Interreg Danube Region

Co-funded by the European Union

DIGI4Care

See it early, treat it smarter

Policy Factsheet

Recommendations to support national decision making in taking up digital medical technologies prepared by DHI Cluster

Key messages

1. **Digital screening at the point of care enables early detection of diabetic retinopathy (DR) and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk, improving prevention and timely intervention.**
2. **AI-supported diagnostics and telemedicine solutions increase access to screening, especially for underserved populations.**
3. **Integrated digital screening pathways strengthen healthcare system efficiency and support data-driven decision-making.**

Learnings & Results

The DTP INTERREG project **DIGI4Care** (Digital Medical technologies reshaping the Danube Region Healthcare systems throughout the patient journeys from prevention to rehabilitation) aimed at redefining patient pathways by testing, validating and strategically integrating digital and AI solutions.

Four pilots were performed in the project.

- **Pilot 1**: Digital Health Technologies for Prevention and Screening
- **Pilot 2**: Tele-ultrasound Training for Emergency Medical Services
- **Pilot 3**: Digital Health for Post-Clinical Rehabilitation
- **Pilot 4**: Digital Solutions for Dementia and Cognitive Disorders

In Bulgaria, Pilot 1 tested point-of-care screening for diabetic retinopathy (DR) and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk in outpatient settings, using AI-supported retinal analysis (Aireen®) and telemedicine-based cardiovascular screening (Hubis). The strongest learning came from integrating digital screening into routine clinical workflows and refining the protocol based on real-world patient use.

Key outcomes and observations:

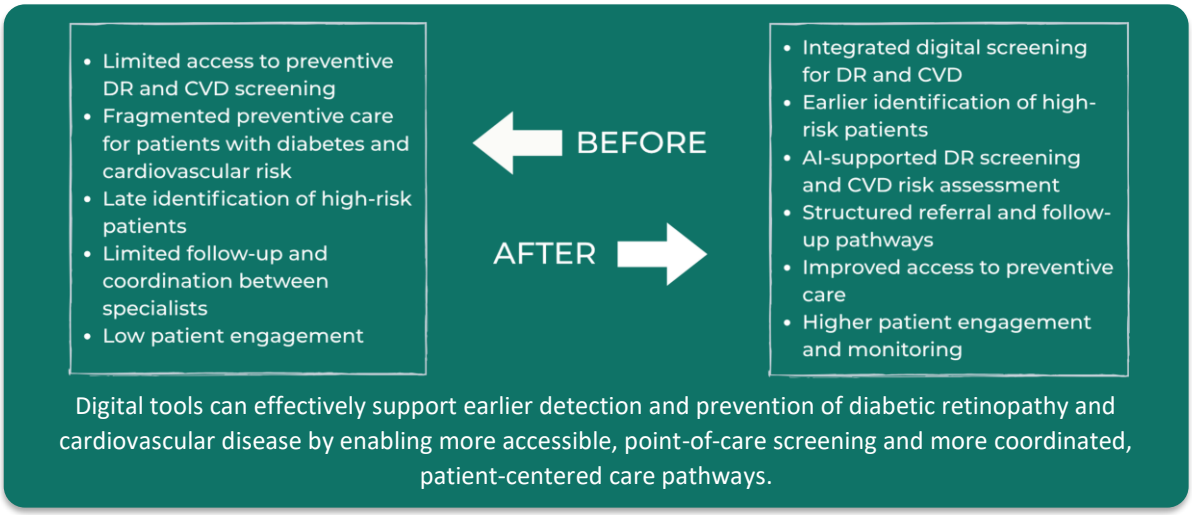
- Point-of-care screening improved access and reduced dependence on specialist visits for initial assessment.
- Patients with previously undetected DR risk and elevated CVD risk were identified for follow-up.
- Workflow issues such as repeat image capture, onboarding and consent were clarified through staff training and protocol refinement.

Main results achieved:

- **Increase of institutional capacity:** Healthcare teams gained practical experience in retinal imaging, AI-supported result interpretation, telemedicine screening and referral coordination.

- **Use of DIGI4Care strategies and action plans:** The project strategies helped structure screening workflows, referral pathways and data collection in line with prevention priorities.
- **Uptake and use of Digi4Care solutions:** Aireen® and Hubis were deployed in outpatient care, generating real world experience for future scale-up.

The results provided by the Digi4Care project are intended to provide country-related information and support evidence-based decision taking by policy makers beyond the project implementation.



Digital tools can effectively support earlier detection and prevention of diabetic retinopathy and cardiovascular disease by enabling more accessible, point-of-care screening and more coordinated, patient-centered care pathways.

Benefits for policymakers

Pilot 1 shows that integrated digital screening can support more accessible, preventive and data-driven healthcare in Bulgaria.

- **Improved access to preventive care**: Point-of-care DR and CVD screening can reach patients earlier, including those with limited specialist access.
- **Earlier identification of high-risk patients:** AI-supported and digital assessments enable timely referral and complication prevention.
- **Better coordination of care:** Defined referral and follow-up pathways improve collaboration between primary care and specialists.
- **More efficient use of resources:** Digital triage helps prioritise patients who need specialist follow-up.

Recommendations for policymakers

1. Integrate AI-supported DR screening and digital CVD risk assessment into routine primary and outpatient care.
2. Use Pilot 1 evidence to inform national prevention and screening policies.
3. Strengthen referral and follow-up pathways between primary care, specialists and digital health stakeholders.
4. Invest in interoperability, secure data exchange and staff training to support sustainable implementation.
5. Scale successful pilot models through regional and national prevention programmes.

DHI cluster