



---

*Rules of Procedure of the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO)*

---

This version dated 9 October 2020 shall replace in entirety all previous versions of Rules of Procedure.

**1. General**

- a. These Rules have been made by the Directors of the European Council of Optometry and Optics (“ECOO”) in accordance with the Statutes.
- b. These Rules have been adopted by the General Assembly of ECOO by a simple majority.
- c. These Rules are binding to the members of ECOO and on National Delegations.
- d. The Directors shall have power to review, amend or repeal these Rules from time to time.
- e. The Directors will notify the General Assembly of any such amendments or repeal made by them.

**2. Membership applications**

- a. All applications for membership must be submitted in writing following the guidance of the Secretary General and Executive Committee.
- b. The Executive Committee will check applications for membership before making a recommendation to the General Assembly. The ultimate decision rests with the General Assembly including if there is a dispute regarding a membership application.
- c. A simple majority of those present and eligible to vote is required for a regular membership application to be successful and a majority of three-quarters of those present and eligible to vote is required for an affiliated membership application to be successful.
- d. The following criteria need to be met for a national association to be eligible for regular membership
  - i. The applicant must be a national association from a country that is part of the continent of Europe but not restricted to countries that are members of the European Union. A country is defined as a recognised State or Nation and not an autonomous area within a recognised State or Nation. National association is defined as a professional association representing the professions of optometry and/or optics in its country and not only a region or local area within the country.
  - ii. The applicant must abide by the vision, mission and statutes of ECOO.
  - iii. The applicant must agree to respect the World Council of Optometry (WCO) concept of optometry.
  - iv. Where there is more than one national association representing opticians and/or optometrists (as applicable) within a country, all such bodies are eligible



- to join. If the country is already a member of ECOO, the Executive Committee will consult the existing member in writing.
- v. No one member shall have a veto to prevent an application for membership being heard and voted on by the General Assembly.
  - vi. The applicant must confirm that their organisation is financially solvent and can pay the annual membership fee of ECOO.
- e. The following criteria need to be met for private sector organisations to be eligible as affiliated members:
- i. The applicant must be a private sector organisation with operations in the optometric and optical field.
  - ii. The private sector organisation may have its headquarters in any country of the world but must have operations in the European continent (not restricted to countries which are members of the European Union).
  - iii. The applicant must agree to respect the World Council of Optometry (WCO) concept of optometry.
  - iv. The applicant must abide to the vision, mission and statutes of ECOO.
  - v. The applicant must confirm that their organisation is financially solvent and can pay the annual membership fee of ECOO.

### **3. Subscriptions**

- a. The annual subscription is a fixed annual fee per country and is determined according to a method proposed by the Directors and agreed by the General Assembly.
- b. One invoice is issued per country and one payment, for the full amount is to be made to ECOO. Where more than one member exists per country, the respective members agree among themselves the shares of the amount and organise the full payment to ECOO.
- c. Subscriptions are payable annually, by calendar year.
- d. The Secretary General issues invoices for subscriptions by the end of January of the year in question.
- e. Membership fees shall be paid by the end of April of the year in question.
- f. The voting right of the country will be suspended if the country fails to pay the membership fee by the due date.
- g. The Executive Committee will make a recommendation to the General Assembly for further action if the country fails to pay the membership fee by the end of September.
- h. The country will be expelled from ECOO by the Executive Committee, which will notify the General Assembly accordingly if it fails to pay the membership fee by the end of the year in question.
- i. The liability for membership fees falls upon the country. If there is more than one association in a country, which fails to make an agreed contribution towards the subscription fee, the other bodies that make up the national delegation are liable for the shortfall; regardless of internal national agreements. Members of that country should first seek a new agreement, compromise or temporary arrangement amongst themselves before referring the case to the Executive Committee who then assess the situation and decide on whether to expel the member who fails to pay its contribution.
- j. When a new member joins ECOO, the following arrangement applies:



- i. If voted in at the Spring General Assembly, the membership fee of the current year is to be paid
- ii. If voted in at the Autumn General Assembly, the membership fee is to be paid as of the following year.

