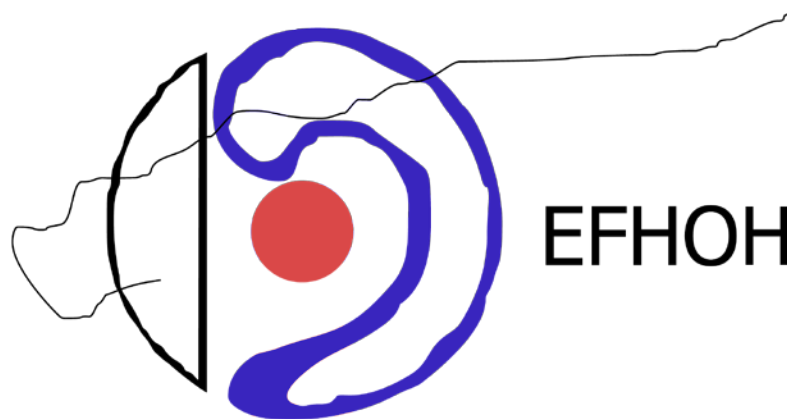


EFHOH

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Edited by Marcel Bo-
beldijk and Niels-Henrik
M. Hansen.

Deadline for the next
newsletter is February 1.
/2012. Please email your
material to nh@niels-henrik.dk



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

Headlines in this issue...



EFHOH
President
letter

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NEW EUROPEAN PLATFORM...

See it at page 5



Deaf Education: Changed by Cochlear Implan-
tations?

Read the story page 6

NEWSLETTER

December 2011



EFHOH President letter

Dear EFHOH friends,

A historical moment in November 2011, all the European organisations for Deaf, Deaf/Blind, Parents, CI-users and Hard of Hearing are now working together in an European Platform. For EFHOH Lidia Best and Marcel Bobeldijk participated in these meetings. Lidia informs you in detail in her article. In 2012 we will sign the official co-operation paper. It is very good that this platform has a good concept with MEP Adam Kosá.

Jan Lamby was in Brussels for the European Disabled People Days organised by the European Commission. Also in this EFHOH newsletter a report of this event.

Last October we had our EFHOH board meeting in Hamburg/Germany. This was an interesting meeting. Together with some German guests and the vice President of IFHOHYP we had a good discussion about the future of EFHOH. And for the next AGM in Bergen on 25 of June we will discuss our new strategy for the years 2013-2015.

As EFHOH president I was also present at the IFHOH board meeting in Oslo/Norway. At this meeting we met Lillian Vicanek, the chair of the IFHOH world congress program

committee. With her we had some discussions about some details of the program. I can inform you that all presentations will be very interesting and they will be of a high quality. And all of this in relation to the theme of the congress "A Better Life". For more information you can have a look at the congress website www.ifhoh2012.no. It will be great to meet you in Bergen.

Dear EFHOH friends, we as EFHOH board wish you all, together with your families, a great Christmas time and a good start of 2012.

See You in Bergen
Yours,
Marcel Bobeldijk.



*Merry Christmas
And a happy
2012*

EFHOH board



1 (1)

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

European Federation of Hard of Hearing People
Nominating Committee

October 26th, 2011

Dear General members of EFHOH,

The new board of EFHOH will be elected in the EFHOH Annual General meeting, June 25th, 2012 in Bergen, Norway.

The nominating committee needs formal proposals from the member organizations for the positions of:

- Vice-President;
- Board Member

Candidates must be nominated by a general member organization of EFHOH. A current EFHOH board member can be re-elected, but he/she has to officially communicate with his/her own general member organization about her availability of re-election.

The Constitution of EFHOH states among others:

- The Board consists of President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and one Board member.
- Board members must be of age and qualified to act.
- The majority of the board members must be hard of hearing themselves and they have to be a member of EFHOH general organization.
- Board members will be elected by a majority vote for a period of two years and can be re-elected.

The present Board comprises:

President:	Marcel Bobeldijk	(Holland)
Vice-President:	Knut Magne Ellingsen	(Norway)
General-Secretary:	Jan Lamby	(Sweden)
Treasurer:	Ritva-Liisa Schädling	(Germany)
Board Member:	Lidia Best	(United Kingdom)

Please send information of candidates at the latest by **February 29th, 2012** to the e-mail address: Eija Isaksson, eija.isaksson@iki.fi or fax +35892227758.

EFHOH Nomination Committee
Eija Isaksson
Kees Twilt
Harald Tamegger

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FRESH FROM BRUSSELS!



European Platform of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing People

Representatives of major European NGO's representing all spectrum of deafness and hearing loss got together to find common purpose and goals.

Who is involved?

European Union of the Deaf, European DeafBlind Platform, Euro Cochlear Implant Users, European Federation of Hard of Hearing and FEPEDA.

Why is this meeting important?

It is the first time that we are all getting together in more official way of co-operation. We have co-operated in the past but working together as the collective will bring much stronger result for all who are deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing in European Union.

Together we will ensure that our collective voice is heard loud and clear and the access to communication in all forms is part of design for all.

The meeting which took place at the EUD office in Brussels lasted all day it included meeting at the European Parliament with Adam Kosa MEP.

More information will be released with next Newsletter so please watch this space!

