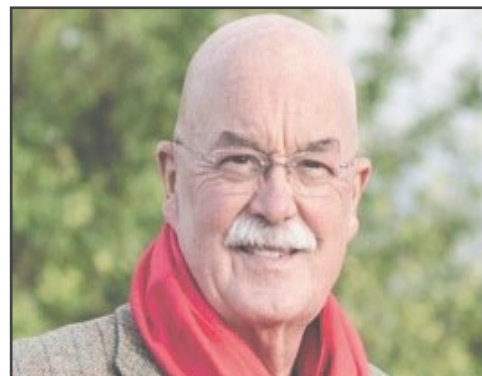




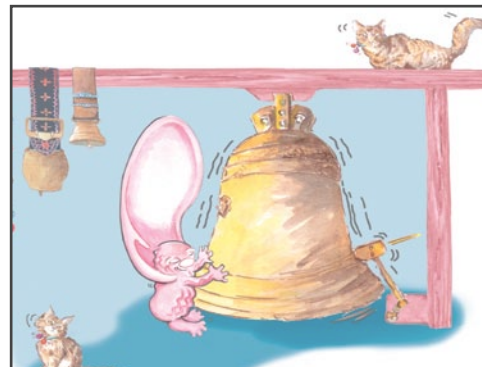
## EFHOH PRESIDENT LETTER

See page 2



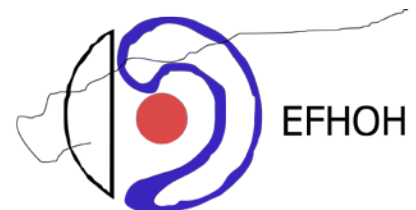
### INTRODUCING THE DEUTSCHE TINNITUS-LIGA E. V. (GERMAN TINNITUS LEAGUE)

Read the story at page 4



### STORY AT THE MUSEUM

Read the news at page 10



EFHOH

European Federation of Hard of Hearing People



## EFHOH President letter

Dear members and EFHOH friends,

### EFHOH board news:

We as EFHOH board like to meet you soon in Essen/Germany at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and conference day 2015. Our member organization in Germany DSB has made a nice and interesting program. When you like to know more about the program please look at our website [www.efhoh.org](http://www.efhoh.org) for more information.

Paris will be at the first weekend of April the host city for the EFHOH AGM 2016.

It might seem early, but we issue this EFHOH newsletter a Call for candidates to organise the EFHOH AGM of EFHOH in 2017.

In January we had our first EFHOH board meeting in Hamburg/Germany with snow. At this board meeting were also present for the first time our intern Ed Spragg and also Sidsel Munkebo Hansen as the new IFHOHYP president. This EFHOH board meeting was focus to the making process of all the papers for the AGM 2015 in Essen and to the EFHOH program 2015.

### Ear Care Day:

The World Health Organization (WHO) had organised at 3 March at the Ear Care Day a launch of: Make Listening Safe. The Ear Care Day this year was focus to the millions of teenagers and young adults are at risk of developing hearing loss due to the unsafe use of personal audio devices such as smart phones and MP3 players and exposure to damaging levels of sounds at noisy entertainment venues including nightclubs, discotheques, bars, pubs and sporting events. WHO estimates that a billion of young people worldwide could be a risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices?

Over 43 million people between the ages of 12-35 years live with disabling hearing loss due to different causes. Among teenagers and young adults aged 12-35 years in middle- and high-income countries:

- Nearly 50% are exposed to unsafe levels of sounds from the use of personal audio devices;
- Around 40% are exposed to potentially damaging sound levels at clubs, discotheques and bars.

EFHOH board is happy that some of our members are in contact with their national governments about the needs to develop stricter laws and rigorously enforce already existing legislation regarding non-occupational noise.



### Hearing Awareness Campaign launched:

Ahead of WHO international Ear Care Day 2015, EFHOH, AEA (European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals) and EHIMA (European Hearing Instruments Manufacturer's Association) have joined forces to promote healthy hearing awareness. Please support our efforts and share widely this campaign about screening ears. Teeth checked. Eyes checked. What about your hearing? At our EFHOH website [www.efhoh.org](http://www.efhoh.org) can you find more information and can you also download your country specific poster and/or flyer.

