✕ Trusted Health Ecosystems
Concept for a national platform strategy

In the "Trusted Health Ecosystems" project we are creating a concept and a product vision for a national health platform of the future. This text is part of the overall concept which is published at www.trusted-health-ecosystems.org.

Trusted Health Ecosystems: Our project approach

The digital age is impacting our lives in ways we've never experienced before, and it's doing so at an accelerating pace. This rapid change, coupled with the disruptive effects it brings, places considerable demands on society in terms of adaptability. Digital platforms are at the forefront of this change, as they supply the essential infrastructure and services driving this transformation.

Through their platforms, digital ecosystems have fundamentally altered entire sectors of the economy. They have changed how people interact and communicate with each other, how goods and services are marketed, and how educational and informational resources are accessed. Platforms are not only impacting the world of work, they have disrupted the media landscape and upended the power dynamics of the mobility industry. So why should healthcare be any different?

New power dynamics

Global tech companies are venturing into the healthcare sector, offering immense potential for a modern, patient-centered and continually evolving healthcare system. While network effects and economies of scale present impressive growth opportunities, they also pose risks to the principle of solidarity that finances our healthcare system. One thing is certain: Digital platforms will profoundly reshape the power dynamics within healthcare systems. It is our responsibility to harness and direct their innovative and guiding influence for the greater good (see video: The power of platform economy).

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Platform strategies for national healthcare systems

The time has come for public and civil society actors to create their own platforms and take the lead in shaping the foundational digital infrastructure, defining value-based guidelines for the future of digital healthcare. National healthcare systems need to formulate their own platform strategies to carve out a position for themselves in the emerging healthcare market. With our "Trusted Health Ecosystems" project, we are paving the way forward to achieve this and developing a concrete vision of a future national healthcare platform. We thus aim to illustrate the potential benefits that can arise from collaborative efforts involving government, civil society and the private sector (see Conceptual considerations: an overview).

Promoting health literacy

The focus of our product concept is to provide patients personalized information and services. By doing this, we confront the enduring problem of health literacy, with more than half of the German population indicating significant struggles in accessing, understanding, appraising and applying health-related information (see Health literacy: challenges of the future). Without health literacy, patients find it difficult to make informed decisions about their health and actively participate in their treatment process. By consolidating and intelligently disseminating curated information, the platform could help streamline how information is handled and reshape the information landscape within the healthcare sector.

Inspiration

The Bertelsmann Stiftung cannot and will not implement and operate this platform itself, because merely providing a digital infrastructure would fall far short of the mark. To cultivate a digital ecosystem that benefits all participants, it requires more than a legal foundation; but also the insight and collective will of all relevant actors in the healthcare system. Therefore, as a foundation, we see our role to inspire those who can collaboratively bring this vision to fruition.

International context

Digital ecosystems have networked the world more tightly than ever before. While these platforms adapt to national circumstances, they often extend beyond borders. This presents challenges that can no longer be effectively tackled solely at the national level. International collaboration and coordination are thus imperative if we are to mitigate risks and seize the opportunities inherent in this transformation. We have therefore positioned our vision of a national healthcare platform within an international framework from the outset, engaging with international

organizations in Europe and beyond. This applies in particular to the quality, safety and interoperability standards associated with such a platform (see InfoQ: Making quality visible).

Real-time project results

Since the advent of AI-powered language models, we have seen just how rapidly digital transformation is reshaping our lives. Given the exponential pace at which things are changing, we have chosen to release our project findings as they develop – in "real time" – rather than holding off until the project has concluded. This concept is a living document and as we move forward, this concept will undergo continual refinement through contributions and the addition of new sections, all aimed at further shaping the vision of the national healthcare platform.

Dr. Sebastian Schmidt-Kaehler, Dr. Inga Münch

Dr. Sebastian Schmidt-Kaehler serves as the co-director of the Healthcare Program at the Bertelsmann Stiftung. Before this, he held the position of managing partner at Patientenprojekte GmbH, a consultancy focused on organizational management with a specialization in patient communication. From 2011 to 2015, he assumed the role of national director at Germany's Unabhängige Patientenberatung (UPD). He is also currently a member of the expert committee for the National Action Plan Health Literacy in Germany.

Dr. Inga Münch is a health researcher and co-lead of the "Trusted Health Ecosystems" project at the Bertelsmann Stiftung. Most recently, she has been involved in various projects that merge patient-centered care with digital health solutions. Her PhD thesis centered around the concept of health-literate organizations. Through her work on a variety of scientific projects, Dr. Münch has conducted research in areas encompassing health education, patient-oriented care and health systems.

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