



Record Number of Participants at the European Health Forum Gastein

- **620 experts at Europe's leading health policy event**
- **Important platform for further development of EU health policy**
- **Focal point for 2008 are ethical problems in modern healthcare systems**

This year's European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) shows a new record in the number of participants. With 620 participants from 45 countries, the 11th edition of the most important health policy event in the European Union has exceeded even the peak figure at the anniversary event last year. The EHFG 2008 is taking place from 1 to 4 October in Bad Hofgastein.

With its extraordinary conception over the last decade the EHFG is a permanent fixture on the European health policy calendar. Unlike most other congresses in this field, the European Health Forum provides a broad-based platform for every group indispensable to a functioning healthcare systems, that is, public health officials, health policymakers, scientists, physicians, healthcare managers and, last but not least, patient advocates and NGOs.

This year, as well, a large number of prominent European health policy representatives are scheduled to attend, in particular EU Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou along with several ministers, secretaries of state and leading representatives from the WHO. The host country of Austria is represented by Health Minister Andrea Kdolsky and Salzburg Governor Gabriele Burgstaller.

"I'm proud we have also been able to continue the momentum of the 10-year anniversary in the 11th EHFG," EHFG President Günther Leiner says. "As a complement to the numerous special events, the concept of a comprehensive platform for meeting and discussion between various interest groups has been a complete success. The EHFG thus lives up to its ultimate goal that here the guiding principles of future European health policy are discussed on a broad basis from every different perspective."

The key theme of this year's EHFG is "Values and Health – From Vision to Reality." The most modern healthcare systems and the next years' upcoming reforms will be explained from ethical perspectives. For Leiner the crucial requirement for success of the necessary reforms: "In health policy and healthcare services ethical decisions must be constantly made. What will the available funds be used for? Who is eligible for what services? Do patients suffering from the consequences of an unhealthy lifestyle have the same claims as patients affected by fateful illnesses? Questions such as these have to be asked again and again, even if modern medicine remains humane and society remains willing to bear the enormous costs of the healthcare industry."

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