



## PRESS RELEASE

### European Health Forum Gastein 2023 inspires discussions on the co-creation of long-term sustainable solutions that support health and well-being

- The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2023 gathered over 1,700 participants, spanning the World Health Organization, European Commission, country officials, industry representatives, healthcare professionals, and civil society actors, to explore solutions to the shockwaves that have hit health systems and discuss countermeasures to safeguard the fatigued social and health workforce.
- [Fighting Fatigue Together](#) received the European Health Leadership Award 2023 for their campaign to improve the well-being of health professionals.

**29 September 2023, Bad Hofgastein, Austria** – The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) 2023, co-organised with the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, and in collaboration with the European Commission and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, concluded today after four days of insightful discussions, thought-provoking debates, and collaborative workshops.

“Health systems in crisis – countering shockwaves and fatigue” was the broad theme which set the scene for forward-looking and solution-oriented discussions at the EHFG’s 26th edition. Ministers and high-level representatives from European Union Member States as well as from the World Health Organization, the European Commission, and the European Parliament agreed that in order to truly address the health system crisis, co-create healthier societies, and ride out the current shockwaves, stakeholders in health must prevent the cornerstones of our systems from crumbling, and fashion long-term sustainable solutions that support health and well-being.

Experts examined best practice examples for making our healthcare systems greener, reviewed the promise of AI tools to help provide safe and resource-efficient care, debated the ongoing review of the Pharmaceutical Strategy, and reaffirmed the necessity to build health systems that will not only withstand shocks, but have the flexibility to anticipate, adapt, and respond to emerging crises.

In the final conference plenary, key stakeholders explored the longer-term impact of the permacrisis and consider the measures needed to ensure the ongoing sustainability and safeguarding of people-centred social security and welfare systems.

“Let’s build a European Social Union, a union of national welfare states, accompanying changes and offering systemic support” said Frank Vandenbroucke, Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Belgium. “The upcoming Belgian Presidency of the Council comes at a crucial time: social and public health priorities are an asset for a thriving society and should remain on top of the next European strategic agenda, building on the European Pillar of Social Rights”.

MEP Sara Cerdas advocated for welfare systems that are sustainable, green, and person-centred. “In recent times our welfare systems have been confronted with health,

environmental, and economic crises. Our common response should be based on solidarity, not austerity. It is crucial to promote sustainable, person-centered welfare states, ensure better access to healthcare, reduce social and health inequalities.”

Reflecting on the final plenary, Clemens Martin Auer, President of the EHFG, said “What makes Europe unique is our spirit of solidarity. Solidarity is embedded in our European soul, law, and social code. It is empowerment through social rights. We need to consider how to secure suitable resources to preserve our solidarity systems”.

The European Health Leadership Award (EHLA) 2023, which sought to identify a grassroots initiative working to build more sustainable and shock-proof health systems in Europe, was awarded to Fighting Fatigue Together. The network of healthcare organisations, who work on European, national, and local levels, were brought together by the European Patient Safety Foundation and campaign for the well-being and safety of healthcare workers.

“We are honoured to receive this award on behalf of all the people and organisations involved in the European 'Fighting Fatigue Together' campaign” said Mirka Cikkelova, Secretary General of the European Patient Safety Foundation, “Fatigue affects the well-being and safety of health professionals with greater intensity and on a larger scale than ever before, contributing to unprecedented levels of burnout, mental health problems and staff shortages. Much needs to be done. This award encourages us to redouble our efforts to protect healthcare workers and their patients from fatigue-related risks and make this everyone's concern.”

EHFG 2023 plenary and session recordings can be found [here](#) and photographs [here](#).

For any questions, please contact the press office at [press@ehfg.org](mailto:press@ehfg.org) or +43 664 5438 701.

#EHFG2023

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## Save the Date

European Health Forum Gastein 2024

September 24-27 Bad Hofgastein, Austria & online

### About European Health Forum Gastein

The European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) was founded in 1998 as a European health policy conference. It aims to provide a platform for all stakeholders from the fields of public health and beyond. Over the past 26 years, the EHFG has established itself as an indispensable institution in the scope of European health policy. With its annual conference and other events and projects, it has made a decisive contribution to the development of guidelines and above all the cross-border exchange of experience, information, and cooperation. Leading European experts traditionally participate in the annual conference held in the Gastein Valley in the Austrian Alps in late September.