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EUHA 2021: A very special Congress!

(Mainz, 27 September 2021) **Some 5,200 delegates from 60 countries took part in the 65th International Congress of Hearing Aid Acousticians in Hanover. After a 23-month break, the Congress was the highlight of the year to be enjoyed by participants, exhibitors, and organisers.**

In total, around 65 percent of the delegates taking part in 2019 attended this year's Congress and the twenty expert lectures, four tutorials, and four Future Friday lectures offered. Eighty-seven exhibitors from sixteen countries presented their innovations at the industry exhibition.

During the opening ceremony, EUHA President Beate Gromke put it in a nutshell: "Albert Einstein once said: 'In the midst of difficulty lies opportunity' – ... we have taken advantage of such opportunity and organised the EUHA Congress as a face-to-face event. Benefit from the opportunities to learn new things, to have a close look at new technology, and discuss the new parameters," she said in her speech. Dr. Stefan Zimmer, Chairman of the Board of the German Hearing Instruments Industry Association, thanked his team for the great work and invited everyone to use the time at the Congress to continue good discussions. The President of the German Society of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Professor Dr. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Welkoborsky, delivered his greetings at the opening ceremony of the Congress, emphasizing that not only science, but also a personal exchange is essential. He underlined the relevance of the Congress for the care of patients with impaired hearing. At the same time, the 65th International Congress of Hearing Aid Acousticians will serve him as a model as next year the German ENT Congress will also be held at the Hanover fair.

Thanks & honour

Jürgen Matthies was awarded the EUHA Golden Badge of Honour. He has been a member of the EUHA since 1975, and its Vice-President since 2008. Beate Gromke expressed her thanks for his merits as a member of the Executive Committee and the association. He resigned from the Executive Committee as a Vice-President and was elected Chairman of the EUHA Council of Honour by the general assembly. Dirk Köttgen thanked Jakob Stephan Baschab for his commitment during the pandemic. "In particular, the classification of hearing aid acousticians as 'relevant to the social system' lifted us up in difficult times and gave us courage. At the same time, it will serve as a basis for future decisions. In the future, we will always be able to refer to this classification when things get tough," said Köttgen. With great empathy, Jürgen

Matthies delivered the memorial address for Martin Blecker, the former EUHA President, who passed away in July. This very touching part of the ceremony was accompanied by music performed by cellist Ida Riegels, and a video showing different moments from his life. Martin Blecker will remain anchored in the collective memory of the industry.

Ambassadors

EUHA Vice-President Eva Keil-Becker had a conversation with Ida Riegels, the Danish cellist and ambassador of sound. Ida had provided the musical introduction to the opening ceremony and enchanted the audience with her beautiful melodies. She is committed to good hearing because she saw in her own family what it is like when people with impaired hearing cannot communicate properly. In her talk with Eva Keil-Becker, she was enthusiastic about her concert tour on her bike – taking her on over 1,000 kilometres along the Rhine – with her self-designed and built cello on her back. Her credo: "Classical music is so beautiful and I think it's a shame when it isn't there for everyone. I bring classical music to the streets."

Peter Möckel, member of the EUHA Executive Committee, talked to rally driver and ambassador of hearing Walter Röhrl. Röhrl took a proactive approach to his hearing loss, drawing an analogy between modern cars and modern hearing systems: for him, both have to work smoothly in everyday life, and he has to be able to rely on them. His hearing systems have to operate just as precisely as his driving equipment. And he makes a clear statement: If I have problems with my eyes, I see an optician. If I have problems with my ears, of course, I will see a hearing aid acoustician!

Keynote address

Dr. Matthias Neumann from the Federal Ministry of Health discussed the "Medical Device Regulation (MDR) and its importance for the healthcare trades". As Deputy Head of Division for Medical Devices Safety, he provided first-hand information about the importance of the MDR for those working in the healthcare trades. For healthcare professionals as manufacturers, the MDR significantly increases the requirements placed on manufacturers. The regulations for the safety and performance of the products have hardly been modified, but requirements for demonstrating compliance with the essential prerequisites have been changed. In addition, the MDR permits very few exceptions for manufacturers of custom-made products, changes the definition of custom-made products, and does not recognise any intermediate products.

Industry exhibition

This year's industry exhibition featured eighty-seven exhibitors from sixteen countries. The top-five exhibitor countries included Germany, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Italy. The booths were magnificent and invited attendees to have a look, be amazed, and enter into conversations. Information was provided about innovations in the fields of measurement technology, hearing system technology and

accessories, new battery systems, in-the-ear systems with Bluetooth connectivity, and lithium-ion batteries. Modern designs, new shapes, and natural hearing were just as much a topic as AI and microphone technology.

The stand concepts were also exciting. "EUHA live" was the motto for video streaming on a YouTube channel, or the chance for hearing aid acousticians to shoot videos for their businesses on the spot.

Future Friday

The Future Friday started at the exhibition during the morning with various exhibitors presenting special knowledge geared towards the future. Short presentations, video clips, and events at the fair made the morning a particularly rewarding experience. In the afternoon, four presentations given by renowned experts provided insights into technical innovations and the future of the industry. Prof. Dr. Tobias Moser talked about optical cochlear implants, and Dr. Birgitta Gabriel on the hearing care professional of the future. Stefan Menzl presented "The future of hearing systems" and Scott Peterson discussed "NOAH ES – cloud-based Extended Services providing reliable, compliant, and scalable solutions". Future Friday as a forward-looking format was offered for the first time in 2019, and has now established itself.

Research award of the Research Association of German Hearing Aid Acousticians

The Research Association of German Hearing Aid Acousticians (FDHA) honoured Prof. Dr. med. Anke Lesinski-Schiedat from Hanover "in recognition of her many years of clinical and scientific work in the treatment of hearing impaired and deaf children and adult patients" by awarding her the 2021 donor award. Dr. habil. Tobias Weißgerber from Frankfurt received funding for his research work on the "Influence of directional microphones on auditory performance of cochlear implant users in everyday listening environments". The prizes were awarded by Prof. Dr. med. Karin Schorn.

Social Media

For the first time, the Congress was covered and its details shared on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn. The community was very active and used all channels to draw attention to the many facets of the Congress!

The 2021 EUHA Congress was the first convention to be held by Deutsche Messe Hannover after the lockdown. Hygiene regulations, a new guidance system, a Covid-19 testing facility, and a compulsory proof of complete vaccination, recovery, or negative test – as much safety as was possible!

The 66th International Congress of Hearing Aid Acousticians has been scheduled to be held in Hanover again – from 12 to 14 October 2022.

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