

## **EURO-CIU Survey CI situation COVID19**

This survey has been carried out on the situation of Cochlear Implantation in Europe due to COVID19 in the 3rd week of April.

We have obtained 20 responses representing 18 countries. From Finland and Germany, 2 representatives responded.

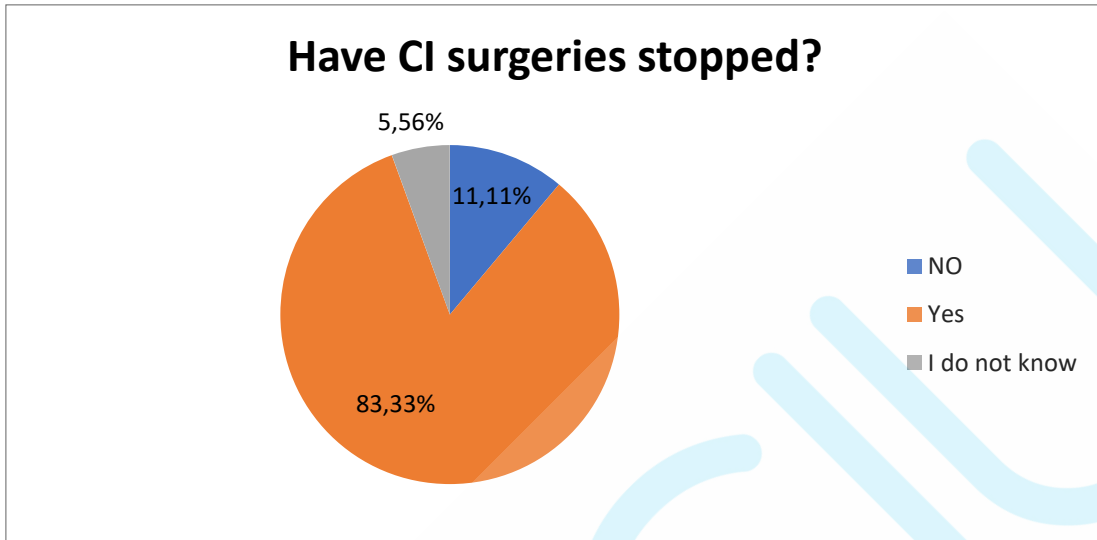
The countries represented are:

Belgium  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Spain  
Estonia  
Finland  
UK  
Greece  
Georgia  
Germany  
Italy  
Luxembourg  
Netherland  
Norway  
Portugal  
Slovakia  
Sweden

### **NEW SURGERIES**

#### **Have CI surgeries stopped?**

Cochlear implant operations have been stopped in practically all countries because of the ceasing of elective surgeries. Only in the 2 countries (Denmark and Finland) report that cochlear implantation operations are believed to have continued. In Finland one of the representatives indicated yes and the other indicated no.



The suspension has been in practically all the countries. Has not been carried out by region or by hospital centers, although in some cases the responses only referred to a specific center, as in the case of one of the responses from Finland.

#### Since when there NO implantation? (Estimate)

	Dates
Luxembourg	01-Jan
Finland	04-Jan
Italy	23-feb
Germany	01-mar
Slovakia	09-mar
Netherland	10-mar
Belgium	13-mar
Spain	13-mar
Norway	13-mar
Estonia	13-mar
Czech Republic	16-mar
Bosnia and Herzegovina	18-mar
Portugal	21-mar
Greece	24-mar
Georgia	24-mar
UK	30-mar

## Is there any plan to normalize the situation?

**UK** – Not yet, but British Cochlear Implant Programme making strong case for paediatric cochlear implantation to continue and for post meningitis people to be implanted. See [www.bciq.org.uk](http://www.bciq.org.uk)

**Belgium, Finland, Estonia, Slovakia and Norway** - Yes, but depends on the COVID 19 evolution during the coming weeks and months

**Italy, Georgia and Sweden** - Nobody knows

**Germany** - Still not clear depending on new infection rate/after may

**Netherlands and Czech Republic** - Yes, at this moment the hospitals started with "normal" care slowly

**Spain, Portugal, Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina** - Not yet

## Comments on CI surgeries:

**UK** - The date of stopping varies in different places in the UK and emergencies are attended to. This is typical statement from CI programme: *"We are currently postponing all appointments and operations until further notice."*

**Belgium** - Starting again at 4 May 2020 with urgent cases: meningitis cases and young babies, no adults yet

**Italy** - Everything is stopped. Only emergency problems are treated

**Germany** - In case of ossification exceptions are possible / emergency cases and CI failures are treated

**Netherlands** - CI surgery is not the first necessary care

**Georgia** - Our organization working with the ministry of health and with stakeholders to solve this issue, only after our call to action the government started thinking about it

**Czech Republic** - All 6 clinics stopped implantations for a short period except for patients after meningitis and children. The clinics started their implantation program on 6.4., 1.5., 1.5., 1.5., 13.4., 20.4.

