Changing lives through technology

Creating Conditions for Independent Living
The European Day of People with Disabilities 2009

The limits of choice?

Constraints in selecting the best device

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European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

IFHOHYP

- IFHOHYP is the only international non-governmental federation for national and regional youth organizations of Hard of Hearing Young People

- The only *international + youth + disability* organisation actively cooperating with the Council of Europe and the European Commission

- 22 countries across the world

- Priority: improving quality of life for hard-of-hearing youth worldwide & awareness-raising

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- EFHOH now has 27 members in Europe
- Represents 81 million hard of hearing people; this amount is expected to rise to 90.5 million by 2015
- Main fields of activity: *Subtitling, Public transport, Telecommunication.*

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The right to access AT

- **Human and fundamental right**

Article 4 - UN Convention on the rights of people with disabilities
Articles 20, 26, 29 and 32

- **Consumers and users right**

Users and consumers with disabilities should be able to benefit from the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers

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The right to access AT

EU level:

- The Medical Services Directive, 93/42/EEC
- The Council Directive establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, 2000/78/EC
- Proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation {SEC(2008) 2180} {SEC(2008) 2181} - refers to accessibility and reasonable accommodation
- Council of Europe Action Plan 2006-2015

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Accessible and assistive technologies

Opportunity:

- to incorporate assistive technology to mainstream technology in order to reduce specificity of the products available on the market.

Threat:

- incorporating assistive solutions in mainstream products could result in *general* solutions only

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Constraints in access to AT

- Lack of information / stereotypes
- Costs of devices (real or assumed)
- Unavailability / lack of assessment information
- Limited training on device use and rehabilitation services, which can create disincentives and barriers to work
- Device complexity
- Long period of waiting (can be more costly than the equipment or surgery required)

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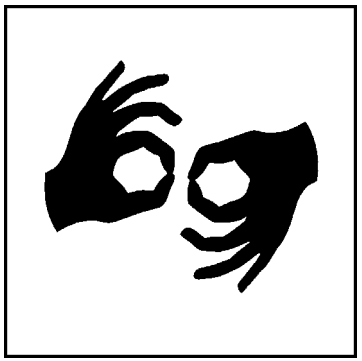
A stereotype:



- "Having a hearing aid is enough"
- But in complex auditory environment, it is not!

