

Edited by Marcel Bobeldijk, president of EFHOH and Niels-Henrik M. Hansen.

Deadline for the next newsletter is February 1. /2017.

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Aïda and Marcel plus Ricard Lopez EDbN (European Deaf blind Network), Terasa Amat Euro-CIU and Laia Zamora Euro-CIU

# EFHOH President letter

Dear Members and EFHOH newsletter readers:  
Warm greetings from the EFHOH board. We hope that you have a nice holiday season later in December. Also we would like to say some words of thanks to all our members, sponsors, gold sponsors and our volunteers for the support that they have given in 2016 to EFHOH.

## EFHOH news 2016:

EFHOH's last board meeting was in October and was held at the Light House in Helsinki. We discussed different topics and our program for 2017. It was also nice that the new

IFHOHYP president Victor Rehn was able to participate at our EFHOH board meeting. Please see also EFHOH board member Juha Hietala's article in this EFHOH newsletter.

## A day in Copenhagen:

IFHOH vice president Avi Blau, EFHOH secretary Aïda Regel Poulsen and EFHOH president Marcel Bobeldijk had on 25 October their Copenhagen day. At first there was a meeting with Majbritt Garbul Tobberup, the president of our member organisation in Denmark, Horeforeningen. Marjbritt had given us an interesting overview about her



organisation and the situation for hard of hearing people in Denmark.

After this meeting in the most accessible building in Europe the Disability House which is also the office of the Danish Disability Council and Horeforeningen. Avi, Aida and Marcel participated in the Hear-It Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2016. It was fine that IFHOH and EFHOH were presented at this Hear-It AGM and representing the hard of hearing people worldwide. In this EFHOH newsletter you can find a nice article with more background information about Hear-It and about their very informative website [www.hear-it.org](http://www.hear-it.org).

#### **EFHOH AGM 2017:**

We as the EFHOH board are very happy that NADP /UK will organise the EFHOH Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference Day 2017. The dates are 5-7 May 2017. It is great that NADP will organise this EFHOH event in the place of our Irish member organisation. Also, NADP have organised what looks to be a very nice time and event at the Friends House (London) and they have made a very interesting programme with the theme Staying Connected, Informed and Empowered.

In this EFHOH newsletter, you will find more information about the EFHOH AGM 2017 in London. We as the EFHOH board look forward to greeting you as our friend at the Friends House in London.

#### **European Disability Forum (EDF) News:**

As an EDF board member I have participated in the EDF board meetings in Slovakia, which was organised with the Slovakian Disability Council as part of the Slovakian Presidency of the European Union. One of the most important results of this EDF board meeting was the new EDF resolution on the Accessibility Act that the EDF board adopted in Bratislava/Slovenia. EDF have also published a new leaflet to explain the basic facts about the European Accessibility Act. Since it may look as if the topic is very complex and highly technical, EDF has made an effort to explain in simple words what the Act is about, how the decision-making procedure works, how EDF is involved and what EDF's main demands are. This leaflet can be used by EFHOH members and it is free to download from the EDF website [www.edf.pro.e-presentaciones.net](http://www.edf.pro.e-presentaciones.net)

29-30 November 2016 European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference took place in Brussels. EFHOH was represented by their president Marcel Bobeldijk and secretary Aida Regel Poulsen. This year the theme was the 10th anniversary of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). In this EFHOH newsletter you can find an article about this event.



Group photo from European Day of Disability

#### IFHOH news:

IFHOH's president Ruth Warick wrote in her letter to mark your calendar the dates 6 to 8 October 2017 for the 4th IFHOH International Accessibility Conference on Hearing Loops and Hearing Technology in Berlin/Germany. It would be great if you as a Europeans, are able to participate in this conference.

#### IFHOHYP news:

IFHOHYP Newsletter, IFHOHYP have their autumn edition ready to launch, please take a moment to read the latest news: participants reflected on their summer camp in Denmark, the UN CRPD & Human Rights, and feature HOH people in Hong Kong, and lastly an announcement about IFHOHYP's upcoming study session. [https://issuu.com/ifhohyp\\_2/docs/pdf\\_2/1](https://issuu.com/ifhohyp_2/docs/pdf_2/1)

IFHOHYP Study Session, 6-11 March 2017 at the European Youth Centre, Budapest Hungary. IFHOHYP is currently finalizing the details of the call, but IFHOHYP would like to know how many young people would be interested and available to attend. Please send an email to [ifhohyp.sts@gmail.com](mailto:ifhohyp.sts@gmail.com) so that IFHOHYP can have your contact information and can later send the details as soon as they become available.

