



Development of a **New Code of Conduct** for **Hearing Care Professionals** – A Success Story of **“Nothing about us without us”**.

In 2015 the Flemish (Dutch speaking part of Belgium) Professional Association for Audiologists (VBA) started with the development of a new code of conduct for Clinical and Rehabilitative Audiologists.

They were inspired by recent codes of conduct in healthcare which are typically much more positively voiced, more end-users focused, are directed more at modern forms of communication and are much shorter and to the point compared to traditional codes of conduct.

The aim was to respect the end-user, ensure quality of hearing care and loyal co-operation between healthcare practitioners towards the best interests of society.

The VBA workgroup finalized this code of conduct on the 20th January 2016 and on the 1st of March 2016. This code of conduct was approved and adopted by the Union of Belgian Hearing Care Professionals (CEUPA).

In the meantime, ECAT (European Committee for Audiology and Technology), the technical workgroup of the AEA (European Association of Hearing Care Professionals) had already started to work on an English version of this code of conduct. As part of their work, they requested EFHOH (European Federation of Hard of Hearing) to critically analyse and discuss this code of conduct with their members to ensure that, although developed by professionals with good intentions, this code of conduct was meeting the expectations of the care-recipients (the users).

Only after implementing the remarks from EFHOH, which were clearly highlighted in a presentation during the AEA mini-symposium in Brussels on the 29th of May 2016 by the EFHOH vice president Mrs. Lidia Best, this code of conduct was presented and fully adopted at the AEA General Assembly on the 30th of May 2016 in Brussels.

EFHOH remarks related to the fact that an audiologist or hearing care professional is not fitting just any hearing aids due to economic reasons (for example need of cutting costs in general). This is especially important in publicly funded services where such conflicts may occur.

Another aspect of the code of conduct was also welcomed: communication during consultation is vital and often overlooked. It is important that hearing care professionals address the user in language they actually understand (no medical jargon) and ensures that we hear and understand clearly during a consultation. Instructions and information should be explained thoroughly but preferably demonstrated to give a user a firm grasp on it.

The significant contribution by EFHOH was very positively received by all AEA members. The code is now more customer/patient focused, something EFHOH members and all hard of hearing people will appreciate. The code of conduct is now available here <http://www.aea-audio.org/portal/index.php/code-of-conduct>

The joint effort between EFHOH and AEA is proving that we can work together to ensure the best results which benefit both providers and users of these vital services. Main question is ... why didn't we think that way before?

Lidia Best (EFHOH vice-President) & Mark Laureyns (AEA President)