## MEP Peterle: Health systems need a true shift to prevention

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*Health systems must shift their current focus from expensive and ineffective late-stage disease response towards more result-based and cost-effective prevention measures as well as early intervention strategies, Slovenian MEP Alojz Peterle told the European Health Forum Gastein. A clear change in trends was needed, since health promotion and disease prevention are key factors for the long-term sustainability of health systems.*

**Bad Hofgastein, 1 October 2014** – “The recent European elections sent a clear message to the European institutions that the EU must address the concerns and expectations of its citizens”, Dr Alojz Peterle, MEP (Slovenia) said today at the opening of the 17th European Health Forum Gastein. “We need strong leadership and a bold vision to reconnect European citizens to decision-making processes in the EU, and to connect European policy to the people.”

An area in which this approach is of particular importance, according to Dr Peterle, is the health sector. “Health is one of the most important values in people’s lives and it is an essential part of both economic and social success”, he said.  “Worrying health trends, particularly increasing rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, despite advances in treatment, mean that this value is increasingly under threat. In addition, impacts of austerity measures such as cuts to social services and unemployment, have taken their toll on people, their health and their faith in the political processes.”

Health systems must shift their current focus from expensive and ineffective late-stage disease response towards more result-based and cost-effective prevention measures as well as early intervention strategies, said MEP Peterle who is President of the MEPs Against Cancer group (MAC) and Co-chair of the Working Group on Health in the European Parliament. “In light of rapidly aging populations and increased incidence of lifestyle diseases such as cancer, diabetes, or heart diseases, behavioural interventions have become a high priority for health systems”, he added.

Health promotion and disease prevention were key factors for the long-term sustainability of health systems and a way of pointing towards a healthy society, MEP Peterle stressed. “The actions of health promotion should be understood positively as the way of diminishing the inflow of new patients. In the long run, prevention is the most cost-effective response for improving the state of the European health.”

“Electing Health – The Europe We Want” is the motto for this year’s EHFG. Around 600 participants from more than 50 countries are attending the most important health policy conference in the EU to exchange view on key issues affecting European health systems. The future direction of European health policy is the key topic on the conference agenda.

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