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MARCH 2026
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Message from the President



Dear Members,

As we begin a new year, I am pleased to share some updates on the activities and priorities ahead of us. One of the most important upcoming events is our EURO CIU Workshop and General Assembly, which will take place this year in Bucharest. I warmly invite all members to join us there. The workshop will once again provide an open space to discuss EURO

CIU's future direction, share ideas, and contribute to shaping the strategic development of our organisation. Your participation and insights are essential, and I sincerely hope to see many of you involved in these important conversations.

Looking back, the past year was truly remarkable for EURO CIU. We celebrated our 30th anniversary with a special jubilee symposium in Istanbul – an inspiring event that honoured three decades of progress, advocacy, and community. We were also present at ESPCI in Hannover, where we exchanged knowledge with experts, professionals, and fellow CI users from across Europe. Additionally, EURO CIU contributed to the conversations at the CIICA Conference in Brussels, which once again highlighted the importance of global collaboration in hearing health.

These events not only strengthened our network but also reminded us how vital our shared engagement is. I would like to express my gratitude to all of you who represented your associations, shared your expertise, and helped raise awareness of the needs of cochlear implant users throughout Europe.

This year, we once again have a full agenda with many exciting activities and opportunities ahead. I look forward to continuing our close cooperation – working together, learning from each other, and driving positive change for our community. EURO CIU thrives on your dedication, and I am confident that together we will achieve a great deal in 2026.

I wish you an enjoyable read of this newsletter and look forward to another year of strong, constructive, and inspiring collaboration.

Warm regards,

Tobias Fischer
President, EURO CIU

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[Message from the Editor of the Newsletter](#)



I hope that you enjoyed International Cochlear Implant Day, and that you used the opportunity to tell people about cochlear implants.

It's not long until we meet in Bucharest for the EURO-CIU Workshop and General Assembly – please see the next article, and book your place if you haven't already done so! We look forward to seeing you there, and many thanks to our friends in Romania for making the arrangements.

We are grateful to those who have sent us articles – it's always good to hear what is happening in our member countries. Also thanks to the cochlear implant companies for keeping us up to date.

Please feel free to forward this Newsletter to Members of Parliament, friends, colleagues and members of your own organisations. We are keen to increase the number of people who can read about the benefits of cochlear implantation. Let's get the message across, particularly as we develop our work, about which you can read in this newsletter.

The next edition of the EURO-CIU Newsletter will be due in June, so please let me have your articles (maximum about 500 words per article please) and jpg photos by Monday 1 June 2026. Just e-mail them to me at newsletter@eurociu.eu

With every good wish - and let's hopefully enjoy some Spring weather!

Brian Archbold (Editor)

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[EURO-CIU – Workshop and General Assembly](#)




Join the EURO-CIU Network

Associations interested in joining the European cochlear implant community are warmly invited to attend the event, meet our members and learn more about EURO-CIU.

Workshop on 17 April 2026 • Bucharest-ROMANIA
General Assembly – 18 April 2026 (Members Only Event)

What Does the Future Sound Like?

Venue: Ibis Styles Bucharest City Center
(Știrbei Vodă Street No. 146)

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<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNG4IJEh-GFn35i2hWbVdIXTTmOPFhofdd19yVKh31rw5bg/viewform?usp=header>






EURO-CIU is a full member of The European Disability Forum (EDF)

EURO-CIU is a founding member of the World Hearing Forum from the World Health Organization

EURO-CIU is a founding member of CIICA

Dear EURO-CIU members,

We invite you to participate in the Workshop and General Assembly in Bucharest.

We invite you to present your organization and its activities on April 17, 2026. We will announce the time allocated to each association depending on the number of people who want to present. It would be beneficial if as many associations as possible could tell us about their activities so that we can replicate them in our countries and come up with a common direction under the umbrella of EURO-CIU.

In order for us to organize, please fill out the form below and you will be contacted by the travel company handling the event. This company can also help you with flight tickets.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNG4IJEh-GFn35i2hWbVdIXTTmOPFhofdd19yVKh31rw5bg/viewform?usp=header>

The workshop and General Assembly will take place in a conference room at the Ibis City Central Hotel in Bucharest (<https://ibisstylesbucharestcenter.com/ro/>). We have reserved rooms at this hotel, single rooms at a negotiated price of 85 euros and double rooms at a price of 95 euros.

The participation fee for the two-day event is €130, which includes: coffee breaks on April 17-18, 2026, lunch on April 17-18, 2026, and dinner at the hotel restaurant on April 17, 2026.

In the form, you can choose to participate in: - the welcome party on the evening of April 16, 2026, which is sponsored by the host association – a trip to Bucharest on April 17, 2026, after the workshop – dinner on April 18, 2026 (at a cost depending on how many participants will be able to attend) Hoping that as many of us as possible will be there to continue the hard work of the former members of the board of directors, I look forward to seeing you in Bucharest!

Best regards,

Anamaria Braşov

0040720045225

P.S. If there are more participants who are coming with guests, please let us know so that we can organize enjoyable activities in Bucharest for them.

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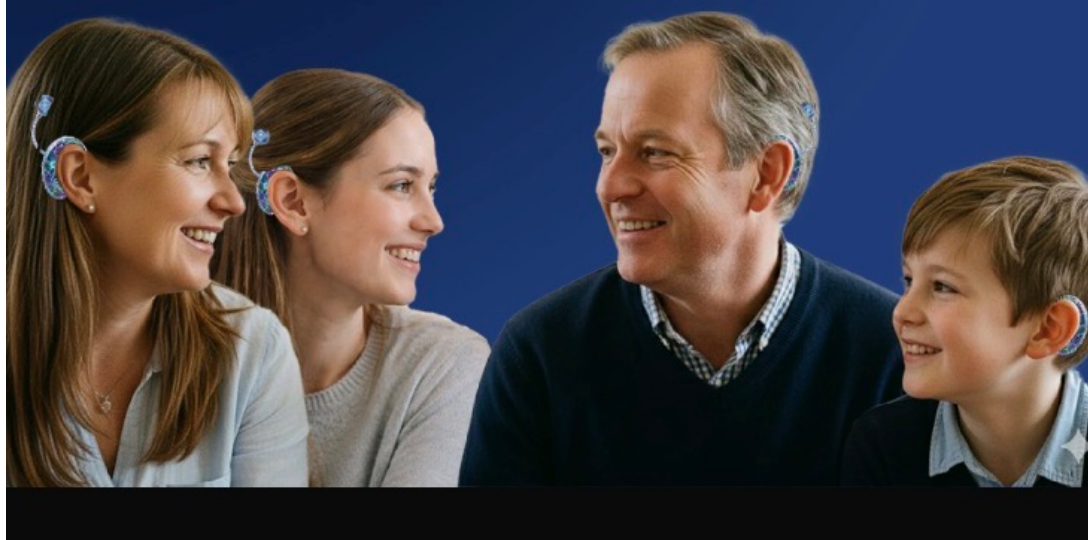
[International Cochlear Implant Day – 25 February 2026](#)

INTERNATIONAL CI-DAY

25.02.2026



Hear Life With CI



On 25 February, we came together to celebrate the strength, diversity and unity of the global CI community.

Around the world, associations, families and CI users prepared meaningful and inspiring activities for this special day and we were delighted to celebrate this day together.

Together we raised awareness, supported one another and inspired even more people.

Together, we celebrated hearing, connection and community.

Hear Life With CI

[#InternationalCIDay](#) [#HearLifeWithCI](#) [#CochlearImplant](#) [#EUROCIU](#)

Aylin Özgür

Vice President EURO-CIU

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[Queen Elizabeth Award for Engineering](#)



(Photo: Graeme Clark, Ingeborg Hochmair and Erwin Hochmair)

The 2026 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering is awarded for the design and development of modern neural interfaces that restore human function. This year's Laureates have delivered pioneering achievements in neuroengineering, demonstrating the extraordinary power of engineering to overcome profound physical limitations and transform lives.

Graeme Clark, Erwin Hochmair, Ingeborg Hochmair, and Blake Wilson are recognised for their groundbreaking work on cochlear implants, which convert sound into electrical signals that directly stimulate the auditory nerve. Their innovations in signal processing, miniaturisation, and biocompatible materials have restored hearing for over a million people worldwide.

Professor Graeme Clark first conceived the idea of electrically stimulating the cochlea to restore hearing while still a medical student in 1954. After training as an ENT surgeon in the UK, he returned to research, completing a PhD in 1969 that established the principles of multi channel cochlear stimulation. He led the preclinical science, engineering development and fundraising that made the first multi channel cochlear implant possible, and on 1 August 1978 performed the pioneering surgery on Rod Saunders, who achieved open set speech understanding.

This led to the creation of the biomedical company Cochlear Limited. Clark's team closely collaborated with their industrial partner so that its performance has continued to improve with the extraction of more speech information. In 1985, he implanted the first multi-channel cochlear implant in a child, and, in 1986, in a young child. Both implants continue to operate effectively after 40 years. In 1985 the Nucleus/Cochlear device was the first multi-channel implant to be approved by the US FDA and, in 1990, the first implant of any type to be approved by a World Health regulatory body. The Nucleus/Cochlear implant has had the dominant share of the international market in the past 40 years and has been implanted in over 700,000 people in 180 countries.

