



EHFG 2012: Fifteen years on, President Prof Günther Leiner passes the baton to his successor Prof Dr Helmut Brand

During Prof Dr Günther Leiner's 15-year presidency, the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) has become the European Union's leading health policy conference. Prof Leiner said that much of what had first been discussed at the annual conferences in the Gastein Valley, south of Salzburg, influenced both European health policy and the policies of individual countries.

Bad Hofgastein, October 5, 2012 – After 15 years as President of the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG), the leading health policy conference in the European Union, Prof Dr Günther Leiner is handing over to Prof Dr Helmut Brand, Director of the Department of International Health at the University of Maastricht (NL). “I am pleased that we have been able to persuade such a distinguished expert to take over the presidency,” Prof Leiner said. “His great expertise on European health policy is a huge asset to the Forum which I regard as 'my child', and which I am confident will be in the best possible hands.”

The EHFG had developed very rapidly over the last decade and a half, he said. From an initial 200 participants it had grown to more than 620 today, bringing together a grand total of more than 7,000 people in the Gastein Valley south of Salzburg. Every single one of the EU Health Commissioners over these years had visited the EHFG, as well as all Austrian health ministers and secretaries of state who had held office during this time.

And much that had first been discussed in the Gastein Valley had later found its way into European health policy, or the policies of individual countries, Prof Leiner said. “Among the many examples of this I would like to mention only two: the issue of rare diseases, and patients gaining access to therapy across national frontiers,” said Prof Leiner. “That's really what first inspired me to start the EHFG in the first place – people's health needs and their sufferings know no national borders. But as I see it health policy was, and still is, too restricted by frontiers. The fact that over the last 15 years we have been able to help Europeanise health policy is something of which I am proud. And I'm also delighted that we are going to carry on down that path under the Forum's new leadership.”

The EHFG is the most important conference on health care policy in the European Union. In this its 15th year, the EHFG attracts more than 600 decision-makers from 45 countries to discuss major topics on the future of the European health care system from 3 to 6 October 2012.

Please find photos of the European Health Forum Gastein using this link: <http://www.ehfg.org/940.html>.

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