**Estonia** - Will continue from May

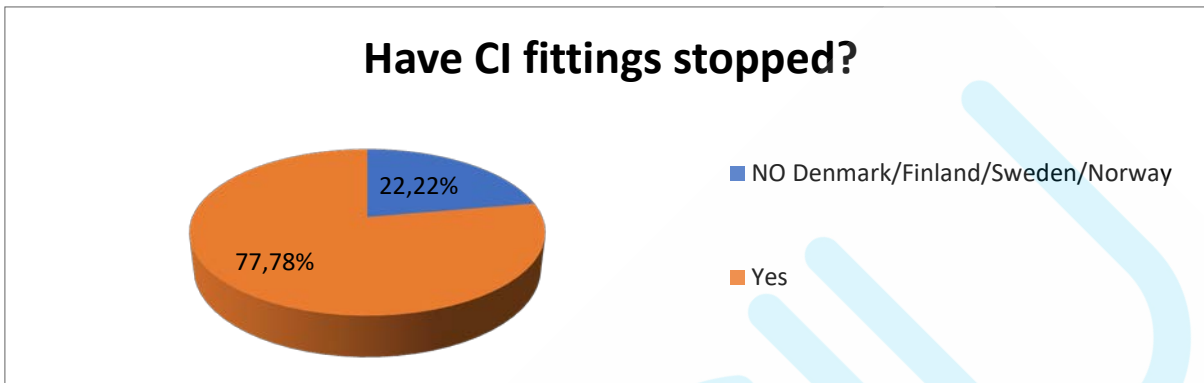
**Slovakia** - Still not known the exact date of restart of implantation

**Finland** - Some of the surgeries have been cancelled that I know of. One case is that child already have one CI and they postponed other ears surgery.

There are five CI regions in Finland (Tampere, Kuopio, Helsinki, Turku, Oulu). In Tampere region, surgeries stopped for 1 month but resumed in week 20. In Kuopio region, operations have been significantly reduced because operating theatres were turned over to Covid-19. Non-urgent surgeries have been postponed but deaf babies and children are operated to normal schedule. In Helsinki region, only adult surgeries have been stopped. In Turku region, only critical operations are being done for children. Limited hearing services available. Oulu region is working quite normally but, in practice, some patients are cancelling their operations!

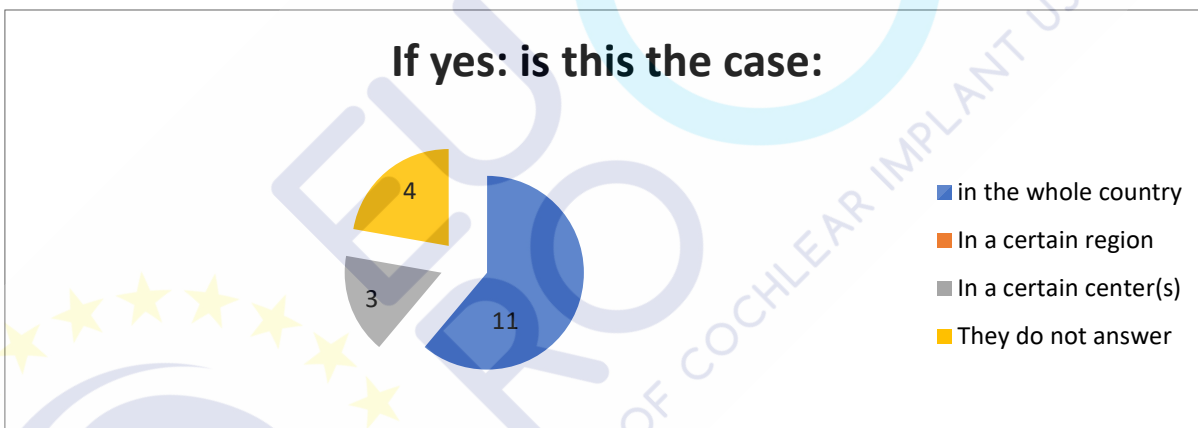
## FITTINGS

### Have CI fittings stopped?



Cochlear implant programming has not been stopped in northern European countries.

### If yes: is this the case:

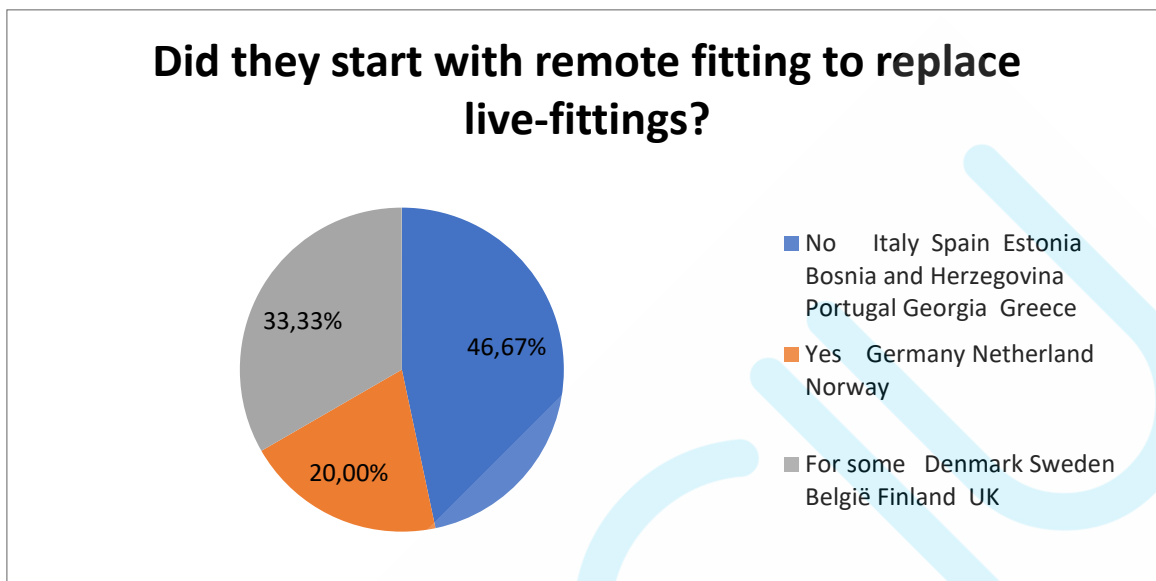


All 14 "Yes" countries have answered the question.