Reporting from Brussels

Lidia Best- Smolarek (EFHOH Board Member)



Deaf Education: **Changed** by Cochlear Implantations?

Reading the book by Sue Archbold (sitting in the middle) with the same title I was so inspired that I felt that it was important to take part as representative of EFHOH in the Conference on Deaf Education organised by Ear Foundation on 9-10 June 2011.

Why the Conference was important?

It involved the most important part of everyone's life – education. Those who have hearing loss, doesn't matter deaf or hard of hearing have additional challenges to overcome

“What was evident, it was the fact that the deaf educators did not really catch up with the technology developments and did not understand how cochlear implants have changed the needs of deaf children and their aspirations.”

during the formative years and cochlear implants have changed the way deaf children learn and acquire language. The statistics are appalling on the educational attainment in UK with

During the conference we heard many presentations from learned scholars, representatives of cochlear implants industry and the cochlear implants recipients. What was evident, it was the fact that the deaf educators did not really catch up with the technology developments and did not understand how cochlear implants have changed the needs of deaf children and their aspirations.

During the conference, we were asked a fundamental question:

- *How can we improve Deaf Education?*

My response was simple:

- Benchmark deaf and hard of hearing children along their hearing peers in order to be able to fulfil their full potential with adjustment for their hearing difficulties.
- Provide them with the correct support to succeed

Of course I did not speak from the experience of a deaf child; I was born hearing and lost major part of the hearing at the age of 12 but speaking to so many young people and my peers I have learned a lot from their experiences and was able to compare with mine.

For me, as a hard of hearing person I have witnessed the low aspiration afforded not just to the deaf peers but also many hard of hearing peers. I was blessed with the teachers who did not give me special considerations but gave me same “hard time” as my hearing peers had in mainstream education.

True, I had to work twice as hard as my hearing friends but the satisfaction was even better!

Still too many deaf and hard of hearing young people are told that they can't take up foreign languages because of their hearing difficulties, yet at the major European events many representatives with different degrees of hearing loss can communicate with me in English with ease!

Cochlear Implants have definitely changed the landscape, the way deaf children are educated and the aspirations they have. The educators need to be able to understand that and not just assume that we can't do things because we can't hear too well.

We can surprise you with what we can do, given the right encouragement and support.

When I talk about Cochlear Implants I also talk about hard of hearing and deaf children who are in similar position and who also need similar support.

With better education our employment prospects will get better and we need that to be able to compete for jobs with hearing people.

Please do give us all a chance to do what we aspire too, even if it looks not possible, who knows what the future holds?

The conference was truly educational for all of us I have learned so much thanks to organisers and Sue Archbold's drive to improve the education.

<http://www.earfoundation.org.uk/index.php>

Lidia Best
London 10 June 2011

Hard of hearing people **terrified?**

Certainly you raised your eyebrows when reading the headline. What in the world is this about? The headline is connected to a presentation held by EDF board member Johan Evans at a conference recently. The European Day of People with Disabilities, EDPD, was celebrated in Brussels as usual the first days in December. The annual conference has been jointly organized by the European Commission, EC, and European Disability Forum, EDF, since 2003. The main objectives of the conference intended to clarify the impact of the financial crisis on persons with disabilities; to deal with the implementation of the article 27 in the UN CRPD.

The first sessions tried to answer the questions: How did the financial crisis emerge; how did it spread from the US to Europe 2008- 2009. Different inputs with different views: A journalist in the France 24 TV-channel; from the EDF board member John Evans who described the situation in terms of what the austerity measures mean to disabled people.

He gave several examples how the austerity measures around Europe already have caused severe threats to disabled people's living conditions. As this might be just the beginning, some people are actually terrified: They wonder how their lives will be possible at all, if all measures proposed come in to reality.

He concluded that in nearly all cases, the austerity measures have been decided without dialogue with the disability movement. That in turn, is a violation of article 33 in the UN CRPD: "to consult representative organisations of disabled people before taking measures".

ACCESS CITY AWARD 2012

For the second year, there was also the prize ceremony of the best accessible city in Europe, the Access City Award. The hostess Annalisa Cottoni, EC, revealed the jury had received double the number of applications since last year. Qualified to compete are all cities with more than 50' inhabitants.

This year's 114 applications came from 23 different EU members. First they pass a national jury; this pre-qualification resulted in 31 cities that were passed on to the

European jury. This jury comprises representatives from both the European Commission and from the EDF.

There were four special mentions in different categories: Tarassa, E (built environment); Ljubljana, SL (transport); Olomouc, CZ (ICT projects) for visually impaired visitors and Grenoble, F (public facilities)

The four finalists were: Krakow, PL; Marburg, DE; Salzburg, AT; Santander, E.

Each of the finalists was presented by a short video clip. I was disappointed by these presentations because all of them only showed adaptations to people with reduced sight/blindness and people with reduced mobility. There might have been displays for visual information in the buses and underground cars that appeared in the videos, but it was impossible to know.

And finally the European Commissioner of Justice and EC Vice-President, Viviane Reding, broke the envelope and read: The winner is Salzburg, Austria! Also attending the prize ceremony was MEP Adám Kosa. He is from Hungary, and is the Chairman of the Parliament Disability Intergroup. More about the Access City Award at www.accesscityaward.eu.