➡ Additional devices, training and a change in attitudes are needed

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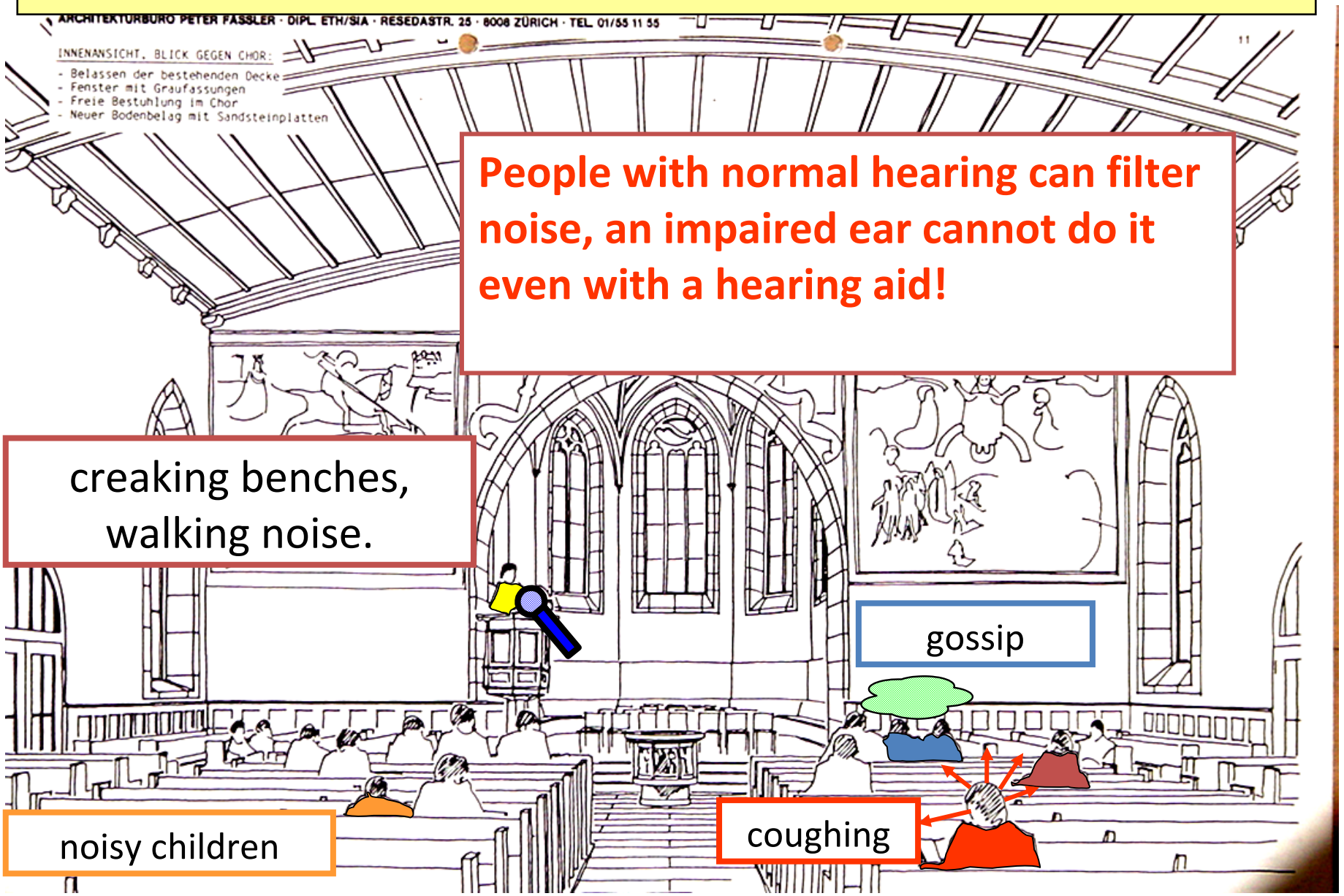
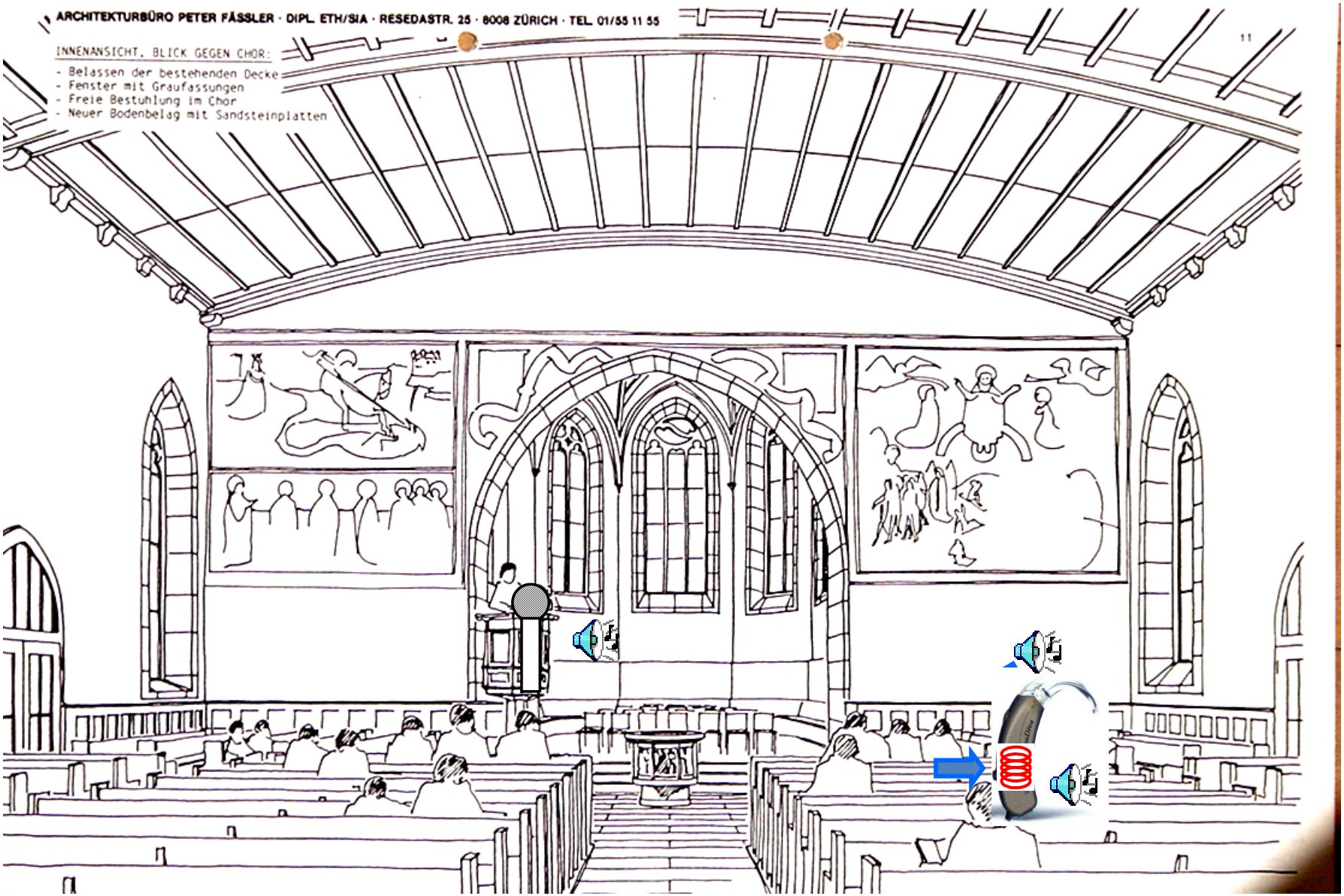
