Advancing digital health in Greece: The role of the Hellenic Digital Health Cluster

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ABSTRACT

Clusters in the EU context are seen as strategic initiatives that bring together interconnected companies, suppliers, and institutions to foster innovation and competitiveness. The European Union's cluster policy aims to boost industry competitiveness and innovation by leveraging interconnected groups of companies, suppliers, and institutions to implement EU priorities and support the EU Industrial Strategy [1]. Greece has implemented national cluster programs to foster innovation and collaboration among SMEs, but these initiatives have been limited in effectiveness due to a lack of continuity, performance evaluations, and technical support [2].

In 2021, the **Hellenic Digital Health Cluster (HDHC)** was founded by FORTH, as the innovation cluster facilitator (ICS & PRAXI network), and 20 innovative companies to bridge academia, industry, and professionals in digital health, promoting collaboration and innovation in this critical sector [3]. Up to now HDHC has gained significant traction by having 33 members, implementing innovative projects and providing valuable services.

The objectives of the cluster include facilitating connections between all relevant stakeholders to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the digital health ecosystem. Additionally, the cluster provides strategic guidance and tailored support to its members, assisting with digital health innovations, market readiness, and R&D initiatives. It also promotes and nurtures digital health startups by offering access to resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities for growth.

Ongoing projects, assisting the development of the national ecosystem, include:

- **VELES Excellence Hub** which creates a cross-border **Smart Health Data Space** in SE Europe to promote innovation in healthcare data exchange and drive advancements in personalized care, particularly in cancer treatment, dementia and Alzheimer.
- **LEVELUP** which enhances digital skills across SMEs in Europe, offering training in Data Analytics, AI, and Cybersecurity to aid their digital transition.
- **IRHIS** which establishes an EU-wide Advanced Remote Care Demonstration Chain, scaling AI-powered MedTech solutions for critical care areas such as musculoskeletal rehabilitation, neurological disorder treatment and critical patient conditions (ICU).

HDHC plans to enhance collaboration between digital health stakeholders, expand international partnerships, and promote healthcare innovations. Future efforts include scaling digital health solutions, expanding research, and increasing the reach and impact of training and consulting services to boost digital health in Greece.

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