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Untreated hearing loss in the EU costs more than the annual EU budget

Around 22.6 million people in the EU live with an untreated, disabling hearing loss. Untreated, disabling hearing loss in the EU costs 185 billion Euros each year. This is 25 billion Euros more than the EU budget for 2018. The costs are related to lower quality of life and higher unemployment among people with a disabling hearing loss.

A new, extensive scientific report, “Hearing Loss – Numbers and Costs” on the evaluation of the social and economic cost of hearing impairment to Europe, concludes that untreated, disabling hearing loss costs 185 billion Euros in the EU each year. This is 8,200 Euros each year per person with an untreated disabling hearing loss.

Lower quality of life due to disabling hearing loss costs the EU 130 billion Euros each year. Lost productivity in society due to a higher unemployment among people with a disabling hearing loss costs 55 billion Euros each year in the EU. In total, this is 185 billion Euros. The cost does not cover extra health care costs caused by hearing loss. A disabling hearing loss is defined by the Global Burden of Disease research group (GBD) as a hearing loss of 35 dB or greater. In Europe as a whole - including non-EU countries – untreated, disabling hearing loss costs 216 billion Euros each year.

The report documents that the use of hearing aids and other hearing solutions improves health and increases quality of life. It also documents that people with an untreated, disabling hearing loss are at greater risk of social isolation, depression, cognitive decline and dementia, while people who treat their hearing loss do not experience a higher risk than people without hearing loss.

There are 34.4 million people with a disabling hearing loss (35 dB or greater) in the EU. More than 22.6 million are not treated for their disabling hearing loss as only around one in three in Europe with a disabling hearing loss use hearing aids or other hearing solutions. With a steadily aging population who live longer and longer and with an earlier onset of hearing loss due to increased noise exposure, this growth will increase even further in the years to come.

The report, “Hearing Loss – Numbers and Costs”, is a meta study which has analyzed and compared hundreds of scientific studies and papers in the last two decades about the prevalence and the consequences of hearing loss and the use and benefits of hearing aids. The report was carried out for hear-it AISBL – the world’s largest and leading website on hearing and hearing loss – by Prof. em. Bridget Shield, Brunel University London, with the assistance of Professor Mark Atherton, Brunel University London.

EHIMA endorses the report. The report proves how the social and economic costs of untreated hearing loss can be reduced significantly with a comprehensive treatment of hearing



instruments. People hard of hearing who use hearing aids or cochlear implants are happier, healthier and wealthier than those hard of hearing who are untreated. With hearing instruments, EHIMA members offer high-quality and cost-effective hearing solutions that reduce personal health risks and costs due to untreated hearing loss.

The report is available here: <https://www.ehima.com/documents/>

The European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA)

The European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA) represents the seven major European hearing instrument manufacturers, offering smart hearing aid and implant solutions for people hard of hearing. EHIMA was founded in 1985 and its members are among the world's largest and most advanced hearing instrument manufacturers, producing up to 90% of the hearing instruments manufactured in Europe. Members of EHIMA develop, manufacture and market hearing instruments on a large scale in one or more countries in Europe as well as exporting their products worldwide. www.ehima.com

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