The link to the IFHOHYP newsletter is [https://issuu.com/ifhohyp\\_2/docs/pdf\\_2/1](https://issuu.com/ifhohyp_2/docs/pdf_2/1)

You can also look for more information at the IFHOHYP website [www.ifhohyp.org](http://www.ifhohyp.org) or at [www.facebook.com/ifhohyp](https://www.facebook.com/ifhohyp) or follow IFHOHYP via Twitter @IFHOHYP

#### Follow us:

We invite you to follow EFHOH via Facebook and Twitter, our Twitter addresses are:

EFHOH	@efhoh
Marcel Bobeldijk	@marbob32
Lidia Best	@best_lidia
EDF	@MyEDF

#### Call for articles for the next EFHOH newsletter:

If you have an article for one of the next EFHOH newsletters that we will publish in 2017, please send it to us. You can also send your article to our EFHOH newsletter editor Niels-Henrik, his email address is [nhmh@learing.aau.dk](mailto:nhmh@learing.aau.dk).

#### SAVE THE DATE:

- 1 of March AEA, EFHOH, and EHIMA event at the European Parliament, Brussels.
- 5-7 May the EFHOH AGM and Conference, London.
- 6-7 October IFHOH International Accessibility Conference on Hearing Loops and Hearing Technology, Berlin.

Dear all, on behalf of the EFHOH board I wish you all, together with your family and friends, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2017!

Warm Regards,

Marcel Bobeldijk  
President of EFHOH.

## All of the board together in Helsinki



## EFHOH **board** meeting in Helsinki 14th -15th October

The last board meeting for the year 2016 was held in Helsinki, Finland. The venue for the meeting was the Light House, a building used by a number of organizations for HOH and deaf people.

The main topics for the meeting were a survey for deafened people, the upcoming AGM in London in May 2017 and the World Hearing Day event in Brussels in March. The plan for EFHOH's new website was evaluated in the meeting as well.

The schedule for two days was quite busy and the board hasn't much time to explore the city. On Friday evening former EFHOH board member Janna Linna joined us for a dinner. We also met shortly the members of the board of Finnish Federation on Saturday.

Written by Juha Hietala, member of the EFHOH board

## EFHOH / NADP AGM and Conference 5 – 7 May 2017

***‘Staying connected, informed and empowered’***

**Friend’s House, 173-177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ  
London, United Kingdom**

The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) will hold its AGM and Conference in London, UK with the theme **‘staying connected, informed and empowered’**.

This event will be hosted by the National Association of Deafened People (NADP). This is a unique opportunity to meet delegates from hard of hearing community across Europe.

The event provides an opportunity for you to hear direct from the most senior leaders in hearing care and disability movement, discover innovative work led by industry, and network with colleagues from across the sector.

The venue is fully accessible with hearing loops and for persons with mobility issues.

For information on location and getting there, please check this link <http://www.friendshouse.co.uk/getting-here>



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

**Speakers** Dr. Laszlo Lovasz (Expert at the UN CRPD Committee and EU Parliament Advisor), Lilian Greenwood (MP for Nottingham South and NADP President), Søren Hougaard (Secretary General of the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association), Mark Laureyns (President of the European Association of Hearing Care Professionals), Gareth Ford- Williams (Head of Accessibility, BBC Design and Engineering) and Chris Wood (Action on Hearing Loss) are already confirmed to speak at the Conference.

### **Program Excerpt**

#### **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May - afternoon**

*Annual General Meeting of EFHOH*

#### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May**

*Conference* – Including all speakers and topics affecting the UK and International Community.

NADP AGM - lunchtime

**Gala Dinner** – Ticket only dinner at an iconic London venue

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup>** – social program

Contact us at [events@nadp.org.uk](mailto:events@nadp.org.uk)





## Invitation to the EFHOH AGM and Conference in London 2017

Dear Members.

It is with our pleasure, to share the details of EFHOH AGM and joint conference with NADP in London 5-7 May 2017.

Due to a very short time to organise the event, we can share registration for the event including financial arrangements, the general information with the theme as well as travel information.

It is worth checking [booking.com](http://booking.com) as well as [trivago.com](http://trivago.com) sites for the best offers on hotel accommodation close to Euston Station.

The program is being finalised and we will share it at the later date.

The organisers have not been able to organise Sunday social activities due to short time but the registration form gives you a possibility to indicate if you would like to take

part in the organised tour. We will share possible options soon.

