



ECOO NEWSLETTER

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MESSAGE FROM MASSIMO REVELLI, ECOO PRESIDENT



Dear ECOO Members,

We are now definitely in 2021 and working at full speed!

From a general point of view, unfortunately the pandemic is still with us and continues to hit us very hard. It is difficult to believe that it is now over a year since the last in person meeting any of us at ECOO have had, when the ECOO Executive Committee met in Florence in February 2020. Luckily, the vaccines are being distributed and we hope that the vaccination will slow down, and eventually end, the pandemic.

From ECOO's point of view we started the year positively, with the online session 'Power of Opticians and Optometrists' where Luisa Redaelli showed to us how we can positively approach our patients and customers even in these difficult times.

Moreover, you might know that the World Glaucoma Week has been announced for the week from 7 to 13 March. We are delighted to announce that the next online focus session will take place for you on 10 March, which will mark World Glaucoma Week. The session, kindly organised by the World Council of Optometry (WCO), will be held exclusively for ECOO members.

As already announced in the previous message, the Spring GA, which will take place on 23 April, will also be held online. We are preparing an interesting programme that, we hope, will be much more similar to our face-to-face GAs. We are going to have some great speakers and the two Committees will hold open meetings! We wish to thank the Finnish organisers and EAEO for supporting us!

Our activity keeps going on and, notwithstanding the pandemic, we are busy following the public affairs work. MDR is one of our main concerns, and we are keeping track of it and foster close contacts with EUROM1 and EUROMCONTACT on this topic. For the other two main focus areas, Vision and Driving and Digital Matters, you may refer to what is reported in the Newsletter.

Finally, I would like to welcome Elaine Grisdale as new secretary of our Public Affairs and Economics Committee!

I am very much looking forward to working with all of you and remain available for any questions you may have!

Best wishes,
Massimo

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ECOO UPDATES

Highlights from Online Focus Sessions

The Power of Optometrists and Opticians

Luisa Redaelli, 13 January 2021

For the first focus session of 2021, ECOO welcomed Luisa Redaelli to speak on **The Power of Optometrists and Opticians**.

Optometrists and opticians play an important role in our healthcare systems, and never more so than now. With the pandemic reducing opportunities for social interaction, optometrists and opticians can play a vital role on the front-line of healthcare providing support to their patients and customers, but they must be able to communicate this.



Unfortunately, all too often optometrists and opticians lack the communication skills necessary to convey the important role they play within society. First, they must be aware of the true potential they hold - there are 2.2 billion people around the world with visual impairments, of which 1 billion could have been prevented with good eye care. Optometrists and opticians have a physical and personal presence and are close to their patients – something which has significant value when the pandemic enforces distancing between most people. They are close, and easily contactable. They have a reputation, with their name directly connected to their work, usually above their door. So how they present themselves is vitally important. And perhaps most importantly of all, optometrists and opticians are resilient and reliable. They ensure continuity in a patient’s care, and take pressure off the health care system. However, these strengths are not being fully conveyed to patients.

Some examples of how opticians and optometrists can improve their communication skills:

- Look at what you’re already communicating to people, and ask whether you think it is sufficient. For example, are you showing people your true potential, and letting them know everything you have to offer? And through what media are you sharing this message?
- By constantly upgrading your skills – and letting customers know you are upgrading your skills – you can demonstrate your professionalism and expertise.
- Equally important is the ability to show empathy and interest in your patients and clients. By getting to know them and creating a space they feel comfortable and welcome in, they will be more willing to connect with you.

The session concluded with the key takeaway to remember three words: Positivity, Confidence, and Dialogue.

ON THE EU AGENDA

Classification of Corrective Spectacles under the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR)

The Medical Devices Classification Group (MDCG) at EU-level is still discussing the classification of corrective spectacles under the MDR. According to the draft guidance document on Custom-Made & Adaptable Devices, corrective spectacles should be considered Adaptable Devices, an exception to a custom-made medical device. This term is not defined in the MDR, which requires a number of clarifications for the sector. In light of the approaching implementation deadline of 26 May 2021, ECOO has urged the regulators to find a workable and simple solution as soon as possible. A set of guiding principles have been shared to this end, emphasising in particular the need for a harmonised approach with requirements that take into account the ability of SMEs to comply. The guidance document is expected to be finalised by April 2021.

