

# 2020 European Parliament Elections

Manifesto



## EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS

ECOO's manifesto for the 2019-2024 mandate of the European Parliament and the European Commission outlines **5 recommendations for promoting eye health and harmonising clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice across Europe.**

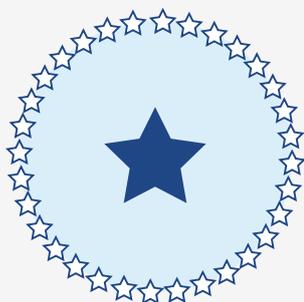
### **ABOUT THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS**

Driven by its overarching goal to improve vision and eye health by providing high-quality, cost-effective optometric and optical services across Europe, the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) represents the interests of optometrists and opticians from 24 countries.

### **A MANIFESTO FOR EUROPE**

Healthy eyes and good vision are paramount for independent and active living, at all ages. Yet, the role of vision on the wider policy agenda, from access to primary healthcare to road safety and healthy ageing, at both the national and the EU level, remains limited. Despite the growing awareness of the role of opticians and optometrists as primary care givers, there continue to be various opportunities to promote eye health across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe.

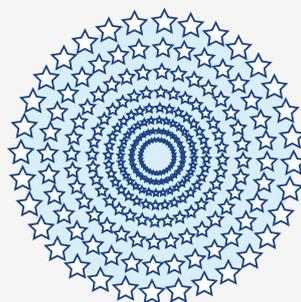
## PREVENTING VISUAL IMPAIRMENT AND VISION LOSS HAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS, HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY AS A WHOLE:



**1 European**  
in 30 experiences some  
form of vision impairment  
(approximately)



**75%**  
of severely visually impaired  
persons of working age  
are unemployed.



**39 million**  
**Europeans**  
are blind or visually  
impaired at distance.



**60%**  
of visual impairment  
or loss is avoidable,  
especially if earlier  
and more targeted  
interventions are initiated.

### KEY CAUSES AND CHALLENGES

The major causes of sight loss are **uncorrected refractive error** and **cataract**, both of which are easily treatable. Other causes include **age-related macular degeneration (AMD)**, **glaucoma**, and **diabetic retinopathy**.

Myopia, or short sightedness, is a growing problem and is expected to affect 50% of people by 2050.

Diabetes is a rapidly increasing health problem and can cause **diabetic retinopathy** which if undetected can lead to blindness.

Macular degeneration is a growing burden, especially in the wake of demographic change.

Many of these diseases are **'hidden'** as they do not show symptoms in their early stages.



Regular eye checks with an optician or optometrist can help to identify eye conditions at an early stage. Early detection allows for tailored treatment, reducing the socio-economic burden of preventable sight loss.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 Enhanced awareness on the importance of vision and eye health in Europe

Visual impairment and vision loss can often be prevented or its progression halted, if the conditions are detected and addressed at an early stage. This implies raising awareness of the importance of good vision, and the need to maintain good eye health through regular eye checks.

***Promote awareness on the importance of vision and eye health, In particular on World Sight Day, and encourage Member States to ensure that all European citizens, including children, have access to primary eye care.***



### 2 Promoting harmonised educational and professional standards at the highest level

A skilled workforce is paramount to ensuring timely diagnosis of eye conditions and access to health care. With the right competences and educational framework, primary eye care professionals are better equipped to identify vision and eye health issues at an early stage and to take the necessary action. ECOO has developed the [European Diploma in Optometry and the European Qualification in Optics to harmonise the educational standards at the highest level.](#)

***Recognise the need for a harmonised and high educational standard in Optometry and Optics in Europe.***



### 3 Eye health in all policies

To effectively reduce preventable sight loss and to mitigate its economic and social impact on Europe's societies, the attention to eye health should be integrated in all relevant policies, from occupational health, nutrition, road safety and healthy ageing to research and public health in general.

***Integrate eye health in all relevant policy areas and into funding programmes for health and social care (research) initiatives.***



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4 Implementing adequate visual requirements for driving in Europe

Driving a vehicle is a key means by which individuals maintain independence and mobility. Safe driving is however only possible with good vision. Europe's opticians and optometrists have a key role to play when it comes to ensuring road safety, as they are often the first point of contact for people experiencing problems with their eyes. However, the standards to determine visual acuity vary significantly from one Member State to another, as highlighted in ECOO's report on [Visual standards for driving in Europe](#).

**Ensure that the vision standards included in the medical Annex of the Driving License Directive are reviewed to ensure relevant eye tests for driving by appropriately trained eye care professionals are included.**



### 5 Good online practice and safety

As the Digital Single Market is developing, online activities are increasing throughout Europe and beyond, which also applies to the optical and optometric sector. While e-commerce offers opportunities for European citizens, there is an important need to promote appropriate online behaviour and practices, as outlined in ECOO's [guidance documents on good online practices for professionals and consumers/patients](#).

**Promote common principles of good online practice and behaviour and ensure a clear legal framework for online activities that protects patients/consumers and that creates a fair playing field for professionals.**



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