SLIDE 1



Opening (0:00–0:45). Good morning. My name is Sergi Marin, I am a director in an analytics consulting company, and I am a cochlear implant user: one implant in my left ear, my right ear is deaf. I work in an international environment, in English, in meetings and video calls, and sometimes in other countries. Today I bring you two things: my own working life, and what members of our Spanish federation AICE told us in a survey we ran for this conference.

SLIDE 2



About me (0:45–1:45). I was born hearing. My hearing loss started when I was eight, and I wore hearing aids through school. I was implanted twenty-three years ago, at twenty-one, in the middle of my computer science degree — so my implant and my professional career started at almost the same moment. Since then I have worked in Spain, Germany, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, and today I am a director in an analytics consulting company. One more thing matters for everything that follows: I have one implant, in my left ear, and my right ear hears nothing. Everything I hear comes through one ear, which is why meeting rooms are hard — no binaural hearing means no sense of where a voice is coming from. I would not have this career without my implant, and **one in five** of our members say exactly the same. But **53%** say their hearing loss slowed their career down. Both are true at once.

SLIDE 3



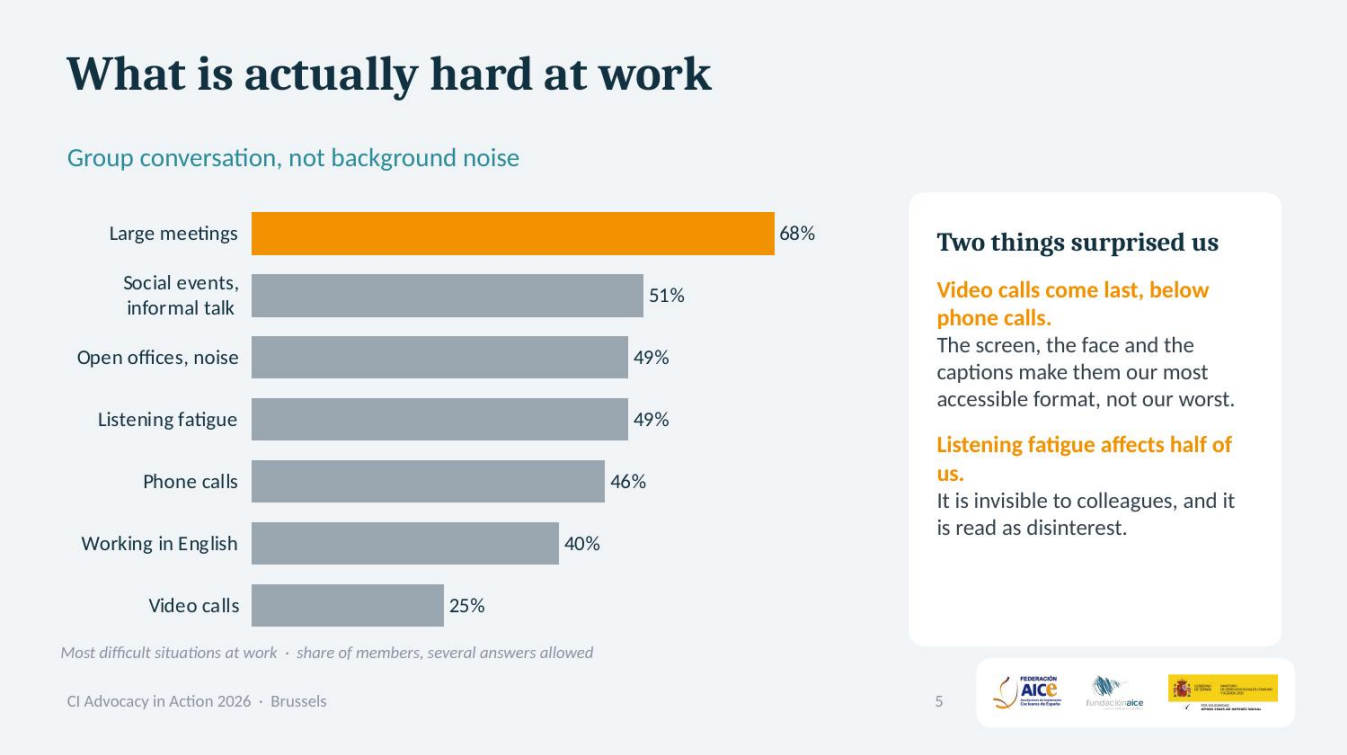
Finding the job (1:45–3:00). Three questions. The CV: do I mention it? Most of us do — **61%** disclose. And here is something specific to Spain worth knowing: half of those who disclose name their disability certificate rather than the implant, because in Spain that certificate can actually help. Companies with more than fifty employees must reserve **2%** of their posts for people with a disability, and they get incentives for hiring us. So in my country that line on the CV is often a plus, not a risk. I mention it because the calculation is different in every country, and it is one of the things this network should be comparing. Contact details: the phone is not rejected, it is accompanied; **43%** give email plus WhatsApp, and fewer than **2%** drop the phone completely. The interview: sometimes the first barrier is that the interviewer does not know what a cochlear implant is. And the hardest number: **29%** believe a job was once denied because of the implant, but almost none can prove it, and **38%** simply do not know. That uncertainty is itself the problem.