ECOO Responds to European Commission Consultation on Driving Licence Directive

The European Commission public consultation on the evaluation of the Driving license rules closed in January 2021. The results of the evaluation will be taken into consideration to determine if changes and/or improvements are necessary to the Driving Licence Directive 2006/126/EC. ECOO has responded to the consultation highlighting the need to ensure visual acuity tests are carried out in standardised conditions, that qualified eye care professionals are included in the scope of Directive and vision standards are portrayed correctly. The importance of regular eye checks for the elderly to ensure safe driving has also been included in the response. ECOO was pleased to see that many of its members reached out to their national driving license authorities to advocate for these important visual requirements.

EU Publishes Green Paper on Ageing

The European Commission published a *Green Paper on Ageing* on 27 January 2021. The Green Paper takes a life-cycle approach, reflecting the universal impact of ageing on all generations and stages in life, and covers a variety of issues including: promoting healthy lifestyles; lifelong learning; and strengthening health and care systems to cater for an older population. Based on the responses to this consultation, the Commission will consider possible policy responses to reinforce efforts in Member States and regions to address the issues around ageing which are likely to be published later in the year in a white paper. ECOO is concerned that the Green Paper makes no reference to the importance of vision to enable active and healthy ageing, and of the need for good eye care services to be part of the health and care system and will make these points in its response to the consultation. The closing date for responses is 21 April 2021.

European Health Data Space

The EU continues to develop proposals in relation to mobile and digital health services. In January it set out a Roadmap for the creation of a European Health Data Space (EHDS). The EHDS would: promote safe exchange of patients' data (including when they travel abroad) and citizens' control over their health data; support research on treatments, medicines, medical devices and outcomes; encourage the access to and use of health data for research, policy-making and regulation, with a trusted governance framework and upholding data-protection rules; support digital health services; and clarify the safety and liability of artificial intelligence in health. ECOO provided feedback on the Roadmap, is participating in stakeholder meetings to develop the proposals and will respond to the consultation on the proposal which is expected in the second quarter of 2021.

COUNTRY UPDATES



UK Update

Debbie McGill, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, ABDO

Despite the challenges that COVID brought in March 2020, and those still being tackled, delivery of eyecare was and is maintained. Governments in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales listed eyecare within healthcare services that remained accessible throughout all lockdowns, albeit routine care was suspended March to June, with only essential and urgent/emergency eyecare permitted during these months. All eyecare is now permitted in the UK whilst adhering to increased infection, prevention control (IPC), social distancing and the use of personal protection equipment (PPE) – provided by the NHS, throughout the UK.

Being recognised as primary eye health care providers was a big step in England, having eyecare recognised and managed in line with all other primary care providers. It resulted in the development of the Covid Urgent Eyecare Service (CUES) which was developed in 8 weeks and made available to areas within England who do not have a Minor Eye Conditions Services (MECS) to provide a pathway to deliver urgent/emergency eyecare. MECS requires additional training and accreditation to partake hence the need for CUES as this enables Optometrists and MECS accredited CLOs to work at the top of their competencies (Core competencies for Optoms and FBDO core competency/MECS accredited CLOs). We envisage CUES will remain once we are out of the pandemic with the title changed. This demonstrated how quickly a pathway can be developed and delivered and it is hoped that going forward it will be that simple to review all eyecare services in England, wishful thinking we know!

England is also progressing with National Outpatient Transformation Programme (NOTP), which is now called the Eyecare Restoration and Transformation Programme (ERTP) as it will now need to incorporate managing restoration from the pandemic due to delayed treatment/care being accessed in secondary care. Discussions in relation to the principles for the governance, direction and delivery of the ERTP are ongoing. A steering group has been established with working groups being looked at now. Optical representative bodies' hope to have equal input to the process. ABDO, AOP, FODO and LOCSU are being consulted.

