



Post-Event Report

Hear the Future

Breaking Barriers for
an EU Strategy on Hearing Loss

04 March 2026
European Parliament
Brussels, Belgium



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the European Union

Executive Summary

Event overview: On 04 March 2026, the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH), in collaboration with the European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals (AEA), organised the event “Hear the Future: Breaking Barriers for an EU Strategy on Hearing Loss” at the European Parliament in Brussels, hosted by MEP Katrin Langensiepen,

Evidence and impact: Evidence presented during the event highlighted persistent structural barriers faced by hard of hearing people across Europe. Findings from the ongoing joint EFHOH-AEA study show that communication barriers, listening fatigue and limited access to reasonable accommodations continue to restrict equal participation in education and employment.

Policy dialogue: MEP Katrin Langensiepen, together with representatives from the World Health Organization, EFHOH, AEA and hard of hearing advocates, emphasised that accessibility and hearing care must be integrated across EU health, education and employment policies. Speakers stressed that inclusive environments, reasonable accommodations and access to hearing technologies are essential to enable participation and address the social and economic impact of hearing loss across Europe.

Call to action: Participants urged EU institutions and Member States to develop a EU Strategy on Hearing Loss and stronger coordinated action at the EU and national level. Key priorities include early detection, affordable access to hearing technologies, and inclusive education and employment policies to support participation across the life course.



Pre-Event Hearing Screening

Prior to the policy discussion, participants were offered the opportunity to undergo audiometry tests. This initiative aimed to raise awareness about the importance of regular hearing screening and early identification of hearing loss. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.5 billion people worldwide live with some degree of hearing loss, highlighting the importance of early detection and timely access to hearing care.



Early detection is essential to ensure timely access to hearing care, rehabilitation, and assistive technologies, helping to prevent long-term impacts on communication, education, and employment. Offering hearing tests alongside the event also reinforced the message of World Hearing Day: hearing health is a key component of inclusion and participation across the life course.

We extend our sincere thanks to Maximilian Hoffmann, Deputy Head of the Audiology Department at Haute École Léonard de Vinci, as well as to the students Camille Rouzé, Marwan Lamrabet, and Dounia Lahbi, for their valuable contribution in conducting the hearing tests with participants.

Insights

The event brought together policymakers, experts, advocates, and persons with lived experience to discuss the need for a coordinated European approach to hearing loss. Discussions highlighted the importance of early identification, hearing care, inclusive education, and accessible workplaces in ensuring equal participation for hard of hearing people across Europe.



MEP Katrin Langensiepen

MEP Langensiepen welcomed participants and emphasised the importance of bringing hearing health and accessibility into European policy discussions. The remarks highlighted the growing global prevalence of hearing loss and the need for stronger awareness, prevention, and early screening. MEP Langensiepen underlined that hearing loss should be addressed not only as a health priority but also as a social and economic challenge affecting participation in education and employment.

"Investment pays off. WHO estimates the \$180 billion cost from hearing loss. We see \$15 return per \$1 invested" - MEP Langensiepen

Nicole Sophie Marinos, Disability Advocate

Nicole Sophie Marinos shared her personal experience of growing up with hearing loss, highlighting how inclusive environments shaped her opportunities. Early identification, accessible classrooms, and specialised support enabled full participation in primary education. However, her experience also showed how accessibility can vary when structural accommodations are inconsistent in the education system.



Insights



Jonathan Elebjörk Wahlström, Unga Hörselskadade

Jonathan Elebjörk Wahlström highlighted the importance of representation, peer communities, and role models for young people with hearing loss. Drawing on youth work, his intervention emphasised how hearing loss can shape identity from an early age and how connecting with others with similar experiences helps foster confidence, belonging, and aspirations for education and careers.

Shelly Chadha, WHO

Shelly Chadha presented the global perspective of the World Health Organization on ear and hearing care, outlining the need for integrated, people-centred services across the life course. The intervention addressed the integration of ear and hearing care within primary healthcare systems to ensure services are available, accessible and affordable, in line with the WHO World Report on Hearing.



