



9th European Health Forum Was a Complete Success

- **Nearly 600 high-profile health experts convened in Bad Hofgastein**
- **Preparatory work for new EU health strategy grants the EHFG particular currency**
- **President Leiner anticipates record attendance at next year's forum**

The 9th European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), which took place on from 4 to 7 October in Bad Hofgastein, was a complete success. With nearly 600 participants from 41 countries, it was the best attended forum so far. The range of topics was also impressive, with 20 plenary sessions, fora and workshops held. “Due to the large number of individual events it was possible for us to cover the diverse range of aspects of European health care policy better than ever,” says EHFG Secretary General Matthias Schuppe.

EHFG President Günther Leiner also pointed to the quality of content at this year's health forum. “In 1998 we began with the idea and the goal of providing a platform for the at that time still infant European health care policy, which could be used by experts working on the international network of health care systems. I think we have largely achieved this goal and that today the EHFG is fully recognized as a think tank and venue for leading experts. Those who have kept track of the forum over the years see that what develops in the Gasteinertal today will be implemented in Europe tomorrow or maybe the day after tomorrow.”

This year's European Health Forum assumed a particular currency due to the intensive phase beginning in the development of the new EU health care strategy (the consultation process for the new EU Health Services Directive began just a few days ago). This also contributed to the fact that attendance numbers were particularly strong this year.

Leiner is only partially satisfied with the development of European health care policy, however. “What functions very well at an expert level is in no way true at the level of policy. Experts have to develop solutions, but politicians also have to adequately communicate this to the public. Sometimes I have the impression that at least certain EU Commission members have no great interest in this. As long as leading EU Commission representatives are ambivalent about the work of their own experts and with regard to adequate information for the populace, then no one should be surprised that in many countries, and not just in Austria, the EU fails to enjoy the credit it actually deserves.”

The number of this year's participants will be considerably exceeded again next year. Leiner has planned quite a lot for the ten-year anniversary. For the first time a European health prize will awarded to municipalities or regions which have implemented model initiatives for the promotion of public health. "This will provide added momentum to the EHFG and its degree of recognition among the general public and I am sure it will bring the 10th European Health Forum Gastein another giant step forward."

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Additional press information and photos concerning the EHFG can be found at
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