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DEAR ECOO MEMBERS,



It is hard to believe that it has now been a full 2 years since we last met in person in Athens 2019. When we first went to online meetings because of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we held short functional meetings to carry out our necessary business. However, as the pandemic continued, we have progressed to fuller meetings and tried to incorporate some of the features of our usual General Assemblies such as workshops and guest speakers which we know members value. We have also held regular seminars on a variety of topics, such as myopia management and vision and driving, which continue to be of interest to our members.

At our October GA our workshop was dedicated to sustainability. The recent UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) brought parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. So, I am really pleased that ECOO has

adopted this as a priority issue and that we are actively engaging in this area; this is a must for all of us, regardless of our modes of practice or business.

Our virtual meetings have meant that we have already contributed to the sustainability agenda, and we will continue to make use of virtual meetings in future. But I am sure you will all agree that we have missed those opportunities to network and share experiences outside the formal meeting settings that physical meetings offer.

I am aware as I write this message that some countries in Europe are taking new measures to fight COVID-19, so I hope that you all keep safe. I also hope that we will be able to meet in person at the ECOO Spring General Assembly in Dublin in May 2022 and I want to encourage you all to support the team at the Association of Optometrists Ireland who are working very hard to make this a safe and successful event for all of us!

Dr Cindy Tromans
ECOO President



Autumn Meetings 2021

ECOO ONLINE AUTUMN GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

Our autumn General Assembly was again held online, and again we were delighted at the level of participation and commitment by members. The meeting was held on 15 October, the day after World Sight Day, and at the GA we shared with members our new [Blue Book infographic](#), which also marked the first anniversary of the publication of the Blue Book.

At the GA, members voted to accept an application for membership from the newly formed Dansk Selskab for Optometri (Danish Society of Optometry). The DSO is concerned with professional and scientific matters and aims to provide clinical guidelines and education for optometrists. It works alongside the two Danish associations who are already ECOO members.

As part of the autumn GA meetings we held a workshop on climate action and sustainability, looking at how optical professionals can address this challenge in their daily practice. The workshop was led by Imran Khan of the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), who opened with a presentation setting out the connections between

climate change and eye health and eye care services. He also introduced the IAPB's [Call to Action](#) and [Guide](#) for environmentally sustainable practices in the eye health sector. Attendees then discussed these issues in four breakout groups, focussing on patients and customers, manufacturers and suppliers, businesses and practices, and the role of national professional associations. This workshop is the first step in ECOO's new work programme on sustainability.

The Professional Services Committee opened a discussion on charging for optometric services, with breakout groups looking at the pros and cons of different approaches. They also presented their plans for the second paper on myopia management.

The Public Affairs and Economics committee gave delegates an update on work being undertaken with the Professional Services committee to develop a joint statement on the role of digital services in eye care. They also presented an overview of the initial analysis of the responses to the survey on market trends they had sent to ECOO members over the summer of 2021.

EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS IN OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS

OVER 500 PROFESSIONALS HOLD THE ECOO EUROPEAN DIPLOMA IN OPTOMETRY



Graduation Ceremony at the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht in the Netherlands

The European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) has been awarded to over 500 professionals since it was established. This year 48 students from the Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz, Hochschule für Technik, Institut für Optometrie in Olten, Switzerland, the University College of Southeast Norway and the University of Applied Sciences Utrecht in the Netherlands

held their graduation ceremonies and joined the pool of “EurOptoms”. The EDO has been developed to harmonise the professional and educational system for optometry at the highest standard throughout Europe. A number of academic institutions from across Europe are already accredited or currently undergoing the accreditation process.

FIND OUT MORE ON

<https://www.ecoo.info/european-diploma/>



EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS IN OPTICS AWARDED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY NEWLY ACCREDITED OHI - OPTOMETRIE & HÖRAKUSTIK INITIATIVE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA

In 2020 the OHI - Optometrie & Hörakustik Initiative in Vienna, Austria - was the first academic institution to be accredited by ECOO with the European Qualifications in Optics (EQO). The EQO is set at the entry standard for optics at a European level and is in line with ECOO's mission to harmonise and develop educational standards and the scope of practice for the profession.

On 9 October 2021, the first graduation ceremony took place where students were formally awarded the EQO by ECOO's past-President and Treasurer Peter Gumpelmayer. In total 57 students have achieved the EQO to date. Each student has to present on and evidence completion of 100 practical 'real-world' case studies as well as a project paper based on a set of minimum quality criteria.

