



Message from the President



Dear members, dear friends,

The Executive Committee met in Munich at the end of January on the margins of optiMunich to discuss the key priorities and objectives that ECOO will be working towards this year. There are a number of legislative initiatives being discussed at EU level, which we are analyzing and feeding into. Your insights and case-studies from

your own countries are very valuable in this sense, and we thank you very much for your efforts!

OptiMunich was also the opportunity to speak to wide range of stakeholders, and visit the exhibition booths of some of our existing partners.

OptiMunich invited three ECOO representatives to take the floor at the trade forum, which was an excellent opportunity to present ECOO to an international audience covering the entire ophthalmic spectrum. Bob Chappell showed how the European Diploma in Optics and Optometry by ECOO works to harmonise optical and optometric education in Europe, and to enable easier access to eye care of a consistent quality for

citizens across Europe. Cindy Tromans presented the consensus of opinion from the eye care sector across Europe with regard to driving and visual standards, and argued that drivers need to be fit to take the wheel. Finally, I used the opportunity to present our organisation and the work we do on the mutual recognition of our profession across Europe.

As a European umbrella organisation, we see the added value of cooperation and collaboration each day.

Current discussions at European Union level about the “Future of Europe” only make us double our efforts to deliver on our goals of improving public health and making eye care services better across Europe.

I look forward to seeing you at our General Assembly in Barcelona and to discuss key issues for our profession. We are pleased to have confirmed two high-level guest speakers: [Christoph Rauter](#) will present on Sport Optics and Dr. David P. Piñero-Llorens will speak about evidence-based practice in optometry. In parallel, the European Academy of Optometry and Optics (EAOO) and Consejo General de Colegios de Ópticos Optometristas (CGCOO) have put together a splendid program for the OPTOM – Academy 2017 meeting.

Best wishes, Peter.

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On the EU agenda

60th anniversary of the European project

To mark the 60th anniversary of the European project, and in light of the fallout from Brexit, the European Commission presented on 1 March 2017 a White Paper on “The Future of Europe”. The paper sets out the main challenges and opportunities for Europe in the coming decade, and presents five scenarios for how the Union could evolve by 2025 depending on how it chooses to respond:

- **Scenario 1:** Carrying On – the EU27 focuses on delivering its positive reform agenda.
- **Scenario 2:** Nothing but the Single Market — the EU27 is gradually re-centred on the single market as the 27 Member States are not able to find common ground on an increasing number of policy areas.
- **Scenario 3:** Those Who Want More Do More — the EU27 proceeds as today but allows willing Member States to do more together in specific areas such as defence, internal security or social matters. One or several «coalitions of the willing» emerge.
- **Scenario 4:** Doing Less More Efficiently — the EU27 focuses on delivering more and faster in selected policy areas, while doing less where it is perceived not to have an added value. Attention and limited resources are focused on selected policy areas.
- **Scenario 5:** Doing Much More Together — Member States decide to share more power, resources and decision-making across the board. Decisions are agreed faster at European level and rapidly enforced.

The introduction of the White Paper touches upon public health challenges associated with the ageing demographics and Europe’s potential ability to innovate and discover cures

for Alzheimer’s. It also highlights the fact that thanks in part to Horizon 2020, the world’s biggest multinational research programme, Europe is at the cutting edge of innovation.

Following the Rome Summit which took place on 25 March, the European Commission will host a series of debates across Europe to gather inputs towards preparing five thematic papers. The first conclusions on the “Future of Europe” paper could be drawn at the European Council in December 2017.



There are also discussions about the implications of Brexit on the freedom of movement and establishment of different professions in the United Kingdom, as well as the recognition of qualifications. These discussions are at the moment held at high levels between the different negotiating parties involved, but stakeholders have been informally communicating their concerns on their particular sectors. ECOO will continue to monitor this topic and engage as appropriate.

Services package

The development of an appropriate legislative framework for the profession continues to be the top priority for ECOO at the moment. This entails engaging in the mutual evaluation and mutual recognition of skills and qualifications exercise and providing input to the European Commission or other competent authorities in an accurate and timely manner.

In January, the European Commission published in January 2017 the so-called “[Services package](#)” aimed at boosting the

services sector. The proposed measures are meant to make it easier for services providers to navigate administrative formalities, and to help Member States identify overly burdensome or outdated requirements on professionals operating domestically or across borders. Two of the four initiatives adopted are of particular relevance to ECOO: the [proposal for a proportionality test](#) before adopting new regulation on professions and [guidance on reform needs for Member States for regulation in professional services](#).

