

PRIORITISING MENTAL WELL-BEING AND HEARING HEALTH IN EUROPE'S AGEING POPULATION

OCTOBER 2021

CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP



FLEISHMAN
HILLARD

HEARING HEALTH FORUM EU



Introduction

On 09 September 2021, the **Hearing Health Forum EU**, alongside the **European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH)**, the **European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP)**, the **European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness (EUFAMI)**, the **European Association of Cochlear Implant Users (EURO-CIU)**, the **European Community Mental health Service providers (EUCOMS)** and the **Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks-Europe (GAMIAN Europe)**, came together to discuss how to use their collective strength to put forward a campaign directed towards EU policymakers on the link between mental health, hearing loss and healthy ageing.

The workshop was divided into three sections:

- 1. Messaging:** unify messaging on the link between hearing loss and healthy ageing, with an emphasis on the impact of untreated hearing loss on mental health in the older population.
- 2. Channels for engagement:** identify effective strategies for engagement with health policy stakeholders in Brussels.
- 3. Creative campaign:** develop a campaign theme to raise awareness in Brussels of the impact of untreated hearing loss on the mental health and well-being of Europe's ageing population.

This document recaps key discussion points and outlines next steps.

Campaign Objectives



1. Raise awareness of the link between hearing loss, mental health and healthy ageing, and promote its inclusion in the ongoing conversation on ageing amongst EU health policy stakeholders.



2. Foster cooperation between organisations working on hearing loss, mental health and ageing to amplify message in a crowded health policy space.



