

Hearing loss on a political agenda and in population surveys in Europe

At the AGM 2017 in London, European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) delegates approved a motion brought forward by a General Member from Norway. The declaration reads as follows:

EFHOH asks the European Commission and European Parliament to put hearing loss on the political agenda and to incorporate hearing loss in population surveys in Europe.

In Europe, an estimated 52 million people have a hearing loss or deafness that significantly affects their daily life, leading to social isolation and loss of employment and education opportunities. Of this group, some require extensive rehabilitation while others require adaptation measures, hearing aids and awareness to master their daily life. Hard of hearing people are a diverse and growing group, as an increasing number of people are affected by hearing loss.

Treatment for hearing loss in Europe is fragmented and follow-up for patients is often haphazard. There is also a lack of research on hearing loss and hearing-related issues in Europe. Demographic variables have shifted and since the 90's the population has increasingly been exposed to both occupational and recreational noise sources. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified hearing loss as one of the most frequent permanent disabilities in the Western world and has shown that hearing loss is increasing in all age groups¹.

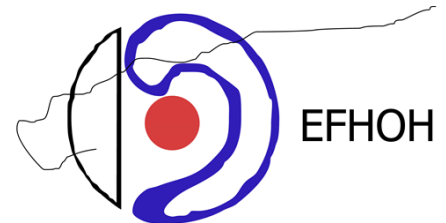
An incorporation of hearing loss in national and European population surveys and public health statistics will give the public sector a better understanding of hearing loss and provide a basis for developing better health services. It is important that decisions and actions are evaluated with sufficient knowledge and competence. An awareness of hearing loss can be easier to explain, and in turn counteract, accidental falls, isolation, mental illness and incapacity for work. Research also shows that elderly people are often diagnosed with dementia when hearing loss is the real issue², and that untreated hearing loss increases the risk of dementia.

Hearing loss is also a hidden factor behind other ailments, such as neck and back issues. An incorporation of hearing loss in population surveys will provide an understanding for the best targeted and most effective form of prevention.

¹ Hearing loss due to recreational exposure to loud sounds. A review. World Health Organization 2015. ISBN 978 92 4 150851 3

² Hearing loss in the elderly, doktoravhandling av Jorunn Solheim, Universitetet i Oslo 2011

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European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

EFHOH encourages the European Commission and European Parliament to:

- **Develop and adopt a strategy on hearing loss issues** that focuses on equality, prevention and rehabilitation to make everyday life easier for hard of hearing-people and ensure that the strategy is led by the experts who are working in the field and who are in direct consultation with hard of hearing people.
- *In addition to the strategy, develop a plan to increase awareness of hearing loss in geriatric care professionals*
- **Conduct research on hearing loss** (including research on prevention and rehabilitation) and produce relevant statistics to improve wellbeing and improved outlook for hard of hearing people
- **Participate** in a joint European conference on hearing loss that highlights good practices from the European countries on how to improve everyday life for hard of hearing people through joint efforts and collaboration.

Prepared with, and supported by, the following members of EFHOH:

<i>Høreforeningen</i> Danmark	<i>HLF (Hørselshemmedes Landsforbund)</i> Norge	<i>Svenska hörsselförbundet rf</i> Finland
<i>Kuuloliitto ry</i> Finland	<i>Hörseltjänst rf</i> Finland	<i>Hörselskadades Riksförbund (HRF)</i> Sverige
<i>Heyrnarhjálp</i> Island		<i>Felagid fyri hoyribrekad i Fearoyum</i> Färöarna