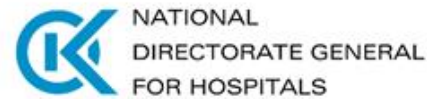


## HEAL NOW

Cooperation in Cross-border Healthcare  
between Austria and Hungary



## 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 The Mid-term Conference of The HEAL NOW Project Was held online



Following the kick-off conference of the Heal Now project kept in November 2020, the Lead Partner Health and Social Fund of Lower Austria (Niederösterreichische Landesgesundheitsagentur) agreed with the Hungarian consortium partner, National Directorate General for Hospitals (NDGH) that the mid-term conference of the project would be also kept virtually, online. The event was organized with the aim to give an account on the technical work so far implemented in the project and inform key health actors, delegated experts and relevant stakeholders of the Austro-Hungarian cross-border region about next steps and results so far.

The objective of "HEAL NOW" project is to explore possibilities for sustainable cross-border health cooperation in the Austro-Hungarian border region, targeting at the fields of histopathology and cross-border emergency rescue care services.

Within work package T1 "*building a bilateral health network*" a pilot will be implemented between the hospital in Wiener Neustadt (Landeskrankenhaus Wiener Neustadt), and the Hungarian Medical Centre in Sopron (Soproni Gyógyközpont- Erzsébet Oktató Kórház és Rehabilitációs Intézet), as network nodes to establish a pathological teleconsultation mechanism that will be based on the mutual use of big-volume data in pathology. The pilot will improve and facilitate the early detection and successful treatment of tumorous diseases by providing a more rapid clinical diagnosis and reducing turnover time.

The main goal of the T2 work package is to initiate a bilateral emergency contract to ensure that in the future the population living in the cross border region can benefit from rapid emergency care across borders, which could save lives in case of emergencies. With the current legislation in place, an ambulance car cannot cross the border, even if human life is at stake. The commitment of the project is to connect health actors (e.g. hospitals, ambulance services) and to encourage them to cooperate in a bilateral network as stakeholders in order to establish a long-term and sustainable health cooperation.

Gábor Csató M.D., CEO of the Hungarian National Ambulance Service, opened the conference and greeted participants on behalf of the Ministry of Human Capacities, Hungary. Dr. Csató praised the future bilateral agreement on cross border cooperation in emergency services between Austria and Hungary. The CEO expressed his special thanks to the staff members of the participating hospitals, which despite and under extreme difficulties caused by the COVID-19 crisis were able to manage a smooth implementation of the project. The significance of this should be even more underlined and justified with a view to the current pandemic and foreign policy situation.

This was followed by the video message of Martin Eichinger, D.Jur., member of Lower Austria's Government for Housing, Employment and International Affairs, who highlighted: "it's rejoicing that cross-border health cooperation to be implemented in the HEAL NOW project will tie the relationship even closer among Western Hungary, Burgenland and Lower Austria, contributing to a quicker and more sustainable healthcare in the cross border region." He also expressed his sincere thanks for establishing a state-of-the-art rapid point-to-point E-consultation & E-diagnostic system between the two hospitals, and the for the pathological equipment purchased in the framework of the project for the Institute of Pathology of the Wiener Neustadt Hospital, which now can provide the latest technology for its patients.

Then the audience heard a short briefing on the results of the "Heal Now" Austrian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation project completed so far from Florian Lochner, Health Agency of Lower Austria (NÖ).

On the recent developments (progress with preparatory work) of the Cooperation Agenda 2030 document Gunter Maier, Austrian National Public Health Institute (Gesundheit Österreich GmbH, GÖG) and Dóra Tóth, from the Hungarian Healthcare Management Association representing the two contracted external experts, who kept their presentations and informed participants on progress of data collection, road mapping and next steps.

Dr. Birgit Ringelhan, Head of the Pathology Department of the Sopron Medical Centre (Erzsébet Teaching Hospital and Rehabilitation Institute), introduced the rapid point-to-point tele-diagnostic distance E-consultation & E-diagnostic system, which is separated from the patients in space and time and will enable the two hospitals to process and analyse histological samples of each other's patients online by routine. "The mutual teleconsultation mechanism of big-volume data to be built out will have a significant role in making a histological diagnosis which is key to provide a successful treatment and identify tumours tissues. We are working on the formulation of the required legal background and documentation protocols and look forward to receiving the then to be purchased high resolution medical devices/equipment, which will provide the state-of-the-art technical background to all of this" underlined Dr. Ringelhan.

Prim. Dr. Wolfgang Hulla, Head of the Institute of Pathology of the Hospital of Wr. Neustadt also stated that the common and interoperable tele-diagnostic distance E-consultation & E-diagnostic system would have a paramount importance role in histological diagnostics, and would serve as a basis for successful treatment. "Pathology already belongs to the hard-to-fill/bottleneck job vacancy medical fields. So, if we can improve care by capacity and knowledge sharing, that will optimise access to quality

sustainable health care for the cross-border population in the long term” emphasized Prim. Dr. Wolfgang Hulla.

The event was concluded by the update of H.E. Mr. Alexander Grubmayr, D.Jur., LL.M., ambassador of Austria to Hungary, who informed participants about the progress made in formulating the rescue contract and emergency agreement. The ambassador expressed his gratitude and appreciation to all participants of the project for the results achieved so far, and confirmed that “Heal Now” would have the potential to improve the efficiency of cross-border health care services, and would serve the direct benefit of end-users, the patients living in the border area.

Heal Now project is implemented by the following partners:

- **Niederösterreichische Landesgesundheitsagentur NÖ LGA** - lead partner  
(Health and Social Fund of Lower Austria)
- **National Directorate General for Hospitals (OKFŐ)** Directorate for Project Coordination consortium partner
- **Province of Burgenland - Nordburgenland -Department 6 (NUTS 2) Region Burgenland** strategic partner

PILOT:

- **Landeskrankenhaus Wiener Neustadt**  
Corvinusring 3-5, 2700 Wiener Neustadt
- **Soproni Erzsébet Oktató Kórház és Rehabilitációs Intézet**  
Sopron Medical Centre, Erzsébet Teaching Hospital and Rehabilitation Institute  
9400 Sopron, Győri út 15.

Further information:

<https://www.interreg-athu.eu/en/>

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