Clark's research is increasingly focussed on the engineering of the cochlear implant and other prosthetic devices. He was honoured in 2016 when the University of Melbourne created the Graeme Clark Institute for Biomedical Engineering, of which he is a member.

Professor Dr Erwin Hochmair is an Austrian electrical engineer who has pioneered the development of modern cochlear implants. Following his doctorate at the Vienna University of Technology, he held leading research positions in Europe and the United States, including at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and Stanford University. From 1985 to 2009, he served as Full Professor of Applied Physics at the University of Innsbruck, where he also acted as Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Head of the Department of Applied Physics.

The co-founder of hearing implant manufacturer MED-EL has authored more than 100 scientific publications and is the (co-)inventor of 26 patent families. His achievements have been recognised with numerous international honours and awards, including, the Russ Prize of the US National Academy of Engineering, and the IEEE Alexander Graham Bell Medal.

Dr Ingeborg Hochmair is an electrical engineer and internationally recognised pioneer in hearing implant technology. Ingeborg is the co inventor of the world's first microelectronic, multi channel cochlear implant, successfully implanted in 1977. She has (co-)authored more than 120 scientific publications and holds numerous patents in the field of implantable neuroprostheses. Her contributions have been recognised with major international honours, including the Lasker–DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award, the Russ Prize of the US National Academy of Engineering, the IEEE Alexander Graham Bell Medal, and several honorary doctorates from leading European universities.

As Co-Founder and CEO of MED EL, she continues to advance translational research in hearing implants, robotic-assisted surgery and AI-driven rehabilitation, with a clear mission: to improve the quality of life for people with hearing loss worldwide.

(With thanks to the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering Foundation for these commentaries)

Graeme Clark has subsequently emailed me and said:

"On international cochlear implant day let us pause and reflect on the fact that the first attempts to bring hearing to those not helped with a hearing aid through bypassing the inner ear with electrical stimulation of the hearing nerve led to the indomitable human spirit meeting the challenge.

"The multi-channel cochlear implant resulted, and is the first device to restore a human sense and bring speech understanding and spoken language to severely deaf people."

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[EURO-CIU News – European Disability Forum Update](#)



Photo: Sari Hirvonen-Skarbö at EDF Disability Day Meetings

EDF Board meeting – November 2026

The EDF Board meeting in Copenhagen, Danish presidency of the Council of the European Union's arranged the High-level conference on Disability; and independent living Denmark. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing and European Commission were organizers with their speakers.

It was concluded that everyone should have access to safe, accessible housing and independent living with help of assistance. There are still over 800,000 people with disabilities living in institutions in Europe. To get affordable and social housing is the main question, the investment to build houses has still decreased after the pandemic. Good town planning would start with idea of good access not only for housing but also to public transportation and communication. This should also include good information and access to the emergency services, especially for people with hearing loss.

During December 2025 the European Commission published its Housing Package, including the new "Affordable Housing Plan". EDF has campaigned for accessibility and other

disability-related provisions to be included in the document and asked for designated financing to pay for more accessible housing.

The next presidency of EU will be Greece, where there will be the AGM of European Disability Forum and the election of the Board.

The European Day of Persons with Disabilities

The traditional European Disability Day, which is 3rd of December, was celebrated in Brussels.

Hundreds of people with a wide range of disabilities gathered to listen and talk about how EU and member States can advance the Disability Rights strategy, turning it into real progress in key areas like accessibility, independent living, and participation. The strategy of the years from 2021 to 2030 was discussed. Nicole Marinos gave her personal testimony – how she, as a hearing aid user, had hearing problems during her studies in university. She did not get any help and was very disappointed. Finishing studies, she got the work as Access UCC Ambassador, enabling diverse student voices in the University, where she can use her experience.

Emergency preparedness

The important and interesting thing was the preparedness and crisis management. The question is how EU and Member States can ensure people with disabilities are included in emergency preparedness and crisis management, building on the lessons learned from recent crises, like Valencia, Spain.

Especially now during the threat of war, is what to consider and do in a crisis, thinking of communication problems with hearing. After a speech by Finnish Member of Parliament, Li Andersson, and some other participants there was a discussion on what to consider making preparedness during normal time. Authorities must work so that all different groups of people living in have the possibility to act in work and in building the civil defense structures. I reminded them of questions about how to spread information so Deaf and persons with hearing loss get all important news. Some deaf people use sign language, so readable information is not best for them. Public planning must include multiple ways to contact public services. If SMS triggered, if you need emergency, call 112, and it should be accessible all the time.

Access City Award 2026

Since 2010, the European Commission has been organizing the Access City Award, in collaboration with the European Disability Forum, to reward EU cities that are prioritizing accessibility for people with disabilities.

On the second day, the conference started with the Access City Award 2026 ceremony. The Commission decided to award a Special Mention on Accessibility in Housing. The EU Jury may decide to award other Special Mentions to cities for their outstanding accessibility work on a specific area.

Cities are key actors in ensuring accessibility, as they have a direct impact on our everyday life and needs as citizens. A city is accessible when people with disabilities can, for instance:

- Get the bus, tram and metro to go to work or meet friends. Travelling must be accessible; there should be a text on which station will be the next one. Communication with the local administration in person, by phone or online should go easily.

Access City Award 2026: The First prize winner was Zaragoza (Spain), second prize winner

Valencia (Spain) and third prize winner is Rennes (France). One of the Special Mention for Accessibility in Emergency Preparedness: Valencia (Spain). The other special mention for Information and Communications Technology went to Piacenza (Italy).

Over the past 16 years, 77 cities have been awarded, including 16 first prize winners among them.

Code of Equality: Building Fair & Trustworthy AI in Estonia

I was able to attend with Kave Noori, EDF Artificial Intelligence Policy Officer, in Tallinn.

The conference Code of Equality: Building Fair & Trustworthy AI was a high-level forum to shape ethical standards for automated decision-making (ADM) systems in the public sector. By bringing together EU and national policymakers, AI and non-discrimination experts, and developers, the event critically examined opportunities and risks while fostering collaboration to co-create a digital future for Europe that is fair.

The event brought together equality bodies, legal experts, technology companies and civil society organizations to discuss how AI can support justice and equal treatment.

The discussions included representatives from the Estonian and European disability movements. EDF was invited due to its recognized expertise. Participation helped to ensure that disability rights were part of the discussion on building fair and inclusive with AI.

EDF has started to publish the newsletter of AI

Kave Noori wrote about smart glasses, its accessibility potential and rising privacy concerns. Smart glasses are emerging as a promising assistive technology. They can describe surroundings for blind and low vision users, translate text, or provide real-time captions for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

But recent developments also reveal a growing tension between accessibility and privacy. Smart glasses rely heavily on cameras and microphones, often sending audiovisual data to external cloud services for processing (terms typically designed for consumers rather than environments that require stronger protections).

Misuse is increasingly documented: people being secretly recorded in public spaces, YouTube “manfluencer” encounters filmed without consent, and simple hacks, like covering or disabling the recording indicator, allowing wearers to bypass safety signals. Even manufacturers acknowledge that these indicators can be bypassed.

The debate is intensifying as companies explore adding features such as facial recognition to smart glasses, raising further concerns about consent, surveillance, and discrimination.

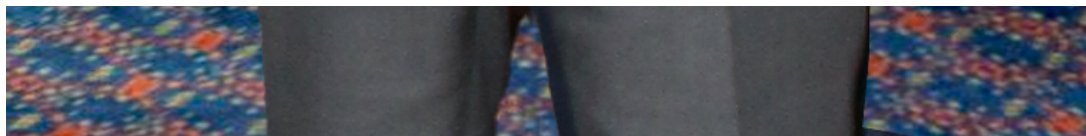
The Newsletter can be reached at the [European Disability Forum website](#).

Sari Hirvonen-Skarbö
EDF representantative for EURO-CIU

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[FRANCE – Cochlee France](#)





Cochlee France no longer has any associative activities and no volunteers to keep the association going.

Therefore, Cochlee France will no longer be a member of EURO-CIU.

We regret this decision and hope that EURO-CIU will continue to represent the interests of all cochlear implant users.

Kind regards

Gilles COGNAT
Cochlee France President

(Many of us at EURO-CIU will remember the dedication and hard work that Gilles put into EURO-CIU as Vice President from 1999 to 2007 and President from 2007 to 2015. Thank you, Gilles. Ed)

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THE NETHERLANDS – OPCI Foundation



(Photo: Henk van Rees, Hennie Epping and Peter Helmhout)

The board of the OPCI Foundation would like to inform you of an important development regarding the future of the OPCI Foundation.

The chair, secretary and treasurer have announced that they will be stepping down from their board positions on 13 April 2026. Despite enormous efforts (since the end of 2024), it has not been possible to find successors in time. According to our articles of association, the board of the foundation must consist of at least three persons. The board has therefore concluded that administrative continuity after 13 April 2026 can no longer be guaranteed.

