

What can a national health portal contribute to primary care?

Considerations based on the Austrian national health portal European Forum for Primary Care, 2025, Vienna

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www.gesundheit.gv.at – the Austrian national health portal

Online health information provided by public institutions is becoming increasingly important as part of national and European public health policies or e-health strategies. Of course, doctors and other health professionals are the first personal point of contact for health issues. National health portals, such as the Austrian www.gesundheit.gv.at, can therefore contribute to improving primary health care (Ramssl-Sauer et al., 2023). The Austrian population primarily obtains information on medical and health topics via the internet and social media, from doctors, and from other healthcare professionals (Griebler et al. 2021).

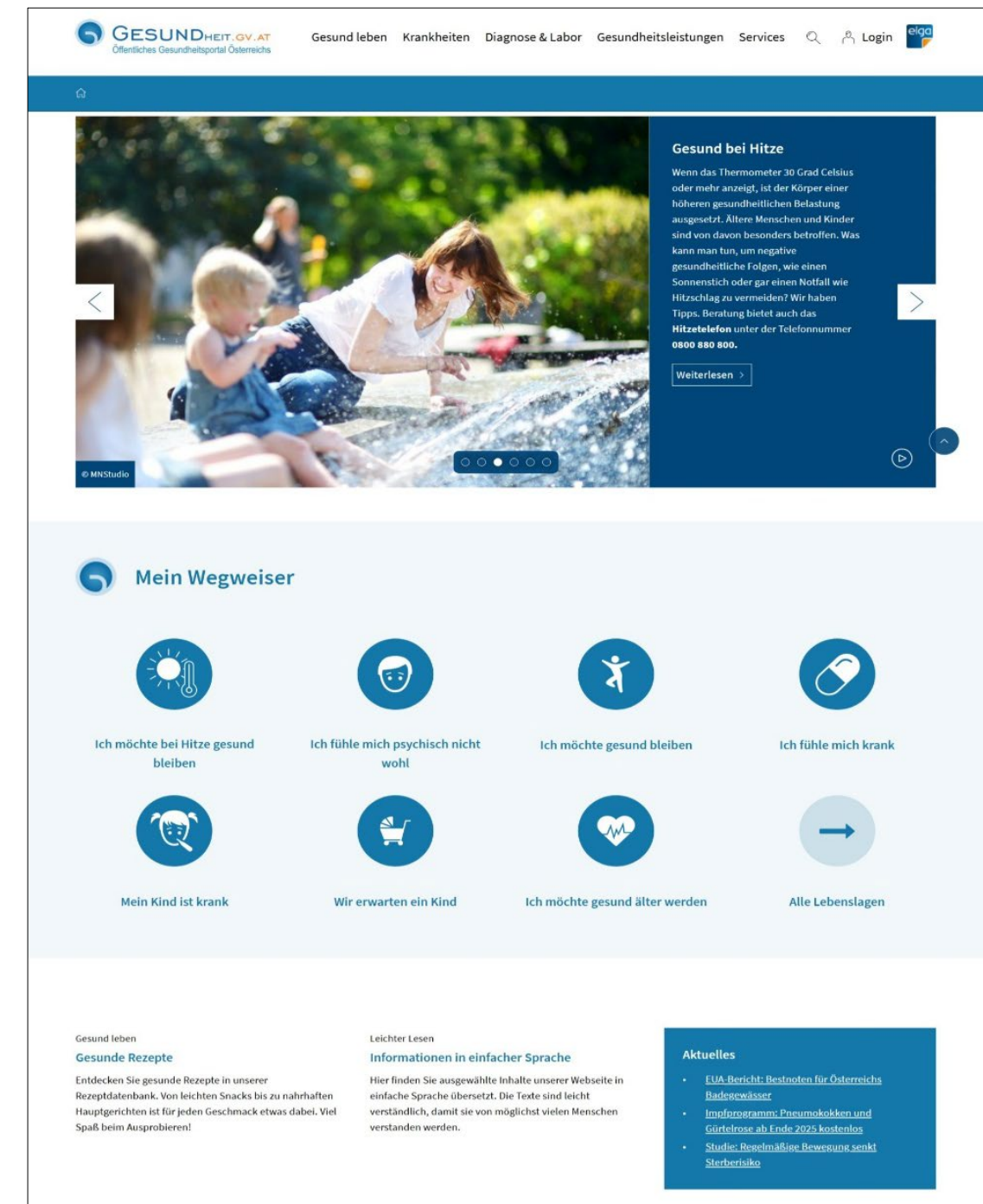
www.gesundheit.gv.at provides citizens with quality-assured evidence-based health information and access to personal health information such as the electronic health record, or the electronic vaccination passport. It is owned by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection. The editorial office is located at Gesundheit Österreich GmbH. The technical operator is the Federal Computing Center (BRZ).