Friday evening is the free evening, which we have not organised. We will communicate with all delegates on this at the later date.

London has so much to offer for tourists and especially for hard of hearing tourists our museums are fully accessible with hearing loops, subtitling on screens. I am sure, you will have a great time in the city.

If you have any questions, need further information including choice of accommodation, please do not hesitate to contact organisers at [events@nadp.org.uk](mailto:events@nadp.org.uk)

Looking forward to welcome you all in London next year!



## MEET **SAM**: EFHOH'S NEW INTERN

Hello all, my name is Sam and I have recently joined you here at EFHOH as your new intern in England. I'm 25 and this move is the start of my second career – my first was in recruitment. I spent five years recruiting for charities and not for profit organisations – mainly Directors, Chief Executive's and Trustee. I made the decision to join the not for profit sector this summer.

Hearing loss has recently become a big part of my family life. In 2012 my sister became a speech and language therapist focused on young people, having completed her Masters dissertation on the effects of Cochlear Implants on young people's speech development. Her passion for the difference that a little bit of accessibility can make to a person with hearing loss' life is infectious. My grandfather has also recently been given hearing aids, which proves her point in a very personal way. My heightened knowledge of the issues related to hearing loss made me delighted to have found a role in the field and I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with you all on making Europe more accessible for people with hearing loss.

So far it has been a lot of fun learning about the different relationships and stakeholders involved in European advocacy. I have mostly been helping make arrangements for the 2017 Annual Conference in London and developing the EFHOH Deafened People Survey 2016. I'm looking forward to staying busy and doing new things for EFHOH over the next few months.

In my personal life I am something of a 'geek' – I am a huge fan of science fiction and computer gaming and I help run a building and painting modelling workshop for young people aged 12-16 having been a competition winner in the past. I am a huge football fan (Liverpool FC) and I very much hope to one day be able to play the Harmonica (after two years I can play two songs!).





## Assistive Listening and Communication Devices at School (The HODA Project) Report now available in English

Pupils (aged 10-16) with hearing loss in inclusive education in Sweden were at the center of interest in the HODA-study, carried out in 2013. Pupils and teachers responded to a variety of questions, lessons were observed and technical devices as well as class rooms settings were examined. Conditions for learning were analyzed in terms of

- Technical support given, in particular access to educationally relevant and functioning microphone systems
- Physical aspects of class rooms, especially acoustics
- Pedagogical issues, such as teaching methods and teachers' awareness of the needs of a pupil with hearing loss
- Social environment during class, for instance supportive and non-supportive behavior of people in the class room

The results show major flaws and stakeholders need to take important steps towards better conditions for students' learning situation.

The HODA-project resulted in a number of reports in Swedish in 2015 and a short summary of the findings were presented in English in the EFHOH Newsletter of September 2015. In December 2016, the Swedish National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools makes a publication of the HODA-study and its findings available in English (see link below).

### Links:

EFHOH Newsletter

[http://www.media.wix.com/ugd/c2e099\\_8616e3f7fd-3c4565a5468bfb69a50e1a.pdf](http://www.media.wix.com/ugd/c2e099_8616e3f7fd-3c4565a5468bfb69a50e1a.pdf)

The HODA Project

<https://webbshop.spsm.se/sok/?search=hoda>





## Hear-it - the world's leading source on hearing and hearing loss

Hear-it AISBL is an international non-profit and non-commercial organisation that deals with hearing, hearing loss and hearing loss treatment. The organisation runs [www.hear-it.org](http://www.hear-it.org) – the world's leading website on hearing, hearing loss and tinnitus.

The objective of the organisation Hear-it AISBL is to collect, process and circulate all and any up-to-date scientific (sociological, legal, medical, public, policy related) and other relevant information on hearing impairments and their human and socio-economic consequences.

One of the major activities is publishing [www.hear-it.org](http://www.hear-it.org), the world's largest web site on hearing and hearing loss. The website is published in English, German, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Chinese. Hear-it.org is updated continuously with news and new factual articles about hearing and hearing loss. The website has hundreds of thousands of visits each month from all over the world. The activities of hear-it AISBL also include initiating and financing scientific research on the consequences of hearing loss, publication of reports on hearing and hearing loss, cooperation with national organisations, dialogue with public authorities and other issues regarding hearing impairments.

Hear-it.org also has a Facebook page, a Twitter profile and a channel on YouTube with a series of videos. You can of course also subscribe for e-mail updates on the hear-it website.

