

Virtual Lunch Debate at the European Parliament

“To hear for life, listen with care!”

Thursday the 3rd of March 2022 – 12.30 to 14.30 h

Virtual Lunch debate hosted by MEP Alex Agius Saliba (Malta, S&D)

Report

This year, the Lunch Debate was virtual. More than 300 people from in total 40 countries around the globe, registered for the debate. Here you will find a bullet point report of this debate.

You can review all the videos from this debate on the AEA website – World Hearing Day 2022.

This was the agenda:

- **Welcome & Introduction – MEP Alex Agius Saliba (Malta, S&D)**
- **"To hear for life, listen with care" - Shelly Chadha WHO**
- **The "Make Listening Safe" workgroup and the "WHO Global Standard for Safe Listening Entertainment Venues" – Mark Laureyns - AEA**
- **Why hard of hearing people care for safe listening – Lidia Best– EFHOH**
- **Why and how the organisation of Cochlear Implant users, started a program of Young Ambassadors going to schools to promote safe listening – Laia Zamora - EURO-CIU**
- **“The importance of Adult Hearing Screening” - Patrick D’Haese - Hear-it**
- **“The importance of Access to Ear and Hearing Care in Europe” - Satish Mishra – WHO-Europe**
- **Debate**
- **Conclusion**

- **MEP Alex Agius Saliba – (S&D – Malta) - "Introduction"**



- This is the 7th Lunch Debate for World Hearing Day, from the European Parliament, and last year we had more than 650 participants from around the globe.
- I am honoured to be the host MEP of this years’ lunch debate and for obvious reasons, this lunch debate is virtual, and the theme is “To hear for life, listen with care!”. All

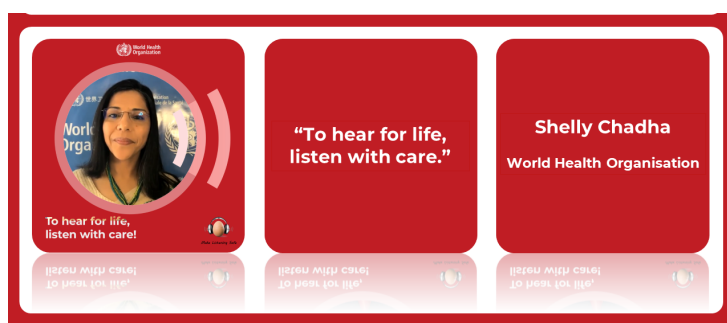
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presentations are subtitled, and the debate will be supported with speech to text, to ensure this debate is accessible for people with hearing loss.

- It's great to see, that the European Associations of Hard of Hearing People, Hearing aid and Cochlear Implant users, Hearing Care Professionals and Manufacturers, join forces with the World Health Organisation, to inform policy makers, governments, professionals, users and the wider public on the importance of prevention, awareness and intervention for hearing loss.
- The European Parliament should lead by example and therefore, it is extremely important to raise awareness around auditory care in remote meetings in the EP and on some recent developments in the scientific field and in other international institutions.
- That is why it is ultimate to support and promote hearing health in the best way possible. In order to tackle this issue we must promote professional and quality hearing and balance care practice through guidance, education, public awareness, advocacy, leadership and research support, facilitate access to innovative technologies and share best practices between the Member States and our institutions.

• Shelly Chadha – WHO - "To hear for life, listen with care"



- Hearing loss is on the rise – over 1 billion people are at risk of hearing loss, due to noise and loud sounds
 - But this is preventable – 50% of young people (12-35 years), listen to music at unsafe levels using headphones, and 40% are exposed to damaging sound levels at entertainment venues and events.
 - We need to change their behaviour, by informing them, create awareness and advocacy campaigns, but also by giving them safe listening choices and creating standards and norms.
 - WHO and ITU create a global standard for safe listening personal audio systems
 - Today, WHO and ITU are launching the “Global Standard for Safe Listening Venues & Events”.
 - WHO calls upon Governments, Private Sector Entities and Civil Society, to act for safe listening.
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- **Mark Laureyns – Co-chair of the WHO Make Listening Safe Workgroup & President of the AEA – European Association of Hearing Aid Professionals – the “Global Standard for Safe Listening Venues & Events”**

