

**biha** Press Release (Bundesinnung der Hörakustiker KdöR) in Germany

## **Intelligent Loud-Speaker in the Ear Inclusion for Hard of Hearing People**

Mainz (Germany), May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Although the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities of the United Nations has been in effect since 2008, people with disabilities still struggle with barriers in their daily lives. The commissioner for people with disabilities of the German Government recently demanded further efforts in the realm of inclusion to further improve the situation for people with disabilities. Inclusion is also important for people with hearing loss.

Going to a cinema or a theater, attending music events or listening to a lecture – for people with hearing loss these are very often real challenges. A babble of voices and large spaces interfere with hearing intelligibility. Frequently, in addition to the desired sounds and words, there is disturbing background noise because acoustics in public areas are not always suited to people with hearing problems. They hear only fragmentarily or with big effort. The person who does not understand everything quickly feels excluded and loses the joy of listening or participating in the conversation. A possible consequence is social isolation instead of participation in public life. Audio Frequency Induction Loop Systems, also called hearing loops, help people with hearing systems and support inclusion. Audiologists / Hearing Systems Acousticians can counsel and help.

Thanks to the latest technology, modern hearing systems wirelessly connect with digital sound sources, such as smart phones, sound systems, and television sets, via Bluetooth. This enables hearing without disturbing background noise. Bluetooth, however, has a big disadvantage: its range is limited to a few meters / yards.

The Audio Frequency Induction Loop System / “Hearing Loop” is a useful system for Hard of Hearing People, which is suitable for public spaces. Hearing aids with a telecoil (and cochlear implants) can directly couple to these systems, thus enabling the users to detect acoustic signals with distortion-free reception. Music, theater performances or lectures are transmitted directly into the ear regardless of distance or room acoustics. The hearing system turns into an intelligent loudspeaker in the ear, with selective filtration.

Many public agencies have already made access to their venues “barrier-free,” and their premises are equipped with an Audio Induction Loop System / Hearing Loop. Where an induction loop wire is installed in the floor or on the wall, people with hearing systems can receive audio signals in the same quality and volume via their hearing systems. With a sign at the entrance in the form of a blue or yellow square with a stylized ear and the letter “T” these “barrier-free” rooms are easy to recognize. If there are only limited areas equipped with an induction loop, such as in a cinema, concert hall or church, then these areas are marked appropriately.

A telecoil integrated in the hearing system can be activated by the person using the system by using a pre-programmed setting. “When requested, the audiologist / hearing aid acoustician can check this free of charge; it takes only a few minutes,” says Marianne Frickel, Hearing Acoustician Master Craftsperson and President of the German Federal Guild of Hearing Acousticians (biha). Hearing acousticians are available as expert contact persons and can give a helping hand by setting up the systems. There are no external receivers necessary – all is included in the hearing system.

Additional information about hearing and many useful facts can be found at [www.richtig-gut-hoeren.de](http://www.richtig-gut-hoeren.de)  
(translated by Siegfried Karg)