



Message from the President

Greetings, ECOO members, and welcome to this issue of our ECOO Newsletter.

Dear ECOO members,

It's with great respect that I take the office as president for ECOO. I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our immediate past-President Julie-Anne Little, for all the work and energy she has contributed to ECOO during the past two years.

On the occasion of this year's World Sight Day, ECOO, in light of its membership in the European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB) and the European Coalition for Vision (ECV) was an active part of the events organised in Brussels. ECV and EFAB organised a two-day joint event at the European Parliament, which featured a retina screening stand managed by several ECOO representatives who performed retina screening, provided explanations to visitors and stressed the importance of having eyes and sight tested on a regular basis. Julie-Anne Little, Bob Chappell, Martin O'Brien (thank you all) and myself met over 300 civil servants in Parliament and 22 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). A dinner discussion and a working breakfast were well-attended by MEPs and provided the opportunity for fruitful discussions around preventable blindness. This is a good and important example on how ECOO can broaden the knowledge around our profession among policy-makers.

All of you that joined last ECOO General Assembly in Limassol know about our discussion around the Mutual Evaluation of Professions. Optometrists and Opticians, depending on the country, are now evaluated in the context of the free move-

ment of professionals in the European Union. We have been asked by the European Commission for data regarding the profession and have provided them with our insights. However we discovered that some member countries haven't yet completed the Blue Book. I must stress how important that is. When authorities at different levels ask or search for information about our profession, it is essential that the data for each country is correct. If you haven't done so I encourage you as country representative to log on and submit your country's information. The ECOO Secretariat and Executive Committee can do a lot, but here we are in the hands of you all, and your respective organisations.

Within the Mutual Evaluation of Professions exercise deregulating of the profession is a discussion point. Due to the different degrees of regulation in Europe, there is a risk that the exercise of the European Commission triggers change in this direction. We would like to ensure that patient safety comes first and believe that deregulation would not benefit this. It is important that a professional standard is maintained, this includes for example that patient records are kept and that tracing of treatment and products used is possible. Furthermore, there should be enhanced control for counterfeit medicines. Patient safety should be in every civil servant's and politician's mind. Let's work for that to come true.



Paul Folkesson

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Update from the ECOO GA in Limassol

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) held its **autumn General Assembly** this year in October, in the Cypriot city of Limassol, on 17th – 19th October 2015. The **Cyprus Optical Council** kindly organised a very successful event and welcomed members who were able to discuss a wide range of topics pertaining to optics and optometry.

ECOO is currently reviewing the significant amount of data contained in the

Blue Book. This is a collection of information regarding optics and optometry across Europe and is based on information submitted by country representatives. The aim is that the Blue Book is regularly updated so that it constitutes a significant repository of knowledge that is easily accessible.

The **ECOO elections** also took place with members voting their new Executive Committee. Paul Folkesson from Sweden has taken over the Presiden-

cy of ECOO from Julie-Anne Little for a two-year term. Peter Gumpelmayer assumes the role of Vice-President and Jesus Garcia Poyatos has been elected treasurer. Per Michael Larsen and Martin O'Brien have been elected chairs of the Public Affairs & Economic Committee and of the Professional Services Committee respectively.

The ECOO General Assembly in Limassol



Module	Candidates	Passed
1	20	1
2	19	10
3	19	10
4	18	7
5	14	11
6	16	7
7	19	4
8	19	11
9	14	3

Year	Members	Approved to 2015
2014	100	100
2015	100	100
2016	100	100
2017	100	100
2018	100	100
2019	100	100
2020	100	100
2021	100	100
2022	100	100
2023	100	100
2024	100	100
2025	100	100
2026	100	100
2027	100	100
2028	100	100
2029	100	100
2030	100	100

Address by the new ECOO President



Regulatory Updates

Mutual evaluation of professions – update from the November meeting

Following the revision of the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive, the European Commission launched a process to assess the proportionality of regulations on qualifications governing access to professions or professional titles. On 24th November 2014, the profession of optics underwent this so called “mutual evalua-

tion” exercise. ECOO has been closely involved in the process, and several of its members seconded their respective government officials in Brussels to inform the exercise and ensure the professional parameters are accurately represented.

In terms of next steps, Member States are required to submit National Action Plans to the European Commission by April 2015. Based on the mutual evaluation exercise, these plans should capture the actions that member states suggest to take to address any disproportionate measures currently in place in terms of accessing the profession.