The conference continued with parallel sessions, one of them called An agenda for New skills and Jobs, implementing article 27 of the UN CRPD.

Ana Carla Pereira, Deputy Head of unit Social Affairs, Employment and Social Inclusion, introduced the strategy "New Skills and Jobs agenda". Some basic facts: the total working age population is going down in Europe; already next year it will reach its peak. This means an increased productivity has to compensate for the diminishing work force. Historically there has been a higher unemployment rate in Europe than in countries like USA and Japan. Another important factor is education level: By 2020 35% all jobs will require high-level education. A third aspect is that involuntary part-time work increases (since 2001).

Donata Vivante, board member EDF, vice President of Autism-Europe, talked about the particular challenge of

Autism. A commonly used expression is ASD = Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In regard to UN CRPD, article 27: to gain a living by work is considered a right, and has to be developed in some way by the states. A person with ASD wants a dignified and productive life; they have excellent problem-solving skills, but lack the social competence.

A vivid discussion followed: Not all people with disabilities can be mainstreamed, always some who need special coaching and training; to be able to work requires accessibility in the built environment and public transport.

As a follow-up to this, Dr Veerle Miranda, Economist, presented a recent study at the OECD. The study revealed that all countries spend more on beneficiaries than unemployment/labor market problems; only the Nordic countries spend over 10 % of their financial support on active labor market problem for people with disabilities.

PLENARY SESSION:

Chair Johan T Geuzendam, EC, tried to summarize the parallel sessions, with help from Ms Pereira. He then gave the floor to MEP Adàm Kosa, who was welcomed for the first time to the EDPD.

Adàm Kosa reminded all participants there are still lots of barriers against the free movement; He expected the EC to propose a European Accessibility Act not later than next year. From his heart came the last demand: The recognition of sign language as an official language in every member state. The chair of the panel, Mr Geuzendam, reassured Adam: There will be no postponing of the EDA; it will come at the end of 2012.

The second day of the conference began with three parallel sessions: I attended no. 1: "Structural Funds funding anti-discrimination and accessibility: present and future". The first speaker was Peter Berkowitz, from the EC unit Regional Policy. He spoke about the proposal for a new Regulation of the EU Structural Funds. The current regulation covers the period 2007-2013. In the new regulation, intended to cover the period 2014 – 2020, there is more focus on anti-discrimination. The disability issues connect to the implementation of the UN CRPD.

Also the plans include introduction of a European Code of Conduct. More news: the regulation calls for a Programme Monitoring Committee and Annual Reports from the member states.

The total amount of the funds during the period is expected to be €376 billion.

Javier Güemes, Acting Director, EDF, wanted to give the EDF's opinion of the Structural Funds; its present and future. He started referring to the current regulation, where one can find several basic principles on non-discrimination and accessibility. These are stated in article 16 in the regulation. Looking to the current situation, there are huge differences between the member countries. Some countries have done a good implementation; others have not been consulting the disability movement. But that is history and we should all focus on what's up now: The new European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, the UN CRPD. Mr Güemes also pointed to some of the articles where the EDF wants improvement: The accessibility aspect should be more visible, not just when talking specifically about accessibility.

The conference was rounded-up by Erzsebet Földesi, vice President of EDF; Ms Földesi concluded the most important message: To avoid the crisis to spoil all achievements during the past decades.

She also honestly declared the EDF was not satisfied with the Czech and Hungarian EU Presidencies during 2011. Looking forward, she had higher expectations for the Danish Presidency starting first half 2012. The Danish Minister of Social Affairs, Ms Karen Haækkerup, greeted the participants through a video presentation. She revealed some of the Danish plans: A conference on Accessibility in Copenhagen 5-6 March, 2012. Also they plan activities on young people and employment, no dates fixed yet.

In addition to this, a short message was delivered from a representative from Cyprus. This country will have the EU Presidency for the second half of 2012.

Of special interest to hard of hearing people was the exhibition this year: One of the stands displayed the re-designed version of the Velotype keyboard. This Dutch company originally presented this special keyboard in the 80's. A lot of curious participants could find out on the screens how fast the speech-to-text can be, when typed on this keyboard.

EFHOH Secretary
Jan Lamby



Interview with Werner Bütikofer



The needs of those with hearing problems were and still are not fulfilled. The care of the hearing devices often is not enough.



When did you get for the first time in contact with EFHOH?
A few years before the founding of EFHOH, at the Annual General Meeting of IFHOH and at the congresses of IFHOH.

Can you tell something about yourself and your work at local and on national level in your country?

From 1974 till 2001 I was secretary general of the BSSV (full time job). The BSSV was involved in an active way in the founding of both the IFHOH and the EFHOH.

When did you join the board of IFHOH/EFHOH and why? Who were in the board? What have you done within IFHOH/EFHOH?

I have never been a member of the IFHOH board. In the EFHOH I was at in the beginning President, together with representatives of Sweden, Finland, Holland and Austria. After two years I changed function with Christina Wahrolin. She was from an EU country, had a hearing problem herself, was in political circles very well known, engaged and a woman. Four good reasons to change roles.

What is your opinion about the role/tasks of EFHOH as a European NGO for HOH people?