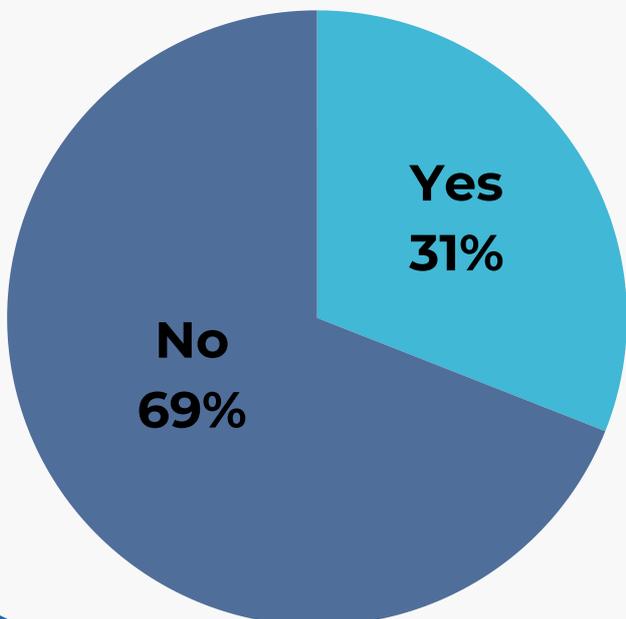
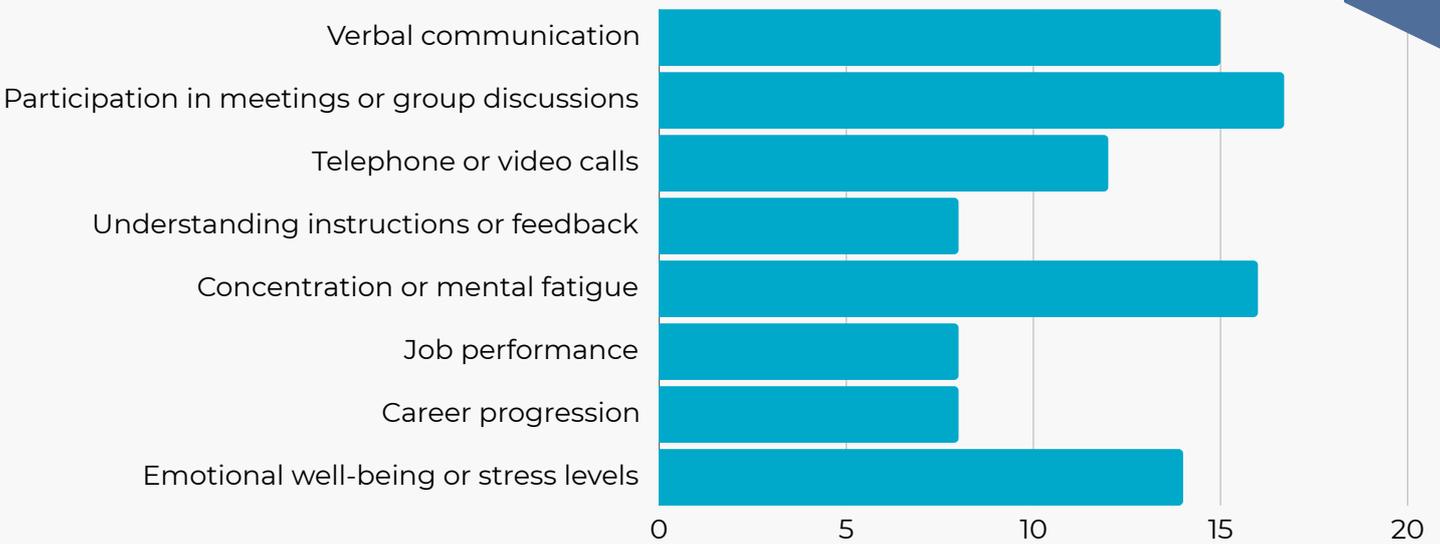
Mark Laureyns, AEA

Mark Laureyns presented findings from research conducted jointly by EFHOH and AEA on hearing loss and employment across Europe. The data showed that many workers with hearing loss experience communication barriers, listening fatigue, and limited awareness of available workplace accommodations. While hearing aids and cochlear implants significantly improve communication and quality of life, workplace environments often remain insufficiently adapted.