The board has therefore decided to dissolve the foundation in a careful manner. This decision has been taken in accordance with the articles of association and legal requirements. Any ongoing matters will be completed in an orderly manner. Any surplus balance will be donated to a charitable institution with a similar objective, in accordance with the articles of association.

We would like to thank all parties involved for their commitment, support and dedication over the past period. The foundation has worked with conviction to achieve its objectives, and we are grateful for the trust that has been placed in us.

If you have any questions regarding this announcement, please contact our secretary atinfo@opciweb.nl.

Please see details of the final Symposium in the Congresses section of this newsletter.

(On behalf of so many people at EURO-CIU, may I say how sorry I was to learn that OPCI was being dissolved. We all know that Hennie, Henk and Peter have been more than just board members for so many people. We wish everyone at OPCI our very best wishes for the future. Ed.)

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SPAIN – AICE – Celebrating Another Successful 4th Concert by Federación AICE



On 26th February, the Higher Conservatory of Music Joaquín Rodrigo in Valencia hosted the 4th Solidarity Concert organised by the AICE Federation and the “Cuarteto de Cuerda Valencia”. Once again brought together music, emotion, and social commitment in support of people with cochlear implants and their families. Held in a warm and inspiring atmosphere, the event highlighted the power of music as a universal language capable of connecting people beyond hearing differences. Attendees enjoyed an outstanding artistic performance while contributing to a cause that promotes accessibility, inclusion, and equal opportunities for individuals with hearing loss. The concert was fully accessible thanks to individual induction loop systems and live captioning services, ensuring that everyone could follow and enjoy the evening.

Through initiatives like this concert, Federación AICE continues to raise awareness about the realities faced by cochlear implant users and to advocate for their rights and needs. The funds raised will support the federation’s programmes, including guidance for newly implanted

individuals, family support, youth activities, and awareness campaigns. The evening was not only a celebration of music, but also a powerful reminder of the importance of solidarity, accessibility, and community engagement.

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SPAIN – AICE – Cochlear Implant Day



For the fifth consecutive year, the Federación AICE has launched its campaign for the Illumination of Emblematic Buildings throughout Spain, an initiative that has been joined by numerous Public Administrations from 14 Autonomous Communities.

The colour chosen to commemorate International Cochlear Implant Day is lilac, a shade that, on the one hand, evokes the magazine Integration and, on the other hand, distinguishes itself from the colours used by cochlear implant brands.

The young cochlear implant users of the AICE Federation gathered in Madrid from February 20 to 22 to celebrate Cochlear Implant Day.

The Youth Meeting was once again a success. More than twenty young cochlear implant users participated in various talks, all of which were fully accessible thanks to simultaneous transcription on screens.

The event combined educational workshops and recreational activities to promote learning and interaction among young cochlear implant users. In the afternoon, they enjoyed a game in an escape room, which was made accessible thanks to individual induction loop systems.

It was undoubtedly a very full and memorable weekend.

As well, in Albacete, on the 8th of March the 11th Cochlear Implant Race was celebrated. More than 400 persons were inscribed. Runners with cochlear implant, parents, friends, all these persons will be united to visibility the cochlear implants.

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The Lehnhardt Foundation – PORA Webinars Online – New Concept 2026

PORA Series of Webinars | Lehnhardt Foundation

Knowledge that opens hearing worlds

- Top-Experts
- Networking
- Round Tables
- Free of charge
- For parents & professionals
- With recordings
- Join now & foster hearing miracles!




www.lehnhardt-stiftung.org

When:
Every Month

Where:
ZOOM

[Learn More](#)



Top international experts
share cutting-edge insights on cochlear implants, Auditory Verbal Therapy and early hearing rehabilitation - practical, inspiring and delivered straight to your home.

Sixteen years after the introduction of the PORA! webinars, the Lehnhardt Foundation has decided to redesign the concept.

In 2009 we chose the name **PORA!** the Russian word meaning “It is time!” as our initial goal was to address Russian-speaking parents and therapists. In many countries of the former USSR there was a great need for information, both in medical and in educational fields.

In 2026, the time has come for us to redefine PORA

Personal Online Recordings Available.

Beyond the Russian-speaking region, we also aim to expand particularly into **Latin America**.

Until now, internationally recognized experts have presented various topics once a month and answered questions two weeks later in a forum discussion. With the new concept, we aim to create a clearer and more structured programme.

Three main thematic areas will be offered, with the goal of sharing knowledge, promoting interdisciplinary exchange, and strengthening international collaboration.

The three topics are:

- Audiology
- Cochlear implant indication and referral criteria
- Rehabilitation and support for parents

The **Audiology syllabus** has been developed by the internationally renowned audiologist **Prof. George Tavartkiladze**. It includes a structured curriculum covering hearing diagnostics, the plasticity of the auditory system, indications for different types of hearing implants, and current technological developments.

Professionals working in regions with limited access to continuing education will thus have the opportunity to acquire knowledge in an easily accessible way and, after completing an online examination, obtain a certificate.

A series of **round-table discussions** on cochlear implant indication and referral criteria will be led by **Prof. Dr. Thomas Lenarz**, who recently joined the board of our foundation. The first step will be to assess existing guidelines for indication and referral in different European countries. Following an exchange of experience and in-depth professional discussions, the goal is to define common standards and ultimately reach and adopt a consensus.

We are pleased that renowned ENT specialists from **Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Slovakia, Armenia, Turkey, Russia, and Australia** have already confirmed their participation.

For the syllabus **Rehabilitation and Support for Parents**, a focus group has been established consisting of experienced therapists from **Germany, Australia, England, Spain, Austria, and South Africa**.

The programme will extend over two years and will cover a very broad range of rehabilitation methods. In addition, structured support strategies for parents will be presented. Parents themselves will also have the opportunity to contribute their perspectives, reflecting our shared conviction that parents play the decisive role in the listening and language development of their children.

All webinars will be easily accessible via **Zoom** and will initially be **free of charge**.

The majority of speakers will present in English, with provision of automatic subtitles in the participant's preferred language.

One webinar per month is planned for each of the three syllabi, creating a regular and easily manageable continuing education program.

The focus groups have already defined the contents, which can be viewed at:

<https://lehnhardt-stiftung.org/pora.html>

There you will also find the names of many of the speakers.

Another important goal of the PORA webinars is to **connect professionals and parents**, based on a trusting and open exchange of knowledge and experience. In this way, we aim to raise the level of hearing rehabilitation internationally.

Further information can be found on the foundation's website:

<https://lehnhardt-stiftung.org>

If you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact us by email:

team@lehnhardt-stiftung.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

Dr. Monika Lehnhardt-Gorany

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[CIICA celebrates its fifth birthday on CI International Day](#)

ADULT HEARING SCREENING: WHY WAIT?

This report reviews evidence,
international guidelines, and policy changes.

www.ciicanet.org



NEW RESOURCE FROM CIICA: ADULT HEARING SCREENING: WHY WAIT?

On CI International Day, and CIICA's fifth birthday, we launched our new report; Adult Hearing Screening: Why Wait? which reviews recent evidence, international guidelines, and policy changes, highlighting the consensus on the value of adult hearing screening and the urgent need for health systems to integrate screening into public health strategies.

Adult hearing loss is one of the most prevalent and under-recognised health challenges worldwide, with significant impacts on communication, mental health, and long-term outcomes such as cognitive decline and dementia. Despite strong evidence for the effectiveness of the early fitting of today's hearing technologies, adult hearing screening is not available in most health systems. At the same time, rapid technological and regulatory developments – including over-the-counter (OTC) devices, self-fitting hearing aids, and app-based hearing tests – are disrupting traditional models of hearing care and making direct patient access to hearing technologies possible.

Adult hearing screening would enable people to have access to today's hearing technologies earlier, increasing their effectiveness. Download this report at [ADULT HEARING SCREENING: WHY WAIT? – CIICA](#)

With thanks to AICE Fundacion, Spain; and Advanced Bionics.

"If this was picked up sooner, there would be such an improvement to people's quality of life. I know of so many people who clearly have got hearing loss but won't ask their GP for a referral to ENT services. If screening was available many of these people would attend, as it would be seen as something that everyone is offered. Hearing loss at any level causes such upset and depression in people and their families. Once diagnosed it gives a person a chance to come to terms with wearing aids and meeting others in a similar situation. I found it takes a long time to admit deafness and be open about it."

An adult with hearing loss quoted in Lamb & Archbold 2016.

EURO-CIU is a founding member of CIICA

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CIICA – Celebrating World Hearing Day: 3 March 2025



World Map shows the 19 countries from Low- and Middle-Income Countries that

provided stories

CIICA celebrated World Hearing Day, with its focus on addressing hearing loss in children in the classroom with two new projects:

Raising awareness of CI for children and infants in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Our recent series of CIICA Conversations focused on strengthening access to CIs and related CI services for Infants and Children in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. These discussions shed light on a critical need to raise awareness for the successes and challenges that families face on the CI pathway. Please visit www.ciicanet.org/events to read the meeting summaries.

The group that has been driving the Conversations are facilitating this effort by collecting stories, sharing them and reporting on the challenges and successes so that we can all learn from them. The stories highlight challenges and successes in accessing and using CIs and corresponding services for their children as part of Ear and Hearing Care.