### Since when there are NO fittings? (Estimate)

jan. 2020	1 Luxembourg
feb. 2020	25 Italy
mar. 2020	9 Slovakia
	10 Germany/Nederland(2)
	12 Spain
	13 Belgium
	13 Estonia
	16 Georgia/Czech Republic(2)
	18 Bosnia and Herzegovina
	21 Portugal
	25 Greece
	UK date different in different places

## Did they start with remote fitting to replace live-fittings?



Northern European countries have used remote programming the most.  
No fittings yet in Luxembourg.  
No answers Czech Republic and Slovakia

## Is there any plan to normalize the situation?

Most of the responses are conditional or indefinite.

**Italy, Spain and Sweden** - Nobody knows

**UK, Greece, Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovakia** - Not yet

**Germany** - Depending on new infections rate/after May

**Belgium** - Yes, but depending of the hospital and of the COVID 19 evolution during coming weeks and months

**Georgia and Estonia** - yes

**Finland** - Finland is giving information later on this week/Tampere region says the situation is quite normal. Helsinki region says that there are no plans yet.

## Comments on Fittings:

**Italy** - We need a program for remote fitting

**Belgium** - Start again on Monday 4 May with urgent cases: these who have been operated just 2 or 3 months ago and other urgent cases who have problems with their device.

**UK** - Most stopped - all face-to-face fittings. More remote programming - eg first paediatric remote fitting.

**Germany** - Online fitting did happen already also before COVID19

**Netherland** - Maybe it will be a benefit that in the future more remote fittings, so that the CI-users have less time need for travelling to the clinics

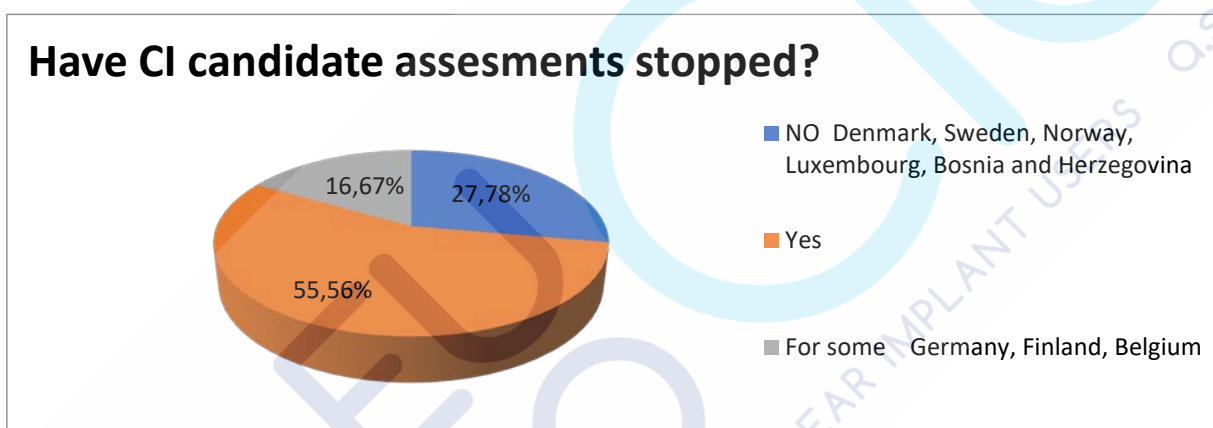
**Georgia** - It is one of the points, but the problem is that this service is possible only in the capital city and traveling during the lockdown is impossible. I afraid the clinic didn't be able to cover the expenses for remote fitting service

**Estonia** - They start fittings again in the beginning of May

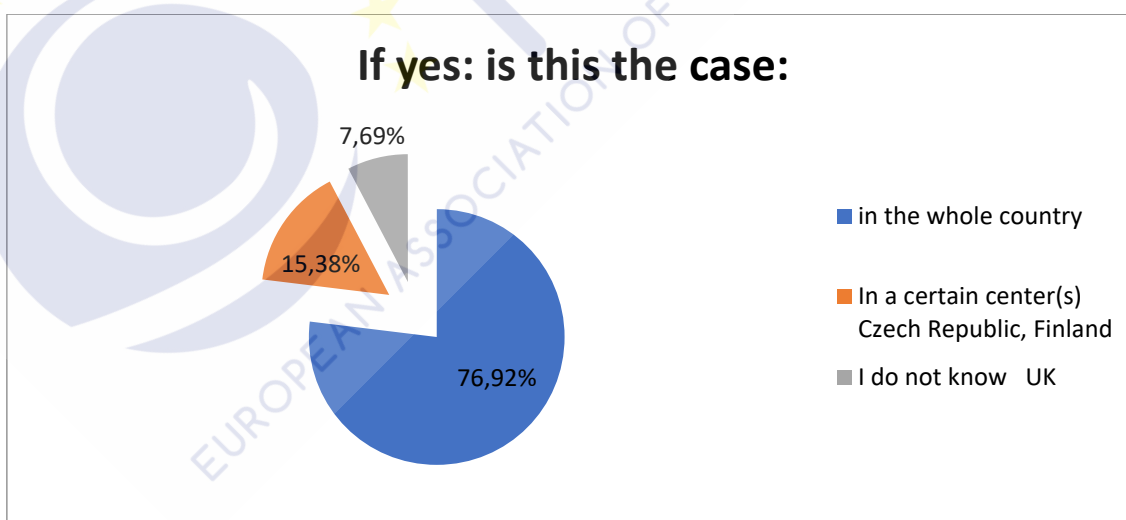
**Finland** - On kids side they are trying to do the fittings as on normal times.//Helsinki region has stopped fittings for adults over 70 years. They say that they have done considerably less fittings than usual since late March/early April. Face-to-face meetings are only happening when unavoidable. Helsinki are trying to help CI recipients as well as they can remotely (e.g. repair services via postal shipping).