The EFHOH has the enormously important task to represent the interests of those who have hearing problems

Can you tell something about your experiences in EFHOH?

The differences/variation between the members were very big. From highly professionally guided countries such as Sweden and Norway, till almost unknown organizations in the South of Europe. The contacts with the countries in the East of Europe were important (already before the coming together of the Two Germanys. We tried to offer help (unfortunately no financial help). The Annual General Meetings were linked with specific issues/topics like subtitling, employment etc. The hosting country presented her activities in the area of hearing impairment. I got to know a lot of engaged, pleasant people

Can you tell something about the co-operation between EFHOH with IFHOH and IFHOHYP?

The EFHOH was active right from the beginning, they did meet every year (IFHOH = AGM every two years) The connections between IFHOH-EFHOH were good, the ICHOH-

YP was often not present – in some countries not present, or not present anymore. All of them had little money!

What was for you personally the most important subject/moment/topic in your period?

The biggest achievement was the organization of the IFHOH-congress in Montreux 1988. With the EFHOH it was the founding en implementation, the AGM in the conference of Gent in the BIT-ILO and in Prato with "speech to text", the seminar in Stockholm. In Helsinki (loop systems) and the conference in Copenhagen, together with the IFHOH.

What was the most sad or difficult moment/topic in your period?

The needs of those with hearing problems were and still are not fulfilled. The care of the hearing devices often is not enough. I missed the good co-operation with professionals-ear specialist, producers of hearing devices etc.

How do you see the future of EFHOH?

I don't know what happened after 2001, EFHOH as the Voice of those with hearing problems remains important. She has to bring up, together with the professionals their needs. Very important is the presence in Brussels. The EFHOH must be strong in front of the DEAF-organisations.

Congresses, like Vancouver and the loop system conference, are very important. What do you think about their role in future?

Congresses have many aims, they have to be planned carefully and the topics have to be attractive and interesting.

What were you going to do in your free time when you had left the IFHOH/EFHOH board?

I took up work/tasks in the church, in hospital; in the care for elderly people (since I'm retired) I also look forward to free evenings and weekends (together with my wife!)

Any other remarks?

I wish the EFHOH a lot of success with what they do and I wish them inspired board members, who have powerful support, also in their own countries.

EDF NEWS

PRESIDENTS BARROSO, BUZEK & VAN ROMPUY MEET WITH EDF: THE FIRST STATE OF THE UNION ON DISABILITY

6th December 2011 /// Today, the first State of the Union on Disability was organised in Brussels. This historic meeting hosted by President José Manuel Barroso gathered Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, Herman Van Rompuy President of the European Council, and Yannis Vardakastanis President of the European Disability Forum: the representative organisation of disabled people in Europe. Together, they discussed how to improve the lives of 80 million Europeans with disabilities and to guaranty their rights and freedom of movement.

This was the first meeting of a series of State of the Union on Disabilities that will now happen every two years. The main goal of this Presidents' meeting is to make sure the European institutions are working together towards the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities concluded in 2010. This is the first human rights treaty concluded by the EU. It promotes the full participation of persons with disabilities in the society, including women and children with disabilities and their families. In this challenging time of crisis, persons with disabilities in Europe are among the worst hit by the unprecedented austerity measures taken by governments.

Yannis Vardakastanis, President of the EDF stressed: "Today, in a time of profound crisis, the commitment to respect and promote the UN Convention is not enough. We ask for the rapid and practical implementation of this Convention through which real change of the lives of persons with disabilities need to be delivered. The State of the Union on Disability is a unique opportunity for the EU leaders to put in place all the necessary policies and measures to make the European Institutions work for the real protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities. This is the only practical way to combat poverty, discrimination and exclusion and to promote the inclusion of 80 million Europeans with disabilities working together for more freedom, participation, democracy and human rights."

EDF executive committee members have reminded the EU Presidents the importance of the EU action in many areas

such as the Structural Funds; the access to technology, to built environment and to transport, the people in need of high levels of support, gender equality and social services for persons with disabilities.

Vice President of the European Commission Viviane Reding reiterated her commitment for a strong European Accessibility Act which is part of the Disability Strategy. EDF welcomed the appointment given by President Barroso to gather again the leaders of the disability movement and the EU Presidents in two years to check the results of the progress. On behalf of the 3 Presidents of the other institutions, Jose Manuel Barroso stated that "The European Disability Forum is the primary interlocutor in Europe for disability issues."

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS TOWARDS THE EUROPE 2020 SOCIAL INCLUSION OBJECTIVES

With its objective of inclusive as well as smart and sustainable growth, and with its EU poverty and social exclusion target, the Europe 2020 Strategy increases the importance of the EU's social objectives and integrates them with the EU's economic, employment and environmental objectives. The National Reform Programmes (NRPs) are the means by which countries are expected to translate the Europe 2020 objectives and targets into national policies. EU countries submitted their first NRPs to the European Commission in April 2011 and members of the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion assessed their countries' NRPs from a social inclusion perspective. In particular, they assessed two things: first, how well does the NRP identify the key country's social inclusion challenges and the main bottlenecks that might prevent it from achieving the Europe 2020's social inclusion objectives (and especially the related national targets); and, secondly, how suitable are the policy actions and measures outlined in the NRP for addressing these challenges and bottlenecks and for achieving the national targets. This short report, prepared by the Network Core Team, summarises the main findings of the independent experts' country analyses. It also puts forward concrete suggestions for strengthening the social inclusion dimension of the NRP process in future.

