

4. European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2001



**Herbert Haupt (Austrian Federal Government,
Minister for Health): Health and Transport Policy
put in the same category of importance!**

**Austrian Minister of Health claims for equal
management of Policies in European Health Forum
Gastein**

Mediaservice:
Dr. Carmen Kiefer
Pressebüro Bad Gastein
Tel.: +43 6434 30250
Fax: +43 6434 30253
+43 6434 253566
Mobil: +43 676 344 9971
113162.437@compuserve.com
www.ehfg.org

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Opening Session of the 4th European Health Forum Gastein

“The European Health Forum Gastein is already established as a fixed item on Europe’s Health Policy agenda”, EHFG-President Günther Leiner explained in his opening speech on Wednesday, 26 September 2001. The international Health Congress takes place for the 4th time in the Salzburg Spa region, this time in Bad Gastein. It is a conference which “brings regions together and unifies them” according to the Austrian Federal Minister for Health and Social matters. With a view on the terror attacks in the USA Mr Haupt stated his hopes that events like the EHFG will dedicate themselves on classical Health issues also in the future and will not have to concentrate on issues such as catastrophe medicine or bacteriological war strategies.

EHFG-President Leiner welcomed senior representatives for EU and applicant countries: the State Secretaries for Health from Slovenia, Hungary and Lithuania, Simon Vrhunec, Jozica Maucec Hakotnik, Mojka Grunter Cinc, Gyula Pulay, Pál Geher and Maija Porsnova; Minister Jane Hutt from Wales, Minister Eduard Rius I Pey from Catalonia and the former EU-Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection, Pdraig Flynn (Commissioner. David

Byrne will attend the forum on Friday), as well as numerous experts from the EU and EU-applicants. The Congress's topic "Integrating Health across Policies" shall be discussed on many aspects of Health and its political impact in Europe. "Only with a reasoning that exceeds the limits of special areas or ambitions of single sectors successful solutions for Health Policy can be attained", Leiner stressed. That has been demonstrated by the recent food scandals: A crisis like BSE requires management across single political sectors and "cannot be dealt with in a national single-handed effort any longer", President Leiner said. Therefore the boundaries between the Health policy of Europe and national Health policies become more and more pervious.

James Walsh from the EU-Committee of the Regions wished in this respect that the states moved closer in order to concentrate the knowledge about Health, so the single states were enabled to learn even more from each other.

Many EU-applicants are on the way to approach the high standards of EU-health criteria and hope for a multinational collaboration on their efforts, the Hungarian Secretary of State Gyula Pulay explained. Federal Minister Herbert Haupt mentioned the importance of the EHFG in this respect, as representatives of EU-Member-states and EU-Applicants discuss about their opinions on Public Health and the EHFG is an event where the EU-Applicants "are accepted as partners and can feel as Europeans".

Leiner stressed that there is an increasing gap between East and West concerning life expectancy. "Since the early 70ies the increase of life expectancy stagnated all over Eastern Europe. After having made up to the standards of life expectancy of Western Europe from the 50ies and 60ies no progress has been made. The Health differences between Eastern and Western Europe became bigger and bigger, even if there was continuous economical growth in most Eastern European countries ", Leiner said.

Federal Minister Haupt even went further in his opening speech: "Health is more than the absence of illness, as the WHO has already stated, Health is also concerned with technology", i.e. Gene Technology, where it can not be foreseen whether what is decided today will prove itself as progress tomorrow. Health policy stands in the field of tension with community-, social-, finance- and transport-policy. For the future Haupt therefore hopes that Health policy is not only integrated into these sectors but of equal importance to the decisionmakers.

Photo and text also available on www.ehfg.org/presscenter/