General health information is provided for the following areas with the main aim to improve (e-)health literacy and navigation competence (Griebler et al, 2022; MacEwan, 2021):

- **Healthy living** – for example concerning nutrition, exercise, mental health, stress-management
- setting-related information in the field of **health promotion**, such as healthy schools or work-places
- **preventive medical interventions** like check-ups and vaccination recommendations,
- **diseases**,
- **examination methods and laboratory values**,
- **news and newsletter**.

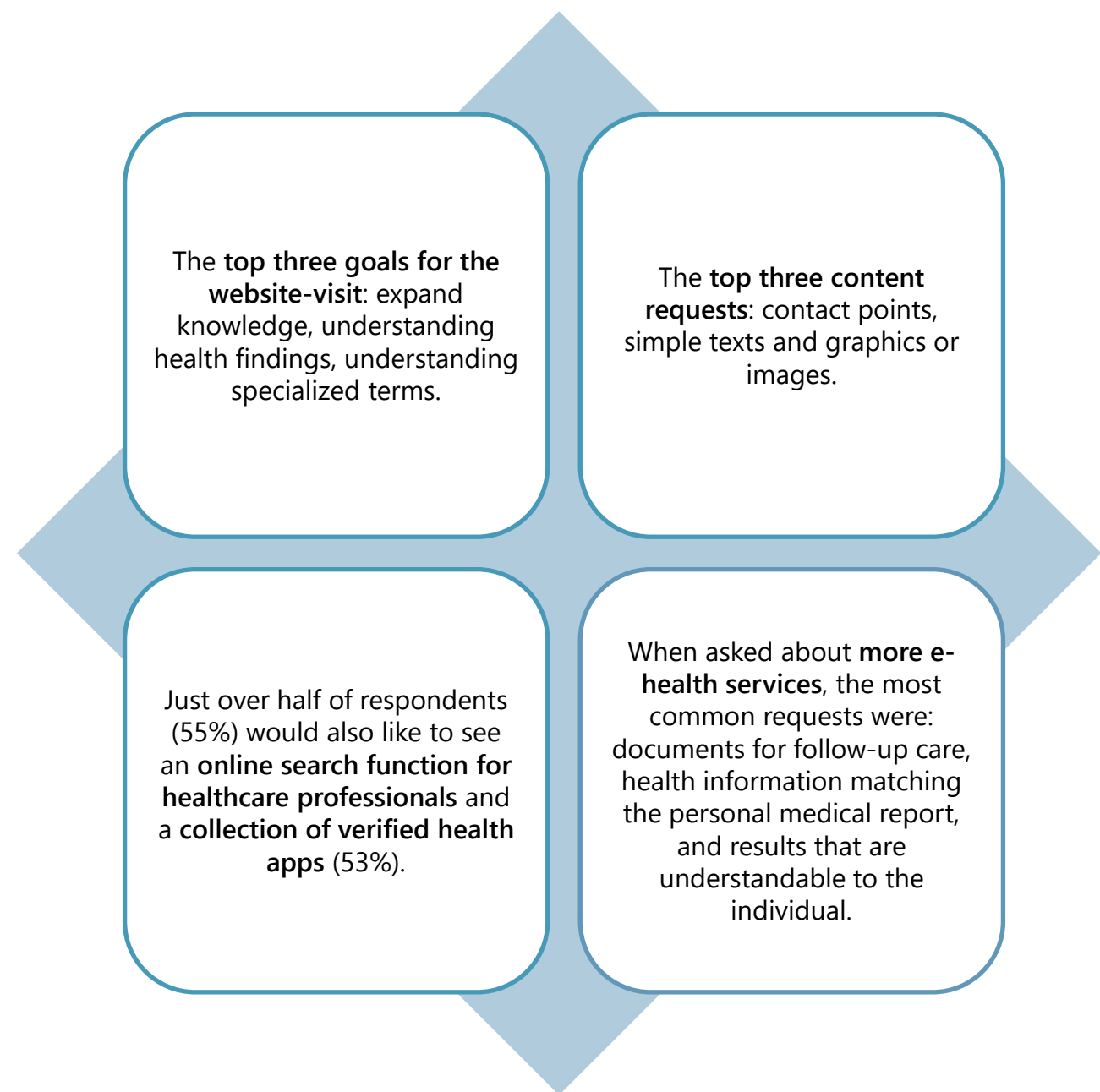
The information is supplemented by a lexicon for the explanation of medical, health and technical terms. Information on health services and contact points additionally provides **assistance in navigating the healthcare system**. A signpost module makes it easy to find specific information - e.g., "I feel sick". **Information for professionals** also enables this target group to be addressed. Most of the information is provided in text form. Multimedia formats and easy-to-read texts round off the offering. The information is made available mainly in German; some content is also offered in English and other languages. The health information undergoes a **defined quality assurance process**, considering criteria for "Good Health Information Austria" (criteria for evidence-based and gender-sensitive health information) (ÖPGK, 2025).