NEW EC JUSTICE WEBSITE HAS BEEN LAUNCHED

The European Commission has presented its new, re-vamped Justice website, which is now online. Available in 23 EU languages, the new website allows users to surf through 11 themes covering all the policy and activity areas related to Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship in the EU. Each of the 11 thematic sections has a common menu, which includes key dates, legislation, programmes and events, in addition to its own navigation menu. Users now have access to a goldmine of information thanks to a dynamic Newsroom, highlighting top news, events and videos, as well as public consultations, grants and contracts and how to get involved.

EDF SUPPORTS INNOVATION FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

EDF actively contributed to the Conference 'Innovation for digital inclusion' and Click-It Event respectively organized by the Polish Presidency and European Economic and Social Committee on the issue of e-inclusion. It gathered many actors involved in the e-inclusion field coming from European countries but also Polish stakeholders were also present during the 3-day conference.

YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WANTS THEIR VOICE TO BE HEARD AT EDF

The EDF Youth Committee has met in October and real progress was made. All proposals were made at the EDF Board Meeting in Warsaw by Pat Clarke.

The Youth Committee has averted its main attention to the issue of the transition from education to the working world. We would need member groups to help us gain an overview and insight of how this problematic change is being dealt with across Europe and what could be done to help the integration a lot easier.

The second featured concern coincides with the topic of jobs. This regards the future generation of campaigners, activists and ultimately leaders of the disability movement. We are asking all members to begin to look at potential ways to expand their youth groups. The youth facebook website is a place where you could suggest to your younger members to have a look at, and try and converse, integrate and congregate with other persons with disabilities. We are stronger together and a new generation is ready to have their say on issues and areas that affect their lives.
media release

CONNECTING EUROPE FACILITY: COMMISSION PROPOSES CONCRETE PLAN FOR A BETTER ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Brussels, 21 October 2011 /// The Commission adopted on 19 October 2011 a package for new infrastructure policy. It comprises a proposal for the revision of important Euro-

pean transport network guidelines (TEN-T) and a proposal for a Connecting Europe Facility. Why are they both positive for persons with disabilities?

The UN CRPD recognizes the importance of accessibility in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Transport and digital infrastructure are fundamental for freedom of movement of persons with disabilities; for the access to the internal market and for the mobility of persons and goods.

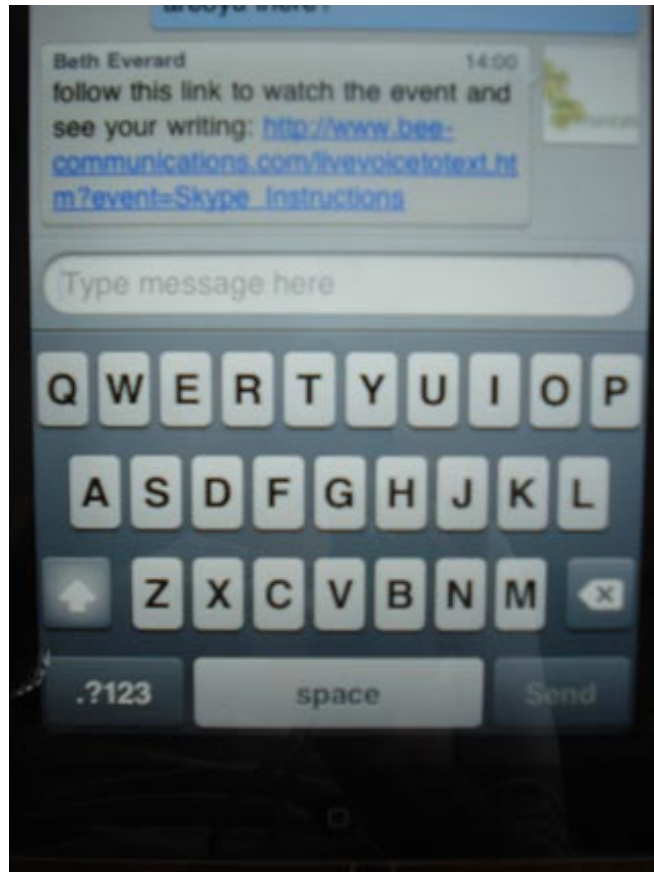
For the disability movement, the accessibility of transport and digital networks is a key issue to allow 80 million European with disabilities to have the same opportunities to move, study, work, live and participate to the internal market as any other citizens in the EU.

WHY IS 112 NOT ACCESSIBLE FOR DEAF PEOPLE?