«It is very clear to me that the profession can only develop together at the European level,» emphasised OHI Managing Director Harald Belyus. «This is why it was particularly important for the management of the OHI to follow a European path.»

«The professional world is becoming increasingly mobile and with the harmonisation of practical skills and educational standards of optometry in Europe, it is increasingly necessary to think outside the box.» added OHI Managing Director Walter Gutstein.



ON THE EU AGENDA

MEDICAL DEVICES REGULATION – WORK STILL ONGING

Although the Medical Devices Regulation came into force earlier this year, in May, ECOO continues work to clarify a number of details. The non-binding Q&A on adaptable medical devices was published in March. However, given that the term “adaptable medical device” is not included in the MDR itself, ECOO has followed-up with a request to clarify certain aspects of the document.

Several other important documents are still in development and ECOO has provided input on behalf of members. This includes a guidance document on classification of medical devices, published in October, which provides information on how devices are classified as to their risk groups, e.g. spectacle frames and ophthalmic lenses are class 1 devices; and a Q&A on Articles 13 and 14 of the MDR about the role of distributors. ECOO also provided input to the common specifications covering non-corrective contact lenses to ensure that optometrists and contact lens specialists are also included as professionals who can address any issues related to contact lenses.

DRIVING LICENCES DIRECTIVE – ECOO SUBMITS PROPOSALS

Following the public consultation in May 2021, ECOO engaged with the European Commission to provide input to Annex III, which covers the visual requirements for Driving in the Driving Licences Directive. ECOO emphasised the need to take vision and driving seriously by ensuring visual acuity is measured adequately and that no professional group authorised to carry out visual assessments for fitness to drive is excluded. A public consultation is

expected later this year or early next year and the Commission is expected to publish their proposed Directive at the end of 2022.

VISION AND AGEING – DEVELOPING A POLICY BRIEF.

The Commission’s Green Paper on Ageing, published in February 2021, is being followed up with various different programmes of work. With the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) and the Global Coalition on Aging (GCOA), ECOO actively engages with the Commission to identify opportunities for vision to be included in future policy areas covering ageing.

DIGITAL - EUROPEAN HEALTH DATA SPACE

In July ECOO submitted a consultation response to the Commission on the European Health Data Space, focussing on why eye care providers need to be included in plans for an EHDS, to be able to both access and input data, and the future possibilities but also limitations of tele-health and Artificial Intelligence in healthcare provision. These consultations tend to be very technical in scope but ECOO monitors them all, and attends meetings and responds where input can be provided.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has been added to ECOO’s priority policy areas. This is an area of growing concern for eye care professionals. ECOO will support members to understand any future regulation and guidance that may affect but more importantly to be pro-active in addressing the global challenge.

WORLD SIGHT DAY 2021

ECOO was proud to participate in World Sight Day, on 15 October, supporting the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) campaign #loveyoureyes

ECOO members also supported and promoted World Sight Day, some of those activities are described here.



SLOVENIA

On World Sight Day, the Optical Association of Slovenija (DOOS) had a unique opportunity to promote healthy vision on the Slovenia TV SLO-1 channel when the very popular TV documentary leader, Mojca Mavec, broadcasted a [15 minute live discussion](#) with the President of the Association, and ECOO Vice President, Dr Matjaž Mihelčič. They addressed several questions including: Is refractive error hereditary? How serious can myopia be? What can one do to prevent myopia from growing? Which are the hidden ocular diseases

that do not present dramatically? Should one have regular vision exams? The show leader mentioned the fact that many children had experienced problems with their vision due to online schooling over the last year and a half during the pandemic. This observation was translated into the broader context of excessive use of computer screens, which may lead to Computer Vision Syndrome. A discussion on how to ease this issue followed, with recommendations for good workplace ergonomics. At the end of the show, there was time to explain the physiology of near vision and the specificity of gazing at the LCD screen.



The TV show was a good opportunity to highlight to the general public some common problems with vision and to also raise awareness of the profession of optometrists. Indeed, in recent years the profile of our profession has increased due to explicit advertising by optical companies, to some radio and TV shows (like this one) and due to the growing number of optometrists employed in private practices who actively promote the profession.

We have achieved all this despite the lack of regulation and lack of determination of the scope of practice. But here there is some good news: A group of Representatives in the Parliament recently posed a question to the Ministry for Health: How can it be that optometry is still not being recognized and included in public services? The Ministry immediately called the Association to a meeting where the General Secretary of the state was present. The discussion was promising. We will report on how this progresses.

