

Report for the EFAS 2021 online congress from May 20th til 21st, 2021

Hosted by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Audiologie, Germany, Cluster of Excellence Hearing4all (Oldenburg/Hannover) and HörTech gGmbH (Oldenburg)

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Organization committee: Aleksandra Mänder, Sabrina Lucke, Martin Walger, Inga Holube, Dorothe Veraguth, Edgar Nowatius, Birger Kollmeier

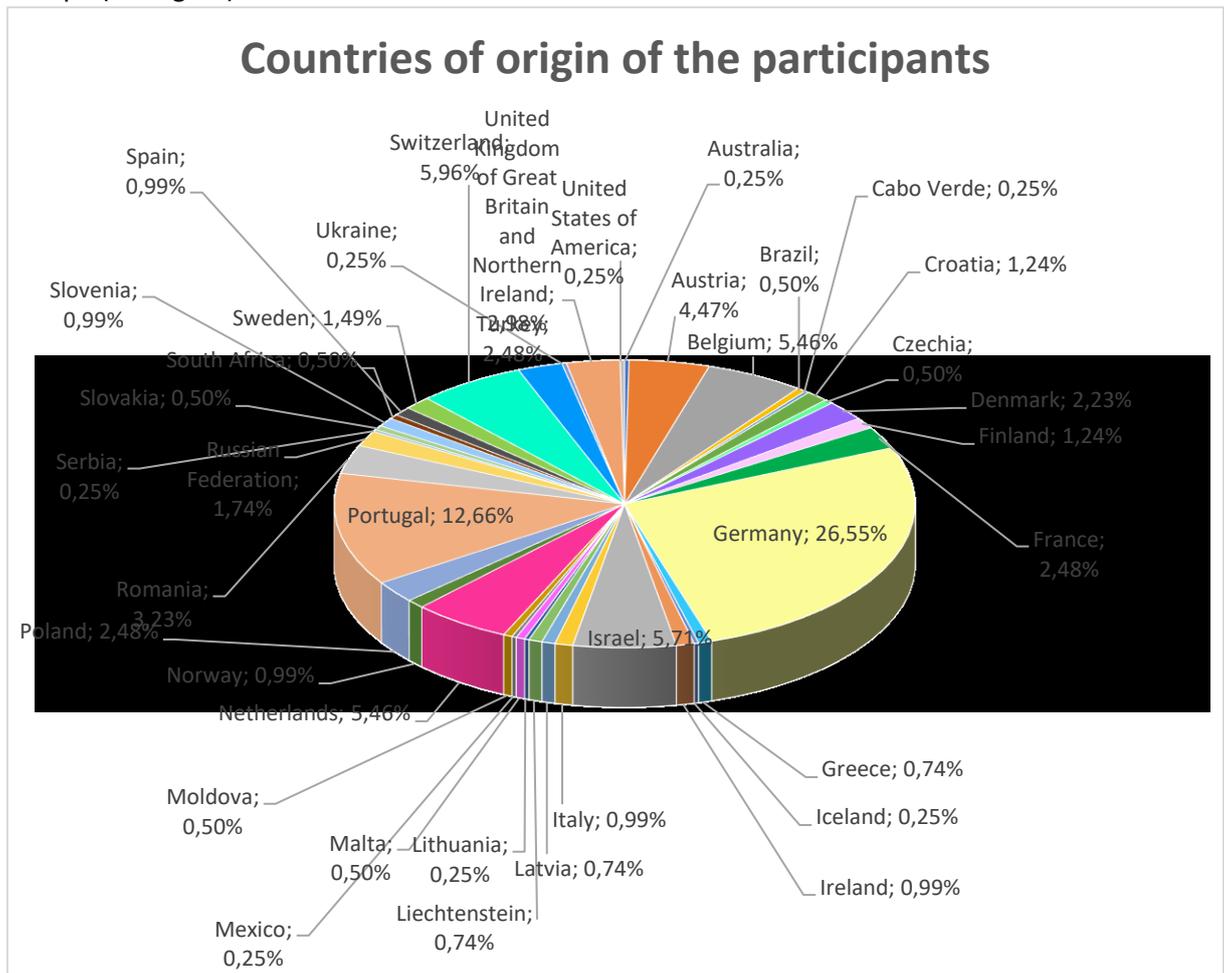
Webhosting: Zwo Null Media, Leipzig

The first online congress of the European Federation of Audiology Societies was organized after the decision that the 2021 live congress in Šibenik/Croatia had to be shifted to 2023 due to the Covid 19 pandemics. Consequently, some of the structured session talks and general topics of the Šibenik meeting (which were already planned well in advance) were taken up in an abbreviated form for the online program. Hence, in six focus sessions 11 invited talkers from 9 nations were asked to present as distinguished talkers. In addition, 84 free papers and 39 poster presentations were submitted and - with very few exceptions - accepted for the conference. Due to the online structure, several innovative elements were introduced to enhance the EFAS congress structure:

- *Teaser Videos*: Two-minute videos provided by the presenters well before the conference to create awareness of their respective contribution
- *Paper and Poster presentation online* for offline viewing: Presenters submitted their video of the presentation (free paper talk or poster explanation) by uploading their respective video shortly before the conference, thus enabling all conference attendees to watch the full presentation whenever requested. During the meeting, discussion sessions gave a short summary of the paper (assuming that the interested audience had already watched it) and encouraged a lively discussion between the author(s), session chair and the audience.
- *Highlighted free paper* plenary session: From the submitted free papers, the program committee selected a limited number of most relevant or interesting talks to be presented in the plenary session at full length. This highlighted the submission of high-quality free papers.
- *Young investigator award*: conference presenters from the category of young researchers (i.e. aged less than 30 years and being employed by less than 0,6 fulltime equivalent position, such as, e.g., doctoral students) had the opportunity to submit their respective contribution to the young investigator forum: The program committee pre-selected the 7 best submissions in this category that were presented at full length in an extra session which was chaired by a jury. At the end, the jury decided about the ranking of the contribution. At the 2021 EFAS congress, the following young investigators received an award:
 - 1st Position: Annerenée Meijer, Groningen, Netherlands, for the oral contribution 'Recording phase locking of the healthy human cochlear nerve', authored by Annerenee Meijer, Jolien Kleinhuis, Gea Drost, Marc van Dijk and Pim van Dijk
 - 2nd Position: Katrien Kestens, Ghent, Belgium, for the oral contribution 'Cognition in relation to listening effort: speech understanding from an auditory-cognitive perspective', authored by Katrien Kestens, Sofie Degeest and Hannah Keppler
 - 3rd Position: Samira Saak, Oldenburg, Germany, for the oral contribution 'Generation of auditory profiles for listener characterization and its potential to estimate outcomes of audiological tests and hearing aid fitting parameters', authored by Samira Saak, Mareike Buhl, David Hülsmeier and Birger Kollmeier
- *Poster award*: All conference attendees were asked to vote for the best poster according to their own liking (up to 3 posters to be selected for each participant). This encouraged all

participants to visit the posters and judge their contents and usage of presentation materials. The following 3 poster awards were presented:

- 1st Position: Tine Arras, Leuven, Belgium, for the poster contribution 'Spatial hearing skills of children with single-sided deafness and a cochlear implant' authored by Tine Arras, Birgit Philips, Christian Desloovere, Jan Wouters and Astrid van Wieringen
- 2nd Position: Kerttu Huttunen, Oulun yliopisto, Finland, for the poster contribution 'Screening, diagnostics, follow-up, and habilitation of newborns with unilateral hearing impairment in three Nordic countries' authored by Kerttu Huttunen, Elsa Erixon, Nina Jakhelln Laugen, Ulrika Löfkvist, Anna Kiviniemi-Pulli and Elina Mäki-Torkko
- 3rd Position: Dana Bsharat, Haifa, Israel, for the poster contribution 'Speech in noise and bilingualism, from physiology to behavioral' authored by Dana Bsharat and Hanin Karawani
- *Virtual industry lunch meeting*: Each day from 12 to 13 hours, the representatives from the industry were given the opportunity to present highlights from their recent product portfolio and to provide more information on request by each conference attendee.
- *Virtual industry exhibition*: The special website set up by the conference and the companies to foster interactions between the conference attendees and the industry was supported by the following companies: Auritec, Innoforce, Cochlear, Medel, Advance Bionics, Hörtech, GNResound.
- Total attendance: In total, 403 persons registered, from 39 different countries mostly from Europe (see figure)



Most participants came from Germany, because the German Audiological Society (DGA) postponed their regular annual meeting and offered their members to join the EFAS congress instead with an own “DGA Day” on Wednesday May 19th. A noteworthy delegation was present from different European Countries, primarily Portugal (about 30% of all participants), but also delegations from Switzerland, the Netherlands, Israel and Belgium were clearly visible. From the 403 participants, 76 students or junior scientist participated which indicates a healthy participations of the next generation of Audiology professionals.

A special highlight was the presentation of the *first EFAS lifetime* award to Prof. Dr. Jan Wouters, Leuven, Belgium. The laudatio was presented by Prof. Wouter Dreschler, Amsterdam, and the certificate was handed over online, but landed instantaneously – to the great surprise of the awardee – physically in the hands of Prof. Wouters at his home office (thanks to Prof. Astrid van Wieringen who managed to appear just in time on the spot!) .

Overall, the conference organisation went quiet well, the web-based conference system was adopted by nearly all participants without major complications, and many positive remarks about the conference style and the contents to be learned during the conference was received by the organising committee after the meeting. The congress website is still open for another 3 months for registered participants to visit the online contributions.

In conclusion, the 2021 EFAS online congress was a big success for science-based audiology around Europe and more countries, thus giving a positive expectation for the 2023 EFAS congress which will eventually take place in a live event in Šibenik, Croatia.