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DEAR ECOO MEMBERS,



Firstly, I would like to thank you all again for your confidence and trust in allowing me to step back into the role of President following the resignation of Massimo Revelli. The past few months since our online Spring GA, have been very busy, with activity in a number of our public affairs workstreams.

In collaboration with the Global Coalition on Aging and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, a meeting was organised with Astrid Dentler, Member of Cabinet for Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Šuica. We presented our joint letter and discussed it with her, emphasising that vision is fundamental to the success of any initiative that wishes to promote active ageing. The impact of an EU-level acknowledgement of the importance of vision should not be underestimated for follow-up actions at national level. We believe that this opportunity, and the offer to work with her to provide input, is important to ensure that vision is incorporated in future initiatives.

ECOO has been active on Vision and Driving for a number of years and has just responded to the

consultation on the revision of the Driving License Directive. We made clear that we would like to be involved in the review process to ensure vision requirements are adequately addressed.

In preparation for the start of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR), and as a follow-up to the MDR deep-dive session at the GA, ECOO prepared a guidance document and distributed it to all of our members. This was the result of a huge amount of work by the Secretary General Fabienne Eckert, Peter Gumpelmayer and our members. I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that ECOO has engaged fully with this topic and that this document, which will be updated as the European Commission continues to work on further guidance, is of great benefit for our members.

I never cease to be amazed at the sheer scope and amount of work that ECOO does, given its limited resources. Despite the numerous challenges that COVID has given our members, I am heartened that ECOO membership has remained a priority for you all and I think the examples above demonstrate what ECOO can and will continue to do with your ongoing support!

Dr Cindy Tromans
ECOO President



Spring Meetings

2021

ECOO ONLINE SPRING GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

The spring 2021 General Assembly was the third GA to be held online, nevertheless a high number of delegates attended.

Following the unexpected resignation of ECOO President, Massimo Revelli, ECOO members voted unanimously in favour of Cindy Tromans taking on the role of ECOO President until the next elections in 2022. Cindy, as ECOO Past President, had been acting President since Massimo's resignation in March. Members also voted unanimously in support of reappointing Fabienne Eckert as ECOO Secretary General for a further three years, to 2024.

This time round it had been decided to include a full set of supporting meetings, as would normally happen. The day opened with a deep dive into the impact of MDR for opticians and optometrists, where guest speaker Thomas Wejs Møller of the Danish Medicines Agency took delegates through new guidance on the classification of spectacles as adaptable medical devices (see below).

As part of our work on active and healthy ageing, Michael Hodin, CEO of the Global Coalition on Aging led a workshop looking at how to achieve healthy vision across a person's life course.

At the ECOO committee sessions, the Professional Services Committee included a presentation on myopia management, and presented case studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on optometric practices. The Public Affairs and Economics Committee focused on digital and technology, with a presentation on the European Health Data Space and the Finnish Kanta system, as well as another on optometrists attitudes to the use of artificial intelligence in clinical decision making.

Finally, ECOO celebrated its 60th anniversary, with a video shown during a break featuring many past Presidents reflecting on how ECOO had developed. And ECOO members closed the day with a drinks reception held across four virtual bars.



NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ECOO AND GfK



Growth
from
Knowledge

The GA itself was preceded by keynote speaker, Paul York of GfK. Paul's presentation showed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sales of spectacles and contact lenses in a number of different European countries. Lockdowns inevitably caused significant falls in sales. However, there was evidence of strong recovery as optical practices opened up, with suggestions that there was suppressed consumer demand, and that premium products in particular had benefited. Nevertheless, it was highly unlikely that all of the lost sales would be recovered because

the opportunity had passed where customers had regular purchase cycles – this was particularly the case for contact lenses.

This presentation was the start of a new partnership between ECOO and GfK, which will provide ECOO members with an annual review on the optical market. In return ECOO members are encouraged to become part of the GfK Data Partner Programme, which helps to build a better understanding of the optical market.

**MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
THE GfK PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME IS AVAILABLE HERE**

www.gfk.com/en-gb/data-partnership





ON THE EU AGENDA

MEDICAL DEVICES REGULATION ENTERS INTO FORCE

26 May 2021 marked the Date of Application of the Medical Devices Regulation (MDR). ECOO has been following the details of the MDR and how it applies to the opticians and optometrists over the past years. The MDR is a product legislation, this means that it regulates the requirements related to a product and does not address how a professional group is recognised and regulated at national level, including their scope of practice. This remains a national competence. Contact lenses (both corrective and plano – Class IIa), solutions (Class IIb), corrective spectacle frames (Class I) and ophthalmic lenses (Class I) are all medical devices and all fall within the scope of the MDR. In a [Q&A document](#), Member States have clarified that correction spectacles are considered “adaptable medical devices”. ECOO has issued a guidance document for its members which they may use to provide further national guidance and to clarify how certain requirements will be handled at national level. ECOO continues to follow this matter as a number of questions remain outstanding and various workstreams, such as Annex XVI common specifications and the work on standards, are still ongoing.

ECOO SUBMITTED RESPONSE TO EU CONSULTATION ON THE REVISION OF THE DRIVING LICENCE DIRECTIVE

In spring 2021, the EU ran a consultation on its roadmap for the revision of the Driving Licence Directive. ECOO has provided a [response](#) in which the role of opticians/optometrists in carrying out relevant eye examinations is outlined. Annex III of Directive 2006/126/EC sets out the vision requirements. There

are however significant discrepancies in the way these requirements have been interpreted, to the extent that some countries do not actually comply with the minimum requirements. One of the roadmap’s objectives is to “Increase safety on the Union’s roads by ensuring that medical fitness of drivers is adequately assessed in a consistent manner in the entire Union”. Adequate vision standards are an integral part of medical fitness to drive and ECOO emphasised that the minimum requirements need to be defined and respected throughout Europe. To achieve this, ECOO suggests a number of concrete changes need to be made to Annex III and will follow-up accordingly with the European institutions over the next months.

ECOO MET WITH CABINET OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION VICE-PRESIDENT DUBRAVKA ŠUICA

Following ECOO’s submission to the EU Green Paper on Ageing, which failed to acknowledge vision and eye health as a fundamental precondition for active and healthy ageing, ECOO, IAPB (International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness) and GCOA (Global Coalition on Aging), [sent a joint letter](#) to the EU Commissioner in charge of Democracy and Demography, Vice-President Dubravka Šuica. A meeting with Astrid Dentler, her cabinet member in charge of ageing, took place in April, during which the three organisations outlined the importance of acknowledging vision in all future EU policies and initiatives related to ageing. Over 73% of people with vision loss are older adults. Without the ability to see, people struggle to learn, read or gain fulfilling employment, and will be more likely to suffer depression, exclusion and die earlier. ECOO together with its partners will continue to engage on this topic at EU-level as further initiatives are planned to be published.



EUROPEAN HEALTH DATA SPACE

On 3 May 2021 the European Commission published a public consultation on the European Health Data Space (EHDS). The consultation runs until 26 July 2021. The primary purpose of the EHDS is to enable better access to health data by both individuals and health professionals for healthcare purposes. The secondary purpose is to enable access to healthcare data for research and innovation, as well as for policy-making and legislation. The EHDS consultation paper also looks at the role of digital health services and products and the role of Artificial Intelligence in healthcare.

ECOO responded to the consultation on the roadmap for proposals for the EHDS in February 2021. As a member of the e-Health Steering Group (eHSG), ECOO has attended and contributed to a number of seminars and working groups during the development of the proposals. We will continue

to do so, as well as responding to this consultation. The focus of our response will be on the benefits for stakeholders and also the costs to healthcare professionals of facilitating control, access to and transmission of healthcare data for healthcare purpose, and (separately) for secondary purposes such as research and policy; how and whether access to healthcare data held by private stakeholders (which could include optical practices) should be governed and incentivised; and the perceived benefits and risks of telehealth, how it might change the relationship between a patient and a healthcare provider and how it should be regulated.

