

EHFG President, Prof. Leiner: “We need a European fund for the elderly. The finance crisis endangers aging in dignity.”

Bad Hofgastein/Austria, 13 May 2010 – “We need a European fund for the elderly. Everyone in Europe should be able to age in dignity. Not just those in a select few countries,” Professor Dr. Günther Leiner, President of the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), strongly believes. “Especially in times of crisis, and now in the wake of the current finance debacle, financing of the needs of the elderly is seriously endangered. It’s a development that will grow more acute.” The EHFG president is alarmed in this regard by “reports of shortages of homes for seniors, of dignified housing and hospices, and in particular the current discussion about euthanasia and assisted suicide.”

One of the main themes just announced for the 13th EHFG, taking place in Bad Hofgastein from October 6th to 9th, is "demographic change and the future of health." The challenges range from longer health and productive performance of older workforces to rising health and social costs and on to the question of “how can different regions of the world learn from one another?” The European health systems have to get themselves in shape for the demographic challenges of the future, Professor Leiner warns. “The world will look completely different in the future, and the policymakers will have to get ready for that.”

Platform for international exchange on health policy

Since its founding in the year 1998, the EHFG has established itself as a fixed factor at international level when it comes to the exchange and integration of perspectives and experiences. Around 600 visitors from 39 countries came in 2009. Once again in 2010 an intensive dialogue will get underway involving politicians, administrators, scientists, researchers, economists and representatives of civil society. The dynamic interaction will involve key actors from the 27 member states of the European Union (EU), countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) and the remaining 52 countries of the World Health Organization (WHO). Among the key speakers for this year’s plenary sessions: Austrian Minister of Health Alois Stöger, EU Commissioner John Dalli and WHO Director Zsuzsana Jakab are expected. About 20 ministers and state secretaries from throughout the world will also be attending this year’s EHFG.

A wide variety of current health policy themes will be addressed in numerous fora at Gastein, including “health competence” and its measurability and the path from informed patient to competent citizen. The new European Network for Health Competence will be launched within this framework. Another theme will be “health is global.” An important question pointed out by President Leiner: “can Europe manage, in these times of international trade, migration and demographic change, to come up with the necessary innovation and alliances needed to ensure the health of its citizens?” Additional themes still: EU action and local partnerships involving the areas of healthcare, decision making and research; investment in health care personnel from tomorrow and adult respiratory diseases – a neglected epidemic.

<http://www.ehfg.org>

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