



EU Commissioner Kyprianou: EHFG Makes Important Contribution to the Development of EU Health Policy

- **Battle against smoking is top European issue**
- **Clear regulations for cross-border healthcare services needed**
- **Hundreds of thousands of Europeans die from avoidable diseases**

At the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) EU Health Commissioner Markos Kyprianou underscored the significance of the event for European health policy: “The European Health Forum Gastein is a continuous, important source of momentum for determining our further health policy targets.” The presence of Austrian Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer not only demonstrates health policy’s considerable place of significance in Austria, but also the high degree of acceptance that the EHFG enjoys.

To the 600 high-profile experts who attended the EHFG this year the EU Commissioner was clear about the priorities of EU health policy. Kyprianou said the battle against smoking is first priority and announced an EU initiative for the issue this coming year. He was unable to refrain from commenting with respect to the host country Austria, in which a controversial proposal for a new antismoking law was put forward: when there is a smoking ban in Austria, the full support of the EU can be counted on.

Furthermore, Kyprianou said that for him it is always frustrating that in the European Union, which has made such enormous progress in areas such as education and prosperity, hundreds of thousands of people are still dying from preventable diseases: “alcohol abuse, smoking and obesity have to be fought effectively and it is an important task of the EU Commission to actively support the member states in all their efforts.” An improvement in dealing with the mentally ill is also enormously important. There will also be an EU initiative for this next year. A primary task for Europe is also the battle against diseases that are flaring up again more frequently in Europe such as tuberculosis and the fight against tropical diseases aided by climate change.

Kyprianou also granted considerable priority to the improvement of access for EU citizens to healthcare services outside of their home country: “Citizens are vehemently demanding this right on an increasing basis and it is an obligation of the member states and the EU to enact measures in order to improve this situation.”

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