

To: European Commission
From: HLF (The Norwegian Association of the hard of hearing)
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HLF (The Norwegian Association of the Hard of Hearing) is the biggest organization for people with disabilities in Norway, and the biggest hearing organization in the world, with 66 000 members. 14,5 % of the Norwegian population above 20 years have a hearing impairment that affect their social life, education and work ¹. Some need rehabilitation, others need facilitated working conditions. Estimates show that one million Norwegians will have a hearing impairment in 2020².

Hearing - Air passenger rights – people with disabilities/reduced mobility (evaluation)

HLF finds that Norwegian airports are not facilitated for people with hearing impairment. High levels of noise and a lack of written information makes it difficult for all passengers, but particularly for hard of hearing people, to get information they need. This may lead to miscommunication and potentially dangerous situations, e.g. fire alarms, evacuations etc. People with hearing impairment need telecoil and all important information should be expressed in text form on screens or similar devices, where it is possible.

Telecoil

One of the many challenges hard of hearing travellers meet is to communicate with staff when they are checking in. The communication should be facilitated with a telecoil. HLF demands that all counters at the airport, from checking in, passport control, security control and car rental should have telecoils, and a sign marked with “telecoil installed”.

Information in text form

Today most airports still use the speaker system to announce warnings and information such as changes in schedule and evacuation. In a noisy environment as an airport this information is difficult to hear for people with hearing impairment. Accordingly, people with hearing impairment are at risk when it comes to dangerous situations and evacuations, as well as missing out on important travel information. The lack of textual information also increases the general stress level of hearing-impaired people while traveling. Everyone will benefit from information in text form, not only people with hard of hearing. This is an important step towards universally designed information.

Acoustics

Speech recognition is difficult in airports, and HLF underlines how important it is that airports must meet higher standards for acoustics. A better listening environment will make communicating much easier. This will benefit both travelers and airport staff.

Assistance

People with hearing impairment can have trouble navigating an airport and might in some cases need assistance. Accordingly, the assistants must be trained to communicate with hearing impaired

¹ Engdahl B, Tambs K, Borchgrevink HM, Hoffman HJ. Screened and unscreened hearing threshold levels for the adult population: Results from the Nord-Trøndelag Hearing Loss Study. *Int J Audiol.* 2005; 44, 213-230.

http://www.fhi.no/eway/default.aspx?pid=239&trg=Content_6496&Main_6157=6263:0:25,6102&MainContent_6263=6496:0:25,6109&Content_6496=6178:50246:25,6109:0:6562:14:::0:0

² Hearing impairment among adults (HIA). Oslo: Senter for medisinsk metodevurdering, Sintef – a report of a joint project, 2001

people. Communication with the assisting services in all phases must be possible in text form and with telecoil enhanced speech.

If you need more information, please contact political advisor Niklas Didrik Hellum by phone: +47 92 60 63 52 or by email: hellum@hlf.no.

Best regards,

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