### EDF news:

The disability movement in Europe gathered in February in Jurmala/Latvia for EDF's board meeting and. Before the board meeting there was a European Conference on information and communication technologies for persons with disabilities this was organised bringing together more than 150 participants from all around Europe. This conference was organised in the frame of the Latvian EU Presidency that has put digital Europe in the agenda with its priorities. The European Parliament Disability Intergroup discussed its priorities. The new, larger Bureau of the European Parliament Disability Intergroup met for the first time at the end of February. In particular, MEP's discussed work priorities for 2015-2016.

EDF worked to ensure that the intergroup objectives are close to our priorities, as set out in EDF work programme 2015: UN CRPD European Union review by the UN Committee, equal access to transport and to goods and services (European Accessibility Act & European disability card), antidiscrimination directive, revision of the European Disability Strategy, revision of the Europe 2020, European Semester and employment issues, digital single market, international cooperation and post 2015 development framework, independent living and de-institutionalisation, accessibility of the European Parliament meetings, communication and processes.

More and other news of the work of EDF can you read in this EFHOH newsletter and of course you can also find more EDF news at the EDF website [www.edf-feph.org](http://www.edf-feph.org)

### European Platform of Deafness, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf blindness:

Wednesday 11 March the Platform members held their first meeting in 2015. Main topic of this meeting was statistics and the program of the platform in 2015. Euro CIU inform us about the statistics of people with a CI in the European Union. Our intern Ed Spragg gave a presentation about the statistics of people with hearing loss in the European Union. Did you know that the platform have also a website [www.edbn.org](http://www.edbn.org)

### Follow us:

So as you know you can follow EFHOH via our website [www.efhoh.org](http://www.efhoh.org) and face book and also via Twitter. The addresses are:

EFHOH	@efhoh
Marcel Bobeldijk	@marbob32
Lidia Best	@best_lidia

If you have an article for one of the newsletters in 2015 please sent it to us. We will also in 2015 some newsletters for our members and other EFHOH newsletter readers and also for the volunteers in your organisation at national and local level.

Dear EFHOH members and friends, I hope to meet you all at our AGM and conference day in Essen and wish you a good start of the spring.

Warm Regards,

Marcel Bobeldijk  
President of EFHOH

## Introducing the Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. (German Tinnitus League)

This year, the EFHOH Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held in Germany in the Ruhr region city of Essen from 10th –12th April 2015. As a member of EFHOH, the Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. (DTL) would like to take the opportunity to introduce itself as well as the services it offers to people suffering from tinnitus and other hearing impairments.

As a non-profit self-help organization, the Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. represents the interests of patients, including their relatives, suffering from tinnitus, sudden hearing loss, hyperacusis, and Menière's disease. With its approx.13 000 members, DTL is Europe's largest tinnitus association and an acknowledged partner of the health care sector. More than 800 experts are supporting members, among them renowned scientists, ENT physicians, hearing-aid acousticians, psychologists and therapists making their knowledge and expertise available for the benefit of the members. In addition, some 90 self-help groups in Germany are given support and guidance by the DTL founded in Wuppertal in 1986.

The Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. – which counts among the biggest German self-help organizations – offers competent, independent support and comprehensive services to members: individual expert counselling on personal, therapeutic or socio-legal questions (consulting hours of physicians, psychologists and lawyers), assistance in choosing a therapy incl. addresses of doctors and therapists; concrete tips on how to lead an active and self-determined life; up-to-date information on all important issues and new therapies published in the quarterly members' magazine Tinnitus-Forum, special infos for members, brochures and events; exchange of experiences with fellow sufferers in self-help groups or with a telephone partner; seminars for DTL volunteers and group spokespersons.