## CANDIDATE SELECTION

Have CI candidate assessments stopped?

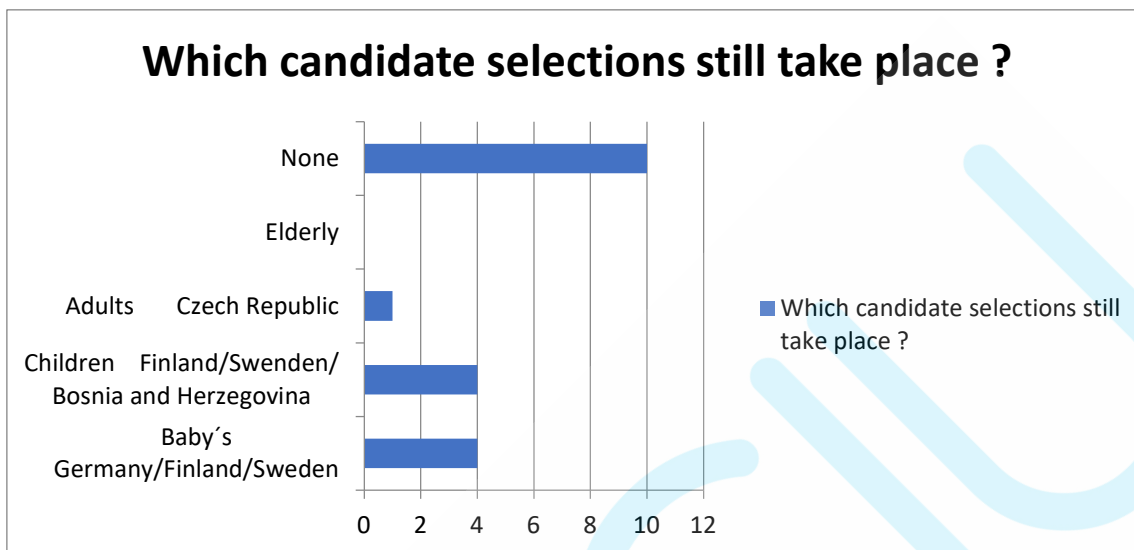


If yes: is this the case:



Responses from 13 countries that answered "Yes" or "For some" in the previous question.

## Which candidate selections still take place?



## Since when there are NO selections? (Estimate)

mar. 2020      1 (2) Italy/Germany  
                     9 Slovakia  
                     10 (2) Spain/Netherland  
                     13 (2) Czech Republic/Belgium/Estonia  
                     21 Portugal  
                     25 Greece  
                     31 UK

abr. 2020      1 Georgia

Luxembourg does not have an implantation center.

## Is there any plan to normalize the situation?

**UK** – It's not clear yet: but some remote assessments/discussions have taken place.

**Italy , Slovakia, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Sweden** - Nobody knows

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** - No

**Germany** - Depending on new infections rate/ after May

**Netherland, Georgia and Estonia** – Yes

**Finland** - We get the information later on this week/ Tampere region say the situation is normal. Helsinki region do not have any plan yet.

**Czech Republic** - It is being restored subsequently

**Belgium** - Yes, starting up again on 4 May with urgent cases (screening of urgent cases on telephone)



## Comments on Candidate selections:

**Slovakia** - Health is Iránec company musí approved reimbursement all implantation process

**Czech Republic** - Different approaches in different centers, but most of them suppose selections will take place as usually again since May.

**Nederland** - Selection cannot take place if candidates can't be operated

**Luxembourg** - after assessment in Luxembourg, candidates are usually transferred to clinics in Germany, Belgium or France