#### **4. Termination of membership**

- a. Membership may be terminated for good and sufficient reasons by the General Assembly in the following cases, as applicable:
  - i. If the member harms the operations of ECOO
  - ii. If the member does not abide by the ECOO's statutes
- b. When a vote is taken to terminate the membership of a member, a majority of three-quarters of those present and eligible to vote is required for the termination to be successful.
- c. The member concerned shall have a right to be heard before a final decision is made.
- d. Where a member wishes to cease its membership to ECOO, a written letter (electronic means accepted) shall be sent to the Secretary General. The subscriptions for the started year are due in full. All reference to the organisation will be removed from the ECOO website and future official documents.

#### **5. Supporting members**

- a. Members are encouraged to keep the Executive Committee informed of ongoing activities at national level.
- b. In the case that a national member requests the support of ECOO for its national activities in the form of advice or a written letter, the member shall send such requests with at least one month notice and keep the Executive Committee informed of ongoing activities.
- c. In the case that a national member wishes to invite a member of the Executive Committee to attend a national conference or event, a three-month notice shall be given. The requesting member shall cover all travel and accommodation costs of the attending person from the Executive Committee. In case there are more than one members in the country in question, the other member(s) cannot try to prevent the attendance of an ECOO representative at the conference or event organised by the inviting member.
- d. In the case of written support for political or regulatory purposes or in the case of an official meeting with policy makers or stakeholders and where more than one member exists in a country, the other member organisations shall be informed and invited to comment with the objective of finding a common approach or consensus. In the case that no such consensus can be found and another member opposes the support, ECOO will withdraw its support.

#### **6. Elections**

- a. All elections shall take place by secret ballot.
- b. The Secretary General will give written notice of the elections at least three months before the elections are due to take place.



- c. Candidates must be nominated and seconded and give their written consent to the Secretary General, at least one month before the elections are due to take place.
- d. For a candidacy to be valid, the nominator must be from the organisation of the candidate and the seconder must be from another organisation in another country. The nominator and the seconder must be ECOO members.
- e. The Secretary General will circulate the written details of all candidates to the General Assembly three weeks before the elections are due to take place.
- f. Late nominations will only be accepted at the General Assembly meeting if no nominations have been made for a particular vacancy within the timetable specified above.
- g. If a person holding an elected position vacates that position before the end of the term of office, the Executive Committee will appoint a replacement until the next election is due to take place.
- h. Elections for a term of two years will be held for the following positions:
  - i. President-elect
  - ii. Treasurer
  - iii. Chairs of Standing Committees
  - iv. Members of Standing Committees
- i. Candidates for the positions of President-elect or Treasurer must have been representing their national delegation in ECOO for at least two years to be eligible for a vote.
- j. There shall be limits placed upon the terms which a delegate may serve in a particular position as follows:
  - i. President: limited to one term
  - ii. President-elect: limited to one term
  - iii. Treasurer: limited to three terms
  - iv. Chairs of Standing Committees: limited to three terms
- k. The Executive Committee shall appoint a Secretary General for a period of three years, and this will be confirmed by a vote at the General Assembly. The Secretary General and any relevant staff or assistants shall be referred to as the 'Secretariat'. The premature termination of the role of either the Secretary General or the 'Secretariat' shall only be confirmed by a vote of the General Assembly. The cost of operating the Secretariat shall be a legitimate expense of ECOO, forming a key component of expenditure in the budget.
- l. Representatives of Affiliate Members cannot stand for election to any of the director posts of ECOO.

## **7. Standing Committees**

- a. Each Standing Committee will consist of six members plus a Chair, each elected by the General Assembly.
- b. No country may be represented by more than one member on a committee (excluding the Chair).
- c. Standing Committees are to meet at least twice a year.
- d. Each Standing Committee will have its own terms of reference, which will be consistent with the Statutes and which will be approved by the Executive Committee.



- e. Each Standing Committee may be assisted by a Committee Secretary, which is to be appointed by the Chair of the Committee and approved by the Executive Committee.
- f. The Chairs and Secretaries of the Standing Committees will be responsible for the agendas and minutes of their respective meetings.
- g. Temporary sub-committees or working groups may be appointed by standing committees. These reports to the standing committees.