Country News

Ireland – New Legislation

By Martin O'Brien, FCOptom

The professions of optometrist and dispensing optician have been regulated by Statute, with protection of title limited to registered persons since 1956 under the Opticians Act. Other than a small technical amendment in 2003, the legislation has remained unchanged since its introduction. It has been the position of the Association of Optometrists Ireland, that the legislation has not been fit for purpose, lacking any meaningful Fitness to Practice provisions and containing limitations on scope of practice not compatible with modern education, training and experience of optometrists in Ireland.

The Government decided in 2008 to transfer the functions of the Opticians Board, the regulator, to the health & Social Care Professions Council (CORU), an umbrella regulator for 12 other allied health care professions. This would require the repeal of the Opticians Act. The decision of the government in 2008 to abolish the Opticians Act and to regulate the profession under an umbrella

body (and legislation) of the Health and Social Care Professions Council, created an opportunity to modernise the governance of the profession.

This was the subject of much debate in the Association between the loss of a stand-alone status (like Medical Doctors, Dentists, Pharmacists and Nurses) versus the opportunity to remove the archaic limitations of the Act, in particular Section 48 of the Opticians Act. Under Section 48 optometrists were effectively forbidden from making a diagnosis or providing any treatment other than the supply of spectacles.

The Council decided to look to the bigger picture and support the transition process. There followed a long an intensive series of submissions, presentations and meetings involving relevant stakeholders – optometry, dispensing opticians, the Opticians Board, CORU and the Department of Health & Children.



Submissions were also received from ophthalmology and medical practitioners as well as representatives of the public interest.

Following lobbying from the Irish College of Ophthalmologists (ICO), who sought to preserve Section 48 in the new legislation, the matter was referred to the Patient Safety Committee of the Department, chaired by the Chief Medical Officer. Having considered all submissions and evidence presented

that Committee was content that there were no patient safety risks inherent in abolition of Section 48. This was then conveyed to the Minister.

In a parallel process, the issue of dispensing was also dealt with. The Department of Health & Children had a stated policy that deregulation was not their aim, but the initial plans to drop the definition of what constitutes “spectacles” (& contact lenses) from primary legislation and to place the regulation of dispensing and sales in the care of another body (not CORU) was resisted strenuously by the Association. It was the opinion of the Association that such action would lead to de facto deregulation due to difficulty in enforcement of legislation across a number of different responsible bodies and disparate legislation.

Ultimately the Department agreed to include prosecutorial powers for regulation of dispensing and sales into the enabling Bill which will allow CORU to pursue issues on non-compliance. In the process, an updated definition of ‘contact lenses’ was agreed and is shown in Fig. 1, which seems to be relatively ‘future-proof’. In September the Department published the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2014. This was the enabling legislation to facilitate the transition process and some additional

updates of the Health & Social Care Professions Act 2005.

A small amendment was agreed regarding the use of support staff in dispensing & sales of spectacles. A further attempt to restrict the scope of practice of optometrists was made in the Seanad (the Upper House), by means

of an amendment brought by a medical consultant who was a member of the Seanad, who openly stated that the amendment was at the request of some ophthalmologists. Following intensive last minute lobbying from the Association of Optometrists, the amendment was heavily defeated. The Bill completed all stages in the legislature on 12th

Fig.2.
Part 7A
PRESCRIPTION AND SALE OF SPECTACLES

Restriction on prescribing spectacles and dispensing prescriptions for spectacles

81A.

- (1) A person shall not, on or after the relevant day, issue a prescription for spectacles unless he or she is a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist.
- (2) A person shall not, on or after the relevant day, dispense prescriptions of registered medical practitioners or registrants of the designated profession of optometrist for spectacles unless he or she is a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist or dispensing optician.
- (3) A person who contravenes subsection (1) or (2) is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a class D fine in the case of a first offence and, in the case of a second or any subsequent offence, a class B fine.

Restriction on selling spectacles

81B.

- (1) Subject to subsection (2), a person shall not, on or after the relevant day, sell spectacles unless—
 - (a) if the person is not a body corporate, the person is a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist or dispensing optician or, if the sale is conducted on behalf of the person by another person, that other person is a registered medical practitioner or such a registrant, or
 - (b) if the person is a body corporate, the sale is conducted by a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist or dispensing optician.
- (2) A person, other than a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist or dispensing optician, may assist in a sale or in the conduct of a sale of spectacles where such assistance is provided in relation to the sale by a registered medical practitioner or a registrant of the designated profession of optometrist or dispensing optician of spectacles in accordance with subsection (1).
- (3) A person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a class E fine in the case of a first offence and, in the case of a second or any subsequent offence, a class C fine.