**Italy** - We need to restart

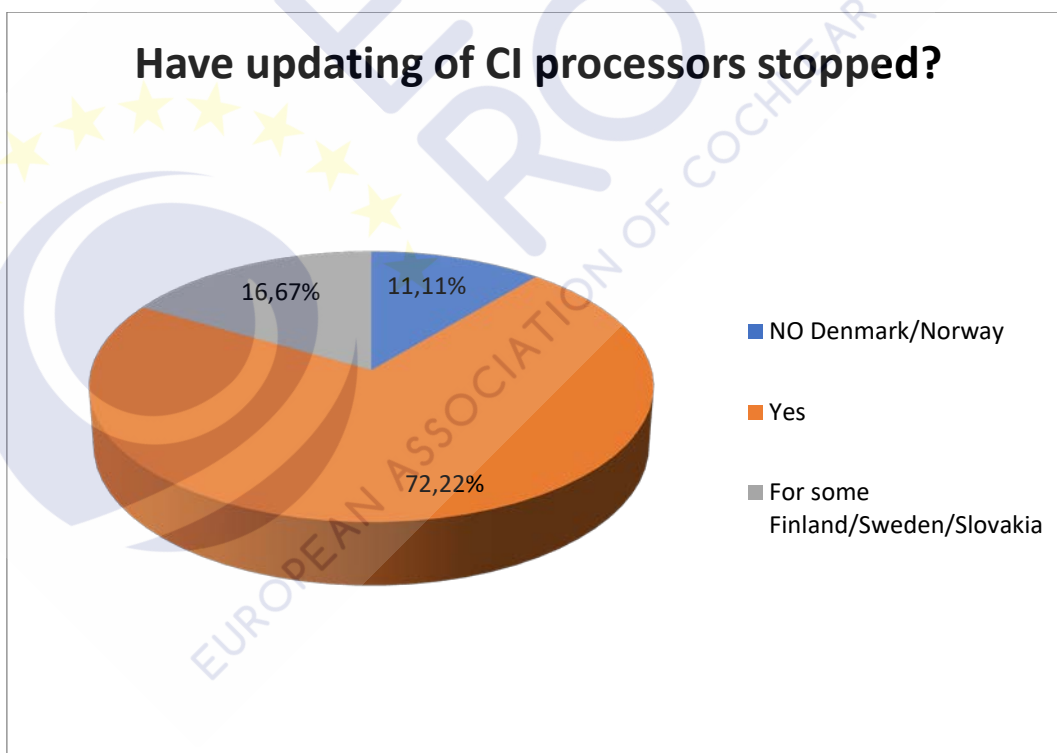
**Spain** – They will start with babies / children and meningitis cases.

**Finland** - In Tampere region, candidate selections are ongoing as normal. In Helsinki region, they have been stopped, except for babies. In Kuopio region, the priority is children and totally deaf patients; hearing preservation cases have been postponed.

**Estonia** - The normal work will start in the beginning of May

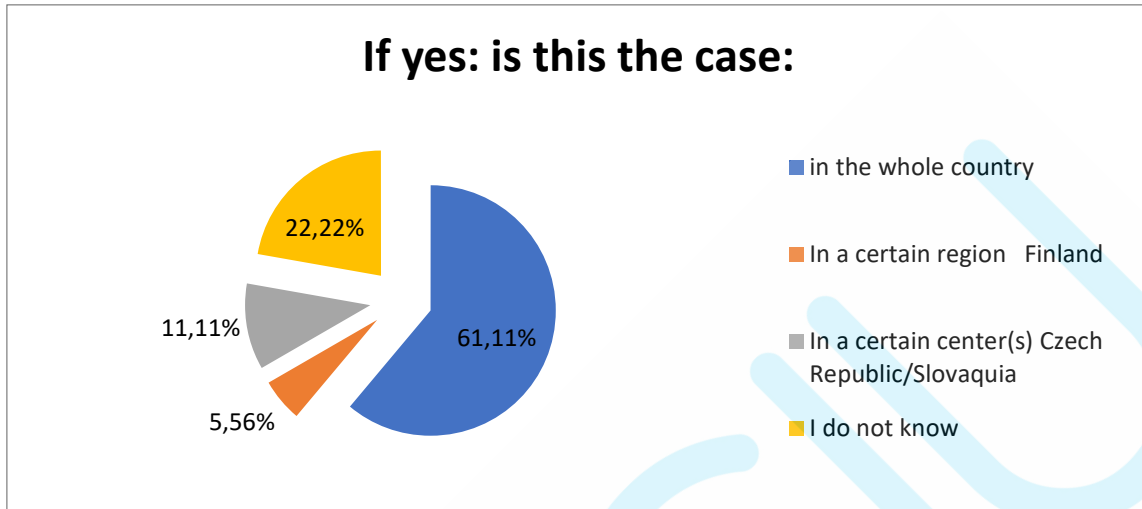
## UPGRADE OF CI PROCESSORS

Have updating of CI processors stopped?





**If yes: is this the case:**



All 18 countries have answered.

**Since when there are NO CI updates? (Estimate)**

- mar. 2020 1 Spain
- 3 Italy
- 9 Slovakia
- 10 Netherland/Germany
- 13 Belgium/Estonia
- 15 Luxembourg
- 16 Czech Republic
- 21 Portugal
- 24 Georgia
- 25 Greece
- UK

We can see that the perception is that processor updates were interrupted abruptly at the same time as candidate selection and schedules.

**Is there any plan to normalize the situation?**

- UK, Spain, Italy and Luxenbourg** - Not certain.
- Greece, Portugal and Bosnia and Herzegovina** - No
- Finland** - Helsinki region say "Not yet".
- Belgium** - Yes, starting up again on 4 May 2020
- Germany and Czech Republic** - after May
- Georgia and Estonia** - Yes

## Comments on CI updates:

**Finland** - Tampere region is updating as normal. Kuopio region has given conflicting answers - one saying the updates have not been stopped and the other saying that they have because updates are not considered urgent. Helsinki region has stopped updates (since mid-March).