#### **8. Boards, Panels and External Bodies**

- a. The Executive Committee may appoint Boards, Panels or External Bodies to run specific projects such as the European Diploma of Optometry or Qualifications in Optics.
- b. Each Board, Panels or External Body will have its own terms of reference, which will be consistent with the Statutes and will be approved by the Executive Committee.
- c. All Boards, Panels and External Bodies report to the Executive Committee and will be responsible to the General Assembly.
- d. The Executive Committee may appoint Secretaries to assist the work of the Boards, Panels and External Bodies.
- e. The Executive Committee may appoint representatives of ECOO to participate in the work of external bodies.
- f. The Executive Committee will notify the General Assembly of all such appointments.
- g. Members of Boards, Panels and External Bodies are to be appointed or reconfirmed by their respective Chairs and Executive Committee every two years in writing (electronic record acceptable)

#### **9. General Assemblies**

- a. The General Assembly will meet twice a year, in spring and in autumn.
- b. Each country shall have one vote at the General Assembly regardless of the number of professional bodies being a member or attending on behalf of the country. It is the responsibility of each country to agree how to cast the vote.
- c. Members may send a delegation to the General Assembly and each member may nominate a maximum of two representatives to represent their delegation. Other members of the delegation may attend and contribute as observers, subject to payment of registration fees.
- d. The dates for a GA shall be agreed at a previous General Assembly.
- e. Voting shall be by show of hands, notwithstanding the right of the President to call for a secret ballot on any matter if (s)he deems it right and proper.
- f. If there is a resolution from the floor or from the President, that a ballot be taken on any issue, then the Secretary General and one member of the General Assembly chosen at random shall count or scrutinise the vote, which will be by show of hands unless the President calls for a secret ballot.
- g. Affiliate members shall not have any voting rights but are welcome to attend and contribute to open sessions including the General Assembly.
- h. In the event of an inconclusive result or a tie; the President shall have the casting vote, save in respect of the election of directors.



- i. The President and the Secretary General will prepare the agenda of the General Assembly and send it to all members at least 30 days before the General Assembly is due to take place.
- j. The Secretary General and members of the Executive Committee will prepare the background documents for the General Assembly meeting, which are to be shared by the Secretary General with ECOO members no later than 30 days before the General Assembly is due to take place.
- k. The Secretariat will be responsible for making a written record of the General Assembly which will be distributed to each of the member organisations not later than four weeks after the General Assembly.
- l. At all General Assemblies, the following items must feature on the agenda:
  - i. minutes of the previous meetings, voted upon
  - ii. report from the President
  - iii. report from the Treasurer
  - iv. other matters as determined by the Secretary General, Executive Committee or notified in writing (including electronically) by members with 30 days notice.
- m. At the spring General Assembly, the agenda must include:
  - i. presentation of the accounts for the previous year, voted upon
  - ii. report of auditors, voted upon
  - iii. presentation of the proposed budget and membership fees, voted upon
- n. At the autumn General Assembly, the agenda must include:
  - i. Vote on the appointment of the auditors

#### **10. Executive Committee**

- a. The Executive Committee meets four times a year, two of which are in conjunction with the General Assemblies.
- b. The Secretariat is responsible for preparing the meetings and for writing the minutes.
- c. Minutes are to be made available to ECOO members once approved by the Executive Committee
- d. The Chair of the European Qualifications Board will be appointed by the Executive Committee every two years and has a permanent seat with a voting right on the Executive Committee.
- e. Secretaries of the Standing Committees may attend the meetings of the Executive Committee but have no voting rights.
- f. The Executive Committee may co-opt ECOO members to take part in the meetings for a defined period of time.
- g. The Executive Committee will seek to make decisions on a consensus basis and if this fails by a simple majority.

