

The EFMI Working Group “Healthcare Informatics for Interregional Cooperation”: An Evolving Strategy for Building Cooperation Bridges

Arriel Benis ^{a, c}, Mihaela Crisan-Vida ^{b, c}, Lăcrămioara Stoicu-Tivadar ^{b, c}

^a Faculty of Technology Management, Holon Institute of Technology, Israel

^b Department of Automation and Applied Informatics, Politehnica University Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania

^c European Federation for Medical Informatics, Working Group “Healthcare Informatics for Interregional Cooperation

Abstract

The Working Group “Health Informatics for Interregional Cooperation” (WG HIIC) of the European Federation for Medical Informatics (EFMI) is dedicated to develop, to implement and to disseminate a strategy for promoting exchange of information, knowledge and experiences all around the world and more particularly, between Health Informatics arena players in the different European continent regions.

Keywords:

Europe, Social Participation, International Cooperation

Introduction

The European Federation for Medical Informatics Association (EFMI) is in Europe, since 1976 [1], is the leading organization in the field with more than 30 partner-countries affiliated societies. Among the main objectives of EFMI, a central one is promoting co-operation inside and outside Europe by supporting dissemination of academic and professional education, knowledge, standards and experience.

For matching with these goals, in a continuously changing scientifically, technologically and regulatory contexts, EFMI has workgroups (WGs) focusing on how to investigate, to disseminate and to promote a large range of sub-specialties of Medical Informatics by taking into account cultural differences. EFMI WG “Health Informatics for Interregional Cooperation” (HIIC) has been created continuing the activity of the EFMI WG Medical Informatics for Countries in Transition (MICIT) chaired until 2003 by Prof. George Mihals and from 2003 by Prof. Lăcrămioara Stoicu-Tivadar who proposed to EFMI Council the new WG in 2007. Since 2018 a new chair – Dr. Arriel Benis - and co-chair – Dr. Mihaela Crisan-Vida took the lead of the WG and will continue the activities in a dynamic manner for the next 4 years.

Objectives

- The EFMI WG HIIC activities consist of promoting exchange of information, knowledge and experiences all around the world and more particularly, between Health Informatics arena players in the different European continent regions. For addressing these, the EFMI WG HIIC is over the years developing and improving a dedicated continually evolving strategy [2].
- The main objectives of the EFMI WG HIIC are [3]:

- to promote exchange of information and experiences between actors in different regions in Europe;
- to investigate the needs, opportunities and obstacles for e-health and to review and select from different education options for developing regions;
- to disseminate European and world-wide results and experiences across regions and between professionals;
- to facilitate access to European groups and their facilities and outcomes by students and health professionals from developing regions;
- to disseminate European and world-wide results and experiences across developing regions and professionals.

Implementation

During the last decade, the EFMI WG HIIC has been involved in different projects and missions, for example,

- to support the development and the implementation of the Electronic Health Record in Europe;
- to motivate national societies to join EFMI as members and also its WGs;
- to support the organization and the community involvement in the Medical Informatics Europe (MIE) conferences;
- to organize EFMI Special Topic Conferences (STCs) and workshops allowing researchers and practitioners sharing their work in a specific sub-domain [4].

Several of these EFMI WG HIIC actions during 2008 - 2017 were:

- 2008: in April the WG chair conducted a mission of evaluation and support the EHR Serbia, with participation in The Conference «Electronic Health Record, options for the Future», Sava Center, Belgrade, April 17 (from EFMI Prof. Rolf Engelbrecht, EAR, MoH Serbia); participation in MIE 2008 Goteborg and in July Organizing the Workshop “Integration of Electronic Health Records” National / International and Technical Aspects, 24-25 July; in September participation in STC 2008, London.
- 2009: during MIE 2009 in Sarajevo HIIC organized the Workshop “Is There a Common Background to Support Better Healthcare in Central and South East Europe?” - to assess healthcare informatics stage for 6

countries in Central and East European area, and the real need for cooperation and its driving forces [5];

