

EUROPEAN HEALTH FORUM  
GASTEIN

# Twenty Years

20TH ANNIVERSARY  
1998 – 2017

*Dear Gastein friends,  
dear participants,*

*We are proud and privileged to present you the 20 years anniversary publication of the European Health Forum Gastein. With this book, we want to mark this special occasion by looking back to the beginnings of the Forum and portraying its development, by paying tribute to its pioneers and supporters, and by highlighting what makes the EHFG unique. We are grateful for the selected contributions of some of the many individuals who have helped shape and steer the association and the event, and regret not to be able to give a voice to all of them on these pages. Join us on the walk down memory lane, enjoy the personal stories of the people who have been crucial for the EHFG, look over the timeline to find the major milestones of the last 20 years, learn some EHFG trivia and enjoy some photos of the last two decades. Most of all, this is a big thank you to all of you for helping to make the EHFG what it is today!*

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# Voices

## The EHFG Presidents

*Three EHFG presidents have thus far overseen the organisation's work towards the ambitious goal of creating a better future for health in Europe. Founder Prof Günther Leiner was in office for fifteen years, followed by Prof Helmut Brand. Taking over this year is Dr Clemens Martin Auer. What the EHFG set out to be, what it is today, and what it might be tomorrow: some thoughts on a groundbreaking initiative.*

# The idea behind it all

## Günther Leiner

### PAST: THE FOUNDER'S VISION

I founded the Forum with the conviction that it was high time to counteract real and perceived imbalances in power between the stakeholders in the field of health and healthcare. The four pillars the EHFG rests on form the basis for the legitimacy of all discussions taking place at the Forum. All actors, be they from the public realm, the private sector, science and academia, or civil society, can voice their concerns freely in the more formal frame of one of our workshops – or informally, at one of the networking dinners or morning hikes. While not always of the same opinion, we often share more than we think. Gastein is, in all its remoteness, the perfect place for being reminded that health surely is a mighty common denominator.

The overall aim I set out to reach, and in some instance hopefully succeeded in doing, was to create actionable policy recommendations at the Forum, or at least noticeably contribute to their development. And what I truly felt, and continue to feel passionate about, is fostering the exchange of best practices with Southeastern and Central Europe and its health systems and experts. There continues to be a widespread lack of awareness regarding what the EU can help this region achieve. Health inequalities persist, and my hope is that the EHFG will contribute to reducing and eventually removing them. I am still convinced that there is room for the EU to grow in the health field. We cannot tackle health problems individually, we need each other. I see the EHFG as a direct expression of this reality.

By the time I handed the organisation over into the trusted hands of Prof Helmut Brand, it had grown considerably: from 200 participants to about 600 each year, meeting to discuss health policy in the Gastein Valley. Together, we set important initiatives in areas such as cross-border care and rare diseases. This is something I am proud of – and I am excited to see how the Forum will further develop in the future.

“The four pillars the EHFG rests on form the basis for the legitimacy of all discussions taking place at the Forum.”



# Where we are now

## Helmut Brand

### PRESENT: AN INTERIM ASSESSMENT

Taking over the office from Prof Günther Leiner was not an easy task – fifteen years of good work meant: expectations were high. I was and am convinced of the legitimacy and purpose of the EHFG, and made clear when assuming my position as president that evolution rather than revolution was my way to go forward regarding the further development of the Forum. Together with the EHFG Secretariat and the Advisory Committee I continuously worked towards a closer thematic alignment of all our sessions and an improvement of internal quality management processes. The second impulse I chose to set was putting a stronger focus on both triggering new discussions and reacting to burning issues at the core of health policy agendas across the EU, such as the financial and migration crises. I am also particularly happy to have seen important developments in the fields of personalised medicine and health literacy being kickstarted at the conference during my presidency.

What the EHFG is about first and foremost is EU health policy. And celebrating 20 years of the organisation is a good opportunity to stop for a moment and appreciate what the EU has achieved thus far: the set-up of structures such as DG SANTE itself, the development of health strategies and programmes, and the contributions these have made to improving the health protection of more than 500 million citizens. Now on to getting even better – and turning missed opportunities into new realities. The anniversary theme of Health in All Politics embodies the sense of urgency to reach the next level of health policy-making.

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# The road to take

## Clemens Martin Auer

### FUTURE: A LOOK AHEAD

For an incredible 20 years, the European Health Forum Gastein has been the market place for major health policy topics. And during this entire period, the EHFG has been stimulated by the lively debates of decision-makers from different capitals of EU Member States, the European Commission and the many experts in academia, the field of public health, patient groups and professional associations. It is fantastic to see that this dialogue has never lost its excitement and power.

Yet, it is now time to break new ground. As a decision-maker in a health ministry, I know of the importance of connecting the analysis of facts with the actual implementation in health policy-making. It is therefore my goal to turn the EHFG into a comprehensive policy dialogue, where the many exciting findings will be anchored in the real world of health systems. I would like to reconcile theory and practice and offer decision-makers who are continuously driving reform processes a Forum for exchange and for encounters. A forum where best analysis meets best practice and where we can all learn from each other.

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