Huge thanks for all the wonderful stories from across the globe, for people who have taken the time to share their journey so that we can all learn from each other. Thanks too for our team who have been collecting these stories and making it happen.

We currently have 71 stories from 19 countries: Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Panama, Paraguay, South Africa, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam. On World Hearing Day we shared some quotes from these, and now we work on preparing them to be shared on the website.

CIICA are currently collating all the stories, working with Hillary Ganeck at Brock University, Canada, and will write a report on the topics that arise in these stories. If you go to **NEW RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT: PARENTS' VOICES IN LMIC – CIICA** you can see inspiring quotes from parents and the map!

EURO-CIU is a founding member of CIICA

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CIICA Conversation with Young Adults with CI: Increasing Accessibility in Education



For the second new project on World Hearing Day, we also celebrated with a CIICA Conversation for young adults, led by Qais Khan, UK, Melis Durmas Yildirim, Turkey, and Ava Bullis, USA, on Increasing Accessibility in Education. The group focused on accessibility in higher education with 27 participants from 16 countries joined the discussion: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, India, Latvia, Libya, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, UK, USA, Vietnam. We discussed the Young Adults Agenda for Change and the recommendations for Education download the Agenda for Change here <https://ciicanet.org/our-stories/ciicas-4th-birthday-international-ci-day-young-adults-with-cochlear-implants-launch-their-agenda/>

The summary of the conversation can be downloaded at [YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONVERSATION: IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY IN EDUCATION – CIICA](#) and the group went on to complete [an inspiring video](#) with contributions from across the globe, which can be [accessed from CIICA's Home Page](#).

Go to [Young People on Accessibility in Education – CIICA](#) to listen to this global group advocating for themselves.

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[RELATED CONGRESS – OPCI – Farewell symposium 11 April 2026](#)



Knowledge, Contact, and Strength

For years, knowledge and contact have been our greatest strengths. Sharing experiences, information, and insights through personal contacts creates support that is decisive for many in making a well-considered and positive decision to choose a cochlear implant. What begins as an exchange grows into a bond – and that is precisely where our strength lies.

Contact between people is always central: between CI users themselves, between professionals and experts by experience, and between healthcare institutions and manufacturers. These encounters bring knowledge to life and make it accessible. Not abstract, but rooted in everyday life. The power of these connections is what characterizes us and what brings us together.

Even now, at what is likely to be the end of this joint journey – or perhaps precisely now – it is clear how important this contact is. It is possible without a centrally managed organization. This makes maintaining mutual connections more important than ever. On 11 April, we reflect on what was, but we also look ahead: to the importance of continuing to meet, continuing to support each other, and keeping the knowledge we have built up alive.

An integral part of all this is contact with fellow sufferers. Stories from everyday life with a cochlear implant have been a common thread for more than twenty years.

During national meetings and in living rooms, people share what is not written in brochures: experiences, doubts, successes, and hopes. This exchange provides recognition, acknowledgment, and strength.

This theme fits in seamlessly with what we stand for. It shows that real strength arises when knowledge is shared in contact with each other. A legacy that remains, even if the organization may no longer exist.

This theme will be highlighted in the morning program by various speakers.

The afternoon program is all about farewells. In September 2024, Henk van Rees and Hennie Epping announced their intention to step down from their roles at the OPCI Foundation. Their departure was planned for April 2026. Peter Helmhout has indicated that he wishes to continue, provided that new board members are found. An intensive search for successors has been conducted over the past 18 months, but unfortunately, none have been found. Peter Helmhout will therefore also be stepping down. The consequences of this and

the future of the OPCI Foundation will certainly be discussed during the symposium.

This means saying goodbye to three very committed board members. For many years, Hennie Epping (chairman), Henk van Rees (secretary), and Peter Helmhout (treasurer) have worked for the OPCI Foundation with great dedication, enthusiasm, and commitment.

The Symposium takes place in Nijkerk, The Netherlands. [Look for the full programme on our website.](#)

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[RELATED CONGRESS – UK – BCIG 2026 Sound Futures: Innovation, Access and Collaboration – 21 and 22 April 2026](#)



The poster is for the BCIG 2026 conference. It features a blue background with white and yellow text. At the top left is the BCIG SCOTLAND 2026 logo, and at the top right is the British Cochlear Implant Group logo. The main title is '21st and 22nd April 2026 | Crowne Plaza, Glasgow'. Below this is the subtitle 'Sound Futures: Innovation, Access and Collaboration'. A paragraph invites attendees to join in the heart of Glasgow for BCIG 2026, where innovation, collaboration, and world-leading expertise in cochlear implantation take centre stage. Four circular icons represent the themes: Real-world clinical insights (two people), Ground-breaking research (magnifying glass over a document), Future-focused discussions on technology, rehabilitation & service delivery (lightbulb and gears), and International perspectives (globe). A final paragraph states that whether you're a clinician, researcher, educator, or part of wider hearing-health services, these sessions will spark ideas, challenge thinking, and energise your practice. It directs attendees to the LinkedIn page for more details on keynote speakers and expresses a welcome to Glasgow.

BCIG SCOTLAND 2026

British Cochlear Implant Group

21st and 22nd April 2026 | Crowne Plaza, Glasgow

Sound Futures: Innovation, Access and Collaboration

Join us in the heart of Glasgow for BCIG 2026, where innovation, collaboration, and world-leading expertise in cochlear implantation take centre stage.

Real-world clinical insights

Ground-breaking research

Future-focused discussions on technology, rehabilitation & service delivery

International perspectives

Whether you're a clinician, researcher, educator, or part of wider hearing-health services, these sessions will spark ideas, challenge thinking, and energise your practice. See our LinkedIn page for more details on keynote speakers. We look forward to welcoming you to Glasgow.

There's still time to register for the BCIG Annual Conference in Glasgow on 21st and 22nd April 2026! The event will be held in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow – there are many accommodation options nearby.

[BCIG 2026 Sound Futures: Innovation, Access, and Collaboration | British Cochlear Implant Group](#)

The theme of the Conference is: **Sound Futures: Innovation, Access, and Collaboration.**

We are delighted that Andrew Oxenham, Distinguished McKnight University Professor in the departments of Psychology and Otolaryngology at the University of Minnesota, will be presenting the prestigious Graham Fraser Memorial Lecture. He has chosen for his subject: **Music Perception and Cochlear Implants: Challenges and Opportunities.**

Artificial Intelligence is another Hot Topic on this year's agenda: David Peebles' keynote presentation on **AI in Health and Cochlear Implant Services: Separating Signal from Noise** is sure to draw the crowds!

The Cochlear Implant Champions from Audiology departments across the UK are also meeting on the first day of the conference and the Rehab Champions, local rehabilitation colleagues (Teachers of the Deaf and Speech and Language Therapists) have a parallel programme on the second day.

BCIG2026 is **THE** conference for health professionals in the world of auditory implantable devices.

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[RELATED CONGRESS – USA – CI2026 Chicago – 6 to 9 May 2026](#)



CI2026
CHICAGO



For more information visit the Conference Website - www.CI2026Chicago.org

ACI Alliance will host CI2026 Chicago: Conference on Cochlear Implants, from May 6-9, 2026. We are thrilled to have Craig Buchman MD and Nobel Economics Laureate James Robinson PhD present our keynote lectures. We will be working with an outstanding and motivated committee of audiologists, physicians, scientists, speech language pathologists, psychologists, and educators in the planning of our annual conference. The diversity of our committee reflects the ACI Alliance commitment to address the multidisciplinary nature of our

field and the critical role of each discipline in patient outcomes. We were excited to see many hundreds of abstracts addressing a wide variety of themes. We hope the meeting further motivates our field to think beyond the ear and improve the patient journey and ultimately improve hearing healthcare.

(Re)Habilitation Connect Forum: Supporting Social and Emotional Well-Being in Cochlear Implant Users: Join us Friday afternoon at CI2026 Chicago for an engaging, multidisciplinary (Re)Habilitation Connect Forum dedicated to one of the most critical, yet often under addressed aspects of cochlear implant care: social and emotional well-being. This forum will feature two dedicated sessions: one focused on paediatric populations and one on adults. This will allow in-depth discussion of age-specific challenges and support across the lifespan. Presentations will integrate current evidence-based research with practical, clinic-ready strategies that can be implemented immediately.

Read more here: [\(Re\)Habilitation Connect Forum – CI2026 Chicago](#)

Special Interest Groups: We will have 6 different SIGs during CI2026, please RSVP during the registration process so we can plan for adequate space. If you've already registered, you can modify your existing registration. The six we will feature at CI2026 are: Adult Aural Rehabilitation; The Mentor-Mentee Relationship (Student Focused); Professionals Working with Spanish-Speaking Patients and Their Families; Educators of Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Members with Hearing Loss; and Cochlear Implant Care within Governmental Services.

Read more here: [Special Interest Groups - American Cochlear Implant Alliance](#)

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[RELATED CONGRESS – HeAL 2026 – Where Science and Innovation in Hearing Care Meet – 4 to 6 June 2026](#)



This year's [HEAL Conference](#) is shaping up to be more vibrant and compelling than ever. The response from the scientific community has been outstanding: submission numbers have surpassed those of 2024, with nearly 230 oral presentations and approximately 100 posters accepted, alongside a rich program of Special Sessions, Panel Discussions, and Keynote Lectures – all unfolding across 5 dedicated rooms.