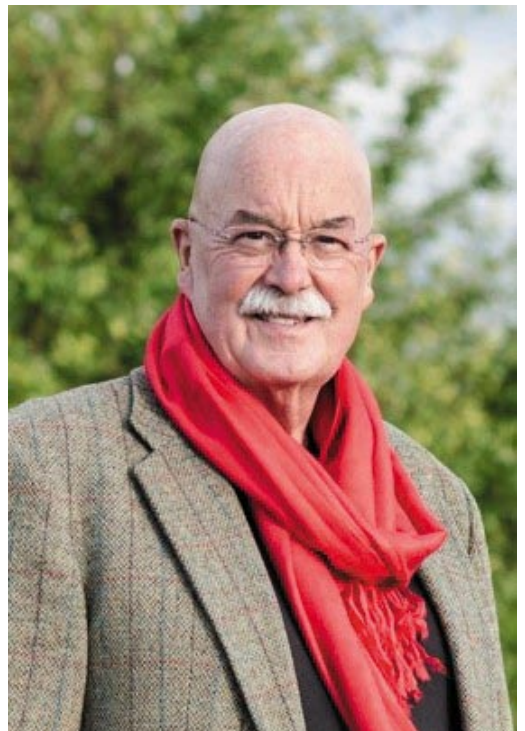
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E-mail: [dtl@tinnitus-liga.de](mailto:dtl@tinnitus-liga.de)  
[www.tinnitus-liga.de](http://www.tinnitus-liga.de)



Michael Bergmann, Managing Director of the Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. (DTL).

Volker Albert, President of the Deutsche Tinnitus-Liga e. V. (DTL).





## News from IFHOH

Greetings from the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH). Our board members are looking forward to joining our European counterparts in Essen, Germany this April and wish you a most successful annual general meeting.

The year has gotten off to a good start with a successful launch of Ear Care Day on March 3. We have joined with the World Hearing Organization, EFHOH, and other organizations in recognizing this day and hope that many of our members will join in holding events on this day in future years. We thank EFHOH President Marcel Bobeldijk for representing both IFHOH and EFHOH at Ear Care day festivities in Geneva on March 3rd. Our thanks to Shelly Chadha, WHO Technical Officer on Prevention of Blindness and Deafness for her leadership in making this day prominent around the world.

On a personal note, I am also a local branch president in my hometown of Vancouver, Canada and we also organized an activity in recognition of the need to lessen hearing loss due to noise. Our event involved an audiologist speaking about noisy situations, their effects and how to minimize them. I maintain that hearing loss due to noise is also a subject of concern to those of us with hearing losses because what hearing we have is precious and must be preserved.

In terms of my international work, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to attend the first ever Sound Hearing 2030 Ear Care Conference in New Delhi February 12-14 (2015). The goal of the conference was to make hearing a part of the global public health agenda. I delivered a presentation of the role of civil society in action toward better hearing and hearing access.

The contacts I made at the conference were invaluable. I was impressed by the work of Paige Stringer, Founder / Executive Director, Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss ([www.childrenwithhearingloss.org](http://www.childrenwithhearingloss.org)) who has a foundation in Vietnam focused on providing early childhood hearing intervention. I was delighted to meet Dr. Xingkuan Bu from China who spoke to the assembly as a professional but also revealed his hearing loss and showed the aids that provide him with access. I also had the opportunity to learn about a hearing aid company in India

that is producing low-cost aids for their population. And, I met parents of hard of hearing young people, who are interested in our work; we have been corresponding since the conference. Our hope is to establish more connections with the hard of hearing in India.

IFHOH's work to train trainers to deliver workshops on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is getting into full gear this year, thanks to the work of Louise Carroll, as well as Hanh Duong Phuong in Vietnam and Marcel, in Europe. We are excited that the first workshop is slated for Vietnam in September, with the workshop for Europe slated for October, 2015.

Finally, I want to close with a note about the importance of our work within the International Disability Alliance and in endeavoring to ensure that the UN's post-2015 development agenda is inclusive of persons with disabilities. While in New York in January, as part of an IDA delegation, I attended several meetings with missions and UN agencies to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities and obtain their advice on doing so within the post-2015 agenda. I am optimistic that when the UN unveils its plan this coming September, the disability community will be part of the new development framework. The result will, in turn, make a difference to individuals and the quality of their lives in their communities.