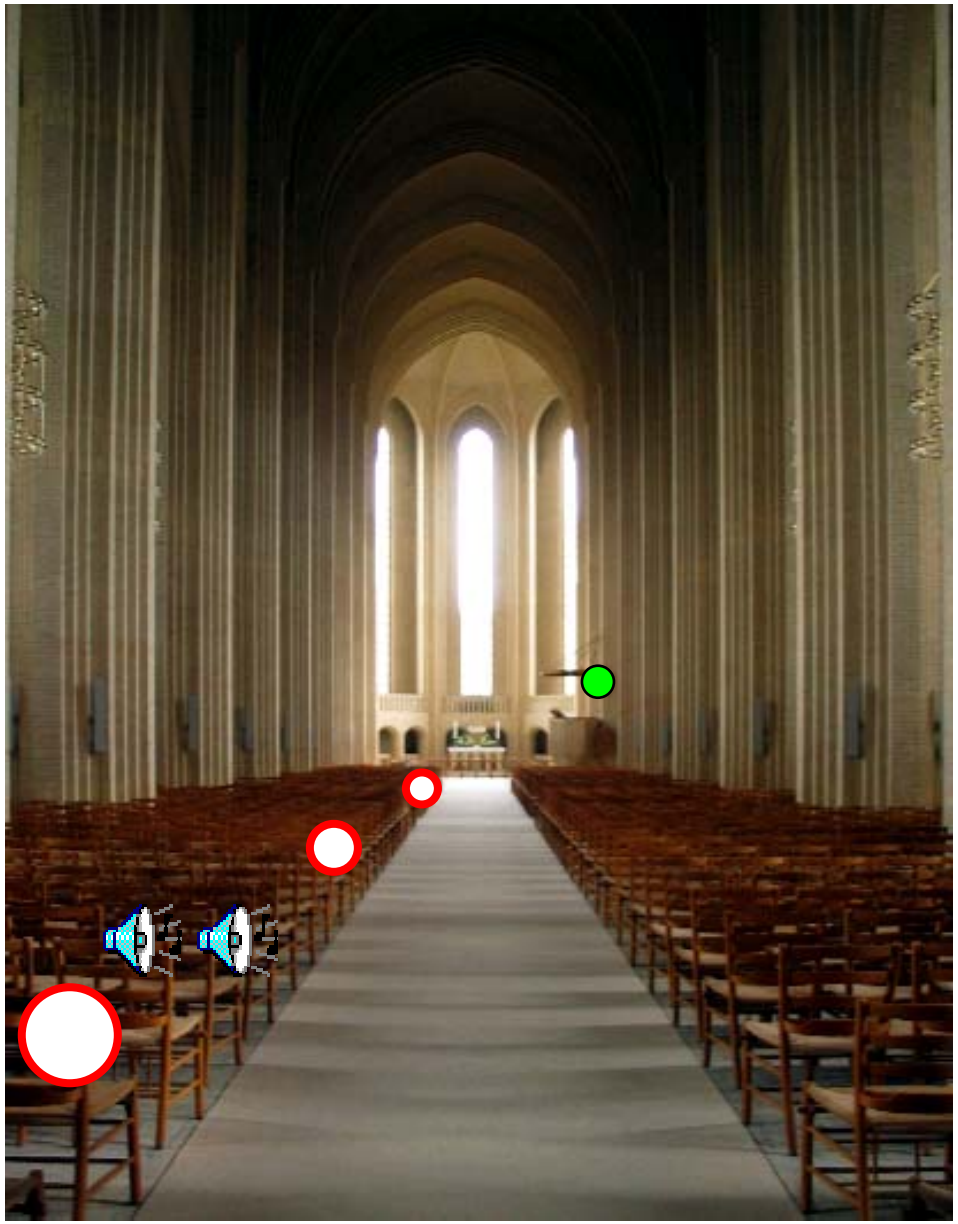
Induction loop = No surrounding noise