### All issues related to hearing

Hear-it AISBL, and the website, deals with almost any issue related to hearing impairment, including:

- prevention of hearing loss
- consequences of hearing impairment for the individual and society
- advice and practical information for hearing-impaired people
- information and advice for relatives, parents and colleagues
- statistics and facts about hearing loss
- causes of hearing loss
- hearing loss treatment
- the benefits of hearing loss treatment for the individual and for society
- information about tinnitus

### EFHOH is a member

Hear-it AISBL is an international non-profit and non-commercial organisation. Hear-it AISBL is comprised of IFHOH (The International Federation of the Hard of Hearing People), EFHOH (European Federation of Hard of Hearing People), AEA (Association Européenne des Audioprothésistes), and individual members from the hearing aid industry, dispensers of hearing aids and others who share the objectives of Hear-it AISBL.

Hear-it AISBL was founded in 1999 and has been running [www.hear-it.org](http://www.hear-it.org) since 2000.

For more information:

[www.hear-it.org](http://www.hear-it.org)

hear-it.org on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/hear-it/>

hear-it.org on Twitter

[https://twitter.com/Hear\\_it](https://twitter.com/Hear_it)



## IFHOH President's Message for EFHOH

Greetings as we enter into the holiday season and are close to welcoming a new year, which we hope will be another year filled with promise and progress.

Please mark on your calendar the dates of the 6th to the 8th of October 2017 for the IFHOH International Accessibility Conference on Hearing Loops and Hearing Technology in Berlin, Germany. The German Association, Deutscher Schwerhörigenbund (DSB), is hard at work in preparing plans and fundraising for this important event. Our thanks to Renate Welter, our liaison from DSB. The venue will be the lovely Best Western Plus – Hotel Steglitz. The conference will be the fourth one on hearing loops since the first one was held in Winterthur, Switzerland Sept. 25-27, 2009 with particular thanks to the leadership of Siegfried Karg.

If you have not already done so, please go to IFHOH's website to view our video on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [www.ifhoh.org](http://www.ifhoh.org). Also on the site is the updated IFHOH CRPD Toolkit that can be used to develop workshops on the topic. The video is the product of a global collaboration with thanks to video participants Ms. Aida Regel Poulsen from Denmark, Ms. Neeta Keshary from Nepal, Mr. Muhammad Akram from Pakistan, Ms. Darja Pajk from Slovenia and Mr. Patrick Gift Egessa from Uganda, and narrator Dr. Louise Carroll of New Zealand. We appreciate the support of the Oticon Foundation, Denmark for the video.

It is time to begin planning activities for World Hearing Day of March 3rd; the theme for 2017 is Action for Hearing Loss; Make a Sound Investment. The World Health Organization (WHO) will share advocacy materials including a theme poster, infographic and banner in advance of the

day. Some suggestions of activities are: sponsor an Art competition in a local school; encourage a hospital or other entity to hold a hearing screening day, or hold a public event with a speaker and promote in the media. Be sure to take photos and do a write-up of the event so that we can show our WHO partners all of the work of IFHOH members on our day to shine. If you require a WHO planning template, please be in contact.

Finally, I want to close with acknowledging that we are marking the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities coming into force this year. On December 3 we join in marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and the theme of Achieving 17 Goals for the Future We Want. There are 17 sustainable development goals adopted by the UN and the aspiration of our community to make them inclusive and meaningful for persons with disabilities. IFHOH has been actively involved in this process in partnership with the International Disability Alliance of which we are proud to be a member. These goals are another vehicle for us to press for our issues for: hearing services and technology that meets our needs; captioning on television, other media and for in-person activities and events, and our human rights and inclusion in education, employment and all forms of society.

In closing, I want to extend my wishes for a happy holiday season.

Ruth Warick  
IFHOH President  
Email: [president@ifhoh.org](mailto:president@ifhoh.org)



## Have a sneak peak at our innovative programme!

We are very happy to announce that the provisional programme of the EENA Conference 2017 is now available!

Our 2017 edition will take place on 5-7 April in beautiful Budapest, Hungary. Over 600 participants are expected to join us from around 50 countries from Europe but also Africa, Asia, Middle-East, and North and South America.

The EENA Conference brings together emergency services, public authorities, researchers and industry representatives to foster the sharing of best practices and debate current issues in the field of emergency services.

### **EENA 2017 - Draft programme**

Since 2009, EENA has continuously strived to combine all ingredients for a successful conference to rapidly become the largest yearly pan-European event in the emergency services field! Our secret? We are convinced that there is always room for doing something "newer and better". Take a look at what EENA has cooked up for 2017!

