

EOQ Press Release

Mr. Gerd Hartinger, winner of the 2016 EOQ European Quality Leader Award

The European Organization for Quality (EOQ) celebrated the winner of the European Quality Leader Award 2016 at the **61st EOQ Congress, in Bled/Slovenia on October 11, 2017.**

The European Quality Leader (EQL) Award is granted annually by EOQ. EOQ 'Quality Leaders' are individuals who have succeeded in guiding their organizations to success for the different stakeholders through their leadership and through the change and quality improvement processes, in the broadest sense, which they have implemented directly through their teams.

The EQL Award winner for 2016 is Mr. Gerd Hartinger of Austria, who has served as CEO of the Geriatric Health Centres of the City of Graz since 2000. Mr. Hartinger was selected as the winner of the EQL award due to his significant and exceptional achievements in the health and social services sector, wide national and international recognition and especially for successfully turning a weak organization into a European centre of excellence by creating a competence centre in the niche sector of geriatric medicine and nursing.

After acquiring extensive experience working as an engineer and economist in various fields (e.g. dam and power plant construction industry, paper and pulp industry), Gerd Hartinger developed his education and competencies in the field of health and social services by working as a Zone Manager for Economy at Graz University Hospital and becoming a member of the Supervisory Board of the KAGes - Health Care Company in Styria (the largest Styrian Health Care provider) in 2000.

His greatest achievement has been his successful efforts as CEO of the Geriatric Health Centres of the City of Graz (GGZ). Although the Geriatric Health Centres of the City of Graz already had nearly 300 years of history at the end of the 20th century, its leadership was in complete disarray, there was no functional strategy, and costs were distributed across several locations in Graz. The organization was heavily in debt, and no investments had been made for decades. In 1999, the organization even lacked a uniform name, phone number or signage system in Graz. The goal was to turn this "derelict" organization into a European centre of excellence by creating a competence centre in the niche sector of geriatric medicine and nursing, and then to carefully but aggressively develop it into an outstanding organization by drawing on A.T. Kearny's "Stages of Excellence". In line with this goal, the portfolio of essential services for geriatric patients has grown from two in 2000 to twenty in 2016, and employee motivation and competence have increased significantly. Mr. Hartinger articulated his essential mission as "Getting the best out of teams through transparency and accountable decision making, role-model behaviour, viewing professional communication structures as a prerequisite for knowledge management, developing significant goals together, and providing support during implementation, while also fostering autonomy".

Under the passionate and committed leadership of Mr. Hartinger, the efforts of the GGZ team have been recognized via several well-known national and international awards, such as the KTQ Awards in 2010 and 2013 (the first European Group Certification based on KTQ 2010), the EFQM Awards (2014, 2015) and the Austrian Quality Award (across all industries) in 2014.

Apart from the organization's outstanding achievements under Mr. Hartinger's leadership, his expertise in quality management in healthcare services has been acknowledged by his serving as a university lecturer for 20 years, as well as his receiving a wide variety of other honors, including IIR Speaker-of-the-Year 2006, Hon. Prof. (FH) for health studies since 2015, Manager-of-the-Year at the Klinik AWARD 2015 in Berlin and various honorary functions in voluntary associations.

EOQ President Torolf Paulshus awarded Mr. Hartinger the European Quality Leader trophy and certificate during the Gala Dinner of the 61st EOQ Congress in Bled, Slovenia on October 11, 2017.

The European Quality Leader Award recognizes outstanding individuals who devote their time, energy and knowledge by sharing their beliefs for the benefit of the European Society. The European Organization for Quality (EOQ) includes more than 70,000 members and 500,000 companies within its member and partner organizations in Europe and worldwide. EOQ is an interdisciplinary European organization that strives to promote effective improvement in the sphere of quality management as the coordinating body and catalyst of its Member Organizations, with the ultimate goal of improving European society by promoting quality in its broadest sense.

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