

Opening of the  
7<sup>th</sup> European Health Forum Gastein 2004  
(6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of October, Bad Hofgastein)



*“Health as a global challenge:  
European solutions in sight?”*

International Forum Gastein  
Tauernplatz 1  
A-5630 Bad Hofgastein

Dr. Carmen Kiefer  
Media Relations

[carmen.kiefer@sbg.at](mailto:carmen.kiefer@sbg.at)

Tel: +43 6432 26138

Mobile: +43 676 344 9971

Fax: +43 6432 26138

[www.ehfg.org](http://www.ehfg.org)

Presscenter

Fax:

+43 6432 20992

+43 6432 26056

**Opening speakers:**  
Maria Rauch-Kallat (Austrian Minister of Health and  
Women),  
Prim.Prof.Dr. Günther Leiner (President of the EHFG).

Today, Wednesday, 6 October 2004, the Austrian Minister of Health Maria Rauch-Kallat and the President of the EHFG Prof. Prim. Dr. Günther Leiner opened up the 7<sup>th</sup> European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) in the health resort of Bad Hofgastein. At the internationally renowned congress, which takes place from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of October, numerous high-ranking decision makers from the world of politics, business and science as well as representatives of providers and consumers of health services (NGOs) meet again in order to discuss urging health-political issues. A total of 600 participants from 40 different countries will compete.

### **Global Health as a general subject**

This year's general subject is "Global Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> century". The President of the EHFG Prim. Prof. Dr. Günther Leiner announced that "the European Health Forum Gastein will be an engine of thinking to create solution approaches for the European challenges in the health sector." "The EU must, in its own interest, be a catalyst in order to improve health in the EU, in Europe and even in the whole world. Infectious diseases do not respect any borders."

### **Common European values concerning health issues**

High on the agenda of the 7<sup>th</sup> EHFG is the attempt to find common European values concerning the health service. "Though it is obvious that we have to counteract the development of costs in the health sector, the question of how to save money in a useful and morally responsible way, is quite hard to be answered", says Leiner. Europe's big chance lies in the use of cross-border synergies in the high-tech sector. „There is, for instance, a border region with eight main hospitals in a surrounding of 30 kilometres. In case one of these hospitals was closed, this would neither have negative effects on health care nor would it lead to an increased need of staff or beds in one of the other hospitals. Still, this potential way of saving money is not applied." A European consensus is not only to be found on preventive measures such as the international control of tobacco and alcohol advertisement, but also on existential

human needs. "The life of multi-decadent old people is often artificially lengthened with all kinds of means instead of enabling them to die with dignity." Leiner affirms the establishment of exhaustive palliative care in Europe.

### **Gastein "Health Summit"**

The EHFG has managed to set itself up as a small health summit: Apart from the Minister of Health Maria Rauch-Kallat, several high-ranking actors from national as well as international (health-)politics participate, including the EU Commissioner David Byrne, the WHO Regional Director Marc Danzon and Roel Bekker (General Secretary of the Ministry of Health, Netherlands), Governor of Land Salzburg Gabi Burgstaller, Secretary of State Hong-Jen Chang (Taiwan, C.o.R.), Minister Chien-Jen Chen (Taiwan, C.o.R.), Minister Julio Frenk (Mexico), Deputy Secretary of State Mojica Gruntar Cinc (Slovenia), President of the Regional Parliament of Land Salzburg Johann Holztrattner, Secretary of State Imre Holló (Hungary), Vice Minister Mihály Kökény (Hungary), Vice Minister Slobodanka Krivokapic (Serbia), Minister Mitalip Mamytov (Kirghizia), Ex Minister Michéal Martin (Ireland) and Vice Minister Petko Salchev (Bulgaria).

### **Increasing prevention**

A common European problem and an inflating factor are lifestyle illnesses. "In Austria 70% of the people still die of heart-circulatory diseases. Overweight and obesity spread already among teens. Every year, 60,000 people have a stroke or a heart attack and the number of patients in kidney machine therapies has risen by 20 percent between 1998 and 2002. Only 10 percent of the Austrians have a regular medical check-up", says the Minister of Health Maria Rauch-Kallat. Such figures are warning messages and must be taken in consideration for every health reform in order to encourage the reach of certain goals in the people's interest. Prevention is the key to a successful health policy in Austria and Europe. "However, an effective health encouragement must be carried out without a warning finger. It has to affect people's awareness of life", says Rauch-Kallat. The Austrian Federal Ministry is currently revising the concept of screening tests. "From now on the emphasis should not be on technical check-ups, but on a personal consultation. In this way, we hope to convince more people to think about preventive check-ups."

After seven years, the OECD has now become a partner of the European Health Forum Gastein. Together with the World Bank and the WHO, this is the third globally-acting organisation which contributes actively to the European health debate at the EHFG. From European side, the EHFG receives support from the EU Committee of the Regions (CoR), from the European Commission, General Directorate for Health and Consumer Protection, and from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies. On Austrian level, the Ministry of Health and Women as well as the ORF are partners of the EHFG.

### **Press release about the plenary-session will be continued.**

**Pictures in the attachment:** From left to right: Franz Weichenberger (EHFG Director), Marc Danzon (WHO Regional Director), Anders Gustav (Committee of the Regions),

Maria Rauch-Kallat (Austrian Minister for Health and Women Affairs), Günther Leiner (EHFG President).