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**Overcoming Cancer with Research:
Promising EU-funded project to arouse the most public attention to childhood cancer research**

The European Commission has currently adopted a proposal that will mark a step forward in the interest in and understanding of publicly funded health research among tax-paying European citizens. The ambitious partners of the project entitled "Overcoming Cancer with research" aim at highlighting dramatic progress against childhood cancer. To adequately inform the public of proven evidence for improved treatments and increased rates of children and adolescents having overcome cancer, the team has chosen clear coverage through diverse actions.

Professor Helmut Gadner, head of the Children's Cancer Research Institute in Vienna, Austria, coordinates the 2-year joint project "Overcoming Cancer with research" under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Subtitled "DIRECT", the science communication project is designed to inform European citizens of how childhood cancer research has generated better diagnostic methods and treatments and are directly linked to the increase in cure rates of children and youths with cancer. "Today we are able to provide a cure for three out of four children and adolescents who would have been incurable forty years ago", explains Gadner.

Funded by the European Commission at 618.000,- euros, the team is composed of the St. Anna Children's Hospital, specialised in pediatric oncology, the German Childhood Cancer Foundation, the Otto Pammer Filmproduction and the Children's Cancer Research Institute, with expertise in pediatric tumour biology.

For the general public, the reasons for financial support granted by the European Commission for biomedical research, associated results and effects on new therapeutic strategies are not always easily understood due to lack of transparent communication. Therefore, the main objective of "Overcoming Cancer with research", which was officially launched on March 1st 2008, is to demonstrate the dramatic advances in pediatric oncology on the basis of carefully selected EC-funded research projects in this field. A website in German, French and English, audio-visual material, press conferences and public events in Austria and Germany covered through television, radio, the internet

and print media are the tools used to inform the general public of how public EC funds have contributed to develop better treatments and are directly linked to the well-being of children and youths having overcome their malignant diseases. An international symposium in Vienna will bring together more than thirty leading European pediatric experts to discuss substantial future steps and how to cope with potential obstacles in this field of health research and care, in particular concerning the issues of former childhood cancer patients. Two special events are dedicated to the "little heroes". At a cycle tour and concurrent mountain climbing event, a selected group of survivors will provide evidence for their good health status and act as protagonists for the project's tv documentary.

Despite improved cure rates, childhood cancer is still a life-threatening disease, treated with highly toxic therapies which may result in side-effects, such as developmental abnormalities, infertility, limited functioning of organs, second tumours. "Previously the primary concern of research was to secure the life of our young patients. Today we can concern ourselves increasingly with the quality of survival and limiting long-term consequences", states Michael Dworzak, head physician at the St. Anna Children's Hospital, scientist and project-partner.

Since cancer is very rare in children and youths, pediatric oncology and research do not represent a financially attractive market for the pharmaceutical industry. Childhood cancer research is largely funded by private donations and public funds, such as provided by the European Commission. Hopefully, "Overcoming Cancer with Research" may boost the commercial interest of large companies to invest in pediatric oncology. This will enable researchers to become less dependent on donations and public funds.

For detailed information about *Overcoming Cancer with Research*, please visit <http://www.overcomingcancerwithresearch.eu>

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