Insights

In which areas do you experience the most impact? (%)

EFHOH-AEA, 2025-2026



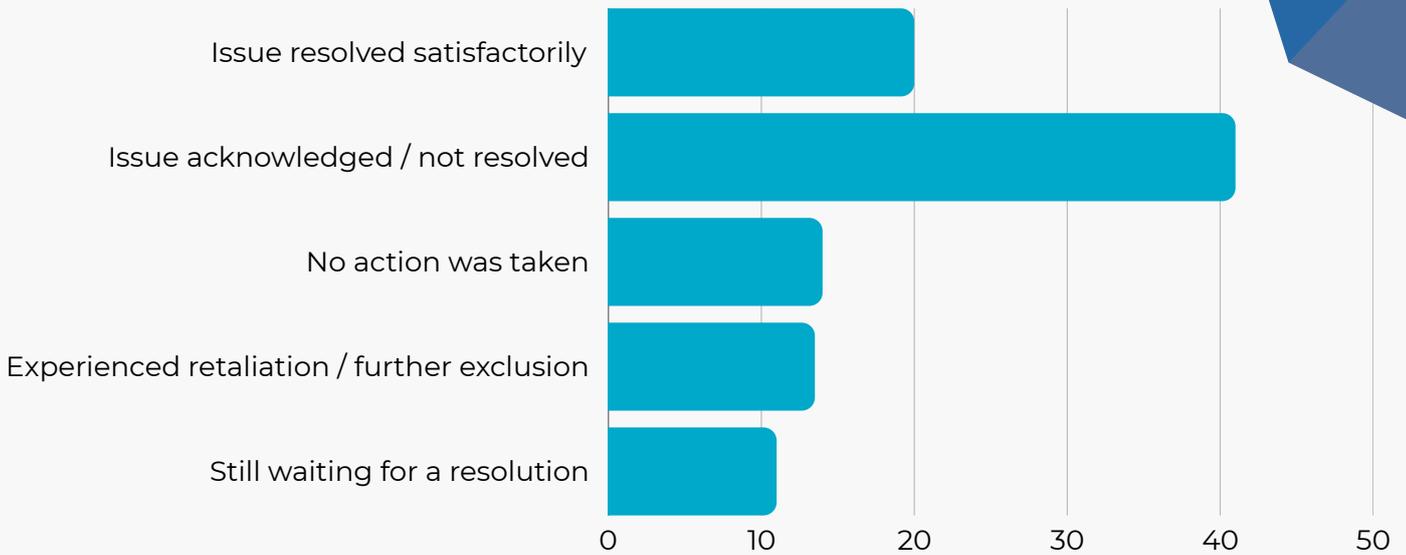
Did you report any negative experiences related to exclusion or discrimination? (%)

EFHOH-AEA, 2025-2026

Insights

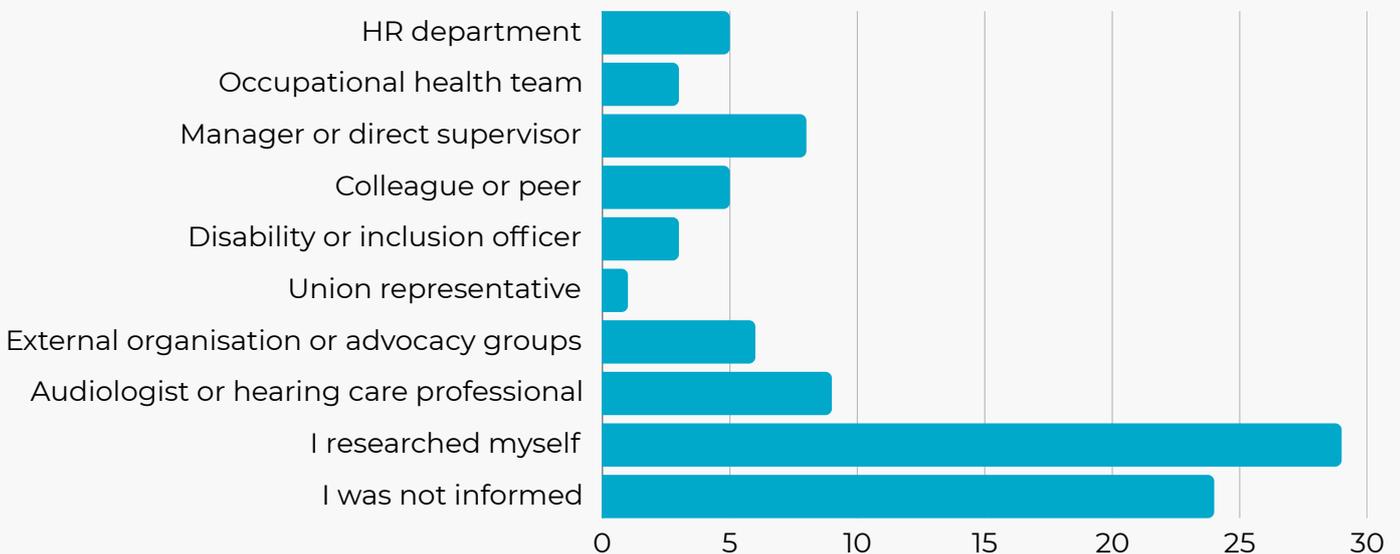
What was the outcome? (%)