Demonstration





Source: Heinz Nafzger, Pro Audito Switzerland

Demonstration

Reverbe -ration	Direct sound
0%	**100%**
30 %	70 %
80 %	20 %
100 %	0 %

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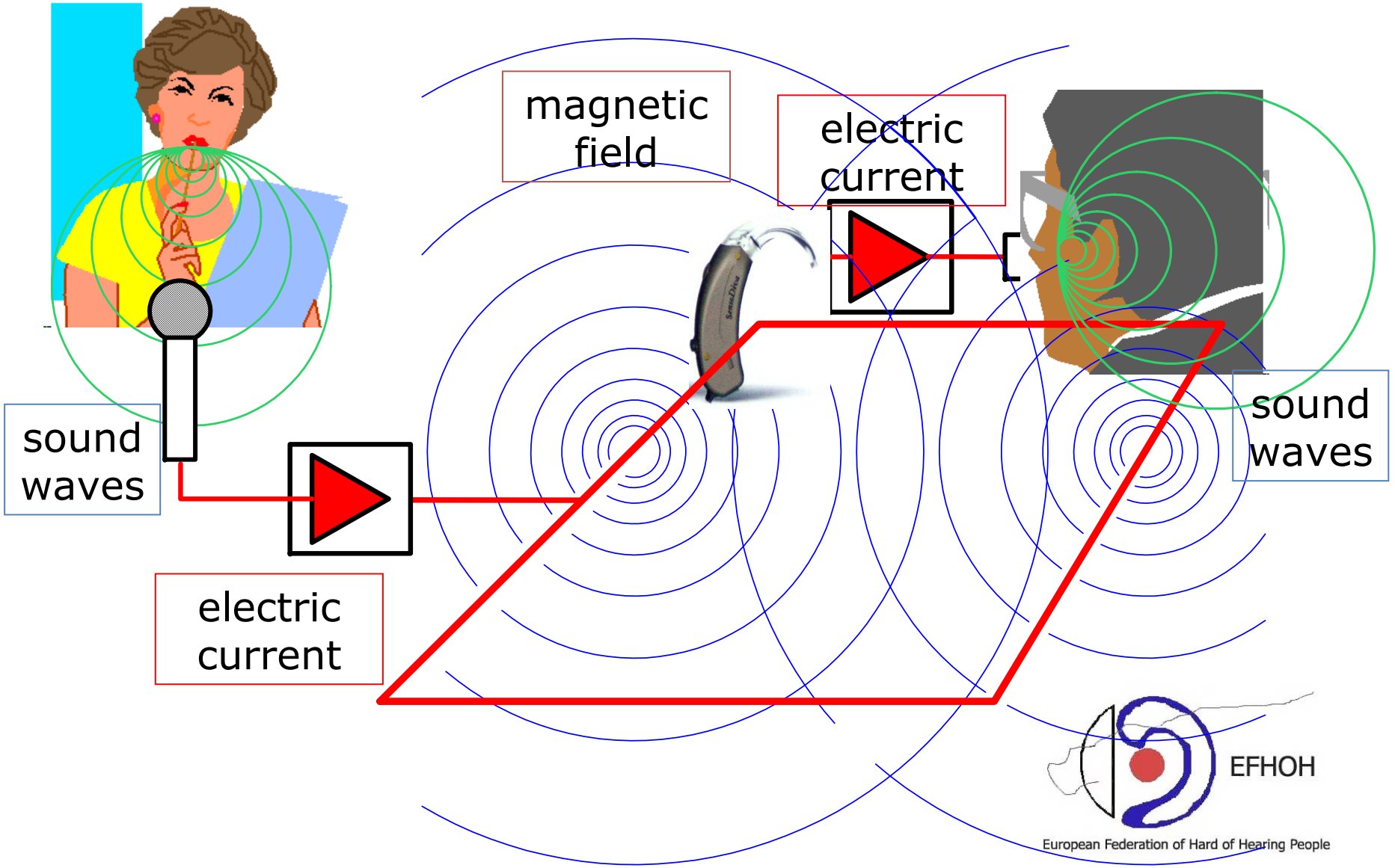
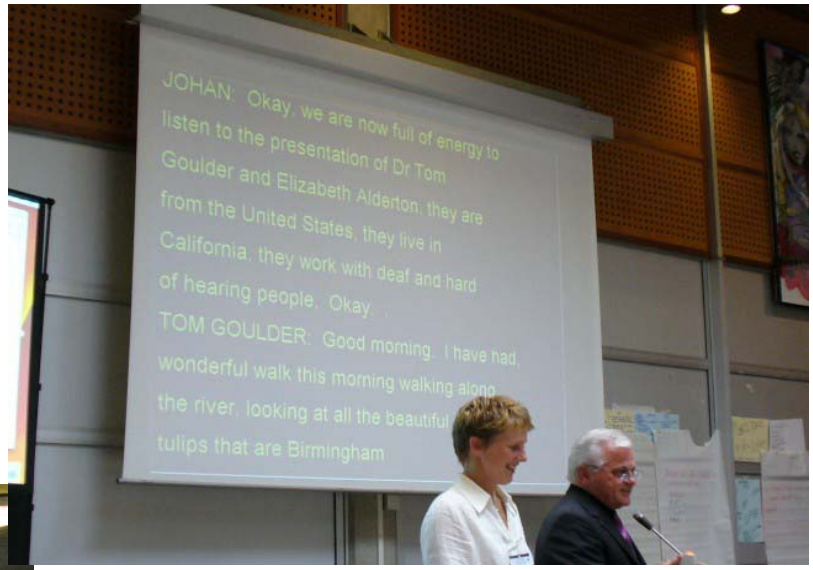
Audio frequency inductive loops systems



Induction loop and palantype

IFHOHYP training courses in the Council of Europe European Youth Centres,



Not all AT are equally good!

