

EU wants patients to be able to access medical data

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The European Commission on Tuesday put forward a proposal that would let patients access their medical data anywhere in the bloc, creating an EU-wide platform that could also be used for research.

The scheme, called the European Health Data Space, gained impetus from the coronavirus pandemic and Brussels' lead in obtaining vaccines and creating a bloc-wide COVID status certificate.

The proposed platform "shows the power of cooperation and that there is nothing more valuable for EU citizens and EU patients than health, and to be able to have access to their [medical records](#), to share this data, to make the best use of it," EU health commissioner Stella Kyriakides told a news conference.

Currently, medical records are retained by family doctors or at a regional or national level.

The commission's plan is to give patients free and easy digital access to their [medical information](#), so it could be used by other doctors, anywhere in the EU, for instance when on vacation.

That would avoid the need for costly duplicate X-rays or analyses that had already been recorded, potentially saving more than five billion euros, according to the commission.

Citizens would have "full control of their data" and be able to correct errors, restrict access to it and see how it is being used, under the proposal.

Researchers, government bodies and businesses would also be able to access it—but only with a permit, with the patient's consent, and in compliance with EU data protection laws, which are among the world's toughest.

Their use could only be for specific purposes and anonymised, and anything derived that could be detrimental—such as hiking [insurance premiums](#)—would be "strictly prohibited".

The European Parliament and the EU's 27 member states would have to approve the proposal before it could come into force.

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