3. Serve as a best practice example for coordination between organisations working on shared or overlapping focus areas.

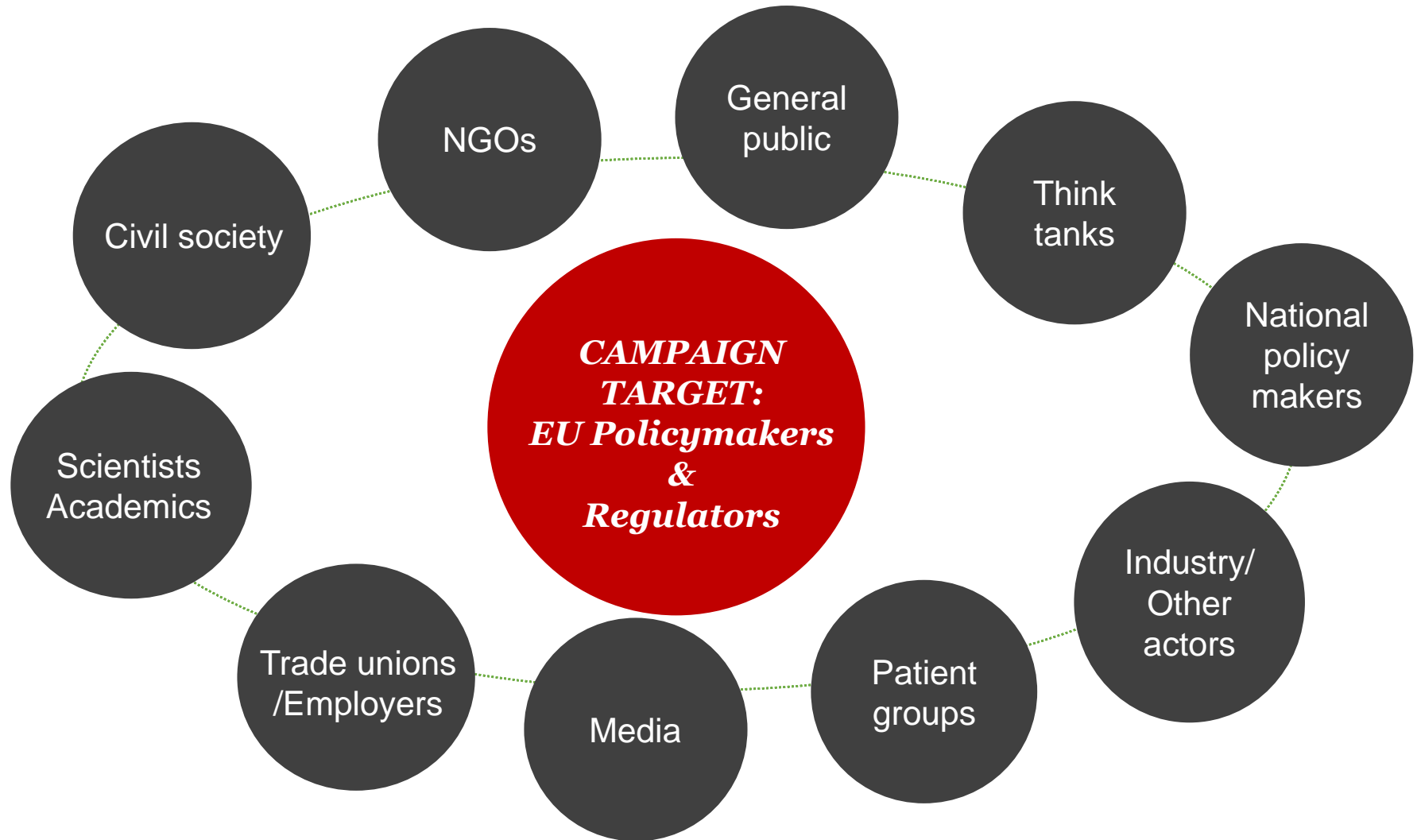
TARGET AUDIENCES

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Who is our audience?

Policymakers don't operate in a single bubble, they are influenced by the environment around them.

Our campaign towards EU policymakers needs to be considerate of all of the stakeholder groups that influence health policy.



KEY MESSAGES

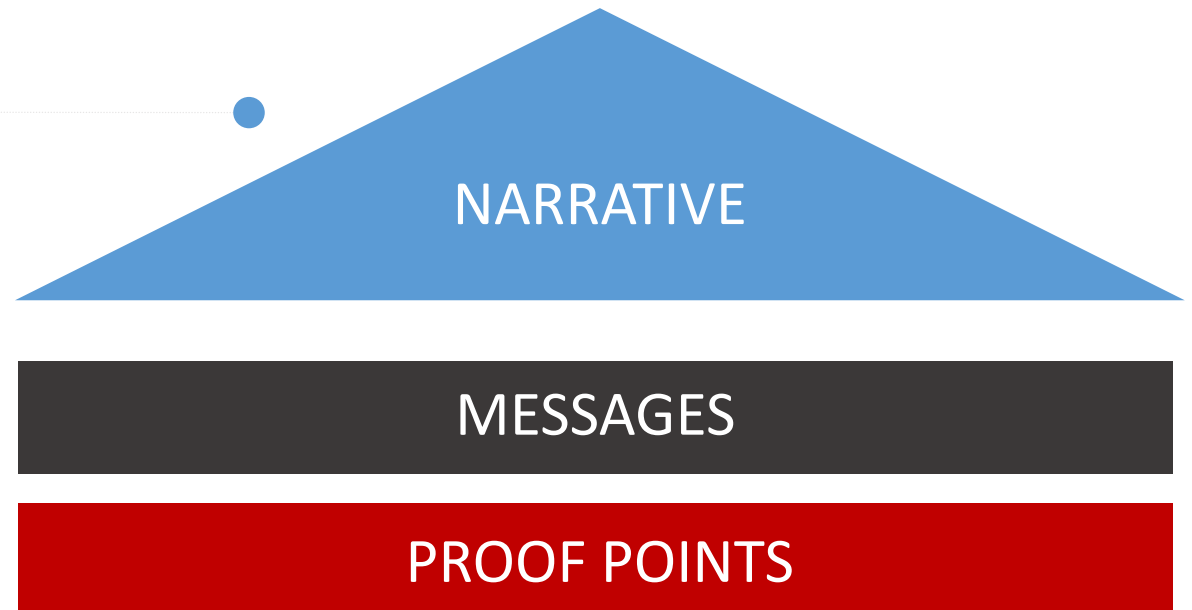
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Meet the Message House

NARRATIVE: The short version of what you want and why what you want is important.

MESSAGES: The 3-5 messages that support the narrative, and explain why what you want can add value to EU policy makers

PROOF POINTS: Reasons to believe – facts, testimonials etc. that back up key messages.