Medical devices, fluorescein and VAT

Following months of negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union over how to improve the long-term safety of medical devices, the file is almost at its final stages. The Council approved rubberstamped the proposed regulation on 7 March and the European Parliament is set to adopt the measures early April. Following this, the **medical devices** regulation will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and will take effect in 3 years. The scope of the new rules has been extended to cover certain products which do not have a specifically medical purpose, such as plano contact lenses. Amongst others, the rules will improve the traceability of medical devices throughout the supply chain to the end-user or patient. This will be done by using a unique identification number, and will allow fast action in case any safety problems are notified. A central database will also be created to provide patients, healthcare professionals and the general public information on products available in the EU.

Related to this topic is the classification of **fluorescein strips** as a medicinal product or a medical device, which is likely to feature later this year on the agenda of the European Commission again.

Finally, ECOO submitted its input to the [public consultation](#) on the reform of **VAT rates** in the European Union, based on data collected from members. ECOO took the opportunity to highlight the following key principles:



- The need to establish clear and SME friendly VAT rates
- The importance of the VAT exemption for healthcare services
- The importance of extending the list of goods and services eligible for reduced VAT rates contained in Annex III of the current VAT Directive to include the provision of eye care (such as eye examinations or sight tests, dispensing spectacles and fitting contact lenses) and products, aids and other appliance used to alleviate or treat visual impairment.

Country updates



Focusing on the future: Dutch optometric & orthoptic associations kick-off collaboration

By Marten Fortuin, member of the Professional Services Committee
Member within the Dutch Optometric Organisation (OVN)

In the near future, all eye care professions have the potential to change due to new technologies, changing demographics and changing political priorities have the potential to impact our professions. The Dutch Optometric and Orthoptic Organisations started a joined project to jointly explore the impact of future changes for their professions.

The Netherlands currently has a population of 17 million people, who are served by five major eye care professions. The General Practitioner (\pm 5000 GP practices) is the general gate-keeper for patients. Any referrals to an ophthalmologist ($n \pm$ 1200) is always via a GP. However, the public is free to go directly to an optician ($n \pm$ 2400), optometrist ($n \pm$ 1200) or orthoptist ($n \pm$ 400) or may be referred to these professions by their GP.

It is estimated that in the Netherlands the amount of patients will rise due to demographic changes (and an ageing population), respectively for cataracts (+46%), Age related Macular Degeneration (43%), Diabetic Retinopathy (+42%) and Glaucoma (+40%) (Keunen et al, 2011). In the future, it is also expected that due to political influences healthcare in the Netherlands will be more organised around and, where possible, closer to the patient. As a consequence GP's and the medical specialists will, far more than at present, be able and willing to work

together with other healthcare professionals (FMS, 2017). GP's and ophthalmologists will constantly have to take into account where and by whom the healthcare can best be provided. There will be a flexible network of healthcare professionals in which the healthcare outcomes and the needs of the patient serve as the point of departure. Social workers, specialised nurses, optometrists, orthoptists and new professions such as Physician Assistants (PA's in ophthalmology) may become part of this network.

As optometrists and orthoptists generally work in good harmony the Dutch Optometric (OVN) and Orthoptic Organisation (NVVO) decided to explore the future challenges and opportunities together. With assistance of a Dutch organisation of (para) medical healthcare workers (VVAA) desk research was started in September 2016 followed by a literature search performed by a small group of optometrists and orthoptists. This resulted in a preliminary concept report which will be discussed soon with opinion leaders with expertise in education and healthcare. The final outcomes are expected this summer. The next step is to make relevant changes in the competencies for the optometric as well as orthoptic education. This combined exploration, by optometrists and orthoptists, seems a solid basis for a bright future.



Digital optometric services are coming

By Panu Tast, Chairman, ECOO DSM Subcommittee,
CEO Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare

It is estimated that 315 million Europeans use the Internet every day, but it is considered that existing barriers online prevent citizens from accessing a wider range of goods and services, companies and start-ups from expanding their horizons or businesses and governments benefitting from digital tools.

