

## PRESS RELEASE

### **New comparative data on the status of optics and optometry across Europe points to steady progress in the evolution of the scope of practice and recognition of education**

**Brussels, 08 October 2020** – The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) published today a [new edition of the Blue Book](#), a valuable aggregation of data on the professions of optometry and optics in countries across Europe. Already at its 4<sup>th</sup> edition, the Blue Book remains the only resource providing comparative data on these two professional groups in Europe. The launch coincides with the worldwide celebration of [World Sight Day](#).

The Blue Book contains data on the number and size of the profession in each country, the status, and scope of practice of the profession, its role in public health, and the education and training provided. Information is gathered through surveys from optometric and optical associations in 22 ECOO member countries and 9 non-member countries, using as a reference the [Global Competency-Based Model of Scope of Practice](#) developed by the World Council of Optometry.

The report shows different professional landscapes across Europe, including a varied scope of practice. This is the result of the training available, the applicable law, the organisation of the professions, their independence, relative size and political weight.

While there are several differences between countries, the scope of practice is evolving. In some countries, professionals can use diagnostic drugs and others have gained or are in the process of gaining recognition of their optometric professions, which in most instances is considered a health profession. On the upper end, countries are also moving towards developing a therapeutic scope of practice.

Despite these differences, a standard eye examination is similar across Europe and is regulated mainly through professional guidelines. For the first time, the Blue Book also includes data on whether professionals can test vision and prescribe spectacles to children.

The Blue Book furthermore shows consistency over the years in the number of professionals in Europe and a steady number of students graduating every year in the various qualifications. One interesting trend observed is that educational recognition is often more advanced than the legislative recognition.

“Despite significant progress achieved, there is still some way to go to ensure the roles of opticians and optometrists are firmly established as primary care givers across all of Europe”, said Cindy Tromans, ECOO president. “With COVID-19, there was a recognition that the two professions could contribute to taking some of the pressure off health systems and ensure continuity of eye care. The only way forward is to invest in a well-educated and skilled workforce that can ensure timely diagnosis of eye conditions and access to care, and opticians and optometrists are eager to play their full role”, she added.

“With the 2020 Blue Book, we hope to assist policy-makers by providing a clear picture on the demand on eye care and the status of optometry and optics across Europe. It is also a valuable resource for our members, who work alongside us towards the harmonisation of clinical and educational standards for both professions”, said ECOO Secretary-General Fabienne Eckert.

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#### **Note to the editor:**

The European Council of Optometry and Optics ([ECOO](#)) is the European organisation which represents the interests of optometrists and opticians from 24 countries. It aims to promote eye health to the public across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe.