**Prioritising Mental Health and Well-being in Europe’s Ageing Population: Campaign Workshop September 2021, Brussels**

**Context:**

* During MED-EL’s outreach programme with non-governmental organisations in 2019 and 2020, it became clear that the topic of mental health unites many of our targeted health focused organisations.
* Studies have shown that there is a strong connection between hearing loss and a decline in mental health and wellbeing. Depressionis more than twice as common among those experiencing hearing loss than those without the condition and can also increase the risk of anxiety and schizophrenia. Many affected by hearing loss cited isolation and detrimental impacts on their relationships as a result of their condition. Mental ill health affects more than one in six people across the European Union in any given year.
* Furthermore, hearing loss is a chronic health condition most prevalent amongst Europe’s older population, affecting one third of adults over 65 years. Within this age group specifically, we see the impact of hearing loss on independence and autonomy, as well as feelings of isolation. This has no doubt been exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, due to low rates of help-seeking among this population, hearing loss may remain untreated and its impact could worsen.
* The economic impacts of mental ill health and hearing loss are significant. Mental ill health brings with it a total cost of over EUR 600 billion - or more than 4% of GDP - across the 28 EU countries. Untreated hearing loss results economic losses of €185 billion per year across the EU28 countries - this stands at €17 billion more than the total EU budget in 2020.
* However, whilst the connection between ageing and hearing loss may be apparent, the connection between hearing loss and mental health is not well known amongst health policy stakeholders. Organisations that focus on mental health are not automatically including those who advocate on behalf of those who experience hearing loss in mental ill health debates or events.
* At the same time, mental health is currently of high interest to EU policymakers due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the proportion of the European population experiencing poor mental health. Mental health is currently a priority on the EU health agenda.
* Advocating for the prioritization of mental health and well-being of Europe’s ageing population provides MED-EL with the opportunity to raise awareness of the link between hearing loss and mental health amongst key stakeholders, whilst also reminding stakeholders that active ageing is dependent on good hearing health. It also provides an opportunity for MED-EL to lead the way in increasing the focus on mental illnesses as a considerable comorbidity of hearing loss and build bridges between stakeholders concerned with only one of the two health issues.

**Proposed Action:**

* As a part of its civil society stakeholder strategy, MED-EL hosts a ‘Prioritising Mental Health and Well-being in Europe’s Ageing Population’ campaign workshop in Brussels. This would develop and support the capacity of NGOs either working on or interested in mental health and/or ageing, to inclusively deliver an awareness raising campaign amongst peers, of both the importance of mental health and ageing, and its links to the non-treatment of hearing loss.
* MED-EL would support the ultimate delivery of a mental health awareness raising campaign, through the facilitation of a workshop that includes sessions focusing on messaging, tactics and next steps.
* MED-EL will support the follow-up delivery of a social media toolkit, developed by FleishmanHillard, that can be activated by each of the organisations on their owned channels. FleishmanHillard will also seek feedback from organisations that participated in last year’s Cognitive Decline campaign workshop, to understand how we can work together to create a great impact with the content created.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

1. **MED-EL builds stronger relationships with relevant NGOs** and demonstrates its overall commitment to improving the health of EU citizens.
2. **MED-EL raises awareness of hearing loss amongst NGOs** that work on mental health and ageing.
3. **MED-EL increases awareness of a decline in mental health and wellbeing as a frequent comorbidity of hearing loss amongst policymakers.**
4. **MED-EL facilitates the creation of a united voice and unified campaign**, amongst health NGOs, **on mental health and ageing**, which includes messaging on the role of hearing loss.
5. **MED-EL increases the number of organisations that are independently raising awareness of the link between hearing and mental health.**

**Logistics:**

* The Workshop would be branded as both MED-EL and the Hearing Health Forum EU.
* It would last half a day and would take place via a virtual platform due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
* >10 participants from identified health advocacy organisations (see below).
* Hearing Health Forum EU members will be invited to participate.
* The event would be hosted and facilitated by FleishmanHillard, as a part of MED-EL’s ongoing retainer.

**Proposed Invitee List:**

1. Alzheimer Europe
2. GAMIAN Europe
3. Age Platform Europe
4. Mental Health Europe
5. European Patients Forum
6. European Disability Forum
7. European Social Network
8. European Brain Council
9. EURO-CIU (as HHFEU member)
10. HEARRING (as HHFEU member)
11. European Community based Mental Health Service Providers (EUCOMS) Network
12. European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness
13. The European network for Mental Health Promotion

**Draft Agenda**

09.30 – 09.40 **Welcome and Introduction**

Patrick D’Haese, MED-EL | Hearing Health Forum EU

* Patrick will explain the objectives behind the campaign workshop and why we believe that it is important that the groups in the room work together
* Patrick will introduce FH Facilitator

9.40 – 10.00 **Setting the scene: the link between Hearing Loss and Mental Health**

Prof. Dr. Paul Van de Heyning, University of Antwerp | Hearing Health Forum

* Prof Van de Heyning will provide a scientific overview on the link between hearing loss and mental health

10.00 - 10.40 **Messaging Session**

FleishmanHillard

* Brainstorm and discussion that will assess key audiences and objectives, ultimately defining agreed upon key messaging for a mental health and hearing loss campaign in Brussels

10.40 – 10.50 **Coffee Break**

10.50 – 11.20 **Tactics**

FleishmanHillard

* Brainstorm different tactics and channels to deliver key messaging

11.20 – 11.50 **Defining a Plan**

FleishmanHillard

* Select tactics that are likely to have the best outcome/easiest to implement
* Next steps to implementation
* Division of responsibilities
* Key learnings from cognitive decline campaign 2021

11.50 – 12.00 **Close**

Patrick D’Haese, MED-EL | Hearing Health Forum EU

* Patrick to thank participants for attending
* We are looking forward to continuing to collaborate together