The European Parliament Written Declaration 0035/2011 on the need for accessible 112 emergency services has been adopted. It invites the Commission "to promote the development of fully accessible and reliable Next Generation 112 services independent from devices and networks, using the Total Conversation concept" and "to put forward legislative and standardisation proposals to make 112 services fully accessible to all citizens, giving priority to sign language services using video technologies and text-based services to ensure the inclusion of deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech-disabled users". This is an additional support towards the deployment of an accessible Next Generation 112. EDF congratulates the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) team who coordinated the initiative with a lot of enthusiasm and energy. Read full media release of EUD See the freshly renewed EUD website with International Sign videos

EUROPE'S WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS: "WE NEED A NEW PLAN TO PROTECT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES"

Brussels, 1 December 2011 /// To mark the European Day of Persons with Disabilities, the European Commission is organising in cooperation with the European Disability Forum a policy conference in Brussels on 1 and 2 December. During two days, representatives from the disability movement, experts with disabilities and decision-makers focus on the effects of the crisis: "Europe's way out of the crisis: the disability rights perspective". It is particularly necessary since the EDF Observatory on the crisis has compiled an alarming report that reveals persons with disabilities are paying for the economic crisis by the reduction in incomes, services and employment.



Remote Captioning link sent over Skype on a smart phone.

Communication Support in the palm of your hand

Bee Communications have been pioneering the use of Remote Captioning, a service which allows our deaf and hard of hearing clients to access a Speech to Text Reporter (STTR) or electronic note-taker over the internet. This service is now being widely used by our clients in a variety of settings.

From Fred Suter is a student who connects to our STTR using Skype during his lectures and follows the text on his laptop, to the NUS who provide Remote Captioning to the 1500 delegates at their conferences – Remote Captioning can provide affordable and flexible Speech to Text support for all.

Handheld Technology

With the growing use of handheld technology the 'Remote' part of Remote Captioning is now even more relevant. The popularity of smart phones and tablet computers is driving the demand and acceptance of handheld and touch-screens devices.

These devices enable our clients to connect to an STTR and follow the captions on the move. A tablet such as the iPad has a powerful inbuilt microphone meaning our STTR can

clearly hear what is being said using an internet telephone service such as Skype. The tablet's 3G capacity means that there is a steady and reliable internet connection. This enables our clients to read the Speech to Text from our website.

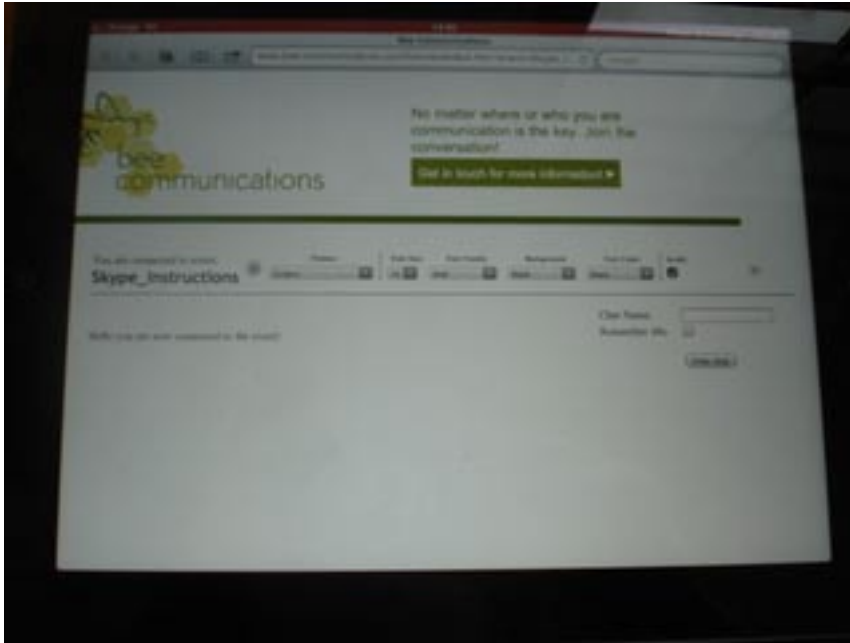
Remote Captioning website on an iPad

Tablets are easy to use and provide great flexibility. We are really very excited about the potential of these devices for improving communication services for deaf and hard of hearing people.

The benefits of handheld devices:

- flexible and portable
- fewer accessories required
- lightweight and durable
- easy to use

Bee Communications has been testing Remote Captioning on tablets and smart phones to see how it works. In fact we found out our clients were way ahead of us! Here are some of their comments:



Remote Captioning website on an iPad

Linda Sharkey, Scotland Director, Hearing Link

"As Scotland Director of Hearing Link, I spend much of my time travelling to and from meetings or events. This means that I am often 'on the road' when our weekly Skype staff meeting takes place – a meeting that is supported by remote STTR from Bee Communications.

To connect to the meeting, I have bookmarked the link to our Skype Bee Communications address and can follow all of the discussion using the live transcript from my iPhone (and from my palm pre before this). This means that I have real-time information, can use my travel time effectively and don't have to catch up from meeting notes at a later date. For me, this is a great advantage and is easy to do, so I'm really pleased that technology allows such flexibility."

Dan Birtles, BT Operate

"As with regards to the service, absolutely fantastic! I use the application on my laptop when I'm in the office and if I'm mobile, I am able to use it on my HTC Desire (Android) mobile phone. Works really, really well.

The benefits are simultaneous / parallel voice and text, which is absolutely critical. Also as I have a regular 'note taker', i.e. you, you know generally who everyone is and all the acronyms that are used. Text Relay would not be able to cope with that.

