

International Day of Persons with Disabilities – 3 December 2025

Today, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, under the 2025 theme "*Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress*", we call for a Europe where hard of hearing people can fully participate and belong.

The European Disability Rights Strategy 2021–2030 provides a strong foundation for advancing equality, but its success depends on meaningful implementation. As the Strategy enters its second phase, the EU and its Member States must ensure that commitments translate into accessible information, media, workplaces, and essential services for hard of hearing people.

Access to media remains a central challenge. Although the Audiovisual Media Services Directive requires Member States to enhance accessibility, implementation is often measured in quantity rather than usability. Quantity without quality does not constitute access. Subtitles must be accurate, readable, and synchronised to fulfill the right to access information guaranteed under Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The forthcoming AVMSD review in 2026 is therefore a key opportunity to embed binding quality standards, strengthen oversight, and ensure that high-quality subtitling becomes a consistent practice across all media services.

Accessibility is also a matter of safety. Despite obligations under Article 109 of the European Electronic Communications Code, many Member States still do not provide equivalent access to the 112-emergency number through real-time text. Securing accessible emergency communication is essential to protect lives and uphold the right to timely assistance.

Equal access to employment demands urgent attention as well. Across the European Union, persons with disabilities face an employment gap of around 25% compared to persons without disabilities. EFHOH's research shows that hard of hearing people continue to face unmet communication needs and limited reasonable accommodation, restricting full participation in the labor market. We therefore support an EU Employment and Skills Guarantee for persons with disabilities, ensuring that accessibility is standard practice across all education and work environments.

As we commemorate this day, EFHOH calls on the European Union and its Member States to match ambition with action. An inclusive Europe is one where communication is accessible, participation is equal, and the rights of hard of hearing people are fully upheld.