## “Electing Health – The Europe We Want”

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*Bad Hofgastein, 21 July 2014* – Ahead of its 17th Annual Congress which will be held from October 1 to 3, 2014, the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) has published details of the program (www.ehfg.org). This year´s theme “Electing Health – The Europe We Want” could hardly be more topical, says EHFG President Prof Helmut Brand: “We need some kind of ‘Roaming for Health’ project. Just like the EU effectively addressed excessive roaming charges, it could also help to unlocking resources, knowledge and experience in health to the benefits of citizens and patients across the European Union. After the elections to the European Parliament and with a new European Commission in place, important questions now arise as to how European health policy can be shaped, as to what role the EU should play in the health sector in the future and as to how competencies should be distributed. In Gastein, we offer a forum at this important point to discuss future developments with all sectors involved.”

Maastricht University health expert Prof Brand emphasizes the importance of exchange and cooperation between Member States: “As far as the financing and performance of health systems is concerned, for example, most member states have similar problems. We don’t have to continuously reinvent the wheel here. There is tremendous potential to learn from the experiences of others,” the EHFG President says. “Citizens can also draw immediate benefits from greater cooperation in health care, such as through cross-border specialization of centers for rare diseases. And everyone benefits if we succeed through better co-operation to achieve a real ‘brain circulation' among health personnel instead of the ‘brain drain’ that currently prevails.”

As in the past, the EHFG will bring together around 600 participants from more than 45 countries in Europe, as well as Taiwan, the SEE countries or Russia.

This year’s Forum once again expects to host officials from the very top echelons of governments as well as European Commission officials. Keynote speakers will include:

* Alois Stöger, diplômé, Minister of Health, Austria
* Dr Tonio Borg, EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, European Commission
* Zsuzsanna Jakab, Regional Director, WHO Europe
* DG Paola Testori Coggi, Director-General, DG Health and Consumers (DG SANCO), European Commission
* Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament (tbc)
* Members of the European Parliament
* High-level representatives of the EU Trio-Presidency (Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg)

In addition to the fundamental debate on the future shape of European health policy and its impact on the health of EU-citizens, the strengthening of primary health care, the performance of European health systems as well as the trend toward personalised medicine will be among this year’s topics in the plenary debates and parallel fora. Other fora are dedicated to topics such as public health leadership, the increasing importance of ‘e-health’ as well as to successful projects for promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Among other things, workshops this year will focus on the future development of European social health insurance systems, active aging strategies, health literacy in a mobile Europe, or with increasing challenges to health care systems, such as hearing or vision loss. They will likewise cover the new EU Health Programme 2014 – 2020, partnerships for health, non-communicable diseases or the mobility of health personnel.

For further information:   
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