BTO – Exchange with DIGITALEUROPE on Virtual Twins for Health and Care, 18 January 2022

Participants:

DIGITALEUROPE (DE):

DG CNECT.H.3

Main topics discussed:

- DIGITALEUROPE (DE) represents the digital technology industry in Europe; it created an Issue Group on Digital Twins in Healthcare, which plans to publish a white paper on this topic in Q1 2022 (a first draft was shared ahead of the meeting). In this context they asked for a meeting with CNECT.H.3.

- EC outlined its interest to hear from members of the Issue Group their views on challenges and possible solutions for fostering the uptake of digital twins in health, contributing to better understanding of how the EC can support the emerging EU ecosystem and accelerate the development and use of virtual twins in health.

- DE presented an overview of the market landscape with early examples of digital twins in healthcare, to illustrate the maturity of solutions available and potential to move forward. Key challenges highlighted by DE comprise: i) data rules, formats and quality are fragmented; ii) need for novel data sources (e.g. environmental, behavioural, omics) and (near) real-time data; iii) security throughout the model’s network and IoT network; iv) ownership needs to be discussed, recognising the legal provisions already available; v) AI Act and EHDS are key to future use cases to be enabled; vi) ethical challenges in fundamental rights and accessibility.

- A discussion took place on the key elements of a consolidated European ecosystem around virtual twins in health and the possible role of industry in it. Such ecosystem could facilitate an open innovation model, having in mind the overall objective to exploit the benefits provided by virtual twins to all patients and citizens, clinicians, public health systems, industry and research. A use case was illustrated by 3DS as an example in which a pool of data was established across industry and academia. DE will further reflect on possible collaboration models in their forthcoming white paper.

- EC thanked DE and the members of the Issue Group for the meeting and expressed interest in the white paper, and the possibility of a following up meeting. EC reminded that we don’t start from scratch in this area, but now need to set up a framework to bring the outcome of decade(s) of investments and research onto the next level in view of industrial roll-out and clinical uptake.