**Estonia** - Start again from the beginning of May

**Luxembourg** - CI-updates only started last year in Luxembourg, most of them are still made abroad

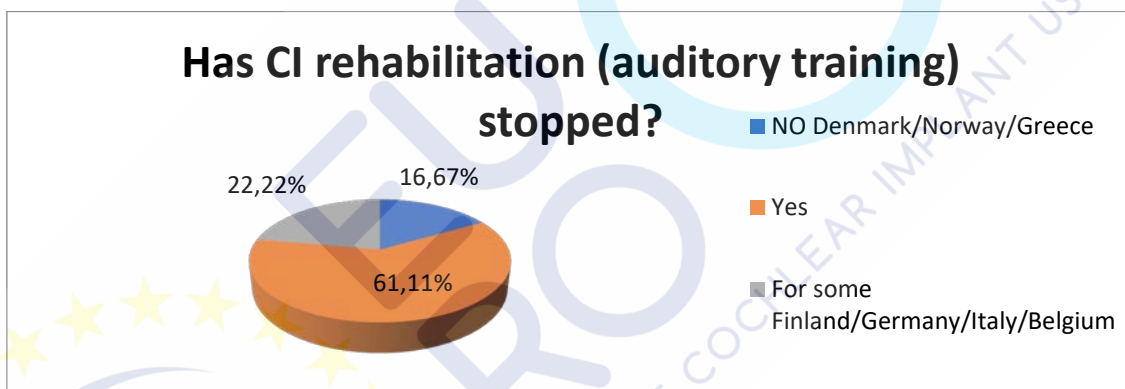
**Netherland** - Sometimes there is contact with CI-users by e-mail

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** - According to our legislation, CI users have no right to get CI update, so actually it is not affected by actual situation

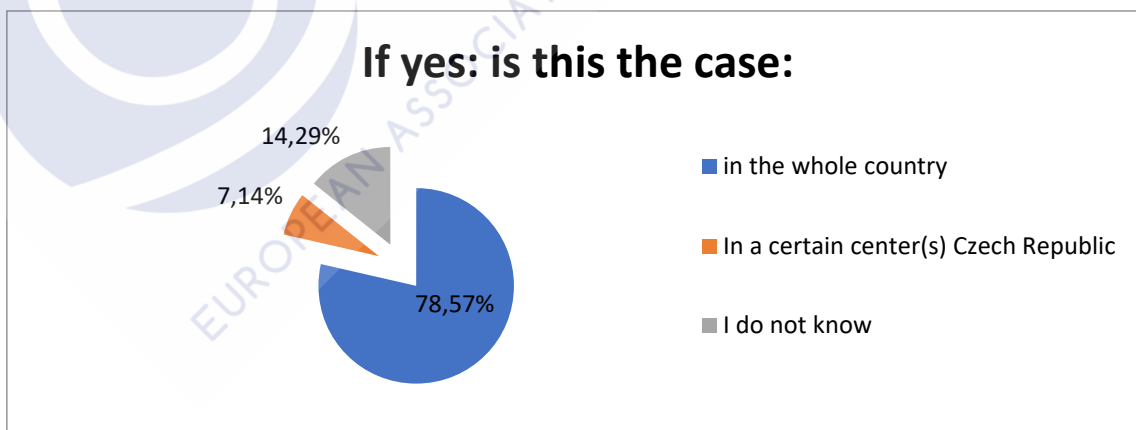
**Italy** - We need to restart

## REHABILITATION (auditory training)

### Has CI rehabilitation (auditory training) stopped?

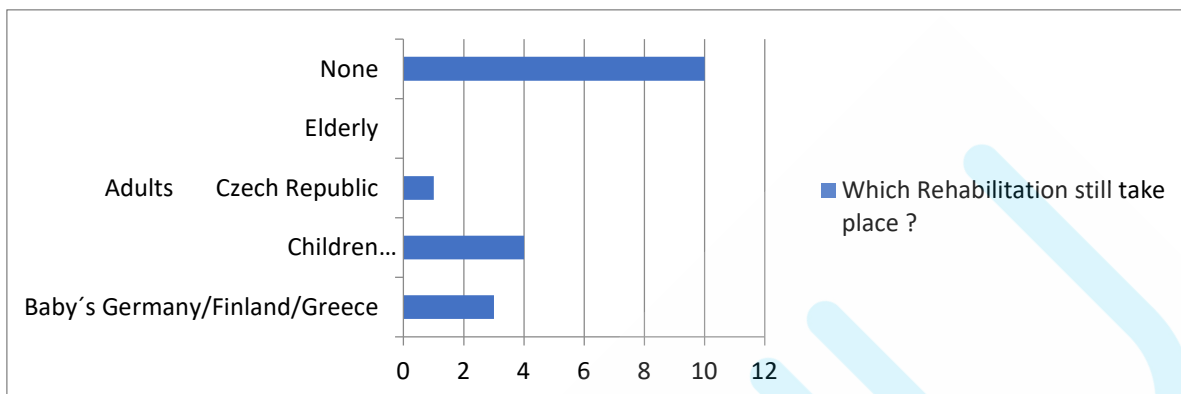


### If yes: is this the case:



14 countries answered

## Which Rehabilitation still take place ?



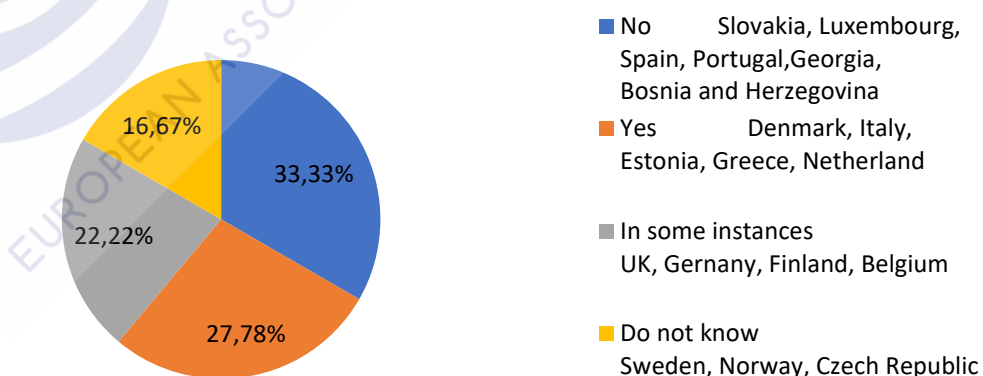
Denmark and Norway have not stopped any type of rehabilitation.  
Estonia has not answered this question.  
UK some remote rehabilitation by therapists.