See the video about Padova on the [website](#)!

The full programme is on track to be released by the end of March, as promised, given the volume of specific requests we have received and are committed to addressing in full.

Oral presentations will be organized into the following thematic sections: *Epidemiology - Genetic issues - Speech perception - Speech and Language Development - Auditory Neuroscience - Listening effort - Auditory Processing Disorders - Auditory training - Effects of noise - Computational & Digital Health Approaches - AI and Data-Driven Approaches - Early identification – Techniques and Strategies - Speech in noise testing - Cognitive decline - Quality of life and hearing loss - Intervention and Rehabilitation – Tinnitus – Amplification:*

Technologies and Strategies - Implantable devices - Improving Hearing Care and Services.

Poster Sessions will be generously timed, allowing delegates to explore the presentations and have in-depth conversations with the authors.

Come and join us for another exciting conference in Padova in 2026!

Ferdi Grandori (Chair)

National Research Council of Italy - CNR-IEIT - Institute of Electronics, Information Engineering and Telecommunications, Milan Unit based at the Dept. of Electronics, Information and Bioengineering, Polytechnic of Milan, Italy

Scientific Committee

Sophia E. Kramer, PhD

at the Amsterdam UMC – location VU University Medical Center in Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Alessia Paglialonga, PhD

National Research Council of Italy - CNR-IEIT - Institute of Electronics, Information Engineering and Telecommunications, Milan Unit based at the Dept. of Electronics, Information and Bioengineering, Polytechnic of Milan, Italy

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[RELATED CONGRESS – The Future of Hearing Implants – 12 to 13 June 2026](#)



Hannover Medical School

7 years for Hearing4all.connects

70 years Prof. Thomas Lenarz

DAY 1 – Foundations, Biology & Decision Making

Understanding hearing loss and preparing for intervention

Opening Session

Welcome & Framing the Field

Session 1: Biological and Genetic Foundations

Why hearing fails – and how we may restore it

Session 2: Prevention & Hearing Preservation

Avoiding replacement when possible

Session 3: Diagnostics & Functional Assessment

Selecting the right therapy for the right patient

Session 4: Timing Matters – Early Intervention

Optimizing outcomes through early care

DAY 2 – Intervention, Technology & Future Horizons

Session 5: Replacing, augmenting, and extending auditory function

Assessment, Fitting, Outcome and Long-Term Success

Session 6: Cochlear and Vestibular Implantation

State of the art and beyond

Session 7: Central Auditory Implants

When the cochlea is not enough

Closing Session

Vision Talk & Final Panel

Honouring Prof. Lenarz

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[RELATED CONGRESS – CI Advocacy In Action 2026: 22nd & 23rd October 2026, Brussels](#)



CIICA'S 3RD GLOBAL CONFERENCE

CI ADVOCACY IN ACTION 2026

EMPOWERING OUR NETWORK

OCTOBER 22 & 23 | BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

REGISTER HERE



LEARN MORE AT WWW.CIICANET.ORG/EVENTS

The poster features a dark teal background with a stylized globe showing the Americas. At the bottom left are social media icons for X, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The CIICA logo is in the top right corner.

CIICA: WHERE SCIENCE MEETS EXPERIENCE

CIICA, the CI International Community of Action, is now five years old, with 120 organisations and over 700 individuals in 76 countries. The shared goal of the network is to increase awareness of the impact of hearing loss and of CI, and the need for sustainable lifelong CI services, addressing the huge gap in provision.

CI Advocacy in Action 2026 brings together CI users, families, professionals, academics, industry and policy makers and funders from across the globe to share advocacy successes and challenges, create new initiatives and inspire each other to action. With increasing funding challenges globally, how do we ensure that those who could benefit from CI gain access, and those who have CI have lifelong services?

- • What does effective advocacy look like to influence stakeholders?
- • How can service providers, industry, users and families work together to ensure the services are effective and efficient?
- • What about those in low- and middle-income countries?
- • How are services delivered to those who are older?

These and other issues will be addressed in this unique, inclusive conference. Thoughts from our speakers:

"Progress begins where scientific knowledge and lived experience work side by side." (Astrid Van Wieringen, President, International Society of Audiology)

Tobias Fischer, CI user and President EURO-CIU advocates for shared advocacy: *"The CIICA Conference will deliver valuable outcomes that strengthen our collaboration and shared advocacy."*

As Rob Beenders, Belgian Minister and CI user reminds us: *"Access to CI shouldn't depend on your age or how well you navigate the system. Get CI advocacy on the agenda – politicians aren't waiting for you."*

Prof Cathy Birman, Sydney: *"We can only meet the need for increased access and sustainable services if we plan together... CIICA 2025 was a highlight of my year: see you in 2026!"*

Join the fascinating conversations which will continue until the last moment... and after!

CI users are eligible for cost reduction. Go to **CI ADVOCACY IN ACTION 2026: 22 & 23 OCTOBER 2026 – CIICA** for further information.

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[RELATED CONGRESS – ESPO 2027 – 17 to 20 April 2027](#)



It is our great pleasure to invite you to the **ESPO 2027** in Prague, a city embodying the theme “Prague as a Unifying European City”, bridging East and West, history and modernity. Czech paediatric otorhinolaryngology, with roots dating back to the post-World War II era, flourished in later decades through pioneering advances in endoscopy and otosurgery.

Today, as a specialized field with its own distinct certification, it thrives in two leading centres Prague and Brno, and proudly contributes to the European Society of Paediatric Otorhinolaryngology (ESPO). This organization has grown with significant Czech involvement from a European Working Group of Paediatric Otolaryngologists into a distinguished society. Prague, a symbol of European unity, provides an inspiring backdrop for sharing innovations and fostering collaboration. We look forward to insightful lectures, workshops, and networking opportunities, that will advance care for young patients and create lasting memories.

***Jiří Skřivan, Zdeněk Čada, Milan Urík and Jan Plzák,
on behalf of the ESPO 2027 Programme Committee***

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[WORLD NEWS – The Coalition for Global Hearing Health \(CGHH\)](#)



Coalition for Global Hearing Health

The **Coalition for Global Hearing Health (CGHH)** was established in 2010 to improve ear and hearing health and the lives of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, especially those in low- and middle- income communities.

We sincerely thank you for your dedication to celebrating World Hearing Day (WHD) 2026 and for promoting the message of Hearing Care for All Children in your community on March 3.

CGHH received nearly 200 applications for small grants to support WHD initiatives. A total of 34 grants, each valued at \$800, were awarded. [Click here](#) to see the full list of recipients.

We look forward to learning more about your activities on the World Hearing Day website at <http://www.worldhearingday.org>.

Please also mark your calendar for this year's CGHH Conference, which will be held in Chennai, India, from Friday, October 9 to Sunday, October 11, 2026.

George Dempster
CGHH Global Community Manager

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WORLD NEWS – Selected News & Highlights of 2025 and 2026 for the Usher Community



On both, **International Cochlear Implant Day Feb 25th** and **World Hearing Day March 3rd**, we celebrated access to hearing, meaning easy access to communication, to full participation in society and to equitable social opportunities. For people living with Usher syndrome good hearing is even more relevant since it helps compensate the progressive vision loss in Usher syndrome.

On **Rare Disease Day** on Feb 28th the entire Rare Disease Community calls for equal access to accurate and timely diagnosis, innovative treatments and holistic care for people living with rare diseases such as Usher syndrome.

Euro-CIU 2025

- The 15th International Symposium of the European Association of Cochlear Implant Users focussed on the journey of hearing with Cochlear Implants
- A panel contribution by the Sturz family (mother-daughter-duo) highlighted the relevance of early genetic diagnosis of Usher syndrome and other syndromic hearing disorders as well as the importance of early intervention for hearing rehabilitation/restoration

Recap from USH2025 – International Symposium on Usher Syndrome

- The Scientific Congress focused on knowledge sharing and aimed to connect and encourage collaboration and crossovers between different fields of expertise. Dominique Sturz gave a presentation about the relevance of registries and of ERN Eye activities and projects for the Usher community
- More information about the Scientific Congress and the Patient Congress can be found on the website. www.USH2025.org/en/
- A closer collaboration between Eye and Ear centers to be prioritised in the future

ERN Eye

- European Reference Networks (ERNs) are a unique and innovative cross-border cooperation platform of expert centres for the diagnosis and treatment of rare or low prevalence complex diseases, such as syndromic hearing disorders and rare eye diseases
- Patient representatives, the so-called ePAGs, are included in all activities, such as an ongoing Clinical Consensus Statement on RP
- A core element of ERN work packages are the rare disease registries. ERN Eye is building the REDgistry (Rare Eye Diseases) and RETgistry (RETina), which are interoperable with the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and national Health Data Hubs and registries. In 2026 the pilot phase should be completed and the registry rolled out to all centers soon.