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- The details of the new standard will be explained and will be connected to new studies and findings, on how young people experience sound quality and risks at venues and events.
 - 1. Limiting sound levels to 100 dB (LAeq 15 minutes) – young people want that the level is safe.
 - 2. Monitoring sound level – information for sound engineers on how to do this
 - 3. Optimizing venues acoustics and sound systems – they need to be designed for good sound quality and safe listening
 - 4. Making personal hearing protection available – why are earplugs needed, how to convince young people to use the earplugs and studies on how this can be done
 - 5. Access to quiet zones – young people want this, how to create quiet zones
 - 6. Provision of training and information – WHO has a lot of material available, we should use labels to indicate safe listening venues and events.
- **Lidia Best–President of the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) and core member of the WHO Make Listening Safe Workgroup - Why hard of hearing people care for safe listening.**



- EFHOH vision: Europe needs to be a place, where hard of hearing people can live without barriers and participate at all levels of society.
- She will present results from a study, showing that Hard of Hearing People, even the ones with mild to moderate hearing loss, experienced “losing their hearing ability” as the biggest trauma in their life.
- Here main call to action for everybody is “please protect your hearing, especially where it is actually in your hands”

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- **Laia Zamora - EURO-CIU – the European Cochlear Implant user - Why and how the organisation of Cochlear Implant users, started a program of Young Ambassadors going to schools to promote safe listening.**



- Laia Zamora, the director of youth of the Federation of Associations of Cochlear Implanted Patients, of Spain. Federation AICE is a member of EURO-CIU, the European Association of Cochlear Implant Users, along with more than 30 national and regional member associations from 23 countries.
- The WHO alerts us to the normalization of exposure to harmful noise as a form of leisure, not only at music festivals, where there is overexposure to high volumes for long hours, but also the new form of virtual leisure such as video games. It is becoming ever more common to use headsets to communicate with players while the sound of the game continues to emit. We must also consider the increase in the use of mobile phones and headphones, which are frequently used with excessive volume and for longer durations than recommended. This leads to an exponential problem in hearing damage among young people.
- We must start by educating the youngest members of our society. They need to be made aware of the problem of ambient noise in our daily environments, what factors they can influence, and how they can raise awareness in their own networks and environments of how harmful noise pollution can be.
- We realized that it was necessary to carry out the talks in a dynamic and fun way, to keep the students' attention and to help messages sink in, so that it went beyond an educational talk, but rather a lifelong learning.
- We started with a small step. We talked about noise, hearing loss and cochlear implants. By the end they were "invested" as if they were "knights" of an order in which they had to fight against noise and hearing loss, so that they themselves could distribute the message among their communities and family.
- being knights" and giving them a "mission" was carried out and remembered which was really the point. We gave them like a “stamp” of approval.
- In the following WHO meetings, we talked about the idea of investing in young people as messengers and this evolved into the term "Young Safe Listening Ambassadors" with the goal of training teens to be advocates of caring for hearing health.
- Nowadays we even dress up as crazy scientists in a funny way, so that they remember the visit of the “Sound professors”. One of our presenters is also deaf and in the middle of the talk she takes off her wig to reveal her cochlear implant, which

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usually leaves the students stunned. Many believe that hearing loss is only for "grandparents" and not for the young, or just believe that it cannot happen to them.

- **Patrick D’Haese – President of Hear-it - “The importance of Adult Hearing Screening”**



- What is the challenge to society? - Prevalence of hearing loss, Hearing loss is associated with a multitude of comorbidities and additional problems, Cost of not treating hearing loss (in Europe this is hearing loss is €185 billion per year. This is €17 billion more than the EU budget in 2020 – and including the expenses or medical costs for other comorbidities are included, the true cost of hearing loss is estimated to be €213 billion)
- What are solutions to the problem? - Treatment of sensorineural hearing loss (Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants), but the uptake is low.
- Potential causes of low uptake rate in adults - Lack of awareness amongst referring professionals about hearing aids, cochlear implants. - Lack of awareness amongst patients eligible for a hearing aid or a cochlear implant. - No national hearing screening programmes in adults and more
- What are the recommendations of the World Health Organization towards Adult Hearing Screening?
 - All adults, from the age of 50 years should be screened regularly for hearing loss.
 - Screening may be conducted at 5 yearly intervals until the age of 64 years.
 - From 65 years of age, the frequency of screening should be increased to every 1 to 3 years. Wherever possible, hearing screening schedules should align with other health checks.
- Once a diagnosis of hearing loss has been made, the interventions must include:
 - Basic education and counselling on hearing loss for people
 - The need for, and type of, hearing technology should be assessed and whichever: Technology is required (e.g. hearing aids, cochlear implants (or other hearing implants), hearing assistive technologies) should be provided and fitted by a trained professional who is authorized to do so
- What needs to change?
 - Hearing loss must be addressed as a public health issue
 - There is a need for policy makers to allocate resources for, and plan strategically to promote, access to ear and hearing care