With best regards,  
Ruth Warick  
IFHOH President



IFHOH Press Release  
International Ear Care Day  
3 March 2015

Over 360 million persons have a hearing loss, representing 5 percent of the world's Population. Among adults, 15% have a hearing loss. These are staggering numbers and especially concerning is that for some persons the hearing loss could be prevented.

The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People joins the World Health Organization in drawing attention to the need for the prevention of hearing loss in making Ear Care Day on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

This year's Ear Care Day draws particular attention to the loss of hearing through the unsafe use of personal audio devices such as smartphones and MP3 players and exposure to damaging levels of sound in entertainment venues. As noted by WHO, "Hearing is a precious faculty, which impacts educational, professional and social development."

Ruth Warick, President of IFHOH, notes that hearing loss through excessive loud noise for entertainment purposes is preventable. "We encourage all persons to take special care to keep the volume down on their devices, not only on Ear Care day, but throughout the year."

IFHOH is an international, non-profit federation of hard of hearing people, which provides a platform for co-operation and information exchange among its members and interested parties. IFHOH, and the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH), work to promote greater understanding of hearing loss issues and to improve access for hard of hearing people. IFHOH is registered in Germany and has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). For more information please go to IFHOH's website [www.ifhoh.org](http://www.ifhoh.org)

For more information, please contact

Ruth Warick, IFHOH President

[president@ifhoh.org](mailto:president@ifhoh.org)



## IFHOH Board Member with Human Rights responsibilities. Report for the EFHOH Journal, March 2015

IFHOH has received a grant from the Oticon Foundation Denmark to provide training on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to IFHOH member organisations through the provision of Human Rights workshops.

The aim of the workshops is to provide the participants with sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to successfully deliver CRPD/human rights training to the hard of hearing sector in their country.

The workshops are a volunteer human rights training opportunity and it's anticipated that when the training has been completed, those trained will then provide human rights training on a voluntary basis for their national hard of hearing organisation or as an individual advocate.

Also, after training the participant should be able to assist and support their national organisation to be involved in promoting the signing and ratification of the UNCRPD and then its implementation and monitoring in their country, if it is not already signed and or ratified.

Participants will also need to be able to monitor opportunities for their national organisation to provide input into various UN instruments and support them to develop interventions.

Plans are for the IFHOH CRPD Workshop in Europe to be held on October 22-23, 2015. Thanks to all who have contributed information in support of it's development, in particular EFHOH representative on the IFHOH Board member, Marcel Bobeldijk, and the EFHOH Board.

IFHOH is very pleased to be able to support our member organisations with the knowledge to support and improve the life quality of people who are living with hearing loss worldwide.

For further information please email: [humanrights@ifhoh.org](mailto:humanrights@ifhoh.org)

## Support our sponsors! They support us!



### The world's leading dedicated hearing aid specialist

With 60 years' experience and more than 5,700 specialist centres in 20 countries, we're the world's leading dedicated hearing aid specialist.

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From our comprehensive hearing assessment to your programme of Free Lifetime Aftercare, we are committed to help you get the very best from your hearing.

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## Call for candidates to organise AGM 2017

This year's AGM of EFHOH is now just weeks away and we know many of you will come to Essen.

It might seem early, but we issue here a Call for candidates to organise the AGM of EFHOH in 2017. The Statutes requires a decision one year before, and the host has to be a General Member of EFHOH. The experience during past years show that there are many practical advantages to decide two years before. It allows the host to look for possible venues, check availability of accommodations etc.

If you are interested to be a candidate for hosting the AGM in 2017, please do not hesitate to contact us.

If you are coming to Essen for the AGM 2015, the best solution would be to make a short presentation of your proposed location/city for the meeting and possible dates.

Looking forward to your response,

Jan Lamby  
General Secretary  
secretary@efhoh.org | office@efhoh.org





## Twavox: an innovative solution for easier access to movie theaters and conference rooms

ESII has developed an accessibility patented solution highly appreciated by the visually and hearing impaired people.

The Twavox system allows easier access to movie theaters and conference rooms for hearing and visually impaired people. With this solution you can broadcast synchronously sound reinforcement and / or subtitles on hearing impaired people's smartphones, and audio description on the visually impaired people's smartphones.