ERN Eye Webinar on Usher Syndrome - recording (from November 2024) available

- Clinical aspects of Usher syndrome presented by Pr Katarina Stingl, University Tübingen, Germany
- Disease progression of USH1B and Implications for Gene Therapy presented by Pr of. Francesca Simonelli, University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, Naples, Italy, (update from LUCE-1 trial for USH1b see below in section clinical trials)
- What is relevant for patients and their families presented by Dominique Sturz, ERN-EYE ePAG chair, looking into the patient perspective during the diagnostic & care pathway, into Do's and Don'ts in clinical settings and into science & research relevant to patients
- The recording of the webinar is available under this link: https://www.ern-eye.eu/type-media/videos/?_sft_categorie-media=webinars-replay

More ERN Eye USH Ressources available at ERN Eye website <https://www.ern-eye.eu/#>

- ERN Eye Good practices series leaflet for professionals #2
- ERN Eye Educational video on USH
- eLearning program under development
- Clinical Practice Guidelines, Clinical consensus statements & Patient care pathways under development
- Clinical Consensus Statement on (non-syndromic) RP ongoing, covering the RP part of Usher Syndrome
- Clinical trial database (by disease)

- The High-Level Meeting on Rare Diseases (HLM Rare 2025) was held in Brussels on 9–11 December 2025, bringing together EU policymakers, researchers, clinicians, industry representatives, and patient organisations, and focussed on sustainable ERNs and a comprehensive Rare Disease policy strategy
- ERN Eye was represented by Prof. Hélène Dollfus, Coordinator of ERN Eye, and Dominique Sturz, Chair of ERN Eye ePAG
- More info here: <https://www.brains4brain.eu/eu-activities-polices/hlm-rare/>

Clinical trials updates

- Sepul Bio is re-initiating the Ultravarsen program for USH2A Exon 13 mutation (former ProQR program), find more details here: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT06627179?cond=USH2A&sort=StudyFirstPostDate&rank=1>
- AAVantgarde Bio have presented preliminary safety data about their AAVB-081 program for USH1B (Luce1) and completed enrolment <https://www.aavantgarde.com/en/innovation/pipeline/>
- Clinicians and researchers are preparing a clinical trial in Germany aiming to restore balance in individuals with USH1B, more details expected soon
- Useful clinical trial trackers:
 - o EU Clinical Trial Register: <https://www.clinicaltrialsregister.eu>
 - o From around the world: <https://clinicaltrials.gov>
 - o ERN Eye <https://www.ern-eye.eu/trials/>
 - o EMA Clinical Trials Information System <https://euclinicaltrials.eu/search-for-clinical-trials/?lang=en>

About Usher Initiative Austria

- Family Group by Families with Usher syndrome for Families with Usher Syndrome
- Informs and empowers Usher families, based on reliable information & collective experience, and connects them to leading national and international experts; advocates for better care and early genetic diagnosis through an interdisciplinary approach Eye/ENT/Genetics; delivers reliable and up to date information about the latest international science & research and supports & informs research and political decision makers;
- Collaborates with relevant Patient (umbrella) organisations and stakeholders at national & international level and advocates for a comprehensive Rare Disease policy strategy including interoperable RD registries and sustainability of ERNs e.g. with EU institutions
- Stay connected and join the mailing list by writing to usher-syndrome@gmx.at

Dominique Sturz, Patient Advocate Usher Syndrome & Rare Diseases, Usher Initiative Austria

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WORLD NEWS – Case Study – The Transformation of Personal Identity in the Age of Corporeal Computing



My name is Johanna Lorenz, and I am a postdoctoral researcher at the Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH). Together with Prof. Ulrike Schultze (University of Groningen, the Netherlands), I am currently conducting a case study on “corporeal computing technologies”, digital technologies that are used very close to the body or integrated into the body (e.g., cochlear implants, implanted NFC chips, artificial pancreas systems, neuro-implants).

The aim of our study is to understand how users integrate these technologies into everyday life, how they interact with them, and how this may influence perceptions of bodily boundaries

and one's self-understanding as a digitally connected person.

At the moment, we are seeking interview partners with lived experience using such technologies, especially cochlear implant users. During my research, I came across the European Association of Cochlear Implant Users (EURO-CIU), and I would therefore like to ask whether you — and/or members of your network — might be interested in participating.

Participation involves an interview (approx. 45–60 minutes, online or by phone). Optionally, participants may also take part in a short accompanying photo-diary component.

I would be very happy to speak with you. For further information, please email me at: johanna.lorenz@tuhh.de

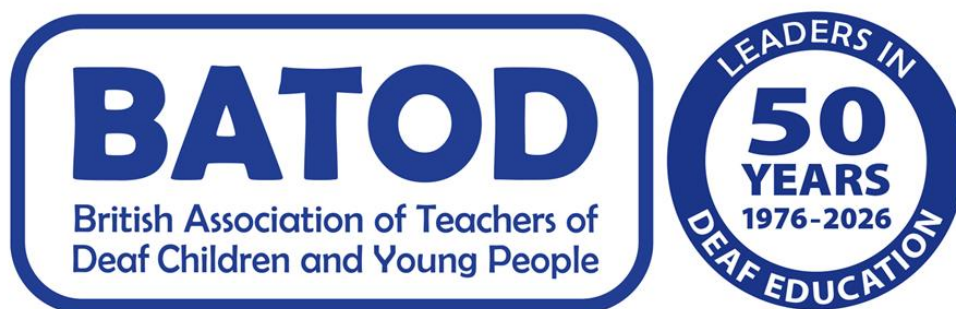
With kind regards,

Dr Johanna Lorenz
Postdoctoral Researcher

Institute of Management and Decision Sciences
Hamburg University of Technology (TUHH)
Am Schwarzenberg-Campus 4 (D)
21073 Hamburg, Germany
Building D | Room 1.004

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[WORLD NEWS – UK – British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People \(BATOD\): Revision of Audiology Guidelines](#)



Have your say on the revision of the [2020 BATOD Audiology guidelines](#) for the assessment of children with special needs

British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD) has partnered with the British Society of Audiology (BSA) and the British Association of Educational Audiologists (BAEA) to update the 2020 publication for a current day, UK wide, context. A multidisciplinary working group, made up of a wide range of educational and clinical professionals, is currently revising the Audiology Assessment guidance document as a joint publication. Two questionnaires have been developed to gather feedback and ensure the revised document is clear, practical, and genuinely supports those who will access and use it in practice.

Professionals are invited to complete whichever questionnaire is most relevant to their role. Each questionnaire takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. Responses are welcome

from individuals; teams may also wish to collate ideas or set aside time to discuss and complete the questionnaire together. *A PDF/printable version of the survey is available to support drafting a response ahead of submission via the Teams Forms link.*

[Click here for the Clinical PDF link.](#)

[Click here for the Education PDF link.](#)

If you have a particular interest or experience in this area, your views would be extremely valuable in shaping the final document. **This survey will close on 15 May 2026.**

The following questionnaire is for **Clinical** based colleagues:

Complex Children/Young Adults: Questionnaire for Clinical Colleagues (BSA, BATOD) – Fill in form

The following questionnaire is for **Education** based colleagues:

Complex Children/Young People: Questionnaire for Education colleagues (BATOD, BAEA, BSA) – Fill in form

[Click here for a supportive guidance document.](#)

Contact details:

National Executive Officer, British Association of Teachers of Deaf Children and Young People (BATOD), Teresa Quail: exec@batod.org.uk

Chair of the Paediatric Audiology Interest Group of the British Society of Audiology (BSA), Verity Langlands: verity.langlands@manchester.ac.uk

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WORLD NEWS – UK – BATOD – for teachers in the UK: The Con Powell Scholarship



For teachers in the UK **The Con Powell scholarship application** period for 2026 is open.

BATOD, on behalf of the [Ovingdean Hall Foundation](#), administers the [Con Powell Scholarship](#) to provide bursaries for teachers wishing to train as a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToDs) but who are not working as a Teacher of Deaf Children and Young People (ToD), so the local authority (LA) or school is not obliged to support financially.

Con Powell was BATOD's first [President](#).

Up to five scholarships are awarded each year. Applicants must provide:

- evidence of Qualified Teacher Status
- details of their chosen course provider including the name and number of the course
- information about their current employment
- a personal statement highlighting why they wish to undertake this training and that they understand the commitment required to complete the course
- proof that their local authority or school is not obliged to fund their training and evidence that they have tried to obtain funding elsewhere.
- the names of two referees

Click [here](#) to access the application form.

Please note that the Con Powell Scholarship is currently only available to UK residents intending to study at one of the four course providers in England. Please note also that the situation is different in Scotland: there is no legislation, but there is policy. The Government is currently revising this guidance, and this will strengthen the position of the postgraduate diploma routes.

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[WORLD NEWS – UK – AUDITORY VERBAL UK – UK Young Cochlear Implant Users call for urgent Government action](#)



Deaf young people were calling for urgent Government action in the UK ahead of World Hearing Day on 3 March 3 to improve access to Auditory Verbal therapy.

Young cochlear implant users like teenager Sam Callaghan who a year ago met a UK Government Health Minister in Westminster, London and explained how Auditory Verbal therapy not only supported him to listen and speak but also allowed him to have the same opportunities as his hearing peers and work towards his ambition of becoming an astrophysicist.

