

## EFHOH position paper on the inclusion of Hard of Hearing persons in the labor market.

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EFHOH welcomes the recent consensus and acknowledgement of the severe impact of disability on individuals' employment prospects. It is an important step towards a more equal society where persons with disabilities can participate based on the same principles and equitable rights.

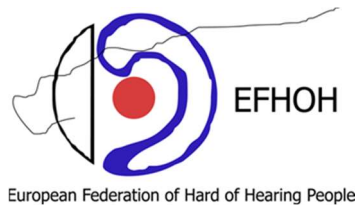
EFHOH would like to point out that it is positive that the EU countries have reached a consensus on the overall strategic direction of European disability/labor policy in the years to come. Most people find that being in work contributes to good mental health. Positive factors that are often highlighted are securing personal finances, well-being, the experience of being useful, a positive self-image, social community, and structure in everyday life.

We have noted, the EU position paper<sup>1</sup> focuses entirely on provision of social services as the principal means of delivering an inclusive labor market. To fulfill the intention of a more inclusive working life for people with hearing difficulties, we point out that for hard of hearing and deafened people, the BioPsychoSocial model of disability approach (person centered approach) is more appropriate, and it is important to understand what assistive hearing technology can offer in terms of facilitation of inclusive employment.

EFHOH reminds everyone, that as stated in the WHO World Report on Hearing, Hard of Hearing people require rehabilitation and accessibility measures, as well as hearing aids and assistive hearing technologies to achieve their full potential and independent life. Providing well-fitted hearing aids by hearing care professionals should be the way to fulfil the requirements of UNCRPD Article 25 (b) and not placing the responsibility of own hearing ability at the hands of person experiencing hearing loss. Recent findings of the Hearing Aids Reimbursement Report<sup>2</sup> show that adults with hearing loss often find themselves disadvantaged in the ability to access suitable hearing aids due to financial and policy constraints.

In 2015 the EFHOH members have signed Essen Declaration<sup>3</sup>, reminding that EU member states must comply with UNCRPD Article 25 Health, to give the right of persons with disabilities to attain highest standard of healthcare without discrimination, including hard of hearing and deafened people.

The Essen Declaration states: "All persons have a right to equal opportunity in the world. For 51 million hard of hearing people in the European Union this right can be best fulfilled through state-funded provision of hearing aids and the proliferation of assistive listening devices (ALD). For these many millions of people, including children and youth, access to hearing aids is access to opportunity.



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For hard of hearing people, achieving the realization of Article 27<sup>4</sup> of the UNCRPD that enshrines the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others in an open and inclusive labor market, the role of assistive hearing technologies and inclusive employment practices must be included.

For inclusive employment practices, in addition to hearing aids, employees who are hard of hearing or deafened should have access to assistive listening devices, speech to text and interpreters support, including additional reasonable accommodations and assistance based on individual circumstances.

### References:

- 1: EU position Paper:  
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14495-2022-INIT/en/pdf>
- 2: Hearing Aid Reimbursement 2022:  
<https://efhoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Hearing-Aids-Reimbursement-2022-launch-edition.pdf>
- 3: EFHOHs Essen Declaration :  
<https://efhoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Essen-Declaration-2015.pdf>
- 4: UNCRPD article 27:  
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-27-work-and-employment.html>

**About EFHOH:** The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People represents interest of 57 million of hard of hearing people in Europe. Our aim is a Europe where hard of hearing people can live without barriers and participate at all levels of society. Our members are national organisations for hard of hearing and deafened people.