The free application Twavox needs to be downloaded before and it is compliant with Android and Apple. Twavox provides optimized sound quality for each user, better speech intelligibility and private listening without disturbing the audience. The movie theaters and conference rooms have now a user-friendly solution to broadcast audio or audiovisual via an audio amplifier. Twavox is both simple to install for the industry and intuitive for the user. With this solution, users are fully independent. There is no need to borrow equipment/devices and give it back after. You only need your smartphone. There is also a great benefit for movie theaters and conference rooms as there are no equipment/devices to manage.

The solution is very easy to install (Plug & Play). It does not require intrusive work improvement as the installation of a magnetic loop required and is insensitive to interferences. In addition, the TWAVOX solution is also more economi-

cal. Twavox is aimed at a wider audience including hearing impaired people without hearing aids.

The application can be used with earphones, headphones, or a single loop. The sound is adjustable to allow everyone to adapt it to his hearing ability.

Hearing impaired people associations contributed to the improvement and validation of Twavox. Major cities in France (Toulouse, Marseille, Montpellier, etc.) have also successfully tested the application for their movie theaters and conference rooms.

Twavox® received the Cap'Tronic trophy of the consumer product and the Embedded Trophy for Consumer, both awarded by the Ministry of Economy, France.

You can visit our website for more information: <http://www.twavox.com>

12 th. episode:

## Ory and His **New** Hearing **Machine**



Text: Aisa Cleyet-Marel, France  
Drawing: Ellen Tierie, Netherlands

# Ory at the **museum**

Today's a special day. Ory and his friends are visiting a new museum in the south of France. There are not only HOH and deaf friends, but other handicapped friends as well. Some of them are physically handicapped and use a wheelchair or a walker, others are visually impaired. There's a family with two children; the youngest is HOH and the oldest, John, is mentally disabled. Their mother communicates with them by signs.

At two o'clock the whole group is waiting outside the museum. Some of them have come far. Children are playing, running and shouting, parents laughing and old people are sitting in the sun, waiting for the guide.

A pleasant young lady introduces herself: "My name's Mireille. I will be your guide in the bell museum". She spells her name with signs.

A bell museum for HOH and deaf persons ? That's very strange!

A bell museum for visually impaired persons ? That's impossible!

A guided tour of the museum for a mentally impaired boy ? That's too difficult!

But the guide explains: "This museum has something fun for everyone. The museum is easily accessible to people with disabilities. Our guided tours are also very popular with individuals with visual impairments, because the tours engage the senses of touch, hearing and smell, just as much as sight. You will discover all the secrets of the manufacturing of bells ranging from the smallest spherical cattle bells for animals to church bells."

On the first floor, Mireille starts the guided tour. There are a lot of cattle bells on the wall. She asks the group to close their eyes. "What do you smell?"

Ory thinks : That's difficult to say. Although the visually impaired lady answers : " I smell metal, wood, leather!"  
Everybody rings the bells, what a noise! The HOH and deaf persons are not bothered by noise.

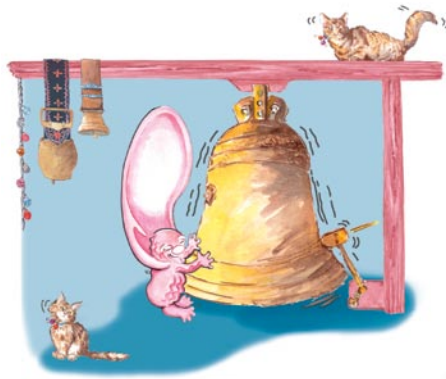
Mireille explains that the casts of the bells are made from clay. John shouts: This is not a bell, it is not ringing, it's a dress of a nice lady. Mireille smiles: "You are completely right, John, the name of the cast is "robe" in French and that means dress."

On the second floor, Ory sees huge church bells. Mireille warns that there will be noise. She rings the church bell. Everyone put his fingers in his ears, but the deaf persons are disappointed: no sound for them. Mireille asks them to put their hand on the bell. She rings the bell again. This time they can feel the vibration of the bronze. That's nice, that's new!

