Press release
The National Digital Council submits its report on the digital transformation of the health system

Paris, 11 June 2020

Backs against the wall.

The long-awaited digital transformation of the healthcare system is, after decades, no longer a spot on the horizon or a mirage that never seems to come any closer.

The health crisis we are going through makes us face the reality: we took too long to get here. "We are at war," President Emmanuel Macron announced on March 16th, 2020. How could we hope, without the political backing of digital health, without a long-term government-led vision, to meet this challenge sufficiently equipped? From the difficulty of providing integrated and independent tools to the lack of training, as well as the users and professionals fragile trust in this field, the pressure that digital health has been under in France is undeniable.

Of course, to look on the bright side, these troubled times allow us to demonstrate the strengths of our country: the growing use of tools such as telehealth. Reaching 10,000 consultations per week in February 2020, usage increased a hundredfold in less than a month! This public digital turnaround is also due to an innovative ecosystem freed from administrative inertia, which was able to rush through decision-making in a record time. So much proof that, even with our backs against the wall, we did not run into it.

We are hardly the only ones to make these observations, and for some time, the efforts to continue the transformation started in 2017 by the Government have increased. This crisis allows us to measure our underperformance and highlights the resources we need to catch up, from the widespread adoption of online treatment to prevention and the monitoring of potential epidemics.

Seized in June 2019 by the Minister for Solidarities and Health and the Secretary of State for Digital, the French Digital Council presented a report detailing eighteen recommendations designed to support this transformation. Far from being made obsolete by the outbreak of COVID-19, it made their translation in political acts even more pressing.

These propositions are structured in four axes: the shift from a care system (*système de soin*) to a health system (*système de santé*); freeing up innovation; giving priority to the national health platforms and the intensification of the professionals and users training.

First, in an era of increasing international competition in the digital health sector, and the arrival on our market of services that sometimes run counter to the French social model and the vision of a widely accessible healthcare, it seems imperative that France develops its own vision of digital health and to lift it on the European stage. This dynamic relies on four pillars:

- Reinforcing the governance of digital health by clarifying the roles of the institutions and the repartition of both strategic and operational management, while strengthening the central position of the patient, at the heart of the health system;
- Successfully transitioning from a care system towards a health system, which requires rethinking our financing system and reevaluating the role of prevention;
- Guaranteeing the interoperability and safety of information systems in order to ensure both citizens and professionals support and confidence;
- Promoting a responsible vision of digital health, which requires integrating ethics, digital inclusion and environmental responsibility to digital health policies.

Secondly, the French digital health market is full of insufficiently valued potentialities and is crying out for a viable economic model. We therefore wish to insist on the need to remove the restraints on innovation in order to offer a real business model and a market to digital health companies. In order to do so, we recommend:

- rethinking, in a decentralized way, the organisation of the innovation support structures network;
- developing mechanisms designed to promote the participation of citizens and health professionals in the innovation processes;
- reinforcing the bridges between industry and research, while ensuring respect for the latter's independence;
- assigning the High Health Authority (*Haute Autorité de Santé*) an advisory role in order to better accompany entrepreneurs in their - sometimes complex - procedures with administrations;
- creating a mechanism designed to streamline exchanges between entrepreneurs, professionals and citizens involved in innovation, and policy makers.

Third, we propose to put the Espace Numérique de Santé (ENS - *Digital Health Space*) and its counterpart for health professionals, the Bouquet de Services aux professionnels de santé (BSP - *Health Professional Services Package*), at the centre of the health system. The referencing of applications and services that will be integrated in these platforms must balance quality guarantees for users and simplified procedures for the industry. Our study brought out four main objectives for the ENS and the BSP:

- rapidly generalize these tools at a national scale, within a clearly defined framework;
- ensure the acceptance of these platforms by users and health professionals, meet their expectations and reinforce their trust;
- make the ENS a digital health dashboard for citizens, handing them control over their own health data, while ensuring their security;
- allow individuals, through their ENS, to freely contribute to research projects they wish to support by handing over their anonymised health data for analysis with full assurance the data is secure.

Lastly, ensuring the success of digital health in France also means to make sure these tools meet the needs of their users, and that these users can use them. There is hence a need to acculturate, train and support users of the national health platforms by:

- developing digital health competence certificates, on the model offered by the platform PIX;
- completing this certification with specific tracks designed for health professionals, mandatory in the initial training and with incentives for the already practicing professionals.

While the pressure of this crisis is slowly decreasing, it is possible again to think longer term: we must seize this opportunity to massively increase the efforts put into digital health in order to complete this transformation. We have seen its limits, and we also know what the benefits would be. We are ready to initiate a deep reform designed to rethink prevention, the quality of care and the central position of the user.

The Prime Minister recently announced a *"Ségur de la Santé"*, which positioned digital health as one of its central pillars. Our report's goal is to endorse these

reflexions, and we hope it will be the same with the propositions made these last months by all parties mobilised for this transformation.

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