Correct frequency response (IEC standard 60118-4)

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EFHOH comparison of subtitling in Europe

AUSTRIA	30%	IRELAND	80%
BELGIUM (FLANDERS)	65%	ITALY	30%
		NETHERLANDS	81%
BULGARIA	2% (only news)	NORWAY	50%
CROATIA	30 minutes	POLAND	10%
CZECH REPUBLIC	72%	PORTUGAL	10%
CYPRUS	2% (only news)	SLOVAK REPUBLIC	25%
DENMARK	36%	SLOVENIA	60%
FINLAND	30%	SWEDEN	70%
FRANCE	70%	SWITZERLAND	German 20% French 17% Italian 18%
GERMANY	25%		
HUNGARY	1%		
ICELAND	334 hours	UNITED KINGDOM	99%

Policy issues

- (Re)-training of health, social and education staff
- Standards regarding compatibility and norms (e.g. quotas for subtitles).
- Adaptation of public contracts for media and ICT (public procurement)

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Access to AT

- ANED Synthesis Report “The Implementation of Policies Supporting Independent Living for Disabled People in Europe”

Distinction between:

a) *functional, impairment related aids*, and

b) *adaptations* to the built environment

- Provided mostly by social services and health/ insurance services.

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Access to AT and adaptations
(assessment and eligibility)

- In most countries in Europe – on the application basis
- "Prescribed" list of equipment –> limits of choice and paying extra from one's own pocket
- Assessments based mostly on the medical model of disability

Example: ***you can hear with an inexpensive hearing aid, but how will you understand speech with it?***

- Procedures often described as "bureaucratic"
- Residential accommodation – even more constraint
- Equipment on loan basis – in some countries (e.g. the UK)
- Budget limitations and fixed upper price limits (Denmark: hearing aid covered only for 728 EUR, Germany has a fixed percentage)
- Paying excess: in order to exercise choice,
  or as part of the means-tested grant

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Access to AT and adaptations

Work-specific equipment

- In many countries, is legislated for and provided separately from home-based equipment
- Need to re-apply for certain adaptations on a new workplace - disincentive for a disabled employee to move jobs

Portability

- Mostly limited
- Equipment and adaptive aids are supplied under regional or municipal administrative procedures –

  constraint to local area

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Access to AT and adaptations

- Compared with personal assistance schemes and the general aspirations for independent living, aids and equipment seem to lag behind.
- Lack of informed choices

"You often cannot choose your wheelchair or hearing aid depending on your individual preferences".

From the ANED Synthesis Report "The Implementation of Policies Supporting Independent Living for Disabled People in Europe", 2009

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Challenges

- Service providers and NGOs should help include the AT in the reimbursement policy of social services in the different Member States.
- Proactive research, directed towards the future
- Re-investing in public policy and in health care schemes
- Social services are separated from medical care -> different demands on the technological platform – the gap should be bridged

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Challenges

- Informed, flexible universal solutions for different disabilities (text-on-screen helps not only hard of hearing, but people with learning disabilities, people in noisy environments, foreign language learners…)
- In Eastern Europe and CEE rights-based approaches are at times hard to implement due to lack of political will and cultural fit
- Mechanisms of welfare policy implementation are not always developed – target groups are not always fully reached
- The needs of some disabilities are more visible than the others (“minority within a minority”)
- Quality of services and assessment
- Standardisation

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The need for action

Two complementary approaches:

- **A technology-oriented approach:**
  - Develop an internal market for AT
  - Delivering AT

- **A human-oriented approach:**
  - Ensure disabled users' participation and involvement; representation by DPOs
  - Being AT literate

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The need for action

- Great *potential* for the future and labour market
- *Social Advertising*
- Revise and integrate *research data*
- *Raise awareness* on assistive technology and examples of good practices!

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Thank you for attention!

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Materials from the following sources were used: RNID, Pro Audito, AAATE, ANED research reports

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