Ory says: " I will try it too!" He removes his hearing machine and asks to ring again. He closes his eyes and focuses on feelings. He puts his hand on the bell, the bronze is cold and bald. When the bell rings, Ory can't hear it, but he can feel it. He even smells the metal of the bell.

At the end of the tour Ory feels different. He has learned to use touch and scent. What a great experience!

Text : Aisa Cleyet-Marel, France



## Hire a EFHOH speaker!

Invite us to talk. We can travel to your event to present and share our work and lobbying experiences.

We may present about IFHOH Human Rights Toolkit and Prague Declaration, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including our subtitling lobbying work.

EFHOH representatives will never charge for their presentations, however we may request for travel and accommodation to be covered by the inviting party.


Please contact us at [office@efhoh.org](mailto:office@efhoh.org)



*Make Listening Safe*

# Make Listening Safe

## KEY FACTS

 **1.1 billion** young people worldwide are at risk of hearing loss due to unsafe listening practices

**Over 43 million people**  
12–35 years live with  
disabling hearing loss



**Among young people 12–35 years in middle- and high-income countries:**

**Nearly 50%** listen to unsafe levels of sound through personal audio devices (MP3 players, smartphones, and others)

**Around 40%** are exposed to potentially damaging levels of sound at nightclubs, bars and sporting events

## PREVENTION ACTION



### Individuals can:



#### Keep the volume down!

- Determine safe listening level on personal audio device
- Wear earplugs in noisy venues; use carefully fitted, and if possible, noise-cancelling ear/headphones



#### Limit time spent engaged in noisy activities!

- In noisy venues, take short listening breaks and move away from loud sounds
- Limit the daily use of personal audio devices to <1 hour/day



#### Heed the warning signs of hearing loss!

- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- Difficulty hearing high-pitched sounds, understanding speech on telephone, following conversations in noisy venues



**Monitor safe listening levels through use of smartphone apps!**



**Get regular hearing check-ups!**



**Parents, teachers and physicians can:** educate young people about safe listening



**Manufacturers can:** design personal audio devices with safety features, display information about safe listening on products and packaging



**Managers of entertainment venues can:** respect safe noise level set by venue, use sound limiters, offer earplugs and "chill out" rooms to patrons



**Governments can:** develop and enforce strict legislation on recreational noise, launch public information campaigns

*Make Listening Safe. Once you lose your hearing, it won't come back!*



**World Health Organization**

Department for Management of NCDs, Disability, Violence and Injury Prevention (NV)

World Health Organization  
20 Avenue Appia  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland  
Tel. +41-22-791-1466  
www.who.int/pbs/deafness/activities/MLS





## TIME FOR DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT!

On 5 March, representatives of the European Disability Forum (EDF) and of the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) met with European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Mimica to discuss European development cooperation and the rights of persons with disabilities.

IDDC and EDF reflected on the progress which has been made in recent years in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in EU external action.

Commissioner Mimica sees the current review process of the EU's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as an opportunity to highlight the progress which has been made on disability inclusive development, and also a chance to point out the next steps the EU should take in order to fully embrace the CRPD. A communication from the EU at this point would be a strong signal to EU institutions and delegations that concrete actions need to be taken now to ensure that all of EU development cooperation is truly inclusive and accessible.

Key strategies that the Commissioner highlighted in order to make this a reality were: the upcoming joint programming processes with partner countries; continuing and reinforcing support to civil society organisations and organisations of persons with disabilities; and ensuring that the implementation and monitoring of EU aid measure its effectiveness in reaching persons with disabilities.

IDDC highlighted the support the EU has given to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the negotiations in New York around the Sustainable Development Goals. The Commissioner pointed out that the EU would continue to support a fully inclusive Post-2015 framework, and put in place initiatives to support its implementation— such as training of EU staff, and using key events like World Disability Day (December 3rd) to raise public and political awareness of Disability Inclusive Development. We also discussed ways to further strengthen the draft framework which is currently under discussion. Additionally, the Commissioner recognised the importance of the rights of persons with disabilities to be reflected in the outcome of the Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa next July.

