



The “Kick-off” expert panel event of the HEAL NOW project was successfully held online

The objective of "HEAL NOW" project is to explore possibilities for sustainable cross-border health cooperation in the Austro-Hungarian border region.

Based on the work packages agreed in the project (T1 and T2), the first step will be to assess data (health status of the population, health care provision) relevant for the development of cross-border health care cooperation. The experts in the working groups will be responsible for clarifying the main legal and technical issues, removing administrative obstacles and developing proposals for solutions in response to the identified needs.

Within working group 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. The pilot will develop a pathological teleconsultation mechanism based on the mutual use of big-volume data in pathology. This access to E-consultation and E-diagnosis will enable a more rapid clinical diagnosis by reducing turn-over time, and will facilitate the early detection and successful treatment of tumorous diseases.

The initiation of a bilateral emergency contract, which is the main goal of the T2 working group, could 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 emergencies. With the current legislation in place, an ambulance car cannot cross the Austrian-Hungarian 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 in the Austrian-Hungarian border region.

Following the official opening conference of the Heal Now project last November, the nominations of health professionals and experts in pre-identified medical fields were made, and the first bilateral

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panel meeting of the project took place online on 30th June 2021. The aim and task of the expert panel was to initiate a professional dialogue and exchange of experiences among relevant health actors and stakeholders from the Austrian-Hungarian cross-border region who are best suited to solve and tackle targeted project goals.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Xavier Conill's key note presentation from EGTC-Hospital de Cerdanya. The deputy director summarised the cooperation experiences of Cerdanya hospital, which is operated in joint maintenance at the French-Spanish (Catalan) border. This was followed by a short briefing on the "Heal Now" Austrian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation project in the form of a joint presentation by Florian Lochner from the lead Partner, Health Agency of Lower Austria (NÖ Landesgesundheitsagentur) and Ferenc Weigl representing the National Directorate General for Hospitals (OKFŐ), the Hungarian project partner. Afterwards, experts from the different stakeholder institutions briefly introduced their hospitals and outlined their proposed areas of cooperation on the basis of previously agreed guiding questions.

The bilateral exchange of experiences constitutes the basic approach to achieve the project objectives. The bilateral network to be established will help to optimise access to sustainable health care for the cross-border population in the long term. Capacity-sharing will have the potential to improve the efficiency of cross-border health care services and will serve the direct benefit of end-users, the patients living in the border area.

Once the framework for cross-border patient care (overcoming legal and administrative obstacles to allow future cross-border movement of ambulances) is developed, a proposal for a cross-border emergency contract (future bilateral agreement) the actual cross border technical cooperation will be put in place. This will be followed by the development of a strategic plan "Cooperation Strategy 2030" setting out short, medium and long-term objectives. This three-tier agenda will serve as a base for long-term cross-border health cooperation. The intention to implement the "Cooperation Strategy 2030" will be confirmed by project partners in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Expert panel members:

- Landesklinikum Wiener Neustadt
- Notruf Niederösterreich
- Hauptreferat Rettungsdienste Burgenland
- Soproni Erzsébet Oktató Kórház és Rehabilitációs Intézet
Sopron Medical Centre, Erzsébet Teaching Hospital and Rehabilitation Institute,
- Országos Mentőszolgálat- National Ambulance Service (Hungary)
- Markusovszky Egyetemi Oktatókórház- Markusovszky University Teaching Hospital
- Hévízgyógyfürdő és Szent András Reumakórház- Heviz Spa and St. Andrew's Rheumatology Hospital
- Magyar Patológusok Társasága- Hungarian Society of Pathologists
- Határon Átnyúló Kezdeményezések Közép-európai Segítő Szolgálat (CESCI)
Central European Service for Cross-Border Cooperation (CESCI)

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**

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PILOT:

- **Landeskrlinikum 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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