



# European Action Plan

## About us

The AEA (European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals) was founded in 1970, and is headquartered in Brussels since 2008.

It is an association of national professional organisations representing a total of 20,000 hearing care professionals from 13 countries across Europe.

AEA strives to improve the quality of hearing care services, ensure a transparent, fair and competitive market, and safeguard freedom of choice in the interest of the end-user.

## Hearing loss in Europe

More than **52 million EU citizens report having hearing difficulties**, making hearing loss one of the most prevalent disabling health conditions in adults.

From a financial perspective, the cost of untreated hearing loss in Europe is estimated at **€ 178 billion**.

Moreover, untreated hearing loss is closely related to “Difficulties in Finding and Retaining Employment”, “Earlier Retirement” and “Reduced Personal Income”, “Social Isolation”, “Depression”, “Cognitive decline”, “Reduced Activities of Daily Life”, “Reduced Quality of Life”, “Frailty” and “Loss of Independence”.

## A sound investment

**Action for hearing loss is thus a sound investment.** The total budget required for prevention campaigns, awareness actions and granting access to professional hearing care for all persons with self-reported hearing loss, is significantly lower than the cost of untreated hearing loss.



## The European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals

## Action plan

In light of the alarming extent and consequences of hearing loss, **AEA has developed the following action plan**, which we have started to implement:



### Prevent Hearing Loss

- We have joined forces with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) in their “**Make listening safe**” campaign, which draws attention to noise-induced hearing loss. We also work to improve and actualise regulations on safe listening like the **EU Directive on Noise Protection, Personal Music Players, Smart Devices & Personal Sound Amplification Products**.
- We provided feedback on the European Commission’s “**Smart Wearables: Reflection and Orientation Paper**”, stating that “**Smart Wearables** intended to be used by people with normal hearing **should not cause hearing damage**” and that “Smart Wearables intended to be used by people with hearing loss should either be connected to hearing aids, which are medical devices, fitted and provided by a recognised hearing care professional, or be classified and regulated as hearing aids when directly providing amplified sound”.



### Promote Awareness on Hearing Loss

- We support and advocate for the introduction of **quality hearing screening programmes** for new-borns, children and adults, to ensure **early intervention** and optimum cognitive capacities.
- We work together with the **World Health Organization** (WHO) in the framework of the **World Hearing Day**, to build and support **public awareness** on hearing loss and tinnitus, notably through the provision of information on how to seek help.
- We have developed a report together with EFHOH and the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA) on “**Getting our Numbers Right**”, to **inform policy makers and stakeholders** on the prevalence of hearing loss and the impact of professional hearing care.



## Guarantee Access to Professional Hearing Care

- We **support professional counselling and fitting** of hearing aids by qualified professionals, who are kept up to date with current guidance set out in EN 15927 the **European Standard on services offered by hearing aid professionals** through mandatory continuous education. In addition, we **actively participate in developing a new International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) norm** on a “Hearing Aid Fitting Management”.
- With the aim to **respect the end-user, ensure quality of hearing care and loyal co-operation between healthcare practitioners** towards the best interests of society, together with EFHOH we have developed a new European AEA **Code of Conduct for Hearing Care Professionals**, which was formally accepted by all AEA member associations.
- **Patient safety and satisfaction** requires that a **qualified hearing aid professional** is responsible for the selection, fitting and **ensuring the immediate and ongoing optimisation of the effectiveness of hearing aids**.
- We strive to ensure **interference-free access to standardised wireless communication** regardless of the type of assistive device used.

### Snapshot: the situation in the AEA members' countries

AEA Country	Population (mill) Jan 2016	Cost of Untreated Hearing Loss in Million Euro	Number of people with self reported hearing loss (mill)	People with recommendation for Hearing Care (mill)
Austria	8,7	3.045	0,8	0,4
Belgium	11,3	3.951	1,1	0,6
France	66,7	23.332	6,4	3,1
Germany	82,2	29.578	9,9	5,0
Greece	10,8	3.774	1,2	0,6
Italy	60,7	21.233	7	3,5
Netherlands	17,0	5.943	1,7	0,8
Poland	38,0	13.668	6	2,2
Portugal	10,3	3.619	1,1	0,6
Romania	19,8	6.916	1,8	0,9
Spain	46,4	16.253	4,5	2,3
Switzerland	8,3	2.914	0,8	0,4
United Kingdom	65,4	22.230	6,9	3,5
European Union	178,6	178.553	52	26



**World Health Organization**

**WHO References:**

Safe Listening:

<http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/activities/MLS/en/>

[http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/news/safe\\_listening/en/](http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/news/safe_listening/en/)

World Hearing Day:

<http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/world-hearing-day/en/>

Information on Hearing Loss and Professional Hearing Care:

<http://www.who.int/pbd/publications/en/>



European Federation of Hard of Hearing People

**EFHOH References:**

Safe Listening:

EFHOH/AEA Joint Report on (PSAP's)  
<http://www.efhoh.org/resources>

World Hearing Day:

<http://www.efhoh.org/campaigns>

Information on Hearing Loss and Professional Hearing Care:

<http://www.efhoh.org/resources>



**EHIMA & HearIt References:**

World Hearing Day:

<http://www.hear-it.org/>

Information on Hearing Loss and Professional Hearing Care:

<http://www.ehima.com/documents/>



**European Commission References:**

Safety standards for personal music players

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-09-418\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-09-418_en.htm?locale=en)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32009D0490>

Environmental Noise Directive

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/index_en.htm)

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/evaluation\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/noise/evaluation_en.htm)

Noise Protection Automotive Industry

[https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/automotive/environment-protection/noise-reduction\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/automotive/environment-protection/noise-reduction_en)



**AEA References:**

Information on Hearing Loss and Professional Hearing Care

<https://www.aea-audio.org/portal/index.php/code-of-conduct>  
<https://www.aea-audio.org/portal/index.php/news>

World Hearing Day:

<https://www.aea-audio.org/portal/index.php/world-hearing-day>

The Association AEA:

<https://www.aea-audio.org/portal/index.php/aea-the-association>