EFHOH-AEA, 2025-2026



Who informed you about the possible support you could receive as a hard of hearing person at the workplace? (%)

EFHOH-AEA, 2025-2026



Insights



Jiska Peeters, Thomas More University

Jiska Peeters shared her lived experience of managing hearing loss and cochlear implants in the workplace. The intervention illustrated how communication demands in meetings, group discussions, and informal interactions can create significant listening effort and fatigue, even when hearing technologies are used. The experience underlined the importance of workplace flexibility, assistive technologies, and awareness among colleagues to support effective inclusion.

“No one should feel they need to move to another country to secure access to the right education.”

Lidia Best

Lidia Best, EFHOH

Lidia Best addressed the structural gaps affecting people with hearing loss across Europe. Despite existing disability and accessibility frameworks, hearing loss remains insufficiently integrated into health, education and employment policies. The concluding remarks called for stronger coordination and urged the development of a dedicated EU Strategy on Hearing Loss connecting early identification, inclusive education, hearing care and employment policies across the life course.



Audience interventions

The panel presentations were followed by a brief exchange with participants, which provided an opportunity to reflect on the policy and practical implications of the issues discussed.

Participants and panelists also reflected on the need for stronger coordination between public policy, healthcare systems and workplace practices in order to improve access to hearing care and effective accommodation measures. The exchange highlighted the importance of policy engagement, knowledge-sharing and collaboration between institutions, professionals and organisations representing people with hearing loss.

The discussion further emphasised the value of awareness-raising initiatives aimed at reducing stigma and promoting a broader understanding of hearing accessibility and inclusion across society.



Concluding remarks: a call to action

The discussions highlighted the need for stronger policy attention to hearing loss across the EU. Despite progress in accessibility legislation and hearing technologies, many hard of hearing people continue to face barriers in education and employment. due to limited awareness, insufficient accommodations and uneven access to hearing care across Member States. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated action at both the EU and national levels.

1. Develop an EU Strategy on Hearing Loss: establish a coherent policy framework addressing hearing loss across the life course, connecting early identification, hearing care, inclusive education, employment and active participation in society.

2. Strengthen early identification and intervention: promote systematic hearing screening programmes, including in early childhood and school settings, to ensure timely diagnosis and access to appropriate support.

3. Support inclusive education and equal learning opportunities: ensure that students with hearing loss have access to appropriate accommodations and accessible learning environments throughout their educational pathways.

4. Promote pathways from education to inclusive employment: encourage inclusive recruitment and retention practices, ensuring that reasonable accommodation and accessible communication are consistently integrated into workplace policies and practices.

5. Increase awareness of hearing loss and reasonable accommodation: promote greater awareness among employers, educators and public authorities of the impact of hearing loss and the accommodations that enable accessible communication and full participation in education and the labour market.

Acknowledgements

The European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) and the European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals (AEA) extend their sincere appreciation to MEP Katrin Langensiepen for hosting the event “Hear the Future: Breaking Barriers for an EU Strategy on Hearing Loss” at the European Parliament in Brussels, and to all speakers, participants and event staff for their valuable contributions to the discussion.

The organisers also wish to acknowledge the participation of representatives from international organisations, European institutions, civil society and national associations whose engagement contributes to advancing the inclusion and rights of hard of hearing people across Europe.



