

Advocating for Adult hearing care services in Europe

Lidia Best, EFHOH President
CIICA 2025 Conference

European Federation of Hard of Hearing (EFHOH)

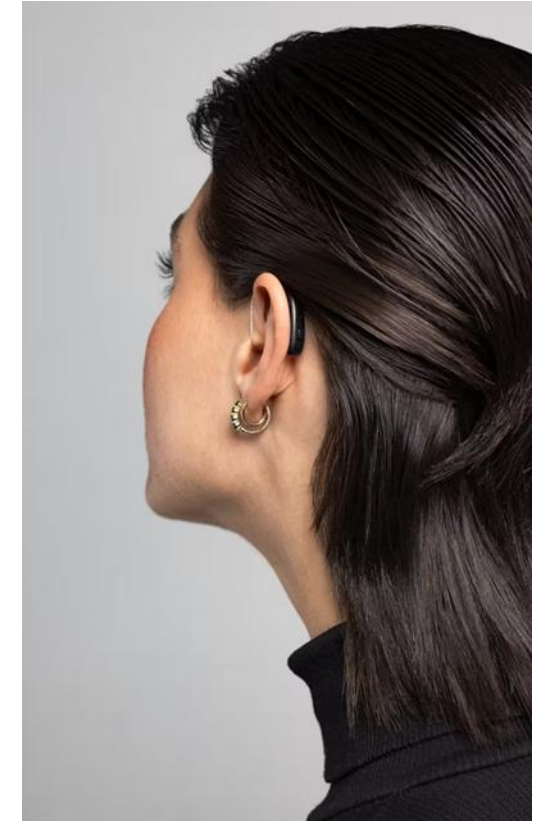
- A European Federation of national associations working across the EU and geographical Europe to further the **rights of persons who are hard of hearing.**
- **OUR COLLECTIVE VISION:**
 - A Europe where hard of hearing people can **live without barriers**, and have **the opportunity to participate** in all levels of society



Consultative NGO with the EU Commission

Framing the narrative

- ➡ The Tragic Victim: Framing the person's life as defined only by **suffering**.
- ➡ The Eternal Child: Assuming the person **must** always be **cared for**.
- ➡ The Lost Helpless Duckling Portraying the person as overly **dependent** and **incapable**.
- ➡ The Burden: Viewing the person as costly and as **extra weight** in workplaces and society.



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YOU DON'T LOOK HARD OF HEARING,
YOU'RE HEARING QUITE WELL!
/
SO YOU DON'T NEED ACCOMMODATIONS,
RIGHT?

SINCE WHEN YOU CAN SEE HEARING
LOSS? DO I NEED TO HAVE GREEN EARS
TO PROVE IT OR WHAT?



EFHOH approach to alliances

- ☐ User led
- ☐ Strength in UNITED voice
- ☐ Understand opportunities and limitations
- ☐ Resources – increased political visibility



Person Centred Approach → Rights Approach

Essen Declaration 2015

"Access to hearing aids is access to opportunity"



All persons have a right to equal opportunity in the world. For 51 million hard of hearing people in the European Union this right can be best fulfilled through state-funded provision of hearing aids and the proliferation of assistive listening devices (ALD). For these many millions of people, including children and youth access to hearing aids is access to opportunity.

On behalf of the 51 million Europeans with hearing loss¹, the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) Annual General Meeting in Essen, Germany is calling for all Member States to guarantee access to affordable, good quality, professionally approved hearing aids, ALD and the training and support standards to use them successfully. **No one should be priced out of equal opportunity.**

Access to Education and Employment: Hearing aids together with compatible assistive listening devices (ALD) provide cost effective access to education and further education, and as such to improved employment prospects. This is crucial to lowering unemployment levels among hard of hearing people.

Access to Rehabilitation: The use of hearing aids is also the most effective means of support provision for the majority of people who experience hearing loss. This is, however, reliant on certain standards being met. In its EU Standard (EN 15927) entitled 'Services Offered by Hearing Aid Professionals', the European standardization authority ANEC recognises that the process of providing a hearing aid must include rehabilitation. If this standard is not met then the hearing aid will not be effective, and the state and healthcare providers will incur further costs.

Access to an Independent Life: All governments have an obligation under Article 5 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities² (UNCPRD) to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to lead full and independent lives. Hearing aids improve quality of life in all areas: communication, socialisation, education, employment, leisure, and ultimately inclusion in society. This combination of factors has proven implications for the positive wellbeing of those who experience a hearing loss.

Rationale: Approximately 10% of the population of the European Union has some sort of hearing loss. Research suggests that those with hearing difficulties are at much greater risk of exclusion from the labour market. This has a negative effect on individual lives, but also on national economies. For example, underemployment in those with hearing loss cost the UK economy an estimated £25bn (approx. €33.5bn) in 2013³. This vastly outweighs the cost of state-funded hearing aid provision.

