



# Towards Hearing Loss Strategy in EU

Lidia Best, EFHOH President  
CIICA Conversations

# Towards Hearing Loss Strategy in the EU



- **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.



Funded by  
the European Union

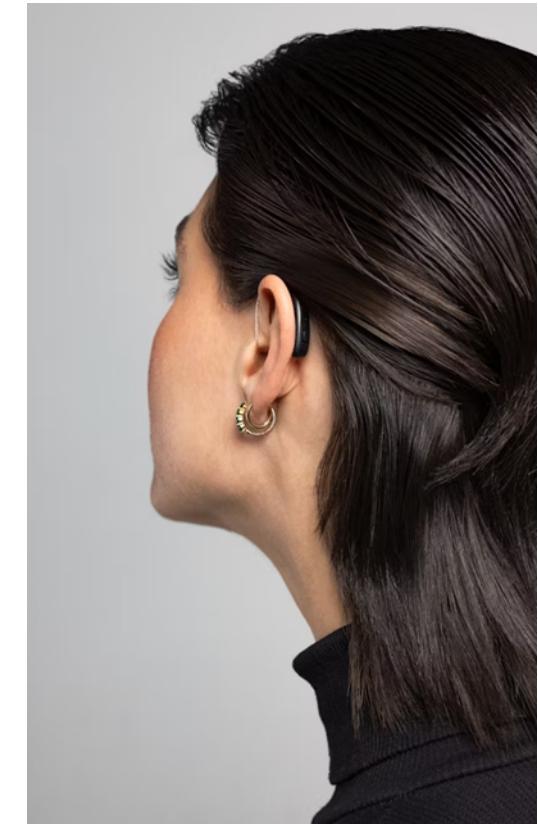
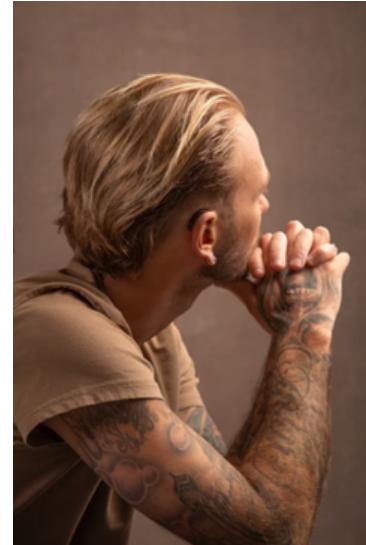
# EFHOH approach to alliances

- User led
- Reframing the narrative
- Strength in UNITED voices
- Understand opportunities and limitations
- Pulling resources – increased political visibility



# 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 over **dependent** and **incapable**.
- ➔ The Burden: Viewing the person as costly and as **extra weight** in workplaces and society.



The new norm

[The New Norm | 26 best free photos on Unsplash](#)

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?



# 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 loss<sup>1</sup>, 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.

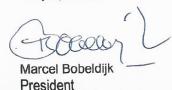
**Access to Education and Employment:** Hearing aids together with compatible assistive listening devices (ALD) provide cost effective access to education and further education, and as such to improved employment prospects. This is crucial to lowering unemployment levels among hard of hearing people.

**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'<sup>2</sup>, 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 Disabilities<sup>3</sup> (UNCRPD) 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 2013<sup>4</sup>. 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 Warwick  
President

International Federation of Hard of Hearing Young People

  
Sidsel Munkebo Hansen  
President



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People



Europäischer Verband der Hörakustiker  
Asociación Europea de Audioprotesistas  
European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People



European Hearing Instrument Manufacturer Association

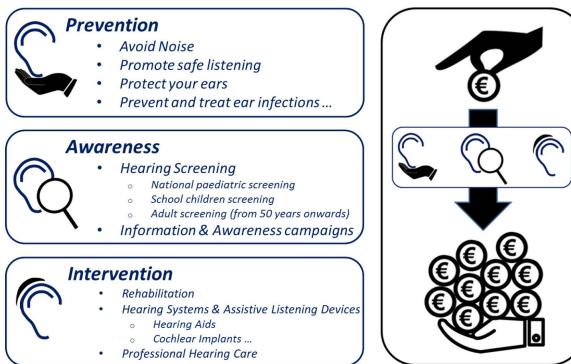
## EFHOH – AEA – EHIMA: Joint Policy Paper

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.