Narrative

We are committed to raising awareness amongst European policymakers of the impact of untreated hearing loss on the mental health and well-being of Europe's ageing population.

Hearing loss can impact all European citizens, yet the likelihood of its incidence increases as we get older. Untreated hearing loss has a detrimental impact on quality of life, is associated with a range of costly comorbidities including poor mental health and cognitive decline, and places pressure on Europe's healthcare systems. Home to the world's oldest continent, it's important that Europe's older population remains healthy and able to actively contribute to its economy.

European policymakers must promote the need for robust hearing health strategies at a national level, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care, in order to support Europe's older population to maintain a good quality of life, and age actively.

Key messages

1. Hearing loss can impact all European citizens, yet the likelihood of its incidence increases as we get older.
2. Our organisations are committed to prioritizing hearing health and mental well-being for Europe's ageing population on the EU health policy agenda.
3. Untreated hearing loss and mental health are costly to the European economy and society and threaten healthcare system sustainability.
4. European healthcare systems should adopt a holistic approach to hearing health acknowledging that the condition affects people psychologically, socially, and economically.
5. **The ask:** To promote healthy ageing and healthcare system sustainability in Europe, EU policymakers must advocate for holistic national health strategies that address untreated hearing loss and associated comorbidities. This includes poor mental health and cognitive decline.

Proof Points

KEY MESSAGE 1: Hearing loss can impact all European citizens, yet the likelihood of its incidence increases as we get older.

- 6.2% of Europe's total population live with a disabling hearing loss, equating to 57.3 million.
- With Europe's population continuing to age, this number is predicted to nearly double globally. By 2050, 1 out of 4 people are projected to have a problem with their hearing, equivalent to 236 million Europeans.
- There is a strong link between ageing and hearing loss: in Europe, 10.9% of people aged 60-69 years experience hearing loss. This prevalence reaches 42% of people aged 80-89 and more than 56% for the over 90 years old.
- Less than 10% of those who could benefit from treatment for severe hearing loss receive it.

Proof Points

KEY MESSAGE 2: Our organisations are committed to prioritizing hearing health and mental well-being for Europe's ageing population on the EU health policy agenda.

- Hearing loss is a barrier to active ageing and may have a detrimental impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing. It is associated with clinically relevant depression symptoms, reduced quality of life, anxiety and suicidal thoughts among the elderly.
 - It is associated with reduced independence and autonomy because of its link to more frequent falls and making everyday tasks more challenging.
 - It is a cause of increased hospitalisation rates and entry into facilitated living or social care.
 - It can lead to social isolation, loneliness, and lower levels of contact with friends and family.
 - Untreated hearing loss deprives the brain of stimulation from communication, which can speed up cognitive decline and increase the risk of dementia by 9%.
- The pandemic has led to an increase in mental ill-health. The proportion of over 70s experiencing depression has doubled since the start of the pandemic, and one in three (34%) older people agree that their anxiety is now worse/much worse than before the pandemic began.

Proof Points

KEY MESSAGE 3: Untreated hearing loss and mental health are costly to the European economy and society and threaten healthcare system sustainability.

- Hearing loss not only affects quality of life, but also leads to an estimated cost of €213 billion each year to the EU and United Kingdom (UK), according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). This stands at €17 billion more than the total EU budget in 2020.
- The cost of mental ill-health, a comorbidity of hearing loss, is more than 4% of the total EU GDP – equating to over € 600 billion across the 27 EU countries and the UK.
 - €190 billion is direct spending on health care
 - €170 billion is spending on social security programmes,
 - €240 billion is caused lower employment rates and reduced productivity
- Public spending on ageing accounts for 50% of general government expenditure within the EU.

Proof Points

KEY MESSAGE 4: European healthcare systems should adopt a holistic approach to hearing health acknowledging that the condition affects people psychologically, socially, and economically.

