Good practice

Digital skills to increase quality and resilience of the health system in Italy

Working Group: Health

Member State, Regions: Italy, all the 19 Italian regions and the 2 Italian Autonomous Provinces

Thematic areas: Digital and Physical Connectivity, Jobs and Skills, Quality of Life and Equal Access to Services

Basic project details

Lead organisation:

ProMIS (Programma Mattone Internazionale Salute) – Italy

Partner organisations:

- Italian Ministry of Health
- Department for Digital Transformation of the Italian Government
- Italian regions including Marche, Campania, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Puglia, Toscana, Veneto, PA di Bolzano, PA di Trento, Basilicata, Sicilia
- AGENAS (Agenzia Nazionale per i Servizi Sanitari Regionali)

Project duration:

- November 2022 – February 2024 (Design phase)
- June 2024 – December 2026 (Implementation phase)

Overview and objectives

The project aimed to enhance the digital skills of Italian healthcare professionals to improve the quality and resilience of the healthcare system. The design phase was funded by the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) 2021, which is the EU programme that provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. The design phase involved understanding current Information and Communications

Technology (ICT) competencies, developing a strategy for skill improvement, and implementing an action plan. Deliverables included inception reports, analysis of current skills, guidelines for Electronic Health Records (EHR), a National Strategy for Digital Skills Improvement, and a roadmap for implementation. The implementation phase was funded with national funds and was inserted in a Large-Scale Regional Partnership under the Pact for Skills – the EU initiative, which aims to support public and private organisations with maximising the impact of their investment in upskilling and reskilling, so they can thrive through the green and digital transitions.

The project's key goals included supporting structural reforms in Italy by enhancing digital upskilling programs for the healthcare workforce. It provided guidelines, methods, and resources for stakeholders at central and regional levels to improve these programs. Additionally, the project aimed to support regional upskilling initiatives, define KPIs for monitoring, increase EHR adoption, and create a national EHR communication strategy. The main deliverables were EHR 2.0 guidelines and a strategy for improving digital skills, including pilot projects to validate the approach. The overall goal was to improve the quality and safety of healthcare services through better digital competence.

Context

The need behind the project was the insufficient digital skills among Italian healthcare professionals. This lack of digital competence hindered the effective adoption and use of ICT solutions, such as EHRs, in the healthcare sector. Consequently, this gap affected the quality and safety of healthcare services. The project aimed to develop a comprehensive strategy to enhance digital skills, ensuring healthcare professionals could provide high-quality, safe care.

Target groups

The target groups of the project were Italian healthcare workers and Italian health authorities and stakeholders.

Actions

The project's actions included mapping current national and regional initiatives, examining international best practices, and engaging stakeholders through workshops and seminars. The project also involved understanding current digital competencies, developing a digital skills strategy, creating guidelines for electronic health records adoption, and implementing an action plan to test these strategies in pilot cases.

Financial allocation

Total budget: EUR 700 000 (Design phase)

EU co-funding: Yes

Sources of funding:

- TSI – Technical Support Instrument 2021 (Design phase): 100%
- Pact for Skills (Implementation phase)

Working Group Insights

"In agreement with the other members of the Health WG, I selected this practice given its potential as an EU funded collaborative projects focused on reforming health systems with the specific focus on digital skills. For this very nature, it has objective and potential of future replicability to other settings. Although the governance systems may not seamlessly fit diverse local contexts across Europe, some of the tools developed offer the potential for reuse with minimal adjustment. Such tools include general theoretical methodologies, digital skills catalogues and assessment tool that are not directly tied to specific governance structures or national contexts. The final report of the project lists several key elements that can be replicated.

By developing a clear strategy and action plan for digital skill improvement, the project enhances digital skills among healthcare professionals to fill the increasing skills gap that comes with the digitalisation of the health sector and thus improve the quality and resilience of the healthcare system in the Italian Regions. This not only improves the quality, the accessibility and the equity of healthcare services but also makes the regions more attractive to skilled professionals, ensuring long-term sustainability and growth".

PAOLO MICHELUTTI

Project manager at Programma Mattone Internazionale Salute (ProMIS) – Italy and Health Workforce expert for the Italian Ministry of Health
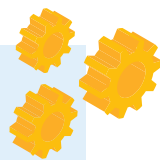
Results

The project produced several significant outcomes. First, it provided a clear understanding of the current ICT skills of Italian healthcare professionals. Additionally, a strategy was developed to enhance digital skills, which included necessary managerial and organizational changes. Third, guidelines for the adoption of electronic health records were created. Finally, an action plan for implementing a digital skills strategy was formulated and tested in selected pilot cases.

Success factors

Success factors for the project included the engagement of stakeholders and the development of a clear and comprehensive strategy for digital skills. The project was integrated into Italy's national digital transformation strategy, ensuring institutional commitment and regional implementation. Effective implementation and monitoring of action plans were also crucial, along with a clear definition of stakeholders' expectations. The engagement of institutional directors ensured political support, while contextualizing project suggestions to regional settings enhanced relevance. An active involvement of regional stakeholders in a co-creation process further contributed to the project's success.

Implementation challenges

Key challenges encountered during the implementation of the project included managing potential delays and feedback from multiple stakeholders. Ensuring the alignment of national and regional objectives was also a significant challenge. To mitigate this, the initiative created a co-governance model, engaging key regional authorities in the design and implementation process. Additionally, ensuring consistent and high-quality training across different regions and healthcare systems proved to be complicated due to the varying levels of existing digital infrastructure and resources among regions. Additionally, differences in regional governance structures and healthcare policies made it challenging to standardise training programs and ensure uniform implementation.

The conclusion of our expert Paolo Michelutti, project manager at Programma Mattone Internazionale Salute (ProMIS) – Italy and Health Workforce expert for the Italian Ministry of Health

"The methodology, digital skills catalogues and assessment tool developed under this programme are not directly tied to specific governance structures or national contexts. They can therefore be easily reused by other countries with minimal adjustment".

Useful sources

Official website: https://promisalute.it/iniziativa-di-sistem/tsi-digital-skill/

https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/document/download/32fe47c4-b63e-42a0-a713-d74b1ff6212f_en?filename=20240521_TSI%20Digital%20Skills_Final%20Report_pubblicazione.pdf&prefLang=el

https://promisalute.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Scheda-iniziative-di-sistema_TSI-Digital-Skills.pdf

Contact

E-mail: secretariat@harnessingtalentplatform.eu

Website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en