Back in May 2015, the European Union Commission launched an ambitious project to make the European Single Market alive online. With the launch of the Digital Single Market (DSM) initiative, the Commission has calculated this can create up to €415 billion per year in growth for the European economy and create hundreds of thousands of new jobs. The DSM initiative covers a wide range of sectors and industries,

and it will surely have an effect also on optical trade and practising of optometry. To keep abreast of these developments and to provide input from the perspective of our professions, ECOO has set up a DSM subcommittee under the Public Affairs & Economic Committee. There is a wide range of issues we are following, such as VAT, consumer protection and geo-blocking. The impact of e-commerce or e-health should not be underestimated. But the prospect of change is also an important opportunity!

The fact that the share of spectacles, contact lenses and sunglasses to be sold online will continue to increase is not new, but what remains to be seen is how this will impact small

businesses. Online players normally operate on gross margins which are only ¼ of the level observed in the offline optical market. Even greater is the challenge in a form of coming 24/7 automated digital refractive and eye health services. Further down the line, could there be a unified online optometric service market as a unified profession?

We also know we have to somehow gather the information how practising online optometric services are being regulated

in different ECOO/EU member states. In Finland for example we regulate offline and online healthcare services including optometry equally. Even if it is going to need an exceptionally tight co-operation between ECOO and all its members.

The ultimate objective of our work is to ensure that the DSM is fit for our profession. Most importantly, we aim at ensuring that online provision of optometric products services follows the same safe and qualitative standards as “offline” practices.

OCULUS news

*By Bente Monica Aakre, member of the ECOO Board of Examiners
Head of Department of Optometry, Radiography and Lighting Design,
University College of Southeast Norway*

The [Erasmus+funded project](#) OCULUS — Optometry CUrriculum for Lifelong Learning through ErasmUS, managed by the University College of Southeast Norway, has had great progress since the first consortium meeting in Barcelona in November 2016.

The overall goal of the project is to harmonize optometry education by benchmarking the education given in Israel and India towards the European Diploma. Four optometric education institutions in England, Spain, the Netherlands and Norway are mentoring the process as well as working on their own accreditation processes.

Benchmarking and visits in India and Israel

Representatives for ECOOs accreditation panel visited the two optometry departments in Israel in February (Hadassah Academic College and Bar Ilan University) and three in India in March (University of Hyderabad, Manipal University and Chitkara University). ECOO self-assessment forms were prepared in advance by the university staff and presented to ECOO along with the course by Prof. Ariela Gordon-Shaag and Ramesh S Ve, who are the region leaders in Israel and India, respectively. The panel reviewed the self-assessment forms, toured the departments and provided practical advice in filling obvious gaps in the curriculum.

Self-assessment document and Pedagogical Transformation Plan

The self-assessment document has proved to be complicated to fill in and one aim in the project is to develop a simpler and more efficient tool. Dr. Hanan Maoz at Sapir Academic College is working on an on-line optometric self-assessment tool in collaboration with the other institutions in the project. This tool will be free to download for any optometry institution who wish to start their benchmarking process. All digital resources will be available at the OCULUS web portal, which is currently under

development: <http://oculus.erasmus-plus.org.il/>.

The self-assessment tool will reveal missing elements in the curriculum required to meet the high standards of the European Diploma, and a pedagogical transformation plan will be developed to close the gaps. Through an assisted mentoring process, the Israeli and Indian partners will prepare a roadmap to address gaps, which will include development of infrastructure, required teaching resources tools and content, identification and training of personnel. At a workshop, taking place in June and hosted by Dr. Catherine Suttle at City, University of London, the institutions will also start working on implementing evidence-based practice.

Evidence-based practice (EBP)

The project aims to further develop the curricula beyond what is described in the European Diploma by adding EBP. Based on a systematic review of EBP teaching methods (currently underway), and knowledge of current EBP teaching methods in each institution's curriculum, the aim of the workshop is to identify EBP teaching methods that would work well in each curriculum.