- There is a longstanding tradition of considering the mind and body as separate and distinct entities. Yet studies indicate that having a long-term physical condition, such as hearing loss, can greatly increase the risk of experiencing mental distress.
- Hearing health comorbidities are associated with worse clinical outcomes, lower quality of life, reduced ability to manage physical symptoms effectively and significantly increased costs of care. Co-morbid mental illness increases the cost of treating physical illness by around 60%.
- The scope of ear and hearing care extends beyond health systems, requiring coordination across other (non-health) sectors including social services, finance, education, labour, housing, the private sector and law enforcement.

The Ask

The ask: To promote healthy ageing and healthcare system sustainability in Europe, EU policymakers must advocate for holistic national health strategies that address untreated hearing loss and associated comorbidities. This includes poor mental health and cognitive decline.

TACTICS

HEARING LOSS AND MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP

Tactics

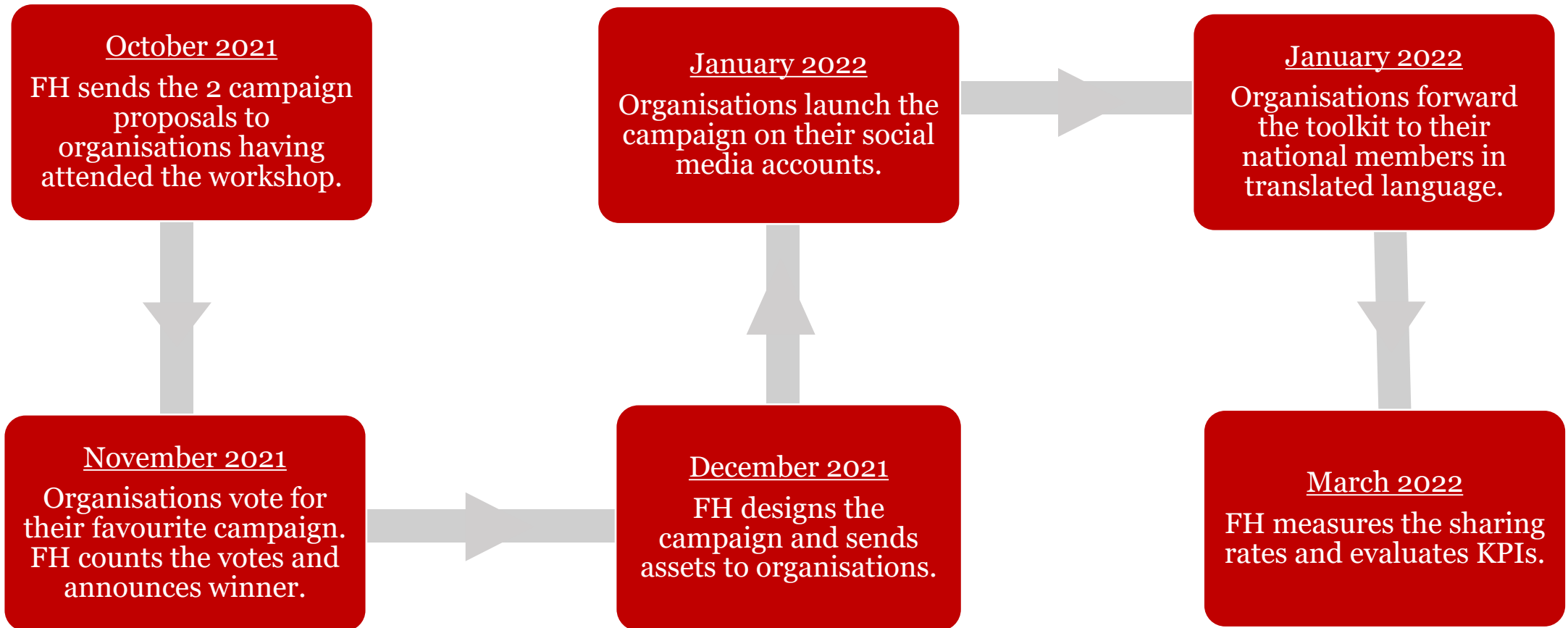
We will **launch a social media awareness-raising campaign targeted towards EU policy stakeholders.**

Twitter and LinkedIn are the most popular social media tools in Brussels used by European decision makers including **Members of the European Parliament** (MEPs). FleishmanHillard sponsored research shows that:

- 61% of MEPs surveyed follow social media conversations daily in their legislative work. In 2015, 77% were on Twitter and 28% on LinkedIn.
- 42% of MEPs use LinkedIn to follow the views of people in their network. They use Twitter to listen and engage: 27% use it to engage with their constituents.
- All 27 European Commissioners have active Twitter channels.

