 identifies Health as an area of opportunity only in terms of innovation and digital health. The EU’s Health strategy makes clear that health is considered to be a key component of the achievement of the EU 2020 objectives and should influence all policy areas. As such, NHS 24 takes the view that Health should be considered to be a specific priority area for the updated EU Engagement Strategy for Scotland.
- The EU Engagement Strategy should articulate Scotland’s ambitions as a Region as well as its ambitions for each individual policy department, with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) indicators.
- Strategic ambitions should include targets to achieve Scottish Representation across key EU policy areas and membership of relevant EU Bodies and Partnerships.
- Successful engagement at EU level requires strong direction and lead from Scottish Government Policy Teams and recognition that resources must be invested to achieve these ambitions.
- The Scottish Government should resource the EU strategy at two levels: (1) strategic - to deliver the key national ambitions and (2) departmental level funding – to support the achievement of specific, sectoral ambitions.
- There is a need to identify good practice at EU, national and local levels and to harness experience to optimise the benefits for all areas of Government policy and to ensure consistency of approach.
- The EU strategy should define its ambitions for the use of the funding that is available to support the secondment of staff to EU institutions. Such funding should be made openly available and should be directed to optimise the benefit for Scotland.
- The Strategy should recognise the Scottish Government’s investment in the creation of a Scottish Funding Portal and support its use to collate information and encourage networking.
- The strategy should also set out Scotland’s ambitions to participate in, and make use of the new EU Expert Database, which has been established to allow exchange of expertise across the EU to address national weaknesses and challenges.
- We welcome the Cabinet Secretary’s announcement that funding for the Scottish Government Office in Brussels has been transferred to the EU Strategy. Our experience of working with the team in Brussels is extremely positive and we believe that this change will provide clear direction, improved awareness, better transparency and improved consistency.

3.3 What has the Scottish Government’s EU Action Plan achieved since it was first published in 2009?
- The key achievement of the EU Action Plan has been to provide a strategic focus for all parts of Scottish Government policy areas. In pursuing the strategic aims, awareness has been raised and more Government Departments have recognised the value of EU engagement; although it remains the responsibility of each department to recognise the relevance of engagement and participation. There is a need to improve awareness in those departments who are not yet engaged and to offer proactive, mentoring support to enable engagement.
- The Scottish Government’s EU Action Plan led key agencies and sectors to develop their own, sector specific EU Action Plans. The revised plan should seek to harness the full range of activities that are being undertaken in Scotland across all sectors, identify relevant expertise and exploit this to foster synergies to drive forward ambitious targets for Scottish participation and achievement.

3.4 What can be learnt from the approaches of other sub-state governments? In particular, how do the EU offices of other sub-state governments operate and what tangible outcomes do they achieve?
- The most successful Regions have well developed EU Engagement Strategies which have clear ambitions for awareness raising, influencing and shaping policy and participation.
• The most successful Regions also have clear ambitions to cascade experience so that public investment of funding is optimised, with public sector agencies leading and supporting other public, private and 3rd sector organisations to access and benefit from strategic initiatives.

• The EU Engagement Strategy for Northern Ireland is particularly worthy of note. The Office of the First Minister sets out the strategic ambitions and an annual implementation plan translates this into clear, specific activities and impacts. It includes a programme of work to ensure that all elected politicians have an awareness of the EU and its ambitions; understand the strategic links between EU and National Policy; shape the determination of national priorities and are provided with regular reports of progress.

• The most successful Regions ensure that engagement and influencing ambitions are clearly communicated to Government Departments and Agencies, to secure commitment at governance levels.

• The most successful Regions within the EU in digital, telehealth and telecare set European Engagement as a high priority and provide financial support for their networking activities at local, regional and EU levels. Such support has secured these regions as recognised front runners in their field this is demonstrated by the scale of their success in securing EU funding across different programmes to support Innovation, Research, Service Deployment and Knowledge Exchange.

4 Health & Social Care: NHS 24 Experience

4.1 The European Commission’s strategy “Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion” identifies health as a key contributor to the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

4.2 The European Commission has produced a Health Strategy: “Together for Health” and a complementary communication “Investing in Health” which further develops the EU’s strategic ambitions to:

• Invest in sustainable health systems
• Invest in people’s health as human capital
• Invest in reducing health inequalities and
• Invest in health through adequate support from EU funds.

4.3 There is very strong alignment between the European Commission’s strategy for Health and Scottish Government policy ambitions; indeed, Scotland is recognised across the EU as having sector leading practice in the use of new technologies to improve health efficiency.

4.4 Scotland is the only Region within the EU to have taken the step of legislating to integrate Health and Social Care and, as such, is recognised at EU level as leading practice in sustainability and efficiency.
4.5 NHS 24 (through the Scottish Centre for Telehealth & Telecare) works with the Scottish Government to represent Scotland in Europe in the area of Digital Health & Care. Strategic oversight and direction for this activity is provided by the Digital Health and Care Innovation Programme Board, chaired by Professor George Crooks, which reports to the Scottish Government’s Innovation Partnership Board.