Dissemination at conferences

At the annual conference of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics in Barcelona 12-14 May, representatives from the OCULUS consortium will be presenting the project in the Education Special interest group session. The group will also submit an abstract to World Council of Optometry's meeting in Hyderabad in September.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein»



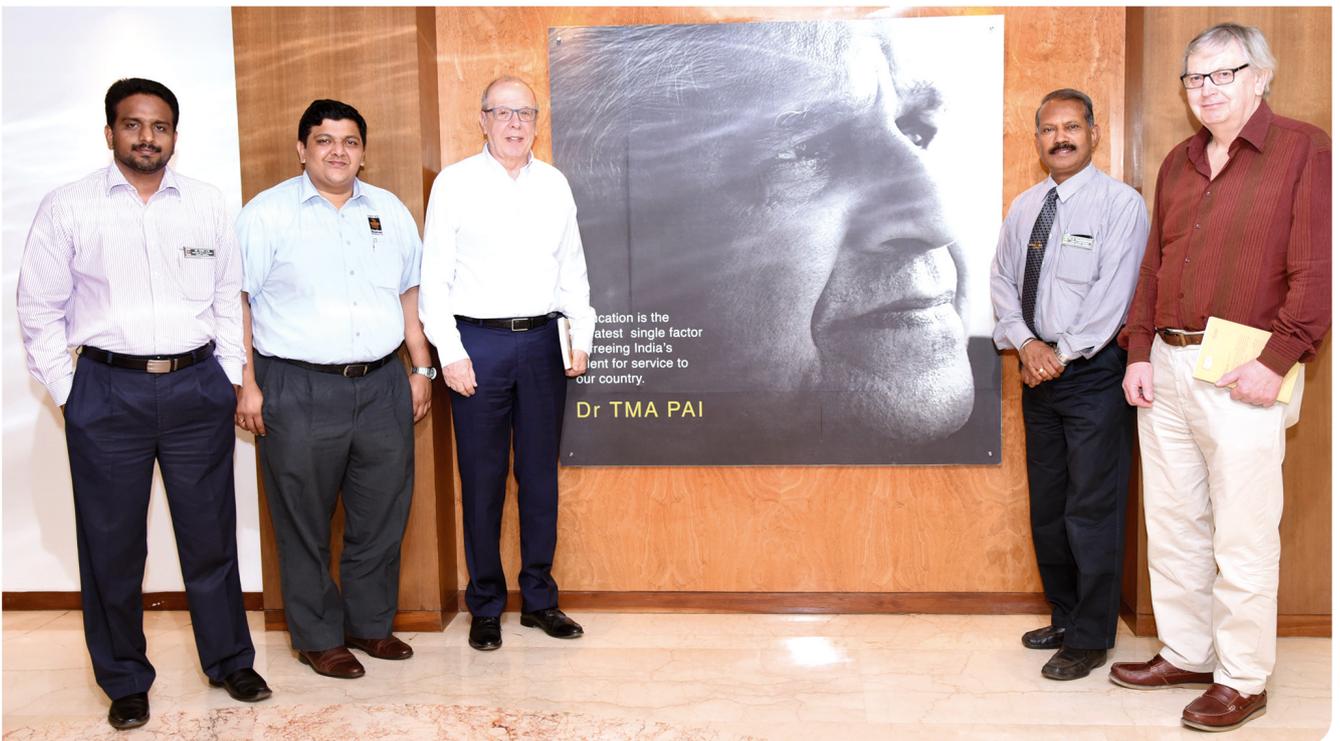
Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



From left to right: Dr Meenakshi Sood-HOD CSHS, Prof Keerti Pradhan-Faculty CSHS, Prof Aditya Goyal-Principal Optometry Prog, ecoo, ecoo, Dr Preethi John-Dean CSHS, Brig R S Gill-Vice President Chitkara Univ, Dr S C Sharma-Registrar Chitkara University



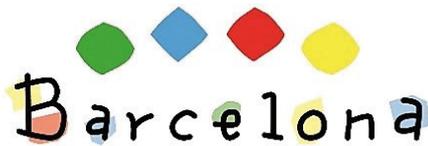
From left to right: Dr. Julie Anne Little, Mr. Bob Chappell, Yony Sanduri, The President of the Israel College of Optometry Standing Dr. Ariela Gordon Shaag, Dr. Einat Shneur, both Dept. of Optometry, HAC



From left to right: Dr Sabu KM, Associate dean, SOAHS Dr Ramesh S Ve, Head of Department, Optometry, Mr Robert Chappell, Dr Rajashekar B, Dean SOAHS and Dr Adrian Jennings

Academy 2017 — Vision and New Technologies

By Mireia Pacheco-Cutillas, EAEO President



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Barceló Sants



This year the Academy's annual conference Barcelona 2017 is a joint conference with the Spanish national organization, Consejo General de Colegios de Ópticos Optometristas (CGCOO). The main theme for the conference is "Vision and New Technologies", approached from two points of view; the impact of technology on vision, and the benefits derived from the new technologies for diagnoses and treatment.