European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, EFHOH

Marcel Bobeldijk
President

International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, IFHOH

Dr. Ruth Warick
President

International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People

Sidsel Munkebo Hansen
President



AEA: European Association Of Hearing Aid Professionals

EFHOH: European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

EHIMA: European Hearing Instrument Manufacturer Association

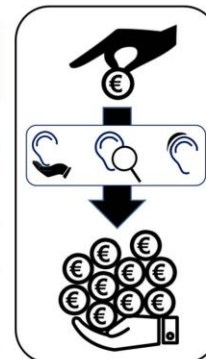
EFHOH – AEA – EHIMA: Joint Policy Paper

More than 52 million EU citizens report to have hearing difficulties. Hearing loss is one of the most prevalent disabling health conditions in adults.

The financial cost of untreated hearing loss is estimated at € 178 billion in Europe.

Untreated hearing loss leads to "Difficulties in Finding and Retaining Employment", "Earlier Retirement" and "Reduced Personal Income", "Social Isolation", "Depression", "Cognitive decline", "Reduced Activities of Daily Life", "Reduced Quality of Life", "Frailty" and "Loss of Independence".

Therefore the joint policy of the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH), the European Association of Hearing Care Professionals (AEA) and the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA) is to activate and promote the following joint action plan.



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EHIMA - 523 Avenue Louise, 1050 Brussels, Belgium - www.ehima.com



Oslo, January 2022

Access to Universal Hearing Healthcare is a Human Right

European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) statement on emergence of the Over The Counter Hearing Aids category (OTC-HA).

We are concerned with the direction OTC-HA leads and the potential loss of quality of hearing care and erosion of rehabilitation support.

Hard of hearing people require rehabilitation and accessibility measures, as well as hearing aids and assistive technologies to achieve their full potential and independent life. Providing well-fitted hearing aids by hearing care professionals should be the way to fulfil the requirements of UNCPRD Article 25 (b), not placing the responsibility for own hearing ability at the hands of person experiencing hearing loss.

In 2015 the EFHOH members have signed Essen Declaration, reminding that EU member states must comply with UNCPRD Article 25 Health, to give the right of persons with disabilities to attain highest standard of healthcare without discrimination, including hard of hearing and deafened people. The Essen Declaration states:

"All persons have a right to equal opportunity in the world. For 51 million hard of hearing people in the European Union this right can be best fulfilled through state-funded provision of hearing aids and the proliferation of assistive listening devices (ALD). For these many millions of people, including children and youth access to hearing aids is access to opportunity."

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We would like to point towards the recent findings from World Health Organisation, on the global return on investment and effectiveness of WHO HEAR interventions on hearing loss², presenting that for every 1\$ spent on hearing care interventions, the society will gain back \$16.

Therefore, the investment in the hearing aids reimbursement and quality of hearing care as part of the universal healthcare provisions is a sound investment.

¹ European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, 2015

² Tordrup D, Smith R, Kamenov K, Bertram M, Green N, Chadha S, WHO HEAR group. Global return on investment and cost-effectiveness of WHO's HEAR interventions for hearing loss: a modelling study. The Lancet - Global Health. Vol 10, January, 2022, p e52-e62. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(21\)00477-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(21)00477-2)







Hearing Care Users and Professionals Joining Forces
The 2024 Joint EFHOH & AEA Position

All hard of hearing people, shall have the right and access to
in person quality hearing care

Hearing care must be provided by a recognized & regulated
health professional in each European country

In the local implementation of the Medical Device
Regulation, the Hearing Aid Professional is the professional
selecting, adjusting, fitting and personalising Hearing Aids in
strong cooperation with the User.

Hearing care cannot be part of a tender, as this results in a
reduction in the quality of care, while every hard of hearing
person is entitled to person centred professional quality care,
and freedom of choice.

EFHOH – European Federation of Hard of Hearing People
AEA – European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals

<https://www.aea-audio.org>
<https://www.efhoh.org>



Concluding Statement
of the Annual General Meeting 2025
Tallinn, Estonia

Telecoils to stay as the integral feature of hearing devices

EFHOH calls for a balanced approach where Telecoils and Auracast™ features co-exist in hearing devices to ensure access to assistive listening systems for at least the next 10- 15 years.

The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) is committed to advocating for accessible assistive listening technologies that ensure full participation in public and private life for people with hearing loss. EFHOH upholds the position that maintaining the telecoil feature and providing access to hearing loops is essential for safeguarding inclusive hearing access across Europe for at least the next 10 to 15 years. By prioritizing assistive technology compatibility and advocating for inclusive regulations, EFHOH aims to ensure that people with hearing loss can benefit from both current and emerging technologies in their daily lives.

With the development of new technologies such as Auracast™, it has been suggested that hearing loops, and the Telecoils which provide access to them, are no longer needed as new systems are going to replace them. Auracast™ audio streaming, designed to be used in facilities as a replacement or add-on option for existing assistive listening systems, is not ready. Furthermore, removing telecoils from hearing devices too early risks cutting off access to proven systems before newer technologies like Auracast™ are fully integrated and reliable.