## Since when there are NO Rehabilitation? (Estimate)

feb. 2020	25 Italy
mar. 2020	9 Slovakia
	10 Netherland
	13 Estonia/Spain/Belgium
	15 Luxembourg
	16 Georgia/Czech Republic
	18 Bosnia and Herzegovina
	21 Portugal
	UK
abr. 2020	6 Germany

## Did they start with remote rehabilitation to replace live-rehabilitation?

### Did they start with remote rehabilitation to replace live-rehabilitation?



## Is there any plan to normalize the situation?

**Georgia and Estonia** – yes

**Belgium** – Yes, starting up again on 11 May 2020

**Germany** – After May/Depending on new infections rate

**Czech Republic** – Probably as in other fields – most likely in May if the situation is good

**Finland** – On June / Helsinki region says “Not yet”.

**Portugal, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy** – No

**UK** – Yes some remote rehabilitation taking place and more planned

## Comments on Rehabilitation:

**UK** – educational and speech therapy services are trying to provide services – but huge need

**Italy** – We need to restart

**Netherlands** – Also can be a good development, that in the future is more digital rehabilitation

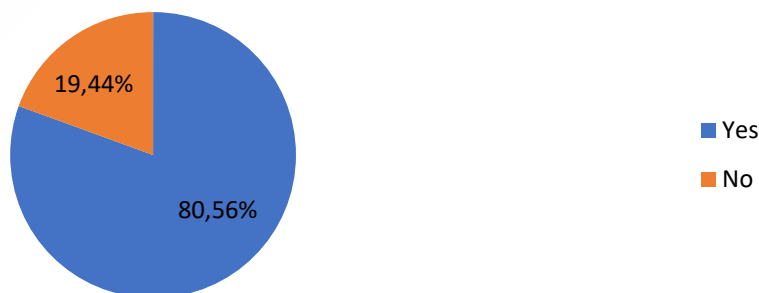
**Georgia** – we have prepared the standard of the remote rehabilitation, it will be adopted by the government in a few days.

**Luxembourg** – Rehabilitation programs in Luxembourg only started last year

**Finland** – Tampere region says that rehab has not stopped for anyone. Helsinki region says that rehab is still carrying on for children. Kuopio region says that rehab is normal for paediatric patients, and that rehab may have stopped in some areas of the Kuopio region.

Do you expect some impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on cochlear implantation (surgery, fitting, upgrade, rehab) in your country?

## Do you expect some impact from the COVID19 pandemic on cochlear implantation in your country?



Portugal, Estonia, Luxembourg and one of the 1 representatives from Germany considered that cochlear implantation was not affected by the COVID19 pandemic.

The remaining 14 countries and one of the representatives of Germany consider that COVID19 has influenced their cochlear implantation programs.

An overwhelming majority believe that COVID19 would harm cochlear implantation programs.

### **If yes, please explain what you expect?**

**Netherland** – I answered before that maybe in the future there will be more digital contact instead of real visits to the implant centres

**Georgia** – The positive impact is that we are forced to start develop remote services for hearing loss people in the future, but we haven't enough time for promote quality remote rehab service. The negative impact also is that all services for today are stopped and people with hearing loss and their families are unprotected.

**UK** – I think it is difficult to be sure what to expect – as the situation is changing all the time. It is difficult to make CI a priority with so many other challenges at the moment, but there is a lot of work going on to improve the situation with remote services for example. Likely to be longer waiting times. The British Cochlear Implant Programme has made strong case for prioritizing young children and keeping ci open for them and for post meningitic cases. Health care budgets are going to be hit hard by COVID19 and its management.

**Greece** – Delay in CI evaluation of very young children may not allow them to be receive a cochlear implant in time

**Italy** – There will be a delay, it will be considered if secondary importance

**Slovakia** – Health insurance comoanues will delay new approvals

**Sweden** – There are impacts right now on all levels but after the pandemic we will se how it will affect hospital budgets that is money for CI (surgery adults, upgrades etc)

**Germany** – I believe that the total number of CI surgeries for the year 2020 will be lower than originally planned

**Bosnia and Herzogovina** – Funds will be reduced for all activities regarding CI (even though they are already very modest)

**Norway** – Short period of no surgery to keep capacity on intensive care available for Covid-19 patients. Maybe already over, since we have a very low number of intensive care needing patients at the moment.

**Finland** – Some of the staff needs to work on COVID19 patient and that is the reason why some on CI-rehabilitation is cancelled.//Tampere region expects a 1 month delay on operations for some candidates. Kuopio region say that some centres are closed, while others have only limited capacity. Helsinki region say that there's no elective surgery at the moment and waiting time may increase. "However, we cannot make compromises with deaf-born children and their treatment is prioritised."

**Czech Republic** – Prolongation of the time period before implantation, a bit dense crowd of candidates when all departments are re-opened



**Belgium** – Big impact on surgery, fitting and rehab. They start up but only with urgent case. So children first and adults have to wait. So we will create a waiting list for adults.