SLIDE 4



English (2:45–4:00). English was always strong for me in reading and writing, but spoken English was different: accents, speed, and constantly asking people to repeat. Over time, and with my implant, that changed — today I understand without asking, and I have full professional proficiency. I would not have achieved that without the implant. And this is not only me: among the members who use a foreign language at work, the average difficulty is **4 out of 5**. It is the most intense barrier in the whole survey. Message to employers: we can reach a very high level, we just need time and the right conditions.

SLIDE 5



What is hard (4:00–5:00). This is the survey ranking. Five situations affect around half of us or more, and none of them is solved by a better hearing aid. Large meetings lead, at **68%**, and informal conversation is second at **51%** — exactly where professional relationships are built and promotions happen. Two surprises. First, video calls come last, below phone calls: the screen, seeing the face and the captions make them the most accessible format, not the worst. Second, listening fatigue affects half of us and is completely invisible to colleagues.



Sound is everything (5:00–6:00). In a conference room, the laptop speaker decides whether I follow the meeting. With a very good one I follow everything; with a poor one I can lose half the call, and I still have to say: could you please repeat that? A good headset works, but you have to invest. And when my implant had no Bluetooth, mobile calls were a real challenge; direct streaming to the processor changed my working life. With one ear, I also choose where I sit. None of this is expensive — and yet only **21%** of our members have ever had their workplace adapted, and another **12%** asked and nothing happened.