- 2011: HIIC chaired EFMI-STC in Laško, Slovenia, e-Health Across Borders Without Boundaries with prof. Lacramioara Stoicu-Tivadar as SPC chair and prof. Bernd Blobel and Tomaz Marcun co-chairs and editors [6].
- 2014: EFMI WG HIIC organized together with EFMI Primary Care WG the STC 2014 in Budapest, Hungary, dealing with cross-border challenges in informatics with a focus on disease surveillance and utilization of big-data, editing the volume Cross-Border Challenges in Informatics with a Focus on Disease Surveillance and Utilising Big Data [7]
- 2015: the WG supported the program and participation in EFMI MIE2015, Madrid, Spain; mediating EFMI-IMIA WGs meeting during MIE 2015; in April participation in EU-USA project Trillium bridge workshop; preparing projects for consolidating cross border cooperation with neighbours, Hungary (Szeged) and Serbia (Vrsac) in e-health projects under INTERREG frame.
- 2016: participation at STC 2016, Paris, France with scientific contributions; participation in EFMI MIE 2016, Munich, Germany and organizing the workshop on regional projects and low cost solutions for financially challenged regions: Sustainability of Telemedicine Projects for Resource Challenged Regions having as invited speaker the regional projects expert Michael Weinara.
- to develop active cooperation at the national level between EFMI country (e.g. Romania / Hungary / Serbia since 2009), academic institutions in different regions of Europe (e.g. "Politehnica" University of Timisoara in Romania and the Holon Institute of Technology in Israel since 2017) in medical informatics education and e-health projects [8].

The results of the previous years show that interregional cooperation in the European health informatics arena is active and gradually moving from focused interested to broad one which combine academic and industrial researches and higher education training. The EFMI WG HIIC focused, focus and will focus on common problems that extend beyond national borders such as health, legal, political, economic and cultural factors.

Lessons and future outcomings

In the nowadays, connected world the EFMI WG HIIC is proud of the previously accomplishments.

From these experiences, the group has pointed-out new needs and challenges for taking to the next level, the interregional cooperations based on medical and health informatics projects.

An important part of the EFMI WG HIIC strategy consists for the next years to increase the numbers of its members, their academic and professional background and country of origin. Accordingly, it will allow the WG to be involved in more projects, such as taskforces, and so will be able to support them by sharing experience and expertise in running multinational and interregional projects.

The virtualization of the workspace is a huge opportunity for establishing scientific, technical, educational and mostly human active and productive partnerships in the European landscape and further.

As some examples of future outcomings, we can mention: collateral involvements in health informatics courses between

academic institutions in EFMI partner-countries and the development and implementation of a collaborative and multilingual dictionary focusing on Health and Medical Informatics.

References

- [1] Mihalas G., Zvarova J., Kulikowski C., Ball M., van Bommel J., Hasman A., Masic I., Whitehouse D., Barber B., History of medical informatics in Europe - a short review by different approach. *Acta Informatica Medica*, 22(1) (2014), 6-10.
- [2] Mihalas G., Evolution of trends in European medical informatics. *Acta Informatica Medica*, 22(1) (2014), 37-43.
- [3] European Federation of Medical Informatics, HIIC - Health Informatics for Interregional Cooperation, <https://www.efmi.org/workinggroups/hiic-health-informatics-for-interregional-cooperation>
- [4] Cornet, R., Stoicu-Tivadar, L., Hörbst, A., Parra Calderón, C.L., Andersen, S.K., Hercigonja-Szekeres, M., Digital Healthcare Empowering Europeans, *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 210 (2015)
- [5] Stoicu-Tivadar L., Blobel B., Kern J., Masic I., Mihalas G., Orel A., Surjan G., Urosevic V., Medical Informatics in a United and Healthy Europe, *Series Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 150 (2009), Open Access funded by EFMI and IMIA, pp. 1002-1006
- [6] Stoicu-Tivadar L., Blobel B., Marčun T., Orel A., e-Health Across Borders Without Boundaries, *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 165 (2011)
- [7] Stoicu-Tivadar L., de Lusignan S., Orel A., Engelbrecht R., Surján G., Cross-Border Challenges in Informatics with a Focus on Disease Surveillance and Utilising Big Data, *Studies in Health Technology and Informatics*, 197 (2014)
- [8] Memorandum of Understanding signed between Politehnica University Timisoara, Romania and HIT Retrieved November 8, 2018, from https://www.hit.ac.il/en/news/news-and-stories/Romania_Agreement

Address for correspondence

Dr. Arriel Benis, Faculty of Technology Management, Holon Institute of Technology – HIT, Golomb St 52, Holon, 5810201, Israel
e-mail: arrielb@hit.ac.il