AEA - 40 rue Washington, B 1050 Brussels, Belgium - [www.aea-audio.org](http://www.aea-audio.org)  
EFHOH - c/o AEA, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL-UK - [www.efhoh.org](http://www.efhoh.org)  
EHIMA - 523 Avenue Louise, 1050 Brussels, Belgium - [www.ehima.com](http://www.ehima.com)



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

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 UNCRPD 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 UNCRPD 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 loss<sup>2</sup>, 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.

<sup>1</sup> European Federation of Hard of Hearing People, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Tordap D, Smith R, Kamnev K, Bertram M, Green N, Chadha S, WHO HEAR group, Global return on investment and cost-effectiveness of WHO 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/S2214-196X\(21\)00477-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-196X(21)00477-2)



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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.

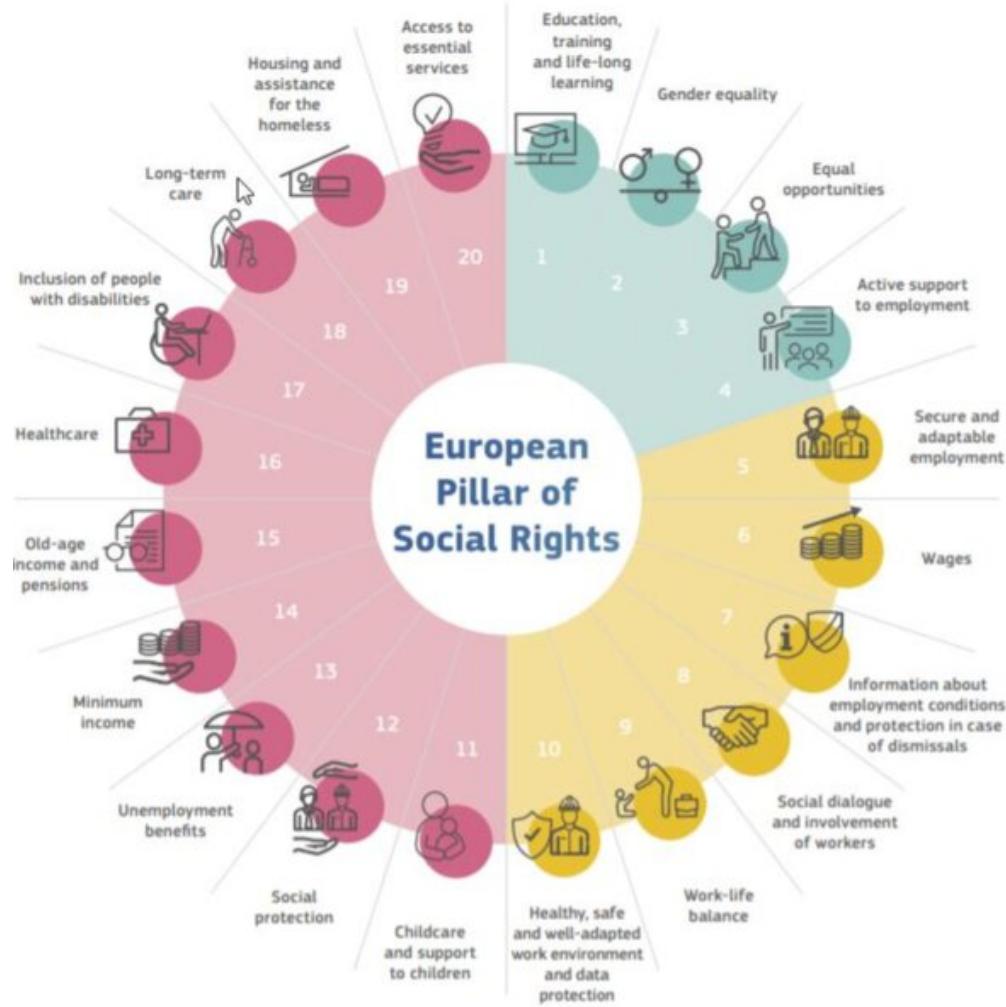
Hearing care cannot be part of a tender, as this results in a reduction in the quality of care, while every hard of hearing person is entitled to person centred professional quality care, and freedom of choice.

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

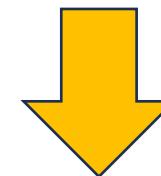
<https://wwwaea-audio.org>

<https://www.efhoh.org>

# Moving forward



## EU Disability Rights Strategy



EU Parliament

EU Commission

(( THANK YOU ))

contact



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