On a personal note - thank you very, very much indeed for all you have done"

Caroline O'Neill, private individual who tested Remote Captioning on her iPad

"Remote Captioning on the iPad was great - the directions were easy to use and it worked really well. I think it is a product I could definitely use in the mainstream workplace. It would be really useful for meetings at short notice or even if you just wanted access to translation for an hour without wanting to make a minimum three-hour booking for an interpreter. Cheaper too! I'd use this service, definitely!"

The more common place these devices become, the more potential there is for improved, remote communication support for deaf and hard of hearing people. This communication support would be in the hands of the individual, on demand wherever and whenever they are.

Please contact us for a test on your smart phone or tablet device, or simply for a chat about how Remote Captioning might help you.

We are happy to provide free demonstrations. Please get in touch for more details: beth@bee-communications.com | 020 7231 3192 | 07931 584 165



Loops explained

Part 2: Why does the same technology give such different experiences, and what can be done to improve it?

In the first part of this series of articles I described two very different experiences of hearing loops. My father's first experience of hearing loops was a positive experience, and now he uses the telecoil setting on his hearing aids whenever he sees a 'loop installed' sign. But my friend Alice's first experiences were bad and she has stopped going to theatres and cinemas because she thinks she won't be able to hear properly.

Why is there such a big difference in their experiences? To answer this, let's spend a few seconds to understand how hearing loops work.

The technical name for a hearing loop is 'Audio Frequency Induction Loop System' or AFILS. The name gives a clue; it works by magnetic induction where electrical signals at audio-frequencies (the range of sounds we can hear) in a loop or coil of wire produce a magnetic field that can be picked-up by the 'telecoil' in a hearing aid, cochlear implant or other listening instrument and reproduced in the users' ears.

There are three main categories of AFILS; *Large Area* systems covering a room or auditorium where the listeners are usually inside the space enclosed by the loop, *Small Area* systems covering a small space like a ticket office window or customer service desk where the listener is near to but not inside the loop, and *Personal systems* such as neck loops that are intended for a single person whose hearing aid is relatively close to the loop.

I've mentioned that AFILS rely on the magnetic field generated by signals flowing in a loop of wire that is picked-up by a miniature 'telecoil' in hearing aid or cochlear implant. A magnetic field has two properties that are very important to the understanding of why AFILS sometimes

don't work as expected; *strength* and *direction*.

To be useful to a hearing aid user, the magnetic field must be strong enough to produce approximately the same sound level in the listener's ear when using the 'telecoil' as they experience when using the hearing aid's microphone to listen to a person talking to them in a normal voice close-by.

If the AFILS signal strength is too weak, the listener will find it difficult to hear properly even if their hearing aid has a volume control – and too many hearing aids don't have one.

If the signal is too strong, it can cause painful distortion of the sound in the listener's ears and might also cause interference with nearby electronic equipment or other AFILS.

But the direction of the magnetic field is equally important. For optimum pick up the axis of the telecoil must be very nearly in the same direction as the magnetic field. In a Large Area system the magnetic field is vertical in the centre of the loop and most of the space inside the loop (and for a sitting or standing person their 'telecoil' is also nearly vertical so they get optimum reception), but the direction of the field changes as you get close to the loop wire. This means that if you tilt your head when close to the edge of a looped room the sound will get louder or much quieter depending on the direction and tilt of your head.

A Small Area system often produces a complex magnetic field pattern and the direction of the magnetic field can change rapidly from one point in space to another.

For example; a poorly designed customer service desk system may sound good to a small person or a wheelchair user, while a tall adult might find the same system too quiet to use. With small movement up or

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down, or to one side or the other, or tilting the head, the situation can change completely so that the tall listener gets a good signal while the small person or seated listener gets the opposite.

A Personal system can also give changes in sound level as you move your head, but the variation is usually small. As well as an adequate magnetic field strength, a hearing aid user also needs an adequately quiet environment to hear and understand speech. This is true whether the listener uses the hearing aid microphone or uses the 'telecoil'. In the same way that an AFILS produces a magnetic field from electrical signals flowing in a wire, magnetic fields are also produced by any electrical or electronic equipment that is powered up. Where these magnetic fields are strong enough, the hearing aid user using their 'telecoil' will hear background hum, buzz or crackling sounds and these noises can sometimes make it very difficult to understand what is being said or, at the very least, uncomfortable to listen to.

There is no easy way to screen the hearing aid from these unwanted magnetic fields, and the solution is to prevent or reduce the noise or increase the distance between the source of the noise and the user. Specialist knowledge may be needed to locate the source of the magnetic noise and find a solution.

Another source of annoying environmental noise is radio-frequency signals from mobile (cell) phones and other radio transmitters. This type of noise can be picked up when using both 'telecoil' and microphone settings of the hearing aid.

Where this is a problem, the hearing aid and the transmitting device need to be separated as far as possible. Many hearing aid users have a neck loop connected to their mobile (cell) phone which they hold in front of them, keeping it away far enough from their hearing aids to minimise noise interference.