In 2024 gesundheit.gv.at recorded around **12.9 million content-visits**. The most frequently clicked topics were "Diseases," "Healthy Living," and "Diagnosis & Laboratory" (Fousek et al, 2025).



Screenshot cutout homepage www.gesundheit.gv.at, Media owner: Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, image rights © MNStudio

User-Survey 2024: Key-Points



Reference: Ramssl-Sauer et al, 2025, a and b

- The User-Survey 2024 concerned the **content of www.gesundheit.gv.at**. It was conducted online via LimeSurvey. Participation was possible from the age of 18 via a link on a survey website. This link was sent out to approximately 18,000 subscribers via the health portal newsletter. In addition, the link was posted on the health portal's homepage and distributed via the GÖG's LinkedIn account and the Austrian Competence and Service Center for Self-Help (ÖKUSS). The information from 607 fully completed questionnaires was included in the data analysis.
- The survey reached **all age groups and levels of education**; most frequently represented were persons at the age between 30 and 79 years. About 95 percent of the participants stated that they live in Austria. 48.9 percent indicated their gender as „female“, 50.6 percent as „male“ und 0.2 percent as „diverse“. Nearly half of the participants visited the website several times a month. Private use of the website was predominantly reported.
- The information on the health portal is considered helpful, easy to understand, and easy to find by a high percentage of users. The user survey also shows that there is a very high level of interest in expanding one's own knowledge and better understanding technical terms as well as content relating to one's own health. This correlation reinforces the health portal's goal of **promoting health literacy among the population**.
- 18.9% would prefer or require the website information to be available in **other languages**. In addition to English (20.2%), Turkish (9.2%), Croatian (8.6%), and Serbian (7.5%) were the most frequently requested languages.
- In general, the users had a **positive impression of the website**, especially concerning credibility and reliability. Most of the participants would recommend the website. Nevertheless, there is a request of innovation.
- An additional **SEO analysis** highlighted also the need for specific information for young people (Ramssl-Sauer et al., 2025, a and b).

Primary care: Context

Gesundheit.gv.at offers many opportunities for synergies with primary care. Information provided on www.gesundheit.gv.at as a national health portal can assist in a wide range - for the citizens in general, but also for example concerning primary care, e.g. by offering:

- **guidance to contact points**,
- materials designed with the purpose of **providing patients and professionals with information** or
- **e-health options**. E.g.: Direct links from the electronic health record and electronic vaccination passport to information on the health portal connect user-friendly e-health services and health information.

Other selected opportunities in the context of healthcare and public health:

- Flexible content design also makes it possible to **place national public health activities**, such as suicide prevention or primary care, directly on the health portal.
- gesundheit.gv.at also provides the initiative EVI (Posch et al, 2023) with updated **health-topics for general practitioners and pediatricians to inform patients**.
- The health portal is currently being further developed as **part of the target control system in the healthcare sector** (Zielsteuerungsvertrag auf Bundesebene, 2024) and thus also **supports the recent Austrian e-health strategy** (BMSGPK, 2024).

At a glance, an evidence-based portal can be an important tool for educating patients. It can also **strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and promote digitization in healthcare** (Wangler/Jansky 2021). A national health portal can therefore also support primary care at key points, help to raise awareness of the personal health status and increase adherence to treatment (MacEwan et al, 2021).

Other national health portals in Europe also show connections respectively contribution to primary health care. For example (selection not based on specific criteria):

- NHS U.K.: Viewing GP health record and test results, range of health information – including contact points etc. (NHS, 2025).
- Sundhed.dk: Patient handbook about symptoms and diseases, search for practitioners, personalized information area (including medical records) etc. (www.sundhed.dk, 2025).
- www.1177.se in Sweden: regional selection of information, health advice, contact of clinics (www.1177.se, 2025).
- Santé publique France: information about diseases, injuries and factors that influence health; regional and age-related topics, news etc. www.monespacesante.fr - separate portal for receiving, storing and sharing health documents (www.santepubliquefrance.fr, 2025; www.monespacesante.fr, 2025).
- gesund.bund.de: information on health-related topics and treatment options – including ICD-Codes etc. (www.gesund.bund.de, 2025)

- Statements for the debate:**
The establishment of a national health portal...
- 1) has the potential to provide patients with **guidance**, e.g. through the healthcare system.
 - 2) has the potential to **facilitate the digitalization of healthcare**.
 - 3) has been identified as a **potential strategy to enhance health literacy**.

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