Incidence of deafness in Spain

- In Spain there are over 1,230,000 people with hearing disability of different types and degrees, in addition to 3,400 children between the ages of two and five. Of the total **1,233,400 people with hearing disability, more than 98% use the spoken language to communicate.** According to the INE National Statistics Institute, 27,300 (2%) people use sign language.
  (Survey into Disability, Personal Autonomy and Situations of Dependence 2020, INE)

- **Five in every thousand newborns** have some degree of deafness. In Spain this means that every year around **1,890 new families have a deaf son or daughter.**
  (Commission for the Early Detection of Hearing Loss) (Spanish Society of ENT Medicine)

- **More than 95%** of deaf **children** are born into **hearing families.**
  (Gallaudet University Research Institute, USA, 2002).
  (FIAPAS Sociological Study. Socio-educational status of deaf people in Spain, 2019).

- **50% of teenagers and young people aged 12 to 35** in more developed countries are at risk of hearing loss due to overexposure to noise in recreational contexts. (World Health Organization)

- **10.6 % of the population have hearing problems**, of different types and degrees, that make it difficult for them to follow a conversation in a normal tone of voice.
  (Eurotrak Study in Spain 2023) (Asociación Nacional de Audioprotesistas)

- **One in every thousand** people in the general population **will become deaf during their lifetime.**

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WORLD DEAF DAY

29 September 2024

FIAPAS MANIFESTO

FIAPAS

SPANISH CONFEDERATION OF FAMILIES OF DEAF PEOPLE

FIAPAS
CONFEDERACIÓN ESPAÑOLA DE FAMILIAS DE PERSONAS SORDAS

WORLD DEAF DAY 2024
FIAPAS MANIFESTO

IT IS TIME TO TAKE THE LEAP

To mark World Deaf Day, the Spanish Confederation of Families of Deaf People (FIAPAS) is keen to convey to society and the public authorities the following Manifesto.

Advances in hearing technology and cochlear implants made more than three decades ago, together with the approval of the Early Detection of Hearing Loss Programme in 2003 for application across Spain, substantially shifted the social and educational prospects of people with deafness and must necessarily be strengthened with early and qualified speech therapy and educational intervention. This can be verified every day in the children and young people with hearing disability who are now overcoming barriers and hitting goals unthinkable not long ago.

But we cannot be complacent and must continue to push forwards. The prevention of hearing health throughout childhood and early diagnosis and treatment of childhood deafness must be an ongoing service beyond birth.

After more than twenty years of experience and steady improvement to the Early Detection of Neonatal Hearing Loss Programme in Spain, medical practice and scientific evidence show that population screening at birth **does not go far enough in detecting all the types of deafness that can occur during childhood,** either progressively, due to late-onset, or because it is acquired.

Figures show that the prevalence of permanent deafness increases significantly during the first six years of life. Studies have also found that most postnatal hearing loss occurs after the age of three and that there are often no recognisable risk factors at birth.

It is therefore necessary to develop new initiatives aimed at the early detection of **postnatal hearing loss**, which should be considered not only **an important health problem** to be assessed and treated but **also an educational** problem because of the implications for behaviour, participation and social interaction in this age group of children and adolescents if not diagnosed and treated in time. Hearing loss also causes delays and alterations in speech and oral language development that impact school performance and the acquisition of the learning skills that let people tap into education on equal terms and, ultimately, social inclusion.

Consequently, **from Health and Education, let us open the door to the enjoyment of all human rights** for children and young people with deafness, with all the tools that make this possible today.

The demands of civil society organisations addressed to public authorities, and which also involve society as a whole, can entail great effort and a certain complexity in order to obtain the appropriate and desired response. But in other cases, as here, it is easy to achieve this response not only because it involves less effort, since the structures and means exist, but because its implementation brings not only a net economic return but also **social benefits that outstrip the investment.**

Thus, FIAPAS calls on society **to take the leap** to surpass the current level of early detection programmes for neonatal deafness and expand the detection, monitoring and treatment of deafness throughout childhood and adolescence, given the negative (and often irreversible) effects of undetected hearing loss.

WE CALL FOR

- ✓ The adoption of **effective protocols for the early detection and treatment of deafness throughout childhood**, beyond the time of birth.
- ✓ The onboarding of **hearing assessments** during paediatric health check-ups, at the time of schooling and throughout the different educational stages, as well as when there is any warning sign and/or suspicion by families or caregivers.
- ✓ **Awareness-raising and training among health and education professionals** for the correct identification of the warning signs of deafness, referral and treatment.
- ✓ **Information and social awareness to guide families and carers** in the event of suspected hearing loss.
- ✓ The incorporation of **postnatal hearing screening into the Public Health service portfolio.**

DA EL SALTO