### **Exciting sessions**

What are the hot topics in the emergency services world? Join us at the exciting sessions of social media and public warning, caller location in an emergency, the use of drones in emergency response, Smart Cities and much more!

### **Why join us?**

From meeting with top international experts and networking in the exhibition area, to attending the inspiring

112 Awards Ceremony, this conference promises to be an unforgettable experience where you can learn, connect, grow and discover!

### **Practical info**

Find out about the Novotel Budapest City and the Budapest Congress Centre that will be hosting this 2017 edition. Also, benefit from special discounts on hotel and flights negotiated for you!

Online registrations open on 1 December!

By joining us in Budapest, participants will have the opportunity to meet with exhibitors showcasing their newest products for innovative solutions in critical areas of emergency services in the exhibition area of the conference.

Are you interested in becoming an EENA 2017 sponsor? Find all the benefits below.

### **Become an EENA 2017 Sponsor**

For more information on the EENA Conference 2017, please visit our website.



November the 26<sup>th</sup> 2016

Dear readers of this letter to the members,

Right now, in the darkest part of the year, the Advent comes to our relief: We need light. And light is given to us through the Advent crown with its four candles or through shining stars with a lamp within ...

In Germany we are now preparing for the Advent and for the Christmastide, adorning our homes with many a small or large decoration: Carollers, groups of angels, crib figures, more angels and miners, candle arches, bouquets of fir branches, and later on with Christmas trees decorated with candles and garlands ...

We are surrounded by traditions which we have known since we were children. Every country, even every part of a country has its own traditions for Advents and Christmas.

In Sweden, for instance, they celebrate St. Lucy's day on December the 13<sup>th</sup>, the day of the Queen of lights, venerating St. Lucia of Syracuse. According to the tradition a young girl dressed in white with red ribbons, carrying a crown with five candles on her head, will wake up her family offering them St. Lucy's gingerbread. . Another Swedish tradition is the St. Lucy processions, with a lot of singing.

What traditions do you have in other countries, like France, UK, US, Africa, Poland, Southern Europe, Northern Europe?

Here in Germany we have our "preferences", as already mentioned above. What should not be missing, however, are the Advent crown and the Moravian star, or the Star from Herrnhut, as it is called here in Germany.



The Moravian star can be seen in most homes, even in front of the entrance door. Originating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century this star has a long history. It was created by the children in an orphanage in Saxony, to console them over being separated from their families. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a merchant from Herrnhut (even that in Saxony) tested various materials and techniques, until he ended up with a star having 25 spikes. It should be stabile and easy to assemble. Still some changes were made, and in 1925 he had the patent registered.

The Moravian star enjoys great popularity. It is traditionally made of paper, with yellow or read spikes. It now comes in a great variety of sizes and colours, and it is made of many kinds of materials.

The crown is mostly made of fir green. You may also find them made of wood. It has four candles, one candle for each of the Advent Sundays. The Advent crown has actually existed since long ago, being introduced by J.H Wichern about 200 years ago. His main concern was to shorten the waiting time before Christmas for the children. J.H. Wichern made a crown with 20 small and four larger (4 Sundays of Advent) candles. Thus the children could count down until Christmas finally came. 100 years later the crown came with only the four candles, making its way into the churches, somewhat later even into the homes.



What about us? Are we impatient like children, who hardly can wait for Christmas? May be we should do what J.H. Wichern did: Put up 24 candles and light one candle every day? We who are hard of hearing use our eyes as our main source of information. Thus the candle may help us to tune in on Christmas. The Advent season facilitates our preparations and our expectations for the coming of Jesus. It should call us to contemplation and reflection, so that we don't perish from hustle and bustle. In this

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the children are our role models. Let us be delighted by the beautifully decorated homes with lights shining everywhere. Thus we can look forward to Christmas with joyful anticipation.

The preparations for the upcoming conference are proceeding. Even though the conference won't take place until 2018<sup>1</sup>, still way ahead, it is already time to look forward to our next event of coming together, being together encountering each other in Alsace. The time for preparing the conference is like an Advent to us, and the conference itself like Christmas. Until then there are still many candles to be lit and stars to be brought to shine.

In the name of the whole board I wish you a blessed and shining time of Advent and Christmas.

*Katharina Nitschke*



## Hire an EFHOH speaker!

Invite us to talk. We can travel to your event to present and share our work and lobbying experiences.

