## Securing healthcare and sustainably strengthening healthcare systems

*At the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2015, several events were held focusing on the topic of sustainable healthcare systems and health system performance. As well as looking at ways of facing challenges such as multi-morbidity against the background of an aging population, the objective was among other things to explore effective implementation of optimum primary healthcare.* **Bad Hofgastein, 30. September 2015**. Across Europe, increasing importance is being attached to issues related to the efficient delivery of primary healthcare in the context of sustainable healthcare systems. At this year’s European Health Forum Gastein, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health, the Main Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions and the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies therefore hosted an event dedicated to this key issue. Experts including Ellen Nolte (European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies) and Hans Kluge (WHO Regional Office for Europe) discussed among other topics a range of best practice examples of different sustainability strategies being implemented by European Union Member States.
 **Challenges facing sustainable healthcare systems**

“Well-functioning primary healthcare also acts as the basis for an efficient and effective healthcare system”, explains Clemens Martin Auer, Director General, Austrian Federal Ministry of Health. „Repositioning primary healthcare is one of the cornerstones of the current health system reform efforts in Austria.”

Ellen Nolte, citing findings from research on primary care in Europe: “There is evidence that countries with stronger primary care structures are associated with fewer potential deaths from certain conditions (e.g. cardiovascular disease) and lower unnecessary hospitalisations”
Multimorbidity is one of the biggest challenges facing healthcare systems today and was therefore the focus of a parallel forum held during the conference. Caring for patients with multiple diseases is a difficult task for healthcare systems, particularly in view of the fact that even common co-morbidities such as
cardiovascular disorders and diabetes often tend to be dealt with separately
in terms of healthcare provision.

**Health information: creating evidence for European Health policies**

The European Commission supports EU Member States in making their health systems more efficient. As part of its efforts aimed at promoting evidence-based public health policy, the Commission´s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety will organise an event this Thursday focusing on information systems.
Dr. Andrzej Rys, Director of the Health Systems and products Directorate in DG Health and Food Safety said: “The availability of scientifically proven, comparable and high quality health data helps us to identify the biggest challenges facing healthcare systems and the healthcare sector. This also puts us in a position to deal more effectively with the problem of limited resources.”

**Strong health systems at the core of strong health security**

“Most European health systems are prepared to address health crises. This includes laboratory capacity, equipped treatment facilities, and trained health workforce. The recent experience with Ebola shows this”, says Dr Guenael Rodier, Director Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment for the WHO Regional Office for Europe. “Yet, despite a common perception, our main challenge is not exotic diseases like Ebola. The European Region has a long experience of tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, measles, rubella and has significantly reduced their burden. However these diseases still exist in the Region and become bigger like drug-resistant tuberculosis. Europe’s health systems should ensure universal access to quality health care without discrimination, so that each and every one in need gets early testing, prevention and care”.

**About the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG)**
The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) offers a unique platform made up of and for experts, policy makers, opinion leaders and interest groups from the health policy field. Over the last 18 years, the EHFG has developed into an institution which addresses and discusses current and future trends and developments in European health policy and thus plays a role in shaping European health policy. The EHFG is in receipt of funding from various bodies including the European Commission, the Austrian Ministry of Health and the Province of Salzburg. The EHFG is organised by the International Forum Gastein.

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