The aim of the conference is to provide delegates with information they can apply to practice, discuss with colleagues, or in any way use to develop their career. The event comprises lectures & short oral presentations, poster presentations, clinical skills workshops, and Special Interest Groups (SIGs), as well as plenty of networking opportunities.

We would like to invite all ECOO members to have a look at the program preview and join our conference; book on

via ECOO link on event page <http://barcelona2017.info> (just extra €50 to book the Academy Sessions!).

We look forward to meeting you at La Llotja de Mar, where the **Welcome Reception** will take place on Friday. This is a free sponsored event, courtesy of the Collegio Oficial d'Òptics Optometristes de Catalunya (COOOC).

The Llotja de Mar is a gothic/neoclassic building, formerly a meeting place of the merchants of the city, with an impressive hiring hall destined to the contracting. Fellowship awards will also be presented here. It will be a unique evening full of surprises.



Look forward to see you all at Barcelona 2017!

European Academy Elections 2017: Call for nominations

The forthcoming **Board of Trustees** for **President-elect** (Vice-President) and **Trustee (Individual Educator)** positions will also take place at the Barcelona 2017 conference. Nominations must be received by the Academy Manager - Caroline Christie - by Friday 17th March 2017 (until 17:00 GMT). Please, remember to participate and vote. You can find all the information in our new website: www.eaoo.info.

The Academy is also inviting nominations for selection to the

Education Committee. The candidates must be **Individual Educators** with recent experience of educational delivery in optometry, optics or visual science OR **Educational Institution Representatives** from an Education Institution that delivers education in optometry, optics or visual science OR **Individual Practitioner** in optometry or optics. All nominations must be received by the Academy Manager by **Friday 24 March 2017**. Please find all the information in our new website: www.eaoo.info.

2017 Marks World Council of Optometry 90 Year Anniversary

By Susan Chiles, Managing Director of the WCO

The World Council of Optometry (WCO) was originally founded in Cologne, Germany in 1927 as the International Optical League — Ligue Internationale d’optique. In 1970 the name was changed to the International Optometric and Optical League (IOOL) and was based in the United Kingdom. In 1996, the IOOL became the WCO and is now headquartered at the American Optometric Association offices in St. Louis, Missouri. This year marks the 90th year anniversary of WCO.

The WCO is the only global optometric body in official relationship with the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners with many eye care organizations which share the same goal of high quality eye health and vision care being accessible to all people.

Today, the WCO’s mission is to facilitate the development of optometry around the world and support optometrists in promoting eye health and vision care as a human right through advocacy, education, policy development and humanitarian outreach. It remains an international organization dedicated

to the enhancement and development of eye and vision care worldwide.

The WCO collectively represents over 200,000 optometrists in almost 60 countries through over 200 affiliate, associate, corporate and individual memberships across six world regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, Latin America and North America.

Along with celebration of its 90-year history, this is an exciting time for WCO as it looks forward to hosting the 2nd World Congress of Optometry being held in Hyderabad, India from September 11-13, 2017. The Congress is an initiative of the WCO in partnership with the Asia Pacific Council of Optometry (APCO) and the India Vision Institute (IVI). The central theme of the meeting, Accessible, Quality Vision and Eye Health complements the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Action Plan of Universal Eye Health with a goal of universal access to comprehensive eye care services.



2nd WORLD CONGRESS OF
Optometry
“Accessible, quality vision and eye health”
An initiative of the World Council of Optometry
Presented In Conjunction With The 21st APOC
 Hyderabad International Convention Centre, Hyderabad - India
11 - 13 September 2017

ECOO upcoming meeting



The next ECOO General Assembly will take place on 12-14 May in Barcelona, Spain, and is kindly organised by the EAEO in collaboration with the Spanish General Council of Optometry (CGCOO).

More information regarding the programme, registration and travel logistics is available on the [ECOO website](#).

Subscribe to the newsletter!

The Newsletters are sent to ECOO's members and contacts via e-mail. Please inform us of any additions to the mailing list or of staff changes in your respective organisations. Should you have any news or updates which may be of interest to ECOO members, please contact the ECOO Secretariat:

E-mail: secretariat@ecoo.info

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