

DIGITAL HEALTH, INNOVATION & DATA



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Alena Sabelová is the State Secretary of the Slovak Deputy Prime Minister for the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the use of European funds. She has been working in the state administration with a short break since 2001, in several management positions, including the Ministry of Finance

and the Government Office. She also led the process of preparing the strategic document "Vision and Strategy for the Development of Slovakia until 2030" and represented Slovakia in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, headquartered in London, for eight years.

Europe is undergoing a profound demographic and technological shift. Ageing populations, rising chronic disease burdens, and growing shortages of healthcare professionals are putting systemic pressure on already stretched health systems, including Slovakia's. At the same time, rapid advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, automation and data analytics are opening new possibilities to deliver care that is more personalized, proactive, and efficient. In this context, digital health is no longer an optional innovation agenda - it is becoming a necessary condition for a resilient, accessible, and sustainable healthcare system.

INNOVATION REQUIRES SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Healthcare innovation is often understood only as the introduction of new technologies. In reality, meaningful innovation requires changes across the entire healthcare system: from administrative support, clinical decisions to long-term patient management. Technology can deliver real value only when it is integrated into everyday clinical practice and supported by appropriate rules, incentives, and skills.

Therefore, Slovakia's priority should not be simply to deploy new digital tools, but to ensure that innovation contributes to better coordination of care, more efficient use of

resources, and improved outcomes for patients. This requires moving beyond isolated pilot projects toward coordinated approaches that align healthcare delivery, research, innovation funding, and public policy.

HEALTH DATA AS A FOUNDATION FOR BETTER CARE

At the heart of digital health lies data. High-quality, interoperable, and securely governed health data are essential for better clinical decision-making, personalized medicine, population health management, and evidence-based policymaking. At the European level, the emerging European Health Data Space reflects a shared ambition to unlock these benefits while maintaining the highest standards of privacy and data protection.

For Slovakia, strengthening health data infrastructure and governance is a strategic priority. Better use of data can support continuity of care for patients, improve planning and capacity management, and create a solid evidence base for public decisions, especially at a time of workforce shortages and fiscal constraints.

MISSION HEALTH: TURNING STRATEGY INTO ACTION

An important step in this direction is Mission Health -

a mission-oriented reform program designed to connect healthcare needs with research, innovation, and implementation.

Mission Health focuses on clinical areas where Slovakia faces the greatest challenges - oncology, neurology, and cardiology - and where improvements in prevention, early detection, diagnostics, and care coordination can save lives and improve quality of life for thousands of patients.

Central to Mission Health is the transformation of the patient journey, supported by digital tools, data analytics, and new models of care delivery. Pilot projects are designed with a clear pathway to scaling within the public healthcare system, ensuring that innovation becomes part of routine practice rather than remaining on its margins.

AI WITH TRUST AND RESPONSIBILITY

AI is expected to play an increasingly important role in healthcare, from diagnostics and clinical decision support to system planning and logistics. Properly implemented, AI can reduce administrative burden, support healthcare professionals, and help identify risks earlier.

At the same time, its use must be guided by responsibility, transparency, and trust. Strong governance, clinical validation, alignment with European regulatory

frameworks, and continuous education of healthcare professionals are essential to ensure that AI serves patients and supports - not replaces - human expertise.

PARTNERSHIP AS A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESS

The digital transformation of healthcare cannot be achieved by the public sector alone. It requires close cooperation between public institutions, healthcare providers, research organizations, and the private sector. Businesses bring valuable expertise, innovation capacity, and experience in scaling solutions - assets that are necessary for turning policy goals into real-world results.

Platforms for dialogue and cooperation, including business associations such as the American Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia, play an important role in fostering mutual understanding and building

partnerships that respect both public interests and market realities.

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Digital health, healthcare innovation, and the effective use of health data offer one of the most promising pathways toward a more resilient and patient-centered healthcare system. Initiatives such as Mission Health demonstrate Slovakia's commitment to approaching these challenges in a coordinated, responsible, and forward-looking manner.

The success of this effort will depend on sustained cooperation, trust, and a shared sense of responsibility across sectors. By working together, we can ensure that digital transformation translates into tangible benefits for patients, healthcare professionals, and society.