



Gusenbauer: Austria Will Meet the European Standard in the Battle against Smoking

- **There are more vehement opponents to smoking in the government than the health minister**
- **Cuts in costs in the healthcare industry must not lead to cuts in healthcare services**
- **Prevention: take action instead of preaching**

Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer took advantage of his appearance at the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), the most important health policy event in the European Union, to announce a clear commitment to the battle against smoking: “There are more vehement supporters for smoking restrictions than the health minister in the government.” The bill presented by Health Minister Andrea Kdolsky is not even remotely close to the targets formulated in the coalition talks. “When I saw the legislation for the first time, I didn’t really believe it was written by the Ministry of Health.”

With the 600 high-profile experts who attended the EHFG this year Gusenbauer had the home advantage in his anti-smoking speech. At the event there was fierce criticism of the host country’s smoking legislation from the experts at the event. “If you didn’t convince the health minister you at least convinced the chancellor,” Gusenbauer told the audience.

Another focus of the chancellor were the permanent problems in financing the healthcare system. Even if it is clear that healthcare is not getting any cheaper and even limiting cost hikes is already a success, he warned against the disaster scenarios that are regularly put forward. They primarily help group interests to prevail and ultimately obstruct the search for further reasonable developments.

It is particularly important that prevention be taken seriously for an improvement in the healthcare situation. “Instead of preaching we have to take action.” As a specific measure Gusenbauer, whose agenda also includes sports, announced a programme in which sports clubs are to directly and intensively work together with schools “This will not only help the clubs, which have to battle concerns about future athletes often enough, but will also help make sport activity for young people an attractive alternative to television and computer games.

Very generously estimated – about 40 percent of Austrians currently do at least a little bit of sports. The first goal is to raise this percentage to at least 50 percent.

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Further press information and photographs of the EHFG can be found at www.ehfg.org.