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Message from the President



Dear Members,

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has just launched the long-awaited [World Report on Vision](#). This report seeks to promote greater awareness of the challenges of visual impairment worldwide. The figures quoted in the report are staggering, with visual impairment affecting 2.2 billion people worldwide with at least 1 billion people having avoidable visual impairment due to treatable eye conditions such as cataract or uncorrected refractive error. The report sets out proposals to address significant challenges in delivering eye care. Its key proposal is to integrate and scale up 'people-centred eye care', embedded in health systems and based on strong primary health care.

One might think that Europe, as part of the developed world, would not have significant problems with visual impairment, but we know from our Blue Book data that opticians and optometrists are not embedded in the primary health care systems in every country in Europe, and are not recognised or regulated in all countries.

The new edition of the Blue Book will be launched in 2020 and as ever, Pelle Knudsen (Norway) has done a tremendous job in preparing the survey. This is our most ambitious survey yet, and we hope to capture data about levels of practice and education as well as information about uncorrected refractive error in Europe.

The Blue Book 2020 will be launched at the Spring General Assembly in Helsinki next year. I hope that the combination of the WHO report and the Blue Book 2020 will give us the evidence to lobby for change across Europe, and of course ECOO will continue to support its members and advocate for better recognition, regulation and scope of practise of Europe's opticians and optometrists.

Cindy Tromans

Recent developments

Highlights from the General Assembly in Athens

ECOO's 2019 Autumn meetings took place in Athens, Greece, from 17-20 October 2019. We are happy to share some of the highlights in this newsletter:

- ECOO proudly presented its latest graduates Xavier Martz and Arnaud Massenet with their European Diploma in Optometry, ECOO's gold standard in Optometry.



- ECOO's 2019 Autumn General Assembly launched the survey to gather data for the 2020 Blue Book. The deadline to submit contributions is 31 December 2019.

- The meetings in Athens featured a workshop on communication in a digital world, which took place on 19 October 2019 and which was organised by Hans Torvald Haugo (Norway). During the workshop, participants created new imaginary shops and reflected on how to best communicate to patients and customers on the use of digital tools.



- Two guest speakers joined the General Assembly for engaging lectures. Nicky Soubry, who is a Belgian based manufacturer and distributor of contact lenses, contact lens solutions & instruments, and a member of Euromcontact, highlighted the impact of the Medical Devices Regulation from the point of view of the contact lens industry.

Matjaž Mihelčič (Slovenia) spoke about the use of digital devices to help people with low vision.



Expert roundtable with the Global Coalition on Aging

Together with the [Global Coalition on Aging \(GCOA\)](#), ECOO is organising an expert roundtable around the theme of “A Life Course of Healthy Vision: Shaping the European Policy Agenda” on 3 December 2019 in Brussels. The event is organised against the backdrop of the recent WHO World report on vision, which anticipates the WHO-led Decade of Healthy Ageing, to be declared in May 2020, as well as the institutional changeover of the European Union.

The objective of the event is to discuss the economic and social importance of vision health in an ageing population, with a view of shaping the European policy agenda for 2020 and beyond.



On the EU agenda

New mandate of the European Commission to start on 1 December 2019

The start of the new mandate of the European Commission was delayed after the European Parliament rejected the nominations for European Commissioners from France, Hungary, and Romania. On 14 November 2019, the European Parliament approved the newly proposed European Commissioners- designate from France and Romania. Thierry Breton from France will be the new European Commissioner for the Internal Market, which deals with the Digital Single Market. Adina-loana Vălean from Romania has been approved as the European Commissioner for Transport and Oliver Varhelyi from Hungary needs will be the new European Commissioner for the EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement.

The new European Commission is now set to take office on 1 December 2019. European Commissioner-designate Stella Kyriakides (Cyprus) will be the new European Commissioner for Health. Stepping up efforts in the field of e-health and realising a European Health Data Space are key priorities for the new Commissioner. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will fall within the remit of Thierry Breton's portfolio, but it is expected that Stella Kyriakides will play a role on AI as well. In terms of upcoming legislation, the European Commission might launch a Digital Health Package in 2022. Moreover, the European Commission's President Elect, Ursula von der Leyen,

has set out the ambition to present a legislative initiative on AI within her first 100 days in office. Please click [here](#) to get a copy of ECOO's identified priorities for the upcoming mandate of the EU institutions.

European Parliament presents non-legislative resolution on digital health

The [European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety \(ENVI\)](#) has presented a [motion for a resolution](#) on enabling the digital transformation of health and care with a view of empowering citizens and building a healthier society. In a nutshell, the committee calls on the European Commission and EU Member States to:

- reduce the risk of privacy breaches and the unauthorised use of health data;
- continue promoting the cooperation of Member States' health authorities to connect to the eHealth digital infrastructure;
- facilitate European coordinated action to support health data exchange;
- test specific applications for cross-border health data exchange for research and health policy to improve prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

This is a non-legislative initiative, but the European Commission may integrate some of the ENVI Committee's recommendations into its upcoming legislative efforts, for instance around the European Health Data Space. Members of the European Parliament had until 14 November 2019 to table amendments. The resolution will now have to be formally adopted by the ENVI Committee and consequently by the full European Parliament in plenary. The timing is to be confirmed.

