



**Press release: 13th European Health Forum Gastein, 6 – 9 October 2010**

## **EHFG-President Leiner: Medical science focus not only on the doable – strengthen EU competence in healthcare**

*For four days, 580 participants from 58 countries discussed issues of core importance to the future of Europe's healthcare systems. Medical science should not be oriented exclusively toward what is technically doable, cautioned EHFG President Leiner at the closing of this year's European Health Forum Gastein. For European healthcare systems to be fit for the future, a stronger EU competence in healthcare questions is needed.*

**Bad Hofgastein, Oktober 8, 2010** – 580 participants from 58 countries, 12 ministers and state secretaries from around the world, a total of 23 events with intensive discussions: the positive balance drawn by Forum President Prof. Dr. Günther Leiner regarding this year's European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG).

With the motto "Health in Europe – Ready for the Future?" the European Health Forum Gastein that took place this year from October 6th to 9th in Bad Hofgastein thoroughly characterized the future of European healthcare systems. A fundamentally ethical debate about the development of modern medicine is needed here, explained Prof. Leiner: "The fundamental problem of modern medicine is not scarcity but rather the abundance -- the abundance of what's doable as well as the abundance of claims."

### **Investing in future and solidarity oriented medicine**

Medical science that is ethically unreflective and focused on profit alone drives needs and awakens desires whose fulfillment is, above all, geared toward the technically doable. "We should not just orient ourselves toward the doable in medicine, but rather toward meaningfulness. For not everything that is doable is likewise meaningful and certainly not financeable."

The debate about a meaningful deployment of resources should not lead to another extreme, however: "It must be clear to European societies that the future of healthcare policy should not be reduced to a debate about savings that ultimately would be at the cost of health care itself. Instead of talking about a so-called healthcare deficit, we should concentrate on the necessary investments that would facilitate a solidarity-based, future oriented medicine," Professor Leiner opined.

### **Strengthening EU competence in healthcare**

"At the prelude of this year's congress I already made abundantly clear that decentralized, federalist healthcare systems are problematic, both in terms of cost efficiency as well as quality," Professor Leiner stated. "Following the debates of the past days about the vast challenges in the future, it is now even clearer that we need to go a step further. The future problems are not resolvable at the national level. We need a significant strengthening of EU competence in questions of healthcare." That is a claim also supported by many other experts at the European Health Forum Gastein.

The EHFG distinguishes itself fundamentally from many other congresses through its problem solving approach, Prof. Leiner said. "At the European Health Forum Gastein, all interest groups involved in the public health sector meet with each other and jointly work out ideas that are also frequently turned into action." An assessment confirmed by EHFG board member John Bowis, former British health minister and former EU Member of Parliament. "For members of the European Parliament, the EHFG offers a good opportunity to influence decision processes even before proposals reach parliament."

EHFG-Vice President Albert van der Zeijden, Chairman of the International Alliance of Patients Organisations, provides examples. “We have achieved much with the EHFG over the past years. We were somewhat able to put rare diseases onto the European agenda. Now there is a new EU initiative with national action plans that also places Europe as the leading continent in the struggle against these diseases.” According to van der Zeijden, a further example is the new legislation introduced by the EU on 22 September 2010 on pharmacovigilance. We know a lot about medicines at the time of market authorisation but for the first time legislation recognises that we do know rather little about the efficacy of medicines when used in individual patients post authorisation. This new legislation will be an important tool for the empowerment of patients by better information and direct reporting of side-effects.”

The 14th European Health Forum Gastein will take place in Bad Hofgastein from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011.

*Closing press conference Friday, October 8, 2010.*

**EHFG Press Office:**

B&K Medien- und Kommunikationsberatung

Dr. Birgit Kofler

Ph. during the Congress: +43 6432 3393 239

Mobile: +43 676 636 89 30

Ph. Vienna office: +43 1 319 43 78

E-Mail: [kofler@bkkommunikation.com](mailto:kofler@bkkommunikation.com)