Electronic Health - eHealth as a part of eEurope Action Plan
(Summary of the Disertation Thesis)

At the meeting of the European Council in Lisbon on March 23 – 24, 2000 the leaders of fifteen European countries set an ambitious target for Europe – to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. As a response to this plan an action plan with the name eEurope was introduced on 19-20 June 2000 in Feira, Portugal. It is a successiveness of steps to reach this target, which belongs to the Lisbon Strategy. By this the member countries of the EU, European Parliament and European Commission made a political commitment to mutually cooperate and coordinate activities in development of European information society.

One of the aims of the action plan is to introduce eHealth in the EU countries. To briefly characterize the concept of eHealth we could well say that it means utilizing the tools of information technology and the Internet for exchange, saving and processing health information. Information technology had an important role in healthcare system in the past and at present it is seen not only as a way to process tasks more easily in the future but also as a way to be competitive at the market.

A task to complete informatization in healthcare system means to cover more basic spheres. Firstly it means to deepen the level of care through e-documentation and possibilities of communication among specialists and employees in healthcare at different levels.

eHealth covers everything from electronic prescriptions and electronic medical records to using new systems and services, which minimize waiting and reduce errors. For example electronic medical records can help the doctors diagnose diseases and prescribe treatment more promptly, which would mean reducing the number of inaccurate decisions in healthcare system. The reduction of administrative operations in healthcare would by all means lead to higher efficiency.

On April 30, 2004 the action plan for health care named "eHealth action plan" was adopted by the European Commission. It tells how information and communication technology can be helpful to guarantee a better quality in healthcare throughout Europe.

Since it is clear that computers and technology have changed all the sectors of economy in the last decades, healthcare has to undergo this phase as well. It is not a necessary evil. It is inevitable.

The aim of the dissertation is:

• To elaborate the accessible information about electronic healthcare as a part of the process of informatization in Europe, namely in European Union, as well as in Slovakia.

• To analyze and evaluate the existing situation in the sphere of electronic healthcare in Slovak Republic and through that also the process of informatization in Slovakia.

• To identify the goals which should be reached in Slovakia in the sphere of electronic healthcare and which arise from the Lisbon Strategy.

• To monitor those activities being prepared in this sphere and continue to elaborate propositions, which will aim at realization and reaching the goal.

In the first chapter primary conceptions and definitions connected to the topic and tasks set in Lisbon Strategy as a basis for eEurope action plan are explained. Main tasks are denoted which there are in Lisbon Treaty for Slovakia and its existing position among the EU member countries. The second part of the first chapter is aimed at concrete successiveness of steps to reach the goals set by Lisbon Agenda introduced in the action plan divided into several parts.

In the second chapter electronic healthcare is defined and the importance of health and healthcare belonging among basic human rights. Further the situation in electronic healthcare is introduced and briefly described the action plan in healthcare, as well as the steps which have been already taken. In conclusion functionality and positives which eHealth has brought so far are analyzed.

The third chapter concentrates on the importance and existing situation of electronic healthcare in Slovak Republic. It explores the situation and readiness of health institutions for introduction of electronic healthcare system, identifies the aims which need to be attained in the given sphere and also the steps which will lead to reaching the goals. At the end of this chapter conclusions are presented which outcome from this dissertation, as well as the benefits of electronic healthcare. There are also suggestions how electronic healthcare should look and how to most effectively realize the necessary steps to attaining this vision.

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