Update from the European Academy of Optometry and Optics

Eye Health for All center-stage at HELSINKI2020

by Ana-Maria Nia

According to the World Health Organisation's much anticipated [World Report on Vision](#), over 2.2 billion people are blind or visually impaired, and the numbers are rising. There is also evidence pointing to existing significant inequalities in terms of the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation services, a shortage of trained eye care service providers and a poor integration of eye care services into health systems.

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Submit your application until December 6, 2019. Details on www.eaoo.info/fellowship

Against this backdrop, a considerable challenge lies ahead. The global demand for eye-care service will increase due to rapid population growth, ageing and lifestyle habits that often lead to non-communicable diseases and related eye diseases. How will health systems cope? What role can emerging health technologies play?

These are some of the issues the next annual conference of the European Academy of Optometry And Optics (EAOO) will try to address, [on 15-17 May 2020](#).

We are honored to co-organise the conference with the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare (NÄE ry) and are grateful for their warm welcome! Organised for the first time in Finland, as many as 500 professionals in the field of vision and eyecare from all around Europe are expected to attend.

Our keynote speakers include:

- **Perttu Pölönen**, inventor, entrepreneur and composer who has won EU's biggest science competition for youth and studied future technologies at Singularity University, based at NASA Ames Research Center in Silicon Valley.
- **Rupert Bourne**, Professor of Ophthalmology at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at Cambridge University Hospital, where he directs the Cambridge Eye Research Centre.
- **Hans-Jürgen Grein**, professor of Optometry at the University of Applied Sciences of Luebeck, Germany. Grein has a doctoral thesis on laser-scanning-tomography, ophthalmological training and scientific assistant at the University Eye Clinic Wuerzburg. He is a Head of Science at the Fielmann Akademie Schloss Ploen.
- **Karen Sparrow**, global programme training and development for new programmes at Peek Vision, building up knowledge in the field and translating it to enable successful and sustainable implementation and scale up.

Make sure you sign up to the [conference newsletter](#) to stay up to speed with announcements on registrations and programme updates!

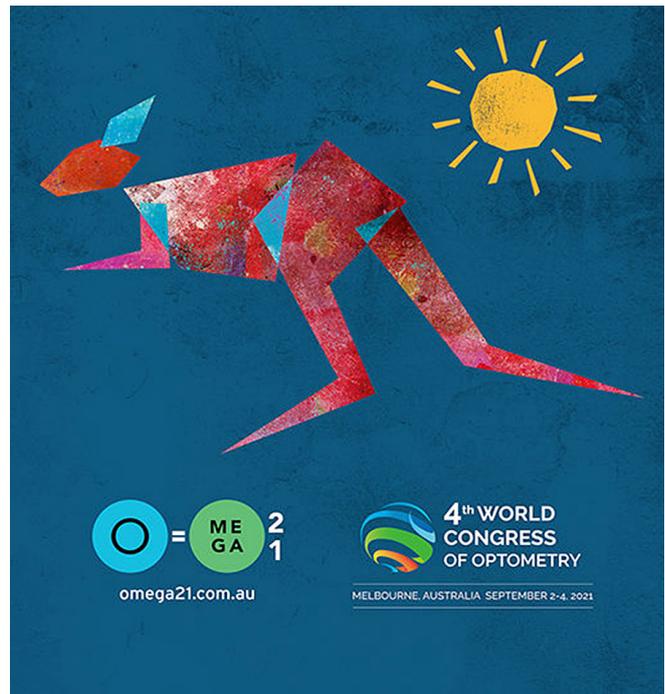
Update from the World Council of Optometry

By Garryn Marlen

The World Council of Optometry was pleased to partner with the American Academy of Optometry for the 3rd World Congress of Optometry and Academy 2019 Orlando joint meeting held October 23-27, 2019 in Orlando, Florida, USA. Attendees enjoyed a vibrant [plenary session](#) highlighting [the WHO's World Report on Vision](#), 450 hours of continuing education, networking with colleagues and an expansive exhibit hall, and over 8,100 registrants.

The World Council of Optometry is excited to announce the 4th World Congress of Optometry (WCO4) in partnership with the highly successful Australian clinical conference and trade show O=MEGA21. The joint meeting will be held in Melbourne, Australia September 2-4, 2021. We hope you will join us for the 4th World Congress of Optometry! Follow the World Council of Optometry on social media to learn new details as they develop.

Cindy Tromans, President of the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO), was recently elected as the Chair of the World Council of Optometry Legislation, Registration and Standards



(LRS) Committee to serve from 2019-2021 and will now also serve on the WCO's Executive Committee. The WCO appreciates the contributions Cindy Tromans has made to optometry and would like to congratulate her in this new role.

ECOO upcoming meeting

The next ECOO General Assembly will take place from 14 -16 May 2020 in Helsinki, Finland. Registration will open shortly on the [ECOO website](#).



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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: secretariat@ecoo.info

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