Auracast™ broadcast audio offers new Bluetooth connectivity, allowing hearing aid users to stream personalized audio from multiple sources, enhancing flexibility in both public and private spaces.

Telecoil is an essential accessibility feature for many users, offering access to clear, reliable sound in public spaces offering a hearing loop.

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Moving forward

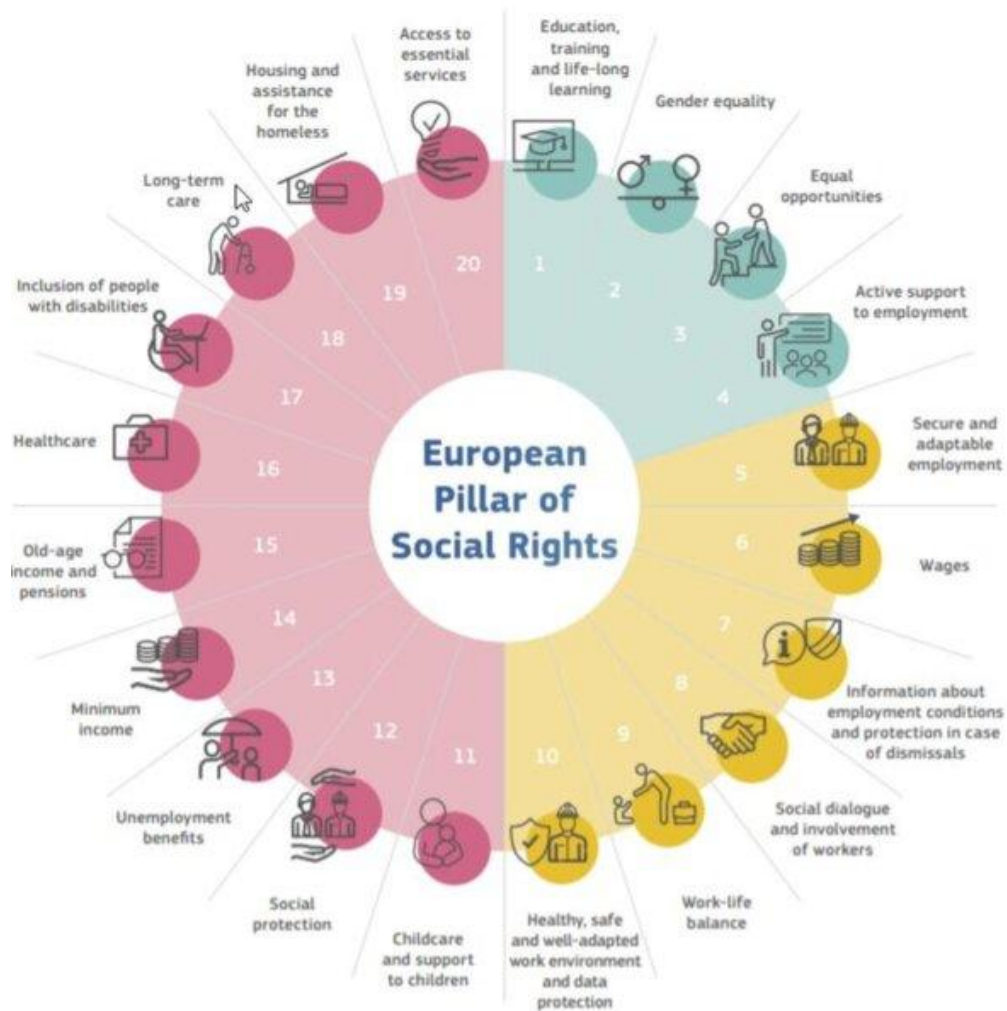
- ❑ Moving hearing health policy closer to disability-inclusive approach
- ❑ Full participation in public and private life
- ❑ Availability, accessibility and affordability of assistive technologies
- ❑ Meaningful engagement of organisations of persons with disabilities in health policy
- ❑ Aligning health policy implementation with the CRPD
- ❑ Capacity building of Hard of Hearing Leadership

The Right to Connect

EU Hearing Loss Strategy



- **Advocacy and awareness:** We promote awareness and understanding of the rights of hard of hearing individuals, working towards legislative and social protections.
- **Accessibility and inclusion:** We strive for a fully accessible society by advocating for public services accessibility, such as hearing loops, subtitling, and real time captioning.
- **Access to hearing care:** We advocate for prevention and access to hearing care for all, as part of universal healthcare. National health systems must guarantee access to hearing aids and cochlear implants for all who need them.
- **Collaboration and support:** We collaborate with members and stakeholders to facilitate practical actions, including access to affordable hearing care, rehabilitation services, and technologies like hearing aids and cochlear implants, assistive listening technologies.



EU Disability Rights Strategy



EU Parliament

EU Commission



Funded by
the European Union

«THANK YOU»

contact



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