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- Public health strategies should address prevention, screening and early intervention of hearing loss
- **Satish Mishra – Technical Officer for Disability and Rehabilitation at WHO-Europe - “The importance of Access to Ear and Hearing Care in Europe”**



- Ear and Hearing Care in Europe: current status and future directions
 - Hearing loss is on the rise in the WHO European Region
 - Today 57 million people in Europe has a hearing loss that requires hearing rehabilitation, and this will rise to 71 million in 2050
 - But many people in the European region, don't find the way to interventions.
- Unaddressed hearing loss impacts many aspects of life:
 - Listening and communication
 - Language and speech development
 - Cognition
 - Education
 - Employment and financial wellbeing
 - Social isolation and loneliness
 - Mental health
 - Interpersonal relations
 - Identity and stigma
- Cost of unaddressed hearing loss - Annually, 225 billion\$ are lost, mainly due to loss of productivity and social isolation attributed to unaddressed hearing loss globally.
- Effective and cost-effective solutions are available
 1. Prevention
 2. Early identification
 3. Appropriate and timely care and rehabilitation
- Challenges in the field of ear and hearing care can be addressed!
- Scaling up ear and hearing care services through Integrated Person-Centred Ear and Hearing Care is cost-effective!
- The World report on hearing calls upon WHO Member States to work towards the achievement of global targets for ear and hearing care
- Call for action
 - The growing number of people with unaddressed hearing loss and ear diseases is unacceptable.

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- Urgent action is needed to prevent and address hearing loss across the life course.
- Investing in cost effective interventions will benefit people with hearing loss and bring financial gains to the society.
- Countries must act now, to integrate people-centred ear and hearing care (IPC-EHC) within national health plans for universal health coverage

• Conclusions



- During this debate, we hear that: “We need to act now”. “Call to action”. “We can't wait”. “We can't do nothing”.
- It started with MEP Saliba, saying that Europe needs to create more regulations for safe listening. Europe needs to go there. Happy to hear that from an MEP. I hope that the Parliament is there for, and the Commission, to help more regulations for create safer listening. Great.
- Shelly Chadha started off by saying that 50% of young people are listening to music at unsafe levels. We need to change their behaviour. We need to make it possible and give them tools. If you are at a concert, it is a choice. If you can't choose to listen safe or to go to a quiet area, then you have no options. There is an urgent call on governments, private sector, and civil society for safe listening.
- For the global standard for safe listening venues and events, it is all about getting more countries to really start with regulations. I think it is a wonderful piece of work. Governments can use this standard to create their own regulations. On the other hand, we need to change behaviour. It is very important, that if you make hearing protection available, young people are motivated to use the hearing protection and have good safe listening habits. It is important to be convincing in a kind way, and not making the music and sound experience unpleasant.
- Lidia Best stated, losing the hearing was seen by the adult hard of hearing people as the biggest trauma in their life. It is important for hard of hearing associations to promote safe listening. They know a lot of hearing losses are preventable.
- We saw Laia Zamora with great dynamics, showing things can happen and change. If you, do it in a pleasant way and start young, it makes a difference. Not only on cochlear implants, but also changing behaviour. People need to act to prevent hearing loss.

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- I was happy to see that Patrick D'Haese promoted the new WHO handbook on hearing screening. All adults from age of 50 should be screened regularly for their hearing. Unfortunately, there are not too many countries doing it. It is high time to do it now.
- Satish Mishra from the WHO office in Europe, stated that hearing care is cost effective. It has a return of investment of 30 to 1. Better than to put it on a bank account. The best investment you can make, take care of your hearing. There is an urgent call of action.
- We need to act now and make sure things are happening. We can't permit to do nothing. The cost of doing nothing is too high. I thank the panel, everybody attending. Very happy that there were so many of you. From around the globe. Join us again, come and join the World hearing forum, the Make safe listening group, to make sure we can work with all of you. Create a world where life is safer. A safe listening experience. Thank you, bye!