Fig 1. Definition of contact lenses in new Irish Legislation

‘contact lenses’ includes any device, designed to be worn in contact with the ocular surface, for the correction of vision, for the provision of a decorative or cosmetic effect, for a therapeutic purpose, or for any other reason, and regardless of the optical properties or the absence of optical properties of the device;

November. Under the new legislation optometrists and dispensing opticians must practice in accordance with their "knowledge, skills, competence and experience" in the same manner as all of the other CORU professions.

There is now no barrier to optometrists diagnosing or treating a condition or disease of the eye provided the optometrist can demonstrate competence to do so if challenged. The new legislation also firmly establishes that the dispensing and sale of spectacles and contact lenses should continue to be carried out by professionals with proper expertise in the area. On the other hand optometrists and dispensing opticians will now be subject to a far more stringent and comprehensive Fitness to Practice regime. CORU have much greater powers of intervention and sanction.

Optometrists and dispensing opticians will be required to follow a Code of

Professional Conduct and Ethics. All of the professions regulated under CORU will have to participate in mandatory CPD. At the moment the Association of Optometrists Ireland operates a CPD program, compliance with which is required to maintain membership.

CORU will have a Registration Board for each of the professions that it regulates. Under the new legislation, optometrists and dispensing opticians will be regulated by the same registration board in two different Registers under the Optical Registration Board. All decisions of the Registration Boards are subject to approval by an overall Council consisting of representatives of each of the Boards and lay-persons appointed in the public interest. In addition to agreeing the Code of Professional Conduct & Ethics, the Optical Registration Board will also put in place by-laws that must be observed by optometrists and dispensing opticians.

It has taken 6 years of intensive consultation and negotiation to bring this process to a successful conclusion. The Association of Optometrists Ireland were central to the entire process with the key objectives of:

- abolition of unreasonable restrictions to scope of practice
- preservation of regulation of dispensing
- clear definitions of spectacles and contact lenses
- protection of title.

All of these have been achieved. The Association and the professions look forward to a new era under modern fit-for-practice legislation where members can practice in line with their knowledge, skill, competence and experience.

Update from the Academy

The European Academy of Optometry and Optics' seventh annual conference, Budapest 2015, is now open for bookings. This year, for a limited time, an early booking discount of up to 25% is offered on conference tickets purchased via www.budapest2015.info.

The conference is a joint meeting with the European Council of Optometry and Optics' (ECCO) and will take place from 14-17 May 2015 in Budapest, Hungary, in association with the Hungarian Craft Union of Private Opticians. Each year, key members of the sector working within optometry, optics and vision science, from over 30 countries across Europe, come together at the Academy conference to share ideas and learn from top industry professionals.

The conference will offer inspiring lectures, engaging discussions, topical research poster presentations and twelve clinical workshops which include:

- Visual processing dysfunctions
- Binocular vision assessment
- Advanced slit lamp techniques
- Vision therapy techniques.

Japanese multinational med-tech company, HOYA, will be the headline sponsor at the conference. HOYA will also sponsor the clinical skills workshops which will be held at the HOYA Budapest Faculty and Semmelweis University.

Former conference delegate, Marcis Bajaruns from Latvia, said: "Last year's Academy conference, Warsaw 2014, was my first conference experience outside of

Latvia and I enjoyed it so much. It was interesting to hear other optometrists' experiences and to be able to share my own. I liked how everything had been organised and found the lectures on eye disease especially interesting. I look forward to Budapest next year."



European Academy
of Optometry and Optics





Professor Paul Murphy, President of the Academy, said: "Budapest 2015 is set to be even more successful, in terms of numbers of attendees and the programme on offer. This year we are offering an early book-

ing discount on tickets to encourage participation from delegates from all types of backgrounds across Europe. With the support of HOYA, we will be able to offer a range of innovative workshops at their

Faculty as part of our extensive conference programme. The EAEO conference is a unique forum to share best practice and one of the most influential and exciting optical events in Europe."

This year the conference keynote speakers are Bruce Evans, Director of Research at the Institute of Optometry (UK) and Dr José M. González-Méijome, Associate Professor at the University of Minho (Portugal). They will focus on myopia, latest developments and clinical approaches for children.

Further information on the programme will be released in the coming months. Visit www.budapest2015.info for more information on ticket prices, accommodation options, a full list of workshops and to buy your ticket.