Resources

[Disability Employment Package](#)

[European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals \(AEA\)](#)

[European Federation of Hard of Hearing People \(EFHOH\)](#)

[Towards Inclusive Employment: Employment and Reasonable Accommodation for Hard of Hearing People in Europe \(2025, EFHOH\)](#)

[Unga Hörselskadade](#)

[United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)

[World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)

[World Report on Hearing \(2021, WHO\)](#)

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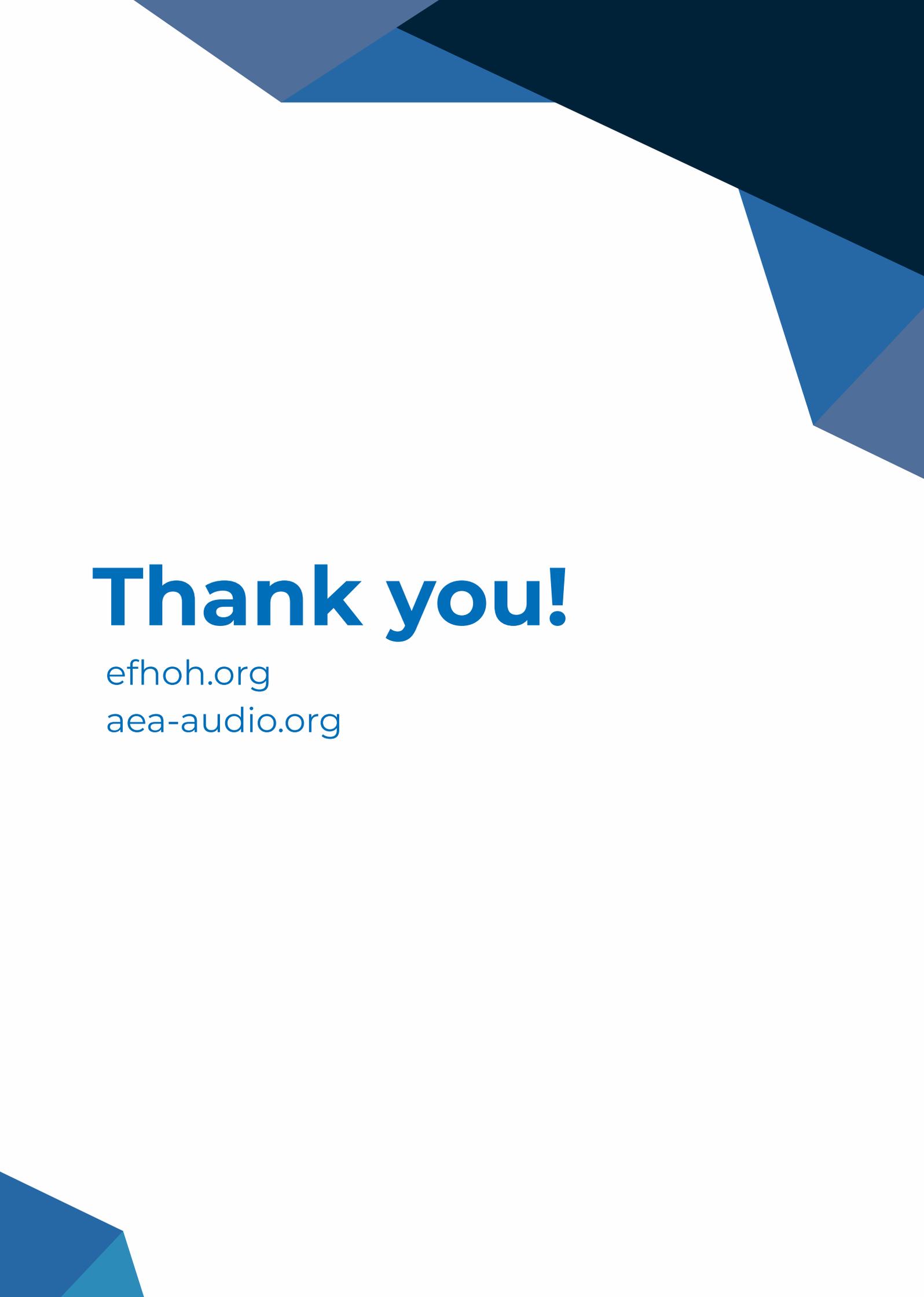
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