We may present about IFHOH Human Rights Toolkit and Prague Declaration, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including our subtitling lobbying work.

EFHOH representatives will never charge for their presentations, however we may request for travel and accommodation to be covered by the inviting party.

Please contact us at [office@efhoh.org](mailto:office@efhoh.org)

## Support our sponsors! They support us!

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## European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2016

This year's European Day of Persons with Disabilities marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). This has been the focus of the 2-day conference organised by the European Commission and EDF on 29-30 November 2016. The conference gathered together around 400 participants including people with disabilities and their representative organisations, associations and companies working to improve the life of people with disabilities, government representatives, EU institutions representatives, academics and many others. Together we are discussing and examining the progress which has been made in the European Union (EU) to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD: each panel gives an overview of the legal and policy framework, and how it has changed, followed by personal testimonies and examples.

At the conference, EDF launched its first issue of a series of European Human Rights Reports. This first issue focuses on the 10th anniversary of the CRPD giving an overview of the state of play and progress made with regards to the CRPD in Europe.

Opening the conference on 29 November 2016, EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis, underlined the positive impact of the CRPD in the EU legislation and initiatives since it ratified it in 2011:

"The Web Accessibility Directive was adopted last month, the proposal for the European Accessibility Act was published and is now being discussed, the European Structural and Investment Funds make a clear reference

to the implementation of the CRPD ensuring accessibility and non-discrimination. Legislation has been adapted, but more can also be achieved, both in laws and policies, as well as on the ground".

He also recalled the importance of implementing, promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and areas of life, as a society that respects the rights of persons with disabilities is a society that first respects the rights of every person and leaves no-one behind: "The full and meaningful implementation of the CRPD can only be achieved through a comprehensive Disability Agenda that mainstreams the rights of persons with disabilities in all policy areas and ensures a meaningful, structured dialogue with the representative organisation of persons with disabilities". "For this reason", he concluded, "it is fundamental to rethink the approach taken so far concerning the implementation of the CRPD. Its implementation is not business as usual and it should not be considered as such by policy makers at the European and national level".

### EU ACCESS CITY AWARD

The winners of the European Access City Awards were announced by the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen and EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis together with the Belgian actor Pascal Duquenne and the Italian Olympic Athlete, Beatrice Vio. This is the European wide award that rewards cities for their efforts in becoming accessible to all.

The winner of 2017 Access City Award is: Chester, UK!

The 2nd prize goes to Rotterdam, the Netherlands and the 3rd prize to Jurmala, Latvia.

Special mentions were given to:

- Lugo, Spain (Special mention on Smart Cities)
- Funchal, Portugal (Special mention on Continued Commitment to Accessibility in difficult geographic circumstances)
- Alessandria, Italy (Special mention on Continued Commitment to Accessibility in challenging times)
- Skellefteå, Sweden (Special mention on Accessible work environments)

## UN human rights recommendations: how to make them a reality?

For the first time in history, the EU was reviewed by the United Nations (UN) in 2015 and received specific recommendations on how to improve its work on the rights of its 80 million people with disabilities. 15 European countries have also been reviewed and two more country reviews will be completed in 2017. The UN recommendations are important guidance, but how can they be translated into change that will improve the living conditions of people with disabilities in practice?

EDF and its members discussed this together with representatives from the Slovak EU Presidency, the European Parliament, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) and the International Disability Alliance during a European conference in Bratislava. The conference was organised by EDF and its Slovak members, the Slovak Disability Council, with the support of the Slovak EU Presidency, as part of EDF Board meeting.

Many EDF members have been actively involved in the review processes of their countries, through the submission of alternative reports and briefing meetings with the CRPD Committee. EDF members discussed their strategies put in place to follow up to the UN recommendations: what have they done to implement the recommendations? What were the successes and the challenges they faced?

Yannis Vardakastanis, EDF President, referred to the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the work of the disability movement to promote its implementation at the European and national level: "When the ratification of the CRPD happened by the EU, we knew that the most difficult work was about to start and that was to make CRPD a reality and bring changes to the everyday lives of persons with disabilities. We need to push decision makers in Europe to support the implementation of the CRPD and to not face it as business as usual. In fact, it is a golden opportunity for

governments and societies to change and have a paradigm shift in the way they look at disability rights and the way they involve the representative organisations of people with disabilities. In this period that fundamental values are questioned, we should be there to advocate for full respect to the rights of persons with disabilities."