Partnering organisations will receive **6 social media cards to share online.** They will be provided in English, and French upon request.

Timeline



CAMPAIGN IDEAS

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1) #HealthyHearingStrategy

The opportunity:

- 2021–2030 is the UN's Decade of Healthy Ageing. The EU can lead by launching an EU-wide strategy on hearing health, also considering comorbidities such as ill-mental health.

Objective:

- Launch a narrative campaign calling European policymakers to actively work on a Healthy Hearing Strategy in 2022. This would highlight hearing and mental health as key components to healthy ageing.
- The hashtag #HealthyHearingStrategy would directly target policymakers whilst still providing the general public with information regarding the link between hearing loss, mental health and healthy ageing.

Tactics:

- 6 social media cards with statistics on the link between hearing loss and mental health, showing the impact of non-treatment of hearing loss on Europe's elderly population. Ask EU institutions to address the challenge in a #HealthyHearingStrategy.
- Tag official accounts of the EU Commission, EU Parliament and EU Council, the copy will directly call out policymakers to work on a strategy to be launched as soon as possible.



**We need a
#HealthyHearingStrategy for
2022! @EU_Commission, what
are you doing for your older
citizens?**

2) #ListenUp!

Opportunity:

- Europe is the oldest continent in the world and continues to age – this means the burden of hearing loss on individuals, society and the economy will continue to increase. The likelihood of experiencing hearing loss increases as we get older, and all European citizens risk being impacted.
- Screening, detection and treatment of hearing loss can improve an individual's quality of life by reducing the risk of comorbidities such as mental ill-health and cognitive decline. This ensures an individual's right to actively age.
- Both hearing loss and its comorbidities are costly to society and must be tackled urgently as the EU strives to 'build back' post-pandemic.

Objective:

- This campaign will raise awareness of the link between hearing loss and associated mental health issues.
- The campaign will communicate a sense of urgency by showing that without effective treatment of hearing loss, European citizens will be denied the opportunity to healthily age.
- It will demonstrate to policymakers that they must promote regular hearing screening and ensure access to hearing loss treatment, including cochlear implants.

Tactics:

- 6 social media cards highlighting the link between hearing loss, mental health, and healthy ageing, with statistics aiming to shock both policymakers and general public.
- The tone of the campaign is mysterious, provocative, and personal.



#ListenUp! Every European citizen will be affected by hearing loss in their lifetime. You might be next ...

SUMMARY

HEARING LOSS AND MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN WORKSHOP

OVERVIEW: CAMPAIGN BLUEPRINT

Objectives

1. **Raise awareness of the link between hearing loss mental health** and healthy ageing, and promote its inclusion in the ongoing conversation on healthy ageing amongst EU health policy stakeholders.
2. **Foster cooperation between organisations** working on hearing loss, mental health and healthy ageing to amplify message in a crowded health policy space.
3. **Serve as a best practice example for coordination between organisations** working on shared or overlapping focus areas.

Target Audiences

Brussels health and social policy-makers (European Commission, European Parliament, Council of EU)
Stakeholders who influence health policy makers (NGOs, patient groups, media, civil society, national health policymakers, think tanks, scientists and academia)

Channels & Tactics

- 1) #HealthyHearingStrategy
- 2) #ListenUp!

Key Messages

1. Hearing loss can impact all European citizens, yet the likelihood of its incidence increases as we get older.
2. Our organisations are committed to prioritizing hearing health and mental well-being for Europe's ageing population on the EU health policy agenda.
3. Untreated hearing loss and mental health are costly to the European economy and society and threaten healthcare system sustainability.
4. European healthcare systems should adopt a holistic approach to hearing health acknowledging that the condition affects people psychologically, socially, and economically.
5. **The ask:** To promote healthy ageing and healthcare system sustainability in Europe, EU policymakers must advocate for holistic national health strategies that address untreated hearing loss and associated comorbidities. This includes poor mental health and cognitive decline.