**Spain** – Decrease in benefits due to economic issues.

## **COMMENTS about CI situation with COVID19 in your country and in general**

**Netherland** – Most of the CI clinics are trying to inform the CI-users as good as possible in general

**Georgia** – Unfortunately still today the country hasn't any plan for prevention or for manage cases for person with disability in general, they promise to work about. The people with hearing loss are excluded from education and partially from accessible information etc. Here is starting the good project called TV School but again there is only sign language interpretation. In general also here are the problem with labor and economic situation today and after pandemic. The people with hearing impaired are most invisible as always. One for the challenge for us is text-to speech support and captioning. The problem is that live transcribe in Georgian is almost impossible.

**UK** – We are still in lockdown and the expectation is that social distancing will go on for months – if not into next year – so there are huge implications for services such as audiology and therapy, in addition to economic concerns, with the huge health care costs of COVID19 and the economic issues for the country in general and globally.

**Sweden** – Hard to get information from hospitals right now because of the situation.

**Germany** – Emergencies, including CI failures, are treated // Sad, because CI surgeries could take place as in many clinics the patient stays only for on night and there are free beds in the hospitals. However, there is partly lack of personnel and protection material

**Estonia** – No panic. The surgeries will continue in May, so the fittings. Spare parts were/are provided by post. Councelling and advice via phone/skype. Overall very understanding.

**Norway** – Only short delay on surgery. Other operations as normal as they can be in this situation.

**Czech Republic** – In the beginning of the pandemic patients themselves cancelled their appointments as they were afraid to come to a hospital where the risk of getting ill is higher. Doctors were informed that in case of necessity they would be redirected to other departments. Outpatient and not acute patient appointments have been cancelled.

**Finland** – The number of implantations will drop due to 2-3 lost active months. Clinics cannot catch up later in the year. From Kuuloliitto web pages: The corona epidemic has also brought changes to hearing rehabilitation services. The exceptional circumstances caused by the corona and the emergency law allow the time limits for non-urgent care to be flexible. In practice, this means that the time it takes for new hearing aid recipients to get one. However, the hearing centers provide assistance for urgent ailments and ensure the

maintenance and repair of the devices of persons who already use a hearing aid, even during exceptional periods. From the point of view of the Hearing Association, it is important that hearing-impaired people who use hearing aids remain functional even during exceptional periods. The Disability Forum has also emphasized the importance of repair and maintenance of essential aids needed by people with disabilities, even in exceptional circumstances. The Hearing Association has collected information on the impact of exceptional circumstances on the operation of hearing centers by region. In general, many hearing centers have reduced their activities during the epidemic and only the most necessary activities are carried out. Hearing aids are mainly serviced by post and rehabilitation instructors provide advice remotely. Patients in need of urgent care are treated. Advice is given by phone.

**Spain** – There is great confusion and nobody knows what will happen.

**Luxembourg** – Luxembourg entirely depends on clinics in other countries.

### **SUGGESTIONS: Is there anything EURO-CIU can do to help in this Pandemic?**

**Georgia** – we need develop captioning and text-to speech services and any suggestions and recommendations will be helpful

**UK** – I think sharing information and practical resources is very useful

**Greece** – CI of very young children should be characterised as urgent cases and should not be delayed any more

**Italy** – We need a strong common communication letter to be sent to the governments explaining that CI is important for a person to live and time is the essence, especially in children.

**Germany** – To support CI users who are in case of cutting off from communication and information when hospitalized

**Slovakia** – Push local governments via EU commission to use simultaneous transcription of presented Saying restrictions and regulations in TVs. In Slovakia the situation is very critical and CI patients do not have available information because protective mask used by all helpful also during TV presentations about new decisions and steps

**Sweden** – Not right now in Sweden. After the pandemic we all have to see to that the priority concerning money do not go elsewhere. CI treatment must come further up on the agenda in our healthcare system all over Europe.

**Germany** – Spread the news and lobby

**Czech Republic** – Share good ideas and experiences how to deal with the situation

**Finland** – Kuopio region says: “The adequate handling of the COVID crisis has to be the priority; CI patients can wait.

**Spain** – It is important to keep all entities informed of the different situations in European countries.

**Luxembourg** – Making us understand the differences between EU-countries is very helpful for a country like Lux.

**Belgium** – Inventory of the European situation (as you do) and give the feedback to all members.



## Clarifications:

-Although we had a good response, there are a lot of unknowns and uncertainties in the answers, so care must be taken in drawing conclusions.

-The estimated dates have been set, although they are not exact, because they indicate the perception of the users, of a date, related to the confinement in each country. The countries were confined on different dates.

-From 2 countries, 2 representatives answered. When the responses were different, the one that provided the most information was considered. Only one answer per country has been specified in each question, and to make the charts. In binary question nº 30, 0.5 points were given to "Yes" and 0.5 points to "No" on behalf of Germany.

-The survey was conducted in the third week of April. We are sure that doing it 1 or 2 weeks later would have different results and with less vagueness. It is important to highlight the lack of knowledge about the future, at a given moment

## Conclusions

At the time of the survey, in most countries, there was insufficient information to make forecasts.

Cochlear implantation operations have been stopped in all countries, they have not been considered urgent. Cases of meningitis have entered the concept of urgent health, such as cases of stroke or oncological treatments and have been treated as a priority, in each country, when hospital conditions have allowed it.

The COVID19 pandemic may provide a push towards remote programming of cochlear implant processors.

There is concern that economic resources will be challenged in the future and result in cuts in cochlear implantation programs.

EUROCIU can collaborate by facilitating the sharing of information and different situations, between different countries. We must have public positions on the issues that impact on cochlear implantation, and act politically in front of the European organizations. We should publish reports that serve as support to organizations to make their positions clear to the governments of their countries.