YOU CAN READ THE FULL CONSULTATION HERE

https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12663-Digital-health-data-and-services-the-European-health-data-space_en





ECOO PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ISSUED POSITION PAPER “MYOPIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY & ITS MANAGEMENT BY ECPS”

Commonly known as short-sightedness, people with Myopia experience blurred distance vision. This is due to refractive error caused by excessive growth of the eye (axial length). Therefore, myopic individuals require optical correction to experience clear vision.

Worldwide, Myopia is one of the leading causes of preventable blindness and vision impairment in the working age population, and the prevalence of Myopia is increasing worldwide. In Europe, both the prevalence and magnitude (increased

refractive error) of Myopia continue to increase at a substantial rate. By 2050, it has been estimated 1 in every 2 people may be myopic, with the prevalence significantly higher in younger generations.

The purpose of this Position Paper is to provide information, to Eye Care Professionals (ECPs), policy makers, parents and other health professionals, regarding guidance relating to Myopia and Myopia Management (Control) that will be of benefit to parents of children with Myopia.

READ THE FULL POSITION PAPER

<https://www.ecoo.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ECOO-Position-Paper-Myopia-May-2021.pdf>





MEMBER UPDATES

OPTOMETRISTS PART OF IRELAND'S VACCINATION PROGRAMME

By Martin O'Brien, Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI)



Martin O'Brien FAOI & AOI President John Weldon FAOI at the Aviva Stadium mass vaccination centre.

At the ECOO General Assembly in April, the Association of Optometrists Ireland reported that optometrists were included in the list of regulated professions to be included as vaccinators in the Irish COVID-19 vaccination programme. The publication of Statutory Instrument SI81/2021 enabling this was a breakthrough for the profession in Ireland. Optometrists are now included alongside dentists, pharmacists, nurses and doctors as professions allowed to complete training to administer Covid-19 vaccines by injection. At that point there had been a number of optometrists who had completed the training but none who had started actually injecting members of the public.

Over recent years, regulation under CORU, the Irish healthcare regulator, has seen a huge change in the legislation governing the profession, with diagnosis and treatment now allowed, albeit with work still to do in widening the range of drugs permitted for treatment by optometrists in Ireland. However, the Standards of Proficiency for Registration with the Optical Registration Board – CORU – stated that only non-parenteral administration of medications was permitted at registration (drops, ointment, tablets etc, i.e. not by a route that involves breaking the skin like an injection).

It was clearly evident that, in the event of a mass vaccination

programme, professionals other than medical practitioners would need to be involved in giving the injections to the public. In Ireland, pharmacists and medical practitioners (and certain groups of nurses/midwives) were already included in the list of professions able to administer a vaccine. The AOI therefore began lobbying for the inclusion of optometrists and preparing the groundwork to ensure that appropriate education and training was in place.

The initial legislation change included a full cohort of nurses followed by physiotherapists (also registered under CORU). This was followed by SI 81/2021 which included optometrists and dentists at the same time in the list of professions allowed to vaccinate. Once this legislation was in place the Health Service Executive (HSE) put together an expert group to oversee the education/training requirements for optometrists as vaccinators (which included preparing some education content for the HSE e-learning platform).

Recruitment for vaccinator roles was sub-contracted to a private recruitment company by the HSE on behalf of the Department of Health, which has been a particularly challenging process overall with a significant amount of red-tape. However, in early May 2021, AOI President John Weldon FAOI and AOI Chair of Education Martin O'Brien FAOI (ECOO Delegate) became the first optometrists to administer a vaccine in the HSE mass vaccination centre at the Aviva Stadium. Since then many other



optometrists have been appointed to vaccinator roles, with more being included on a weekly basis.

It is heartening to see optometrists working alongside pharmacists, medical practitioners, nurses and

other professions, recognised as healthcare professionals as part of the Irish Government pandemic response and seeing the scope of practice for the profession expanded.