Update from the World Council of Optometry

Congratulations to Tone Garaas-Maurdalen

The European Council of Optometry and Optics has congratulated Tone Garaas-Maurdalen for having received the award for Outstanding International Contributions to Optometry that she received from the American Academy

of Optometry - Essilor Award earlier this year. We are now also letting ECCO members know as we are very happy that she received this distinction and we can only echo that her contribution to the profession is remarkable and

has also been valuable to our work in Europe. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Tone for her support and work and wish her the best for the future.

1st World Congress of Optometry, Medellin, Colombia 14th-16th August 2015

The World Council of Optometry, in partnership with the Colombian Association of Optometrists (FEDOPTO), will be undertaking the 1st World Congress of Optometry in Medellin, Colombia 14th-16th August 2015. The programme will have a strong focus on clinical

practice, education and research and all the presentations will be bi - lingual Spanish and English. The city itself has a wonderful flower week in mid-August so a great opportunity to combine the Congress with a few extra days holiday. The Convention and Exhibition cen-

tre and local hotels are all of excellent standard. It would be really fantastic to gain European support from ECCO's association members and from European Universities.

World Focus

World Sight Day was celebrated by WCO by launching WORLD FOCUS in a new magazine style. Marc Taub and his team from the Southern College of

Optometry USA led the development. We are all interested in your response so we can start planning for next year! The good news is that the magazine

is available in many languages. See for yourselves.

www.worldoptometry.org

Getting involved

WCO is in partnership with the World Continuing Education Alliance to develop e-learning resources to support optometry education internationally. If you would like to get involved please contact the WCO Education Chairman who would be happy to discuss with you directly: glowther@indiana.edu

WCO London Office

An open invitation: If you are travelling to London it is always good to catch up with colleagues so do get in touch.

A new team has now been created to support WCO's London office:

Natalie Briggs	CEO	Natalie.briggs@worldoptometry.org
Charlotte Hall	Business Manager	Charlotte.hall@optometry.org
Lucy Jenkins	Communications and Marketing Manager (Freelance)	Lucy.jenkins@worldoptometry.org
Paula Titheradge	Finance Manager (Freelance)	
Maria Arce Moreira	Policy and Programme Consultant (Freelance)	

Update from EUROMCONTACT

New simulation tool to help eye care professionals (ECPs) promote wearer loyalty endorsed by practitioners at a seminar in Amsterdam

A simulation tool kit, co-developed by EUROMCONTACT and Professor Gino Van Ossel, expert in retail marketing and management at the Vlerick Business School (Belgium), was presented to industry representatives and eye care professionals at a seminar organised by EUROMCONTACT on 16th November 2014 in Amsterdam. The tool kit was developed to help ECPs simulate different scenarios designed to increase customer loyalty by growing their contact lens business.

The seminar focused on the 'The Loyalty Effect - putting customers at the heart of your practice' and included

presentations from Gino Van Ossel on Loyalty in the digital era; from Shelly Bansal (First Contact Opticians) on 'CL customers are more loyal than others - and what to do to promote customers' loyalty'; and from Anne Grethe Johansen (master in marketing) on 'How to improve customer loyalty through a deeper understanding of the expectations at an optician's shop - a case study from Denmark'.

The tool kit will be modified and developed further to take account of feedback from the seminar. It will then be made available to ECPs as a downloadable file from the EUROMCONTACT website.

EUROMCONTACT is the voice of European contact lens and lens care industry to the European Institutions, media, stakeholders and the public. EUROMCONTACT is the European Federation of National Associations and International Companies of Contact Lens and Lens Care Manufacturers. EUROMCONTACT members include National Associations of Manufacturers, representing Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom; the global companies Alcon, AMO Ltd., Bausch & Lomb, CooperVision, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Menicon; and the European Federation for the Contact Lens Industry EFCLIN.

ECOO upcoming meeting

**General Assembly in Budapest (Hungary),
14-17 May 2015**

The ECOO Spring 2015 General Assembly will take place together with the European Academy of Optometry and Optics annual conference on 14-17 May 2015 in Budapest, Hungary. The event is being organised by the European Academy for Optometry and Optics (EAOO) with the support of the Hungarian Craft Union of Private Opticians. Registrations are open and information on the meetings including the schedule and logistics are available on the ECOO website.



Save the date

ECOO Autumn 2015, Brussels (Belgium)

The ECOO Autumn meeting 2015 will take place in October 2015 in Brussels, Belgium. More information will follow soon.



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 Fabienne Eckert at the ECOO Secretariat:

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