



**15th European Health Forum Gastein
Crisis and Opportunity - Health in an Age of Austerity
Bad Hofgastein, Salzburg, October 3 to 6, 2012**

Bad Hofgastein, May 10, 2012 – The European Health Forum Gastein is preparing for its 15th annual conference. The theme for 2012 could hardly be more topical. After decades of rising prosperity, the spectre over Europe is of a continuing financial crisis which threatens every aspect of people's lives. And a sector particularly affected by austerity matters is public health – representing 10% of GDP in the EU, and providing one of the largest sources of employment.

Some commentators fear the sufferings of Greece could be a portent of what is to come. As the Greek economy worsened in the first six months of 2011, suicide figures rocketed by 40% on the year before. And a growing number of people describe themselves as ill. The researchers at Cambridge University who produced a report on these developments placed the blame in large part on cuts in medical and social services, including help for drug-addicts, whose numbers are growing.

“The great virtue of the EHFG, and what has made its international reputation over these 15 years, is that we address real issues, and look for practical solutions,” says the EHFG's founder-president Dr Guenther Leiner. “The financial crisis is real. Does it present opportunities as well? I am sure it does. We have held, at the EHFG, fruitful debates on how limited resources could be used more sensibly and effectively. It is high time that these be implemented on a political level.”

As in the past, the EHFG will bring together some 600 participants including some of the most influential figures in 50 countries in Europe, as well as Russia, Taiwan, and the SEE countries.

This year's forum once again expects to host officials from the very top echelons of government from around the globe. Keynote speakers will include:

- Alois Stöger, Austria's Minister of Health
- John Dalli, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy
- Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director, WHO Europe
- Martin McKee, Professor, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

The focus of plenary debates will be the health consequences of political responses to the financial crisis, and how - despite this - sustained improvements in both health and economic growth might be achieved. Other areas to be discussed are the prospects for public health in 2050, sustainable health systems, personalised medicine, non-communicable diseases, health communication, and global governance.



Workshops will examine in detail such issues as vaccination and innovative approaches to improve trust and uptake, and the often-disruptive role of social media; aligning the pharmaceutical industry with social needs; improving nutrition in Europe with flour fortification; health reform in practice; solutions to chronic disease; or the epidemic of kidney disease.

The first programme announcement is now online:

www.ehfg.org/fileadmin/ehfg/Programm/2012/1PA_english_web.pdf

The EHFG can also be found on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/European-Health-Forum-Gastein>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/GasteinForum>).

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