



## PRESS RELEASE

### Shifting sands of health – Democracy, demographics, digitalisation

- The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2024 gathered over 1500 participants, including representatives from the European Commission, World Health Organization, national governments, European Parliament, industry, healthcare professionals, and civil society, to discuss the transformative impact of democracy, demographic shifts, and digitalisation on Europe's health systems.
- Médecins du Monde-Greece received the European Health Leadership Award 2024 for their work in addressing the challenges posed by Europe's demographic shifts.
- In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the EHFG, Josep Figueras, Director and Co-Founder of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, has been awarded the Star of the EHFG, honouring his important role in shaping the Forum's vision and impact.

**27 September 2024, Bad Hofgastein, Austria** – The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2024, co-organised with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, with support from the European Union, and in collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, concluded today after four days of discussions, thought-provoking debates, and collaborative workshops.

Guided by the theme "Shifting sands of health – Democracy, demographics, digitalisation", the 27<sup>th</sup> EHFG fostered forward-thinking and solution-oriented dialogue. High-level representatives from EU Member States, the European Commission, the World Health Organization, and the European Parliament examined how the intertwined forces of democratic processes, demographic changes, and digital advancements are reshaping Europe's health landscape.

Experts examined ethical concerns related to governance, inequity, and privacy amidst rapid digital developments. The challenges posed by demographic shifts was also a central theme, with discussions on how health systems must adapt to remain resilient and inclusive. Participants emphasised the importance of cooperation and social values in shaping Europe's health policies for a sustainable future for all citizens.

The final plenary reviewed the progress and challenges surrounding the implementation of the European Health Data Space (EHDS) across Member States, featuring perspectives from diverse stakeholders.

*"The European Health Data Space is more than just a policy initiative - it's a vision", said Marco Marsella, Director, Digital, EU4Health and Health Systems Modernisation, European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety. "It aims to harness the power of health data to enhance citizens' well-being, improve healthcare systems, and foster innovation across Europe. This transformative regulation empowers*

*citizens to control their health data, professionals to access it seamlessly, and innovators to make the best out of it, all while safeguarding privacy and upholding European values”.*

The European Health Leadership Award (EHLA) 2024 recognised Médecins du Monde-Greece for their work in addressing Europe’s demographic challenges, particularly supporting vulnerable elderly populations. The initiative focuses on promoting healthy ageing through medical and psychosocial care, including home visits, remote counselling, and enhancing digital literacy through online companionship programmes.

*“It is a great honour for Médecins du Monde-Greece to receive the EHLA award” said Anastasios Yfantis, Operations Director. “This award recognises the daily efforts of MdM members, allies, and volunteers to ensure the right to health. Especially now, when pressing issues like demographics in the EU can only be addressed through inclusive, multi-sectoral actions that prioritise immediate support for those facing health inequalities and social exclusion.”*

EHFG 2024 plenary and session recordings can be found [here](#) and photographs [here](#).

For further information or press inquiries, please contact the press office at [press@ehfg.org](mailto:press@ehfg.org).

#EHFG2024

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### Save the Date

European Health Forum Gastein 2025

30 September – 3 October, Bad Hofgastein, Austria & online

### About European Health Forum Gastein

The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) was founded in 1998 as a European health policy conference. It brings together stakeholders and decision-makers from the public and private sector, civil society, and science and academia, who together form the four pillars of the EHFG. Over the past 27 years, the EHFG has established itself as an indispensable institution in the scope of European health policy. With its annual conference and other events and projects, it has made a decisive contribution to the development of guidelines and above all the cross-border exchange of experience, information, and cooperation. Leading European experts traditionally participate in the annual conference held in the Gastein Valley in the Austrian Alps in late September.



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