At the meeting the Minister agreed to explore the development of national guidance which would create a clear, consistent framework for delivering Auditory Verbal therapy in publicly funded services in the UK, ensuring families who want their deaf child to learn to listen and talk can access it wherever they live.

Almost one year has passed and with no progress Sam and other deaf young people have taken to social media to demand action.

Sam said: *"When I met Stephen Kinnock last year, I was really excited to talk about my love of science and space and show him what a difference Auditory Verbal therapy has made to me but that meeting was nearly a year ago and nothing has happened."*

As part of its ongoing [Hear Us Now campaign](#), AVUK has also been urging families and supporters to write to their MPs across the UK setting out the urgent need for Government action.

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WORLD NEWS – USA – ACI Alliance Recognizes International CI Day and World Hearing Day



**Cochlear Implants open
doors to sound.**

**Happy International
Cochlear Implant Day!**



International Cochlear Implant Day, on February 25, reminds us of all the advances of hearing health technology. Cochlear implants provide meaningful access to sound for those with more severe hearing loss. Even the most advanced hearing aids may not overcome the hearing difficulties associated with moderate to profound hearing loss. A cochlear implant bypasses the damaged areas of the cochlea and may provide improved hearing abilities for speech understanding and the perception of music and environmental sounds. If you are looking for a cochlear implant clinic, please refer to our [find a clinic map](#).

On March 3, in recognition of World Hearing Day, ACI Alliance co-hosted a special reception

and presented the inaugural Hearing Health Champion Award. Executive Director Donna Sorkin shared her personal story about the life-changing benefits she experienced from a cochlear implant – opportunities that were not available to her father. ACI Alliance also participated in joint World Hearing Day visits on Capitol Hill to meet with members of Congress and discuss CMV and the importance of hearing health.

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[WORLD NEWS – USA – Carrie Spangler AuD Selected as Next Executive Director of American Cochlear Implant Alliance](#)



The American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance) Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Carrie Spangler AuD, has been appointed as the organization's next Executive Director. Carrie will join the ACI Alliance team for CI2026 Chicago May 6-9, and officially assume her role as Executive Director mid-June.

Carrie brings deep leadership experience, a strong commitment to mission-driven work, and a collaborative, strategic approach that aligns closely with the ACI Alliance goals and values.

The Board is confident that she is well positioned to guide the organization into its next chapter of growth and impact.

The Board also extends its sincere gratitude to Donna Sorkin, who has served as the ACI Alliance founding Executive Director for more than thirteen years. With her leadership, the organization was built from the ground up and has become a respected voice in the cochlear implant community. We are deeply appreciative of Donna's vision, dedication, and lasting contributions.

The Board is working closely with both leaders to ensure a thoughtful and smooth transition in the months ahead. We look forward to introducing Carrie more fully to the community and sharing additional updates as we move forward.

Contact: Daniel Zeitler MD, Chair, Board of Directors, American Cochlear Implant Alliance, daniel.zeitler@commonspirit.org

www.acialliance.org

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ADVANCED BIONICS – A Journey Toward Confidence and Connection with Cochlear Implants



Photo: Hailey Brunk

Hearing loss has been part of Hailey's life since birth. She faced several early medical challenges, and hearing loss became the one that shaped much of her daily life. As a child, she struggled to understand speech and often asked others to repeat themselves. Hearing technology at the time offered limited help, but she was supported by friends.

A New Level of Clarity

Things began to change in high school when Hailey received her first hearing aids. The improvement brought meaningful clarity, and in college, Bluetooth and FM systems helped her follow lectures and participate confidently. Technology became central to how she learned.

Reaching a Turning Point

As an adult, Hailey built a career in teaching and camp leadership. These environments

required ongoing communication, which grew more challenging over time. In 2023, she decided to explore cochlear implants. Meeting with her care team and speaking with a Cochlear Implant Consumer Specialist from Advanced Bionics helped her understand her options. A waterproof device and colorful styles were an important match for her lifestyle.

Surgery, Activation, and Progress

Hailey became an implant candidate in March 2024. She had surgery in August and was activated in September. One year later, her progress continues, both in hearing and in connection with others. She has taken additional ASL classes and works closely with sign language interpreters.

Giving Back to the Community

Hailey has also had the joy of working with Camp Diego, which is dedicated to Deaf youth. Sharing her experience and mentoring others there has been deeply rewarding.

Looking Ahead

These experiences have strengthened her sense of community and belonging. Hailey often reflects that she wishes she had taken this step sooner. Her journey is still unfolding, and each new moment continues to support her confidence and connection.

Read Hailey's full blog post on Advanced Bionics' blog, [CONNECTIONS](#).

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ADVANCED BIONICS – Questions to Ask at Your Cochlear Implant Evaluation



The cochlear implant evaluation can feel both exciting and overwhelming. To help you feel more prepared, Advanced Bionics partnered with Pacific Neuroscience Institute to share the questions people ask most often. While the original blog was written for an American audience, these questions are helpful for anyone on a hearing journey.

Understanding Your Options

Q: Can I get a cochlear implant in one ear or both?

A: Many adults can get an implant in one ear or both. Your care team will look at each ear and explain what is possible.

Q: Can both ears be implanted at the same time?

A: Some clinics offer this option. Others may recommend doing one ear first. Your clinic can explain what they do and why.

Making the Decision

Q: Do I need to make a decision during my cochlear implant evaluation?

A: No. The cochlear implant evaluation is there to give you information about your hearing choices. You don't have to decide right away.

Planning What Happens Next

Q: How long does it take to get the surgery once I decide?

A: Timelines vary. Your clinic can review your specific situation.

Q: How often will I need follow-up visits?

A: Many people return several times in the first few months and then once a year. Some clinics offer Remote Programming that allows you to get your cochlear implant system adjusted without going into the clinic.

Finding Balance Between Ears

Q: What are my choices for the other ear?

A: Your options may include another implant or a hearing aid. Your care team can help you understand which option supports your hearing needs.

A Last Thought

Asking questions is an important part of understanding your care. The more information you have, the more you can feel confident about your next steps.

Read all the questions and answers on Advanced Bionics' blog, [CONNECTIONS](#).

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[COCHLEAR – Insights from Cochlear: Should you consider upgrading your sound processor?](#)



If you're using an older generation sound processor, you might wonder whether upgrading will genuinely improve your daily hearing experience. At Cochlear™, we've studied this question extensively through both clinical research and real-world feedback from people like you.

What today's sound processors offer

Sound processor technology has evolved significantly in recent years, bringing improvements that directly address the challenges you face in everyday listening environments. Cochlear's flagship processors, the Cochlear™ Nucleus® 8 Sound Processor and the Cochlear Nucleus Kanso® 3 Sound Processor, exemplify these advances. Modern processors offer automated sound scene management that removes the burden of manually switching between programmes throughout your day. This automation reduces cognitive load and ensures advanced features activate when needed without requiring you to remember which programme suits which situation. You'll find enhanced wireless connectivity for direct streaming from smartphones, better battery efficiency that extends usage time between charges, and more compact, lightweight designs that increase comfort during all-day wear.

Contemporary processors also provide more sophisticated noise management strategies that adapt to the complexity of real-world listening environments. Unlike traditional noise reduction targeting single sources, advanced directional processing responds continuously to multiple noise sources surrounding you, matching the demands of challenging situations like restaurants, family gatherings, or busy workplaces. Clinical research published in the International Journal of Audiology found that automated directional processing, such as ForwardFocus * in Cochlear's Nucleus 8 Sound Processor, delivered a 4.3 dB improvement in speech recognition threshold compared to standard processing.⁽¹⁾ This translates to noticeably easier conversation in noisy environments where understanding speech matters most.

Maximising your new processor's potential

When you receive your upgraded processor, you'll want to ensure you're benefiting from all its advanced capabilities from the start. Recent Cochlear research involving nearly 400 users revealed that 52% had advanced features available on their processors that had either not been activated during clinical programming appointments or were activated but users were

unaware of these capabilities.⁽²⁾ This means making the most of your new technology requires understanding what features are available and ensuring they're properly configured for your listening needs.

When you have your upgrade appointment, discuss which features will be enabled and how they'll benefit your specific listening situations. You can also explore this beforehand by reviewing your manufacturer's website or user guides. This conversation ensures you're getting the maximum benefit from your new processor right from the beginning.

Understanding your upgrade pathway

Accessing a processor upgrade varies across Europe depending on your country's healthcare system. Most countries provide coverage at intervals of around five to seven years, though this varies. Your specific eligibility depends on your current processor age and your country's funding policies. Contact your audiologist to understand your specific eligibility timeline and process.

Making an informed decision

Upgrading will bring benefits, though what matters most differs from person to person. Think about which listening situations are most important in your daily life and what improvements would be most meaningful to you. Some people value easier conversation in noisy environments, whilst others prioritise wireless connectivity for phone calls or streaming. Your audiologist can help you understand how newer technology addresses the specific challenges you experience and whether the improvements align with what matters most in your lifestyle.