ONLINE OVN CONGRESS WAS A GREAT SUCCESS!



On Monday 15 March 2021, the Optometristen Vereniging Nederland (OVN) congress 2021 Next Level took place. Almost 1000 professionals attended the digital congress and were very enthusiastic. Gabriëlle Janssen, president of Optometrists Association Netherlands, says: «We received 4.7 stars out of 5 as appreciation from the participants. I would like to thank all sponsors, speakers and volunteers who made the first online OVN congress a success!»

The congress was professionally set up. Visitors could easily move between the different 'rooms' and interact with the speakers. The morning started with an interactive talk show where various stimulating topics within the field were discussed. Then a total of six content sessions took place and went into depth for various topics such as myopia control, corneal diseases, Artificial Intelligence, and more.

Additionally, nine companies gave state-of-the-art lectures about their products or services in the partner sessions.

It was also possible to engage in conversation with other colleagues, both known and unknown, during the break via the 'networking roulette'. During this roulette, visitors were randomly paired with one of the other attendees for a video chat. After 5 minutes the chat was closed and you were paired with someone else.

The OVN offered the opportunity to watch both the partner lectures and the substantive lectures at a later time, so that delegates could benefit from all the sessions and learning opportunities.



OPTOMETRY AND CONTACT LENSES (OCL)

A NEW GERMAN PEER REVIEW JOURNAL LAUNCHES JULY 2021

Optometry and Contact Lenses (OCL) is the new official journal of the Association of German Contact Lens Specialists and Optometrists (VDCO), published by the DOZ-Verlag Optische Fachveröffentlichung, GmbH, Heidelberg, Germany.

The Past President of ECOO, Wolfgang Cagnolati, DSc, MSc, FCOptom, FAAO is Editor in Chief of OCL.

The first issue will be published on 1 July 2021.

OCL will be published ten times a year, covering all aspects related to eye and vision care. It publishes scientific and clinical articles as well as case reports focusing on ophthalmic optics, optometry, ophthalmology and related disciplines.

OCL also publishes interviews with public figures in the fields covered by

the journal, book reviews of new and current publications related to eye and vision care as well as association information from VDCO. In addition, each issue also contains a section called "COE Continuing Optometric Education", featuring a COE certified article with a multiple-choice quiz. COE participants can earn one COE credit when they achieve the passing score for the quiz. Each article is peer-reviewed before publication.

36 top-class international experts from the fields of optometry, ophthalmology and related disciplines are part of the Editorial and Scientific Advisory Board.

OCL invites authors anytime to submit clinical and scientific manuscripts for publication related to all aspects of eye and vision care to the Editor in Chief.

OCL is now inviting authors to submit manuscripts for the following OCL Special Issues:

JUNE 2022 Special Issue on "Keratokonus and Ectatic Corneal Diseases".
The submission deadline is 1 November 2021

JULY/AUGUST 2022 Special Issue on "Orthokeratology".
The submission deadline is 1 December 2021

OCTOBER 2022 Special Issue on "Presbyopia - Cause and Management".
The submission deadline is 1 February 2022

DECEMBER 2022 Special Issue on "Artificial Intelligence in Eye Care".
The submission deadline is 1 April 2022.

**AUTHORS AND READERS INFORMATION
IS AVAILABLE IN GERMAN AND ENGLISH**

<http://www.ocl-online.de/>
<http://www.ocl-online.de/en>

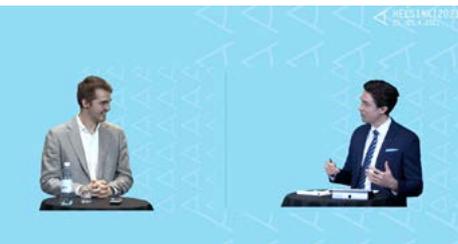




HIGHLIGHTS



Nearly 600 vision and eyecare professional attended the 12th annual conference of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics, co-organised with the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare (NÄE ry) in April. For the first time due to global COVID-restrictions, the event was held completely virtually with lectures, sessions and even the exhibition held on an online platform.