Branislav Ondrus, State Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, talked about the importance of the CRPD as a legally binding international tool that translates important principles into national legislation. "In the future, we hope that we will manage to change the thinking of society on this. Our ministry is ready to face the challenge that the CRPD brings about and fully supports the implementation of the CRPD in Slovakia with the involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities.

Jana Žitňanská, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the Disability Intergroup, explained that despite the fact that Slovakia has ratified the CRPD, Slovak people with disabilities still face many difficulties: many live in institutions deprived of their rights, access to personal assistance is problematic, only a small number of people with disabilities have work etc. She also described the important role the European Parliament plays in supporting the rights of persons with disabilities, including a quick response to and endorsement of the UN recommendations through the European Parliament's resolution of July 7th. The adoption of a strong European Accessibility Act, the adoption of the Marrakesh Treaty, as well as the promotion of de-institutionalisation, access to work, information and health care, are some of the priorities she referred to for the next period.

Diane Kingston, Member of the CRPD Committee, explained the role of the CRPD Committee and how the CRPD review process works, via a virtual presentation. She also highlighted the importance of the involvement of the representative organisations in providing independent analysis of whether the UN recommendations have been implemented as well as providing their expertise to their governments to support them to develop an action plan on the implementation of the CRPD and the UN recommendations.

From his side, Juan Ignacio Perez Bello, Human rights officer of the International Disability Alliance, focused on strategies for following up to the UN's recommendations on the rights of persons with disabilities at the European and national level.

Ana Pelaez, EDF Executive Committee member and also a member of the CRPD Committee, concluded on the key points for a successful implementation of the UN recommendations:



- Representative organisations of persons with disabilities need to prepare strong alternative reports on the situation of persons with disabilities in their countries;
- A correct translation of the UN recommendations into the national language has to be ensured;
- The representative organisations of persons with disabilities should develop an action plan for the responsible ministries on how to implement the recommendations, highlighting the most urgent issues and calling for the necessary funding to implement these recommendations;
- These recommendations should also be widely disseminated and used to provide input to the review of EU countries by other UN human rights mechanisms.

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## European Parliament “Signs” Yes to Disability Rights

For the first time, all the 31 EU official sign languages were simultaneously signed in the European Parliament during yesterday’s event ‘Multilingualism and equal rights in the EU: the role of sign languages’. Organised by MEP Helga Stevens, this historic event brought together more than 1.000 people including a huge representation of deaf people and other sign language users from across and beyond Europe. The aim was to raise awareness on sign languages as part of Europe’s multicultural and multilingual heritage.

## Technical cooperation is essential for implementation of the CRPD

Together with the International Disability Alliance, and a range of partners, EDF was part of a side event at the Social Forum on October 5th, on the topic of ‘Technical cooperation and capacity-building in monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities’. The event looked at the importance of technical cooperation and capacity building to implement and monitor the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) from different points of view.

## Programmes for persons with disabilities under threat in Spain and Portugal

The European Commission proposed the suspension of European Structural and Investments Funds (ESIF) for Spain and Portugal due to their non-compliance with EU budgetary rules. What this proposal fails to consider is the huge impact this will have on persons with disabilities in Spain and Portugal, as many programmes and projects promoting social inclusion and non-discrimination are funded by ESIF.

## EU takes positive steps to end book famine

EDF welcomes the European Commission’s proposal to implement the Marrakesh Treaty into EU law. It now has to be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council. If there is an agreement, the EU will ratify the Marrakesh Treaty facilitating access to published works for persons with are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled, including persons with autism. EDF calls on the EU to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty without further delay and end the book famine for millions of persons with disabilities who are denied access to published works against their rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that the EU has ratified.

## Accessible Public Websites and mobile apps become a reality in Europe

The EU just adopted a directive on the accessibility of websites and mobile apps

The European Parliament adopted today the ‘Directive on the Accessibility of Websites and Mobile Applications of Public Sector Bodies’ (Web Directive). From now on, all websites and mobile applications, including the electronic documents and multimedia, of public authorities in Europe have to be accessible to a wide range of users including 80 million people with disabilities. This is a crucial milestone to achieve an inclusive digital society in which people with disabilities and other users have access to online services and information on an equal footing to other people; this is a right enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) that the EU has ratified.

## Time for a new disability rights agenda for Europe

The EU was reviewed by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the work it has done to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, in August 2015. How has the EU progressed on putting the UN’s recommendations on the rights of persons with disabilities into practice so far? EDF and the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a Public Hearing to gather the views from organisations of persons with disabilities, civil society, equality bodies and EU institutions.