2015 marks also the European Year for Development, making it an ideal time to ensure a strengthened approach to EU disability-inclusive development, and to ensure that the next EU Disability Action Plan will describe concrete steps to make EU development cooperation effectively inclusive and accessible. The Commissioner is willing to take a leading role in galvanising and harmonising the support for this disability-inclusive development within the EU. It is important to note that the EU and its member states have all signed the CRPD, and the Post-2015 framework gives rise to the possibility of a joint, aligned approach between them, aiming for disability-inclusive development cooperation.

IDDC and EDF will continue to work together and advocate for the full implementation of the CRPD in International Cooperation and look forward to ongoing cooperation with Commissioner Mimica.

## EDF CALLS FOR EQUALITY & FULL INCLUSION FOR WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES!

On the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March, EDF calls for equality and the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all actions that European Union and its Member States undertake.

This year is special. 2015 is not only the year the world will agree a new international development framework, it is also the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action; this platform aimed to bring to light the structural inequalities and human rights violations faced by all women and girls, and to prepare the ground for concrete action to realise gender equality.

Today, when we look at this platform for action, we stand together with women's organisations across the world in calling for a reinforced commitment to women's rights and gender equality. We would also like to highlight why it is essential to make the platform inclusive, and to address the rights of women and girls, of all ages, and with particular attention to women who face multiple discrimination, such as women and girls with disabilities and female informal carers of persons with disabilities.

Discriminatory laws and harmful traditional practices, as well as customary and negative stereotypes of women and men remain. Many women face barriers to the enjoyment of their human rights and full equality due to factors such as disability and may be disadvantaged and marginalised by lack of general knowledge and the non-recognition of their human rights, as well as the obstacles they face in access to information and recourse mechanisms in case their rights are violated.

Many women, including women with disabilities, are also particularly affected by environmental disasters, serious and infectious diseases and various forms of violence against women.

Reproductive rights of women and girls are not properly recognised as defined in paragraph 95 of the Beijing Platform for Action, and there are barriers to their full enjoyment. Some women and girls continue to face obstacles in their attempts to do justice to them or in the exercise of their human rights, due to factors such as disability. 'When it comes to women's rights, we need to make sure that women and girls with disabilities are included in each discussion, and in every measure taken to address inequality. Why? Women with disabilities are students, workers, mothers, carers, political activists, and experts on their own issues. We know that women and girls with disabilities are more likely to be poor, denied access to quality education, more exposed to violence, discrimination and

deprivation of legal capacity. If we want Beijing + 20 to tackle the root causes of inequality, women and girls with disabilities need to be fully included following the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and all forms of multiple discrimination faced by them, must be addressed', says Ana Peláez, EDF Executive member and Chair of EDF Women's Committee who will represent EDF at the Beijing +20 summit this year.

EDF would like to mark this day by asking for the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all actions to address gender inequality and urges the European Union and its Member States to undertake comprehensive reviews on progress and difficulties encountered in this regard.

EDF's commitment to promoting the rights of women and girls can be found in our 2nd Manifesto on the Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the European Union.

## European Economic Strategy fails to include European citizens with disabilities.

Brussels, 23 February 2015

At the European Disability Forums Board meeting in Latvia this weekend, members took part in a general discussion on Europe 2020 and the European Semester process. New evidence came to light of the negative impact which this agenda is having on persons with disabilities across the EU.

The measures being taken by governments as a result of EU recommendations are undermining social inclusion. EDF members from countries such as Finland, Denmark and Belgium gave examples of processes at country level which are neither transparent, nor inclusive.

Persons with disabilities are at higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, and higher risk of unemployment than people without disabilities.

Adequate standards of living and social protections are fundamental rights which are hindered by national reforms and recovery measures taken to pursuit economic growth by the EU. Economic growth should be inclusive and not leave 16% of the EU population behind.

Controversial consequences of the Country Specific Recommendations on persons with disabilities, lack of transparency and lack of involvement in the development of the National Reform Programmes, by the national authorities, are common problems experienced across the EU.