4.6 Engagement at EU level is shaped and informed by Scottish Government policies:

- The Healthcare Quality Strategy (2010) – which aims to deliver the highest quality healthcare services to the people in Scotland.
- Integration of Health & Social Care [Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act] The Scottish Government’s ambitious programme of reform to improve services for people who use health and social care services. Integration will ensure that health and social care provision across Scotland is joined-up and seamless, especially for people with long term conditions and disabilities, many of whom are older people.
- The eHealth Strategy (2011), which outlines how digital technology will enable patients to become more directly involved in the design and management of their individual care.
- Scotland’s Digital Future – Delivery of Public Services (2012) which sets out a vision for Scotland in which digital technology provides a foundation for integrated public services that cross organisational boundaries and delivers to those most in need, and for services that promote business and economic growth.
- National Telehealth and Telecare Delivery Plan for Scotland to 2015 (2012) which provides continued strategic direction for the use of Telehealth and Telecare within Health, Social Care and Housing in Scotland.

4.7 NHS 24 and SCTT have developed a European Engagement Strategy which sets out our four key ambitions:

- Actively engage with European institutions to the benefit of Scotland and other countries of Europe.
- Build relationships and partnerships to learn from others, share best practice and collaborate on areas of mutual interest.
- Enhance Scotland’s reputation in Europe and create new opportunities, including securing inward investment and generating economic growth.
- Influence and secure funding from relevant EU programmes to benefit Scotland by supporting the delivery of key national strategic initiatives.

4.8 Our success in Europe has been achieved through positioning Scotland at the centre of key stakeholder organisations and partnerships that shape the health, ICT and innovation agenda in Europe. This includes membership of the European Connected Health Alliance (ECHA); the European Health Telematics Association (EHTEL); the European Regional and Local Health
Authorities (EUREGHA) network, the Community of Regions for Assisted Living (CORAL) and the mHealth Task Force.

4.9 Such representation can only be provided through public investment. It is this function that underpins our credibility as participants in large scale funding projects and also provides a catalyst/enabler function to facilitate smaller public, private and 3rd sector providers in Scotland to access opportunities.

4.10 In 2012, the EU launched its European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EIP on AHA). It recognises the major societal challenges being faced by all of Europe’s Regions – an ageing population, a reducing workforce, the increase in long term health conditions and the need to redesign our health and care systems to deliver sustainable services into the future.

4.11 The EIP on AHA incorporates six thematic action groups: all of which have Scottish representation. Scotland also has lead co-ordination roles in all of the Action Groups.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Group</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Scotland’s Commitment</th>
<th>Represented by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Adherence &amp; Medication</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical care for Long Term Conditions</td>
<td>Scottish Government</td>
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<td>A2</td>
<td>Falls Prevention</td>
<td>National Falls Programme</td>
<td>Scottish Government</td>
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<td>A3</td>
<td>Frailty</td>
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<td>B3</td>
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<td>C2</td>
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<td>D4</td>
<td>Smart Cities &amp; Communities</td>
<td>Dementia Enabled Communities</td>
<td>The Health &amp; Care Alliance</td>
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4.12 The EIP on AHA works to identify key areas of innovation which the EU can then support through shaping calls for funding to directly respond to the identified needs.

4.13 The Regions within the EU who lead in digital, telehealth and telecare and health & social care include South and Mid Denmark; Catalonia, Andalucia and the Basque Country in Spain and Nord Brabant in Holland.

4.14 Each of these regions set European Engagement as a high priority and provide financial support for their networking activities at local, regional and EU levels. Such support has secured these regions as recognised front runners in the field of telehealth and telecare and this is demonstrated by the scale of their success in securing EU funding across different programmes to support Innovation, Research, Service Deployment and Knowledge Exchange.
4.15 The Region of South Denmark has also translated its engagement at EU level into successful creation of jobs and growth – with new businesses being created and a growth in SME business in the region.

4.16 In this way, it is clear that Scotland’s success in drawing down EU funding is inextricably linked to our active engagement towards influencing and participating in EU strategy and policy development. It is only through participating in EU networks and the EIP on AHA that we can learn, shape and influence the EU’s ambitions. Our participation leads to a greater awareness of the EU’s ambitions for funding calls, improving the quality of proposals. We are better able to recognise synergies with other EU Regions and form sustainable, meaningful partnerships.

4.17 If Scotland did not participate in these influencing activities, the EU would continue to develop health policy and priorities without Scottish influence, which would weaken the strategic alignment between EU and Scottish policy. Policy direction would be determined for us, rather than with us.

4.18 Scotland’s participation on the EIP for AHA is managed, strategically, to optimise the specific expertise of each agency, with learning and experience shared across Scottish agencies to optimise opportunities.

4.19 NHS 24’s EU Engagement Strategy is funded by a direct, ring-fenced allocation of £1m per annum from the Scottish Government. This direct contribution is essential. Without it, we could not engage in this activity. This funding secures our participation in influencing activities and it provides the match funding for our EU projects.

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