



**Press release: 15th European Health Forum Gastein, 3 – 6 October 2012**

## **European Health Forum Gastein prepares for its 15<sup>th</sup> Congress**

### **Crisis and Opportunity - Health in an Age of Austerity**

**Bad Hofgastein, September 14, 2012** – Ahead of its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress which will be held from October 3 to 6, 2012, the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) is announcing updates of the programme (<http://www.ehfg.org/de/program2012.html>). Along with several senior European politicians – including Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Austrian health minister Alois Stöger – EU Health Commissioner John Dalli has confirmed he will be taking part in this year's EHFG conference.

EHFG Founder-President Prof Dr Günther Leiner said the Commissioner's contribution would be especially valuable this year: “Commissioner Dalli is leading the Commission's response to the fundamental problem we now face – how to manage and pay for European health systems in a time of austerity, which is the focus of this year's conference.”

The Commission, also represented at Gastein by Paola Testori Coggi, Director General for Health and Consumer Affairs (DG SANCO), and Robert Madelin, Director General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG Connect), announced in July it is to appoint a 17-member panel of independent experts to identify the best and most sustainable ways of investing in healthcare systems in a time of demographic changes, huge technological and scientific advances, and rising patient expectations.

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, former head of the European Task Force on eHealth, will attend Gastein this year for the first time. In a recent interview he described the use of IT in health as “a must in Europe given our demographics.”

Other senior figures who have confirmed their participation at Gastein 2012 are: Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Regional Director for Europe; Martin McKee, Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Sir Andy Haines, Chairperson of the European Academic Global Health Alliance; MEPs Karin Kadenbach and Antonyia Parvanova; and the Ministers of Health of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sredoje Novic and Taiwan, Wen Ta Chiu.

Prof Dr Leiner said it would be hard to bring together a more effective and experienced group to discuss the big issues of European healthcare. “Yes, of course the financial crisis is real,” he said. “But in health the crisis is also organisational, with scarce resources sometimes being spent on the wrong things. I am optimistic that the ideas generated in the framework of the European Health Forum Gastein to address some of these issues will be implemented politically.”

As in the past, the EHFG will bring together some 600 participants including some of the most influential figures from around 45 countries in Europe, as well as from Asia, Russia, and the SEE region.



The focus of plenary debates will be the health consequences of political responses to the financial crisis, and how sustained improvements in both health and economic growth might still be achieved in a time of austerity. Other areas to be discussed are the prospects for public health in 2050, sustainable health systems, personalised medicine, non-communicable diseases, health communication, and global governance.

Workshops will examine in detail issues such as vaccination and innovative approaches to improve vaccination uptake and trust; aligning the pharmaceutical industry with social needs; improving nutrition in Europe with flour fortification; health reform in practice; addressing the burden of chronic disease by tackling obesity; the epidemic of kidney disease.

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