The most valuable step you can take is having that conversation with your audiologist. Whether you're ready to upgrade or simply want to understand your options, you'll ensure you're getting the maximum benefit from your cochlear implant system.

Disclaimer:

* ForwardFocus is a clinician-enabled feature that can be user-controlled or automated.

References:

- ⁽¹⁾. Nel, E., Hong, W., Playford, J., & Mashal, M. (2025). A clinical and real-world investigation of cochlear implant recipient speech performance in noise with the automation of ForwardFocus. *International Journal of Audiology*. DOI: 10.1080/14992027.2025.2561889
- ⁽²⁾. Internal data (March, 2025) ROI Rocket, Recipient Survey. Cochlear North America. Survey of 389 Cochlear™ Nucleus 8® Sound Processor recipients who upgraded from a Nucleus 7 Sound Processor.

Note: This article presents general educational information synthesised from available research and industry knowledge. Individual upgrade pathways vary by manufacturer, health system, and clinical circumstances. Consult your audiologist for personalised guidance.

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[COCHLEAR – Making the most of your cochlear implant: Practical tips for success](#)



Living with a cochlear implant helps you hear in many situations: at work, in social settings, and during daily activities. Your hearing outcomes depend on both the technology and how you use practical strategies and training to connect with the sounds around you.

Strategies for everyday hearing

A simple way to follow conversations better is to ask people what the topic is at the start. This approach gives your brain context and helps you anticipate the words you're likely to hear, which can support comprehension in different listening environments. This can be especially helpful in group discussions where several people are talking.

Phone calls can present challenges for cochlear implant recipients. Starting with phone conversations with familiar voices, such as close friends and family members, allows you to practice in comfortable settings. These practice sessions can help you build confidence and develop your listening skills. As you improve, you can gradually try calls with others.

Your TV viewing experience

Streaming can make TV much easier to follow. **When you stream directly from a compatible device**, the sound goes straight to your processor. With direct streaming from compatible devices, sound is delivered directly to your sound processor. This reduces the impact of background noise and distance from the television speaker. For example, if you move into the kitchen for a snack or drink, you can continue listening to commentary.

If you watch TV with others, you can adjust your streaming volume without changing the volume for everyone else. This means you can set the level that works best for you, while others choose their own volume. Some recipients find this particularly helpful during family movie nights or when watching programs with others who have different hearing needs.

Your automated technology features

Some CI users may not be aware of automated features available in their sound processors. To give an example, the Cochlear™ Nucleus® 8 Sound Processor and the Cochlear Kanso® 3 Sound Processor include the ForwardFocus ** feature, a technology designed to support hearing in noisy environments by focusing on sounds in front of you while reducing background noise from behind. If you haven't talked about ForwardFocus with your audiologist, consider asking whether it can be activated. It can make a difference in restaurants, meetings, and busy social situations.

Accessing website support resources

Check your manufacturer's website for resources that can help you become more familiar with the different functions your sound processor can provide. For example, **Cochlear's website provides video tutorials and step-by-step guides for using sound processor features**. These resources cover topics such as how to:

- connect to compatible devices,
- set up streaming from your smartphone to your sound processor,
- adjust your sound processor settings through the apps,
- care for and maintain your device,
- manage battery usage,
- optimize settings for different listening situations.

These resources can help you get more confident using your device and make sure you're getting the most from its technology.

Disclaimer:

** ForwardFocus is a clinician-enabled feature that can be user-controlled or automated.

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[MED EL Founders Receive the 2026 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering](#)



Photo: Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair

Copyright photo: Jason Alden

MED EL is proud to share that its founders, Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair, have been awarded the 2026 Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering (QEPrize). This globally prestigious award honours engineering innovations that have brought meaningful, lasting benefit to humanity, and is considered the unofficial Nobel Prize for Engineering. The QE Prize recognises the Hochmairs' pioneering work on the cochlear implant, which has changed life for hundreds of thousands of people.

Ingeborg and Erwin began their research in 1975 at the Technical University of Vienna. In December 1977, their microelectronic multichannel cochlear implant was successfully implanted for the first time worldwide, turning what many thought was impossible into reality: restoring hearing through engineering.

The Hochmairs share the QEPrize with cochlear implant pioneers Graeme Clark and Blake Wilson, whose collective contributions laid the foundation for modern cochlear implant technology.

Innovation Guided by Compassion

For Ingeborg Hochmair, this award also honours the belief that compassion and scientific integrity must drive innovation. Cochlear implants show what is possible when engineers, clinicians, and users work together.

For MED EL, the award is a tribute to cochlear implant users, whose experiences inspire ongoing improvements. It also celebrates the many professionals worldwide who work to expand access to hearing care.

This recognition strengthens MED EL's mission to continue advancing hearing implant technology to overcome the barriers of communication.

Read more about the Queen Elizabeth prize for Engineering [here](#).

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MED-EL – The Hearpeers Community Has Officially Launched



We are thrilled to share that the Hearpeers Community, MED-EL's innovative social media network, was officially launched on International Cochlear Implant Day, 25 February.

The Hearpeers Community is designed to connect hearing implant users and candidates worldwide. It is a welcoming, dedicated platform for shared experiences, support, and engagement.

Hearpeers Community Features:

- **Join Community Groups** based on a variety of topics, like shared interests and location, where users can exchange advice and experiences.
- **Chat one-on-one** with hearing implant recipients, Hearpeers Mentors, and local MED-EL team members for support and guidance.
- **Connect with hearing implant users** nearby and worldwide through tailored search filters.

Visit the [Hearpeers Community](#) to explore how MED-EL is building a global network that strengthens support across the hearing implant community.

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MED-EL – Meet the Winners of IDEASforEARS 2026



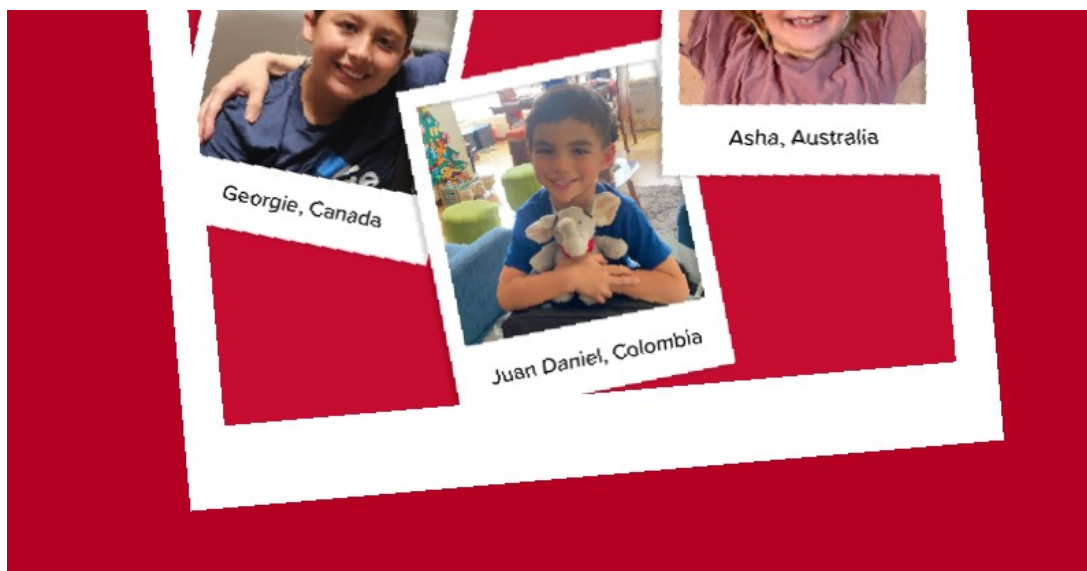


Photo: Congratulations to the 2026 IDEASforEARS winners!

We are delighted to share the results of this year's IDEASforEARS Children's Invention Contest, an annual global initiative by MED EL that invites children aged 6-12 years to imagine new and improved ways to support people with hearing loss.

This year's contest brought in an impressive 302 entries from 25 countries, with inventions focusing on challenges familiar to many cochlear implant users: better power solutions, improved safety, seamless connectivity, and stylish personalisation.

Young Inventors Shape the Future of Hearing Technology

We are excited to introduce the winners of IDEASforEARS 2026:

- **Anaisha Sharma (11), India**
- **Asha Daisy Hodgson (8), Australia**
- **Christos Skourlis (11), Greece**
- **Cristian Campolattano (10), Italy**
- **Georgie Alexander Atanasov Hidalgo (11), Canada**
- **Juan Daniel Melo Buitrago (6), Colombia**
- **Olivia Belmonte Canal (9), Spain**
- **Roy Zheng (8), USA**
- **Santino Mateo Sosa Morales (12), Argentina**

Their inventions highlight not just technical creativity but also a deep personal understanding of what it means to live with hearing loss.

A Special Celebration in Innsbruck

All winners have been invited to MED EL's headquarters in **Innsbruck, Austria**, for a special two day Winners' Event on June 2–3, 2026. Here, they will meet their fellow young innovators, get a behind the scenes look at MED EL's world, and even meet the people who manufactured their hearing implants.

You can explore the children's inventions and learn more about the winning ideas here:

[Winners – IDEASforEARS](#)

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