

# CHANGING MINDSETS

## *On Hearing Loss and Mental Health*



### *A call to action for improving social-emotional well-being of Europeans with hearing loss.*

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Delegates at the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People's International Conference on Hearing Loss and Mental Health are calling the EU Commission and European Member States to prioritize Hearing Loss and Mental Health as part of current review of EU Health priorities 2024-2029.

We urge European Governments to pay attention to the crisis of cost of living and mental health which disproportionately affects hard of hearing citizens, unable to afford hearing aids, cost of cochlear and assistive devices, which are essential to hard of hearing people to access and maintain personal independence and access education, employment opportunities.

Hearing loss and mental health are linked closely and require attention and action from all stakeholders. Hearing loss can have a profound impact on a person's quality of life, social interactions, education, employment, and mental health. People who are hard of hearing face many barriers and challenges in accessing information, communication, and services that are essential for their well-being.

Hearing loss can also affect the development of self-identity, self-confidence, and self-esteem. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition and that includes hard of hearing people.

Access to hearing aids and implantable technologies, together with accessible and inclusive environments and services, can foster the social inclusion and participation of people with hearing loss.

Let's make the world more hearing loss friendly where everyone feels valued and supported.

# Action Steps

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## ACTION STEPS - HEARING LOSS

- Prioritise Hearing Loss and Hearing Care in the current review of EU health priorities.
- Support timely and affordable hearing care including access to hearing aids, implantable technologies and follow up rehabilitation. Access to hearing technologies provide 30 to 1 ROI (Return on Investment)
- Develop policies that include and protect the rights and interests of people with hearing loss in consultation with experts who are hard of hearing and their representative organizations.
- Foster inclusion of hard of hearing people including access to speech to text interpretation, hearing loops and other forms of assistance
- Promote and implement inclusive education and employment policies for hard of hearing people.
- Promote awareness among the general public and service providers about the needs and rights of people with hearing loss.

## ACTION STEPS – MENTAL HEALTH

- Include Mental Health support in hearing care and health strategy planning, including hearing loss and tinnitus management.
- Provide training on communication strategies and hearing loss awareness for public-facing staff.
- Implement accessible healthcare planning including alternative ways of contact.
- Support and develop public campaigns on changing mindsets and attitudes towards people with hearing loss.

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