Remember Alice? She not only found the auditorium AFILS too quiet, she also found it was muffled. Where a building has metal in its construction, such as hidden steel in concrete floors and walls, the magnetic field can be affected so that the higher octaves of sound are reduced compared to the lower octaves, making the sound muffled and indistinct. This effect can be reduced or eliminated by careful planning of the loop installation and the use of multiple, smaller, loops or by the use of specialist AFILS equipment. In such cases, the advice of an AFILS specialist is very important to avoid costly errors. It can be very expensive to

dig-up a concrete floor if the loop wiring is not positioned correctly, for example.

So far, I've discussed how poor experiences of hearing loops can be due to problems in the AFILS or the environment in which it is being used, but the hearing aid itself can be a key factor.

If a hearing aid is to produce approximately the same level of sound whether the listener is using the microphone or the 'telecoil', then the hearing aid telecoil needs to be in the correct orientation (vertical) and the electronics need to be programmed or adjusted by the dispenser or audiologist to ensure equal sound levels. All too often this isn't the case, and an AFILS is deemed to be "unusable" even though it is working perfectly. Some dispensers and audiologists even disable the 'telecoil' setting or programme because they believe 'telecoils' have been superseded by new technologies such as Bluetooth-enabled hearing aids! How wrong can they be?

Bluetooth has its place; it is great for connecting a single person to another Bluetooth-enabled device such as a mobile (cell) phone or an MP3 player. But it substantially shortens battery life and if a listener wants to make use of an AFILS they will need additional equipment to receive the loop signal and translate it to a Bluetooth digital signal.

In part 3 of this article you can learn what caring organisations, and hearing aid users themselves, can do to improve the hearing loop experience.

In the meantime I would be pleased to answer your questions by e-mail. Please contact me at doug@edworthyaudio.com.

Bio:

Doug Edworthy is an independent audio engineer based in the South East of England. He has worked as a designer and commissioner of hearing loop systems since the 1980's, runs training courses on hearing loops for the UK's Institute of Sound & Communications Engineers, and serves on many national and international standards committees including three that are concerned with hearing loop systems and the equipment used in them.

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A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR HARD OF HEARING

IFHOH World Congress in "The Land of The Midnight Sun" **25.-28.06.12**

The last week of June 2012 hundreds of people with hearing problems and professionals will meet in Bergen, Norway for the IFHOH World Congress. The congress is only arranged every fourth year, last time in Vancouver, Canada.

The main theme for the congress is "A Better quality of Life for Hard of Hearing". Every day there will be two plenary sessions followed by parallel sessions. Several speakers from all over the world will participate, both well known professionals and hard of hearing. The program is of high quality and will give the participants a view into the future.

Go to Norway with an open mind and you will leave inspired and exited!

The whole program you will find on the website: www.ifhoh2012.no

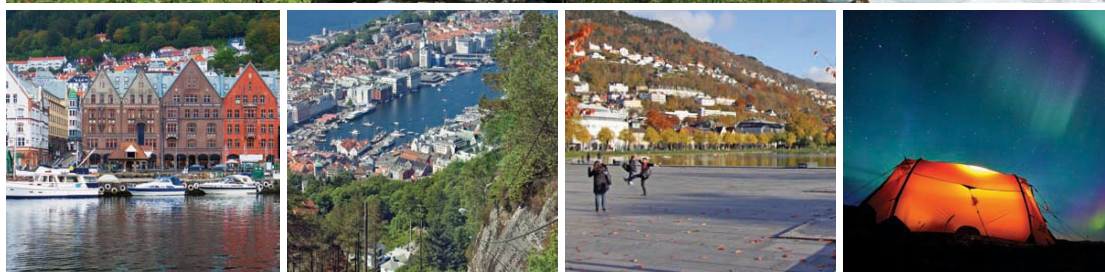
Here you also can sign up for the congress, book hotels etc. NB! Sign up before 01.04.2012 and you will have a special "early bird" fee!

And if you will like to see more of Norway when you are here – you will find several possibilities on the website.

Bergen is called "The Gateway to the Fjords", and in a couple of hours you will find the most amazing sites. For example you can go on a one day trip called "Norway in a nutshell" or on cruise with "Hurtigruten" for a couple of days or the whole trip "almost to the North Pole" and back. It is called "The World's Most Beautiful Voyage".

Bergen is worth a visit by itself. It is a World Heritage city with a lot of interesting sites. It has a very compact centre and the hotels are just a few minute's walk from the famous Grieg-hall which is the venue for the congress. Surrounded by seven mountains, but at the same time open to the ocean it is a very special city you have to experience yourself.

Welcome to Bergen and Norway in June 2012 and get an experience you will remember for the rest of your life!



You cannot miss the IFHOH World Congress 2012 in Norway, the Land of the Midnight Sun!

The last World Congress was in Vancouver, Canada in 2008.

The next one will be in Bergen, Norway, June 25 to 28, 2012!

The theme for the World Congress in 2012 is "A Better Quality of Life!"

À ne pas manquer, le Congrès mondial IFHOH 2012 en Norvège, le pays du soleil de minuit !

Le Congrès mondial précédent a eu lieu à Vancouver, Canada en 2008.

Le prochain sera à Bergen, en Norvège, les 25 au 28 juin 2012 !

Le thème du Congrès mondial 2012 est « Une meilleure qualité de vie ! »

WWW.IFHOH2012.NO

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.