Currently reform processes are exacerbating inequalities in Europe. Right now women, young people, persons with

disabilities, and older people are disproportionately affected by these reforms and being driven into poverty. We call on the European Commission and European Council to require and ensure involvement of civil society, including organisations of persons with disabilities in the semester process at national level. We call for truly inclusive growth, and truly inclusive economic recovery. We call for the inclusion of social equality indicators in the semester process.

## 80 MILLION PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES CALL FOR ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

The disability movement in Europe gathered this weekend in Jurmala, Latvia for EDF's Board meeting. Before the meeting, a European conference on information and communication technologies for persons with disabilities was organised bringing together more than 150 participants from all around Europe.

Entitled "An inclusive digital continent", the conference opened a dialogue between representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities and European and national decision makers.

The conference was organised in the frame of the Latvian EU Presidency that has put digital Europe in the agenda with its priorities. It was opened by Gunta Anca, EDF Vice President and Chair of the Board of the Latvian organisation of persons with disabilities 'Sustento', Uldis Augulis, Latvian Minister of Welfare, Iveta Grigule, Latvian MEP, and Rodolfo Cattani, EDF Secretary General and chair of the EDF ICT expert group.

"In Latvia, disability is often linked only with social or health care services. We are talking about disability pensions and allowances, and sometimes about employment. Only very rarely we can imagine how important ICT solutions can be in the everyday activities of persons with disabilities. For example, navigation systems help blind people to navigate in different environments; smart home solutions make it possible to manage everyday life for people with severe physical disabilities, while deaf people can also use special applications in mobile phones. We just have to recognise these possibilities", said EDF Vice-President, Gunta Anca.

EDF Secretary, Rodolfo Cattani drew attention to the utmost importance of the right to inclusion of persons with disabilities in the so-called Digital and Knowledge-based Society, as well as in the Digital Single Market, as equal citizens and customers: "To this aim, we need a strong and binding legal framework which enables innovation and ensures the availability of accessible technologies for persons with disabilities. We need future-proof European

initiatives concerning ICT to acknowledge and incorporate accessibility as a key element like others, such as privacy or security which are always mainstreamed in the legislation for this sector."

The Latvian Minister of Welfare, Uldis Augulis, underlined that during the Latvian Presidency more attention should be paid to the disability policy in order to encourage and strengthen the commitment of the EU to solve the issues of equal opportunities of persons with disabilities: "Therefore, during the presidency, in various discussions we will touch upon issues like the employment possibilities of persons with disabilities, the rights of children with disabilities, as well as digital issues. In particular, we will emphasise the importance of inclusive education, which is a way to employment and independence."

From her side, the MEP Iveta Grigule stated that: "Today all of us have an opportunity to assess together the achievements of the last year and discuss what can be done this year so that people with disabilities are more included in society, as well as in the common work market. Only when every member of our society feels needed, protected and respected, only then we can say that we live in a safe and effective welfare state. This is the path that we have to take together."

The conference reinforced the commitment of the disability movement to advocating at all levels for an inclusive digital agenda for Europe including persons with disabilities in every step.



## EFHOH MEETINGS 2015 & 2016:

<b>2015</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2015</b>
28 March	Antwerpen / Belgium	Symposium 60 years Onder Ons	Marcel
9 April	Essen / Germany	IFHOH board meeting	Marcel
10-12 April	Essen / Germany	EFHOH Annual General Meeting (AGM)	All EFHOH board members
18 April	Tallin/Estonia	Nordic Late Deafened Conference	Lidia and Jaana
17 May	Brussels	AEA AGM/Symposium	Lidia and Marcel
29-31 May	Warsaw/Poland	EDF AGA	Lidia and Marcel
25-27 September	Athens/Greece	Hearing Awareness workshop + board meeting	All board members
22-23 October	Copenhagen	Human Rights Train the Trainers training	All board members
3 December	Brussels	European Day of Disabled People	One of the board members
<b>2016</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2016</b>
1-3 April	Paris / France	EFHOH AGM	All EFHOH board members
23-26 June	Washington DC /USA	IFHOH BGM and world congress	Marcel

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## 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.