Some optometrists and dispensing opticians are delivering the COVID vaccines through local mass delivery programmes. The majority of the optical workforce have received their first vaccination or have been offered a vaccination. At the time of writing approximately 643,000 people in the UK have been fully vaccinated with 18.6 million having had their first dose.

Unfortunately, COVID has had a negative impact on children's screening due to school closures and in England a communication has been sent to children impacted and direction given for them to attend their local optical practice to help with the backlog. We have yet to receive an update from the other countries on the position.

In Scotland they have managed to progress with the development of glaucoma patients' shared care. Not all areas are engaged yet but some hospital eyecare departments are now sharing management of glaucoma patients with primary eyecare.

Lastly, Wales have resumed their review of eyecare services which will provide a platform to deliver eye health care, fit for patient demographics now and in the future, as the optical profession evolves embracing the new advancements in technology etc. to deliver the best eyecare available, utilising all multidisciplinary optical teams to their full potential.

Finnish Optometry – Constant Progress

Panu Tast, CEO of the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare

In total, there are around 1,200 active optometrists in the labour market in Finland. Almost 1,000 of them have diagnostic rights at the moment and every new Finnish optometrist now gets the right as part of the BSc. studies. Change has been rapid and happened in 10 years.



Our two universities of applied sciences, Helsinki Metropolia and Oulu, have been in a heart of this change. Even if the process is not completed yet both universities are undertaking the ECOO accreditation process. The process itself has been a giant leap for the universities and Finnish optometry. It has connected us for good both into a European and Nordic network and helped us to understand that our domestic issues quite often are actually Europe-wide or global.

The last step in the process to raise the general competence level of our profession in Finland has been Oulu University's International Master's Programme in Optometry. Oulu Master's has the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases as a special area of expertise. This is needed, as Finland will be one of the very first EU countries to face the effect of the ageing population and a significantly growing demand for eye health services at a full power. The programme is built so that it has an equivalent medical content compared to the studies leading to therapeutic rights for Finnish nurses. So, also therapeutics are in process – may be one day...

All this ongoing development, and the fact that many recent successful eye health technology innovations such as iCare, Ocusweep, Optomed and Topcon Harmony have their roots in Finland, makes EAOO Helsinki 2021 on 23-25 April a must to attend for every optometrist in EU. An easy and safe congress experience is guaranteed even in COVID-19 conditions, as EAOO Helsinki 2021 is arranged as a full virtual congress. Make a good decision and register now <https://e.eventos.fi/events/naery/helsinki-2021/home>. See you online in Helsinki!

UPDATE FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY

WORLD GLAUCOMA WEEK



WORLD COUNCIL
OF OPTOMETRY

**WORLD GLAUCOMA WEEK:
HOW DO WE WORK TOWARDS COLLABORATIVE CARE?**

JOIN US IN THIS ECOO EXCLUSIVE WEBINAR

**WEDNESDAY
10 MARCH, 2021
13:00-13:45 GMT +1**



**Dr. Johan Semby
Ophthalmologist**



**Dr. Melinda Toomey
Optometrist**

**REGISTER
NOW!**

Glaucoma Awareness Week is quickly approaching, and the World Council of Optometry has an exclusive opportunity for ECOO members! Please join WCO for the lunchtime webinar “**World Glaucoma Week: How Do We Work Towards Collaborative Care?**” on **10 March at 13:00-13:45 GMT+1**.

WCO President Mr. Paul Folkesson and President-Elect Prof. Peter Hendicott will lead the webinar with panelists Dr. Johan Semby and Dr. Melinda Toomey to present the challenges and benefits of collaborate care with regards to glaucoma.

We hope you will join us for this exciting event! Please register below.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

This is the second of several webinars to be produced by the WCO in 2021. Visit [our website](#) to watch our previous webinar on Myopia Management. Our next webinar will take place in April and more details will follow soon.

ECOO upcoming meetings

The ECOO Executive Committee meeting, and the meeting for the European Qualifications Board, will happen on the 22 April 2021, followed by the ECOO General Assembly on the 23 April 2021, including Committee open meetings and a workshop. Currently, all meetings are planned to be held online.

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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

Special thanks to our supporters