#### **11. Co-option of members to the Executive Committee**

- a. The Executive Committee may co-opt up to two members at any one time
- b. The decision of who may be co-opted will be made by the ECOO Executive committee and the person(s) will be contacted by the ECOO Secretariat with an invitation to become a co-opted member of the ECOO Executive committee.



- c. The purpose of the co-optees are to bring experience of the work of the ECOO Executive committee to wider members of ECOO and to encourage better succession planning for election onto Executive.
- d. Such co-optee's will be determined by the ECOO Executive committee on the basis of providing balance of geographic regions, and balance of scope of practice and development of eye care or contribution to the skills to the committee.
- e. Co-optees will be members of ECOO through being a representative of their national organisation. They will have attended ECOO General Assemblies for at least two years prior to being invited for co-option.
- f. Co-optees will attend up to four meetings of the Executive committee for a period of one year. After this period, co-option will automatically cease. A person that is co-opted may be co-opted again. A person may not be co-opted for longer than a period of two concurrent years. The co-optee will be expected to be able to devote the time and effort required to appropriately prepare for meetings and to participate in discussions.

## **12. Organisation of Meetings**

- a. The Secretary General will advise the organisation hosting the General Assembly on the practical arrangements.
- b. The host organisation will provide the Executive Committee with a full cost overview to host the General Assembly meetings, taking into account the set registration fees.
- c. The cost of the ECOO meetings shall be covered by the registration fees. ECOO does not cover any shortcomings nor claim any surpluses from the meeting.
- d. The costs of the General Assembly will include the registration fees and hotel costs of the Secretary General and one other Secretariat representative.
- e. The General Assembly may be organised by a member or partner organisation on behalf of ECOO either as a stand-alone event or in conjunction with another event.

## **13. Finance**

- a. ECOO's accounts will be prepared in EUR. All items of income received by ECOO and expenditure incurred by ECOO will be shown in the annual accounts and in any accompanying documentation.
- b. The accounts are required by law to be filed with national authorities according to their requirements.
- c. The Treasurer and the Secretary General will be responsible for the preparation of ECOO's accounts and they may be assisted by an accountant.
- d. The Treasurer and the Secretary General will prepare an annual budget of income and expenditure in EUR for approval by the Spring General.
- e. A business plan needs to accompany the budget and may extend over several years.
- f. The Treasurer and the Secretary General will inform the Executive Committee each quarter of the income and expenditure incurred in the current year; they will also present the corresponding bank statements to the Executive Committee upon request.
- g. Payments for items of expenditure by ECOO of less than €5000 may be authorised by the Secretary General. Items of expenditure of €5000 or more have to be authorised by the Executive Committee.



- h. The annual accounts of ECOO will be prepared in EUR by the Treasurer and the Secretary General, assisted by an accountant within three months of the end of the year in question.
- i. The documentary evidence supporting the annual accounts will be inspected by two members of the national delegations, who are not members of the Executive Committee and who have been elected by the autumn General Assembly as Auditors.
- j. The annual accounts and the reports of the Auditors will be submitted for approval by the spring General Assembly.
- k. The members of the Executive Committee and any co-optees may claim reimbursement of, and ECOO will pay, the cost of their travel and accommodation to attend meetings of the Executive Committee, which are not held on the same occasion as the General Assembly of ECOO. The amounts paid will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee; and, if agreed, a cap will be put on the reimbursement of each claim thereafter.
- l. The Executive Committee may agree from time to time to reimburse ECOO's representatives their costs of travel and accommodation to attend meetings of other organisations or meetings that further the work of ECOO.
- m. The Executive Committee may approve budgets for projects upon request from the Standing Committees.
- n. The Executive Committee may agree from time to time to reimburse members of the Boards their costs of travel and accommodation to attend the meetings of the Boards of the European Qualifications Board.
- o. All claims for reimbursement will be made in writing in a form agreed by the Executive Committee and must be accompanied by receipts.
- p. ECOO may pay fees and honoraria to external persons with specialist knowledge who carry out work for ECOO and has been authorised by the Executive Committee.
- q. National organisations may kindly cover the costs of their representative for any meetings other than the General Assemblies, which are always covered by the national organisation. It has to be noted, that such informal gestures are an important contribution to maintaining a healthy ECOO budget.