SLIDE 7

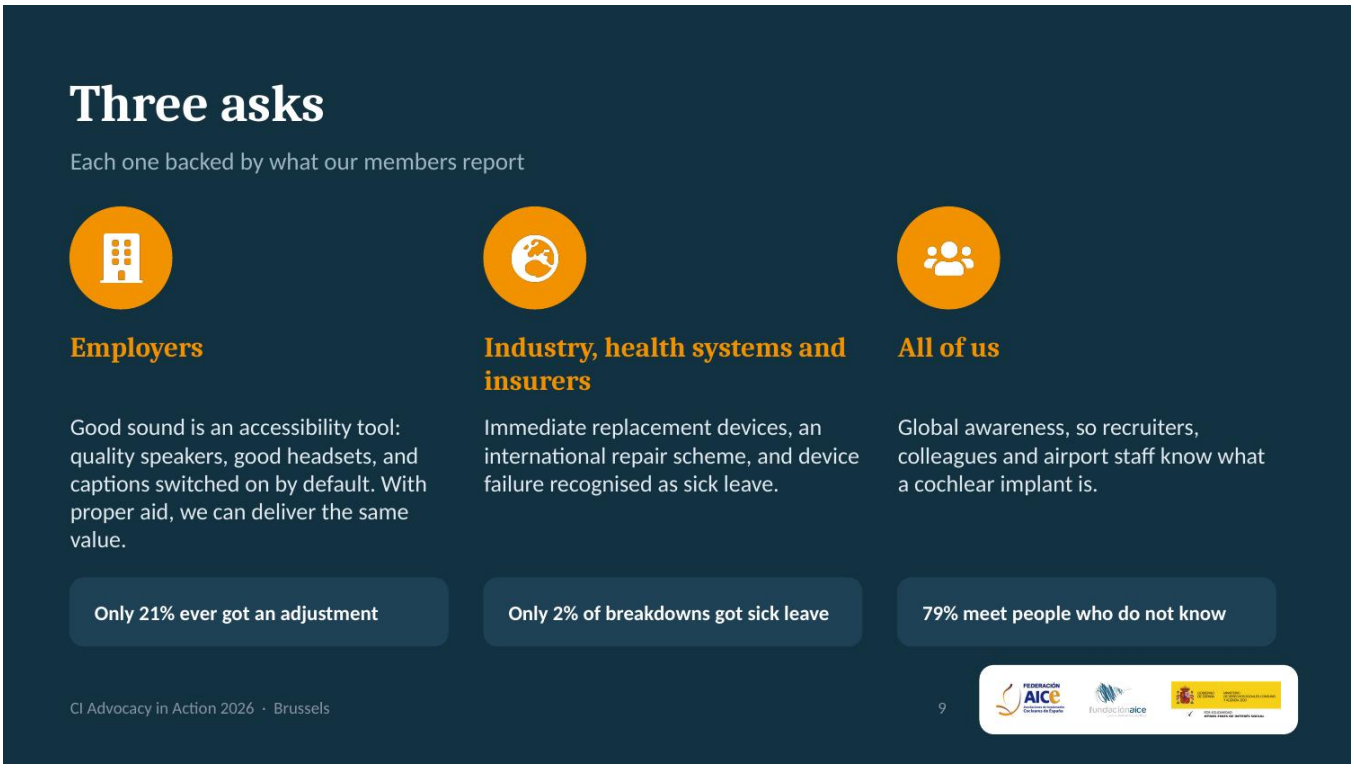


When the implant stops (6:00–7:00). When I relocated to Qatar and later to the UAE, there was no CI repair service. I had to fly home to my implant centre in Spain, at a big cost, and use my vacation days; I only kept working because we had a work-from-home policy. Even in Spain, with social security, a device failure fits nowhere: I kept working from home but had to tell my employer I could not take calls for several days. Fortunately, I have had flexible employers. Our members confirm it: of those whose processor broke down, **40%** lost working capacity, **9%** spent their own holidays, and just **2%** were given sick leave. We did not choose to be absent. Our device failed.



Awareness (7:00–7:30). This is the barrier underneath all the others, and the clearest number in our survey: **79%** of members meet interviewers or colleagues who do not know what a cochlear implant is, often or almost always. Fewer than **5%** have never experienced it. It costs us the first minutes of every interview, the same explanation with every new team, and uncomfortable moments at airport security. And when members were asked what single thing they would change, a third asked for exactly this: awareness and understanding, not technology.

SLIDE 9



Three asks (7:30–7:50). To employers: good sound is an accessibility tool. Quality speakers, good headsets and captions on by default cost very little, and only **21%** of our members ever got any adjustment at all. With the right support, CI users can deliver the same value to our society. To industry, health systems and insurers: immediate replacement devices, an international repair scheme, and device failure recognised as sick leave — because today only **2%** of breakdowns were treated that way. And to all of us: global awareness, because **79%** of us meet people who have no idea what a cochlear implant is.

SLIDE 10



Thank you for your attention — and thank you to the AICE members who answered the survey for this talk.