## EDF Visited Refugees with Disabilities in Greece

The EDF Director took part in a mission of the European Economic and Social Committee to Greece to investigate the situation of refugees and other migrants with disabilities. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a consultative body of the European Union, with a Permanent Study Group on Disability. The delegation to Greece from the EESC included the study groups President, Mr Noel Bernard, and members Yannis Vardakastanis, and Stojan Dare, supported by Valeria Atzori. The EESC and EDF have a long standing cooperation on all issues related to the rights of persons with disabilities. EESC reports, opinions and hearings are an important avenue for EDF in advocating towards the European Institutions;

## EDF's Youth Committee at the Council of Europe

Our Youth Committee chair, Ovidiu Tuduruta, participated in a round table organized by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on October 5th.

The event was organized in preparation of the Disability Strategy 2017-2023. Ovidiu took the floor during the second panel with the title Young Persons with Disabilities from Minority Backgrounds.

## MEPs map strategy for Marrakesh implementation and ratification in the EU

On 19 October 2016, a strategy session was held in the European Parliament to consider the Directive and Regulation proposed by the European Commission for implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty. Participants all expressed their support for swift EU ratification of the Treaty. The first steps were taken to establish a strong cross-party coalition with civil society support for a fast-track parliamentary consideration and approval of the Marrakesh legislation while at the same time opening a dialogue with EU member states in the Council who are also considering the legislation.

## EDF speaks at workshop on new technology and disabled drivers!

On 11 October, EDF participated in a workshop entitled "New technology and disabled drivers" organised by the International Motor Vehicle Inspection Committee (CITA) and the International Commission for Driver Testing (CIECA). The focus of the discussions was more on the current situation concerning the adaptation of cars for disabled drivers and the testing of drivers for driving licenses.

## Towards a European standard on accessible buildings

Last week, EDF attended the kick-off meeting to start the work on a new European standard (EN) on improving accessibility of buildings in Europe, the so-called "Mandate 420".

The European Commission has given a mandate to the European Committee on Standardisation (CEN) to develop this Standard in order to improve accessibility - it is thus one of the few standards that are developed on the demand of a legislator rather than the industry itself.

## EFHOH MEETINGS 2017

<i>2017</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2017</i>
<b>17-20 January</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>ITU meeting</b>	<b>Lidia</b>
<b>1 February</b>	<b>Brussels</b>	<b>Platform meeting</b>	<b>Aïda and Marcel</b>
<b>17-18 February</b>	<b>St.Paul/Malta</b>	<b>EDF board meeting</b>	<b>Marcel</b>
<b>1 March</b>	<b>Brussels</b>	<b>EFHOH-AEA-EHIMA event in European Parliament</b>	<b>All Board members</b>
<b>3 March</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>WHO World Hearing Day</b>	<b>Lidia</b>
<b>6&amp;7 March</b>	<b>Geneva</b>	<b>WHO-ITU Make Listening Safe Meeting</b>	<b>Lidia</b>
<b>20-22 April</b>	<b>Helsinki</b>	<b>EURO-CIU AGM</b>	<b>Juha</b>
<b>5-6 May</b>	<b>London</b>	<b>EFHOH AGM</b>	<b>All board members</b>
<b>13-14 May</b>	<b>Malaga/Spain</b>	<b>EDF AGA 2017</b>	<b>Aïda and Marcel</b>
<b>24-28 June</b>	<b>Paris</b>	<b>IFOS meeting</b>	<b>Lidia</b>
<b>June or July</b>	<b>Helsinki</b>	<b>IFHOHYP AGM</b>	<b>Juha</b>
<b>4-5 October</b>	<b>Berlin</b>	<b>IFHOH board meeting</b>	<b>Marcel</b>
<b>6-8 October</b>	<b>Berlin</b>	<b>IFHOH Loops Conference</b>	<b>All board members</b>
<b>24 October</b>	<b>Copenhagen</b>	<b>Hear It AGM</b>	<b>Aïda and Marcel</b>

**Version: 27-11-2016**

## EFHOH - European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People consists of National Associations of/for Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened People, Parents' Organisations and Professional Organisations.

EFHOH comprises the European members of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) and was established in 1993. It has its own board and secretariat. The federation has non-profitable and benevolent aims and it is a non-political and non-sectarian organisation. EFHOH is a general member of the European Disability Forum (EDF). We also work in good co-operation with IFHOH and our official language is English.

The Board members of the EFHOH carry out their work on an honorary basis.