Perttu Pölönen (left) and host Jussi-Pekka Rantanen

“[Vision for the future: forum for optometry and optics](#)” was the general theme setting the scene for forward-looking and solution-oriented discussions involving key opinion leaders, practitioners, and researchers. The conference offered a platform for specialists from over 20 countries to discuss and share the latest research, education and clinical practice in optometry, optics and dispensing, and vision science.

Event highlights included three keynote speeches, which discussed current issues as well as the future of vision and eyecare. The three-day conference started with the speech by an inspiring Finnish speaker and futurist Perttu Pölönen. Rupert Bourne, Professor of Ophthalmology at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at Cambridge University Hospital then continued with an interesting keynote on vision loss. The third keynote was presented by Karen Sparrow, the Head of Global Programme Training at Peek Vision – a non-profit, social impact technology start-up leading ground-breaking work to develop smartphone solutions to reduce avoidable blindness across the world.

The conference programme also included presentations and discussions on many other current

issues like glaucoma, aging and vision loss, digital eye strain, dementia and eyecare, and using technology in the vision therapy room. The online lectures and open paper sessions were widely praised not only for the inspiring speakers and interesting content, but also for the technical implementation – the online platform was easy to use, and the chat function enabled discussion and exchange of views and ideas between participants.

According to Panu Tast, President of the Finnish Association of Vision and Eye Care (NÄE ry), the online event was a great success thanks to the joint co-operation and efforts of organisers, speakers and participants.

“We are very proud of the work that resulted in EAEO Helsinki2021. I’d like to thank everyone on board: EAEO, ECOO, all our sponsors and the nearly 100 speakers who committed to our event, but most of all, the hundreds of participants who really made the event special. We’ve received a great deal of positive feedback about the programme’s comprehensiveness and relevance. The optical field is currently at an inflection point – eye health issues and technological advancements in particular are the field’s major current developments, which we wanted to highlight in the programme.”





UPDATE FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY



WHO

WCO is the only global optometric organization to be in official relations with WHO and has renewed the collaboration agreement for 2021-2024.

INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

WCO has a position on the board of IAPB, the overarching alliance for the global eye health sector, with more than 150 organisations in over 100 countries working together for a world where everyone has universal access to eye care.

LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY PROGRAM

Building on the past successful advocacy program, this 8-week online program will be offered later this year. The goal is to give leadership and advocacy tools to enable them to effect change at both policy and practice levels in their countries.

WEBINARS

“Dry Eye: The New Frontier” webinar will take place on June 16, 2021.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

WCO will be offering a day of continuing education geared to both practising optometrists and optometric educators on November 20, 2021.

Dr. Scott Mundle represents WCO on the Board of Trustees.

MYOPIA MANAGEMENT: STANDARD OF CARE RESOLUTION

WCO Board of Directors unanimously approved a resolution advising optometrists to incorporate a standard of care for myopia management within their practices. This has been accepted and adapted by many WCO member organization globally. The resolution can be accessed in 5 languages at <http://bit.ly/WCOMyopiaManagement>.

TOOLKITS

We are in the final stages of developing a legislation, registration, and standards toolkit to assist member countries in developing associations, setting up regulatory bodies and expanding scope.

STAFF CHANGES

Garryn Marlen has taken a position with the AOA, and we wish her the best. Alyssa Callaghan has been promoted to Operations and Communications Manager. In April, Alli Bartnick joined us as our Marketing and Communications Assistant, and Katie Alonso joined us as our Administrative Assistant.





UPCOMING MEETINGS

The ECOO autumn meetings will take place on **15 October 2021** in an online format. These will include the Committee meetings, a workshop and the General Assembly. The meetings of the European Qualifications Board and the Executive Committee will take place on 14 October 2021. Members will be informed of all details at least one month ahead of the meetings.

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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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