#### **14. Solidarity Fund**

- a. Payments to the Solidarity Fund
  - i. All payments to the 'Solidarity Fund' will be voluntary.
  - ii. Each year, one reminder of the 'Solidarity Fund' will be sent to each member organisation; with details of how to make an online payment to the account.
  - iii. All payments to the 'Solidarity Fund' are separate to the membership fees and need to be transferred with the reference "Solidarity Fund + [Name of country and association]
  - iv. Payments to the 'Solidarity Fund' can be made at any time of the year.
  - v. The ECOO Secretariat needs to be informed of a contribution in writing and will send a confirmation of receipt.



- vi. Individuals, members or organisations may make a donation to the fund via the ECOO secretariat at any time. Such donations shall not entitle the donor to any rights, entitlements or consideration under any circumstances.
- b. Applications for assistance to the Solidarity Fund
    - i. Members who are facing financial difficulties, and are unable to pay the membership fee as determined each year, may formally apply for assistance from the 'Solidarity Fund'.
    - ii. Where members are aware that they face a problem in paying the ECOO membership fees, they should contact the Secretariat as soon as possible and before the relevant General Assembly to explain the reasons for the financial difficulties, and to discuss:
      - what other possible sources of income have already been explored (e.g. sponsorship, special membership fee collection etc.).
      - specifying the amount that cannot be paid (either full or partial amount of the membership subscription).
    - iii. If no other solution of funding is found then a member organisation can apply for funds from the 'Solidarity Fund' to pay either partial or full ECOO membership fees.
    - iv. Such an application will need to be made in writing (which includes e-mail) to the Secretariat. Furthermore:
      - Detailed accounts / statements (including information on the annual accounts and budgets of the country association) must be supplied including information on membership numbers and fees charged to members of the relevant organisation.
      - The Executive may seek further information and or clarification as required.
    - v. The Budget for each year is prepared at the Executive meeting preceding the Spring General Assembly. All applications for assistance from the Solidarity Fund should be notified in writing to the Secretariat in writing (which includes e-mail) before the Executive meeting so that the Budget can recognize the potential reduction in income.
  - c. Approvals of requests to the solidarity fund
    - i. An ad-hoc Committee comprising of Auditors (who are not members of the Executive), Treasurer and the Immediate Past-President shall be convened if or when there is a request for assistance from the Solidarity Fund. This committee shall be called the Solidarity Fund Committee.
      - This committee shall make a recommendation to the General Assembly for disbursement of funds (if any are available) from the Solidarity Fund.
  - d. Other rules
    - i. The Solidarity Fund Committee may only approve a request for assistance from the 'Solidarity Fund' for



- two consecutive years;
  - and may not consider more than two requests from any member organisation in any five-year period (from the year of the first donation) for each individual member country / organisation.
- ii. The Solidarity Fund Committee may only approve a request for assistance to pay ECOO membership fees only, the Solidarity Fund will not assist with
    - delegate travel costs or expenses
    - payments to third parties
    - payment of outstanding fees
  - iii. If possible those seeking assistance should make some form of (nominal) contribution to the cost of the membership fee. The Solidarity Fund Committee may approve either a full or partial payment of the calculated membership fee, where a member is unable to pay the full amount.
  - iv. The Solidarity Fund Committee cannot approve a payment towards the cost of membership if there are not sufficient funds in the Solidarity Fund account
  - v. Donations or contributions to the Solidarity Fund are considered final and irrevocable.
  - vi. Donations or contributions to the Solidarity Fund shall not confer any rights or entitlements to the donor.
  - vii. A member may nominate a representative to attend the General Assembly to present a case for assistance from the Solidarity Fund; such a representative may attend the General Assembly session only and will not be subject to delegate fees if attending for that purpose only. Alternatively, the preferred option would be to ask another member who is already attending the General Assembly to present on the applicant member's behalf.
  - viii. A member that has received assistance of the Solidarity Fund, should whenever possible attempt to contribute towards the Solidarity Fund if or when financially viable for that member.