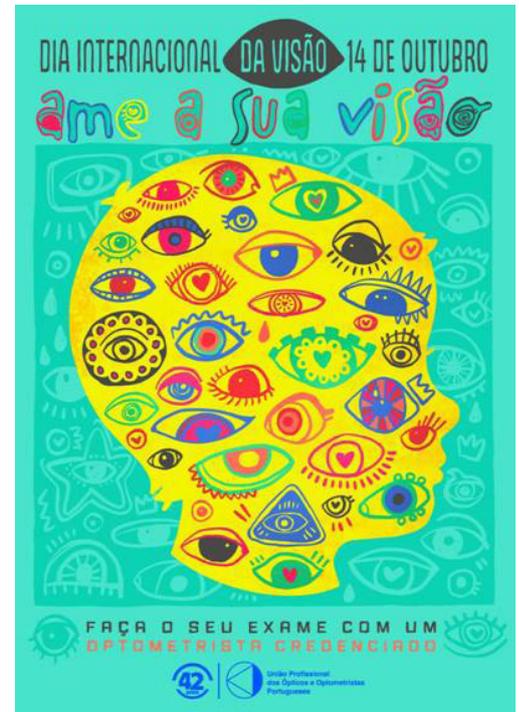


PORTUGAL

This year UPOOP decided to celebrate World Sight Day throughout the week of 11 to 15 October, developing a campaign about different types of visual health problems, particularly in children. In this context, this poster created by UPOOP was shared with its members:

UPOOP encouraged its members to publish the slogan “LOVE YOUR EYES” among their patients and, on 14 October, made a small institutional film, showing the importance of attention and care given to children’s vision.

Between 18 to 29 October the film was broadcast in 20 advertising spots on two national television channels - TV24horas and SIC News.



YOU CAN WATCH THE FILM HERE:

<https://tinyurl.com/5h9scm2m> 



DENMARK

And in Denmark, Optikerforeningen ran their campaign in collaboration with another Danish eye health organization on facebook #tjekditsyn (Tjek dit syn | Facebook) and Instagram (Historier • Instagram).



COUNTRY UPDATES



UK MEMBER ABDO HOLDS SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABILITY IN OPTICS

In a unique initiative more than 250 dispensing opticians, contact lens opticians and optometrists joined manufacturers in an event coordinated by the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) to kick start the optical industry's work towards long term sustainability.

Keynote speaker at the SEE Summit on the Environment, Nick Bridge, the UK Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Climate Change, spoke about the global context for climate change as well as UK actions to address key issues.

Other speakers included James Conway, Chief Executive of Millmead, a UK manufacturer, who spoke about the range of changes the company had introduced, from re-usable water bottles for staff, led lighting in their buildings to their policy on recycling and compacting waste. Research optometrist Sarah Smith talked about

the different modalities of contact lens wear and her research project to analyse data relating to the amount of waste that different modalities of wear generate. A variety of questions from those attending were discussed by a panel of experts that included Jayne Abel, Chair of the Optical Suppliers' Association Sustainability Committee, Simon Berry, an optometrist from Durham and Dispensing Optician Ruth Shelton. Jayne Abel informed attendees that the OSA were developing a Green Charter which will aim, "to ensure that suppliers in the UK optical industry ask the all the right questions and take all the right moves and to help educate all our customers too".

In the final session Antonia Chitty, ABDO's Head of Communications, launched ABDO's Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool. The tool is designed for all working in practice as well as business owners and managers. It covers an extensive range of what you can do to become more sustainable and is open to anyone to use.

You can find out more at the [ABDO SEE hub](#), where you can watch the event recording, take the sustainability self-assessment, and find out what the industry is doing to become more sustainable.

EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS

*Nick Rumney, President of the Academy,
reports on developments over the past year.*



I am sure many of you are wondering what has happened to the EA00 as we emerged from lockdown. Well, the EA00 is still very much here though administration of office tasks has moved to Kellie Smyth at the AOI in Dublin. At this point I would like to say a big thank you to Ana Maria Nia on behalf of the Board of Directors who has been the life and soul of the Academy since before Pula 2018. She steered us through a very successful cooperative conference with our Italian partners in Rome 2019 and of course we were all set for heading north to Helsinki 2020.

Ultimately, we all know what happened next but nevertheless the Academy were able to support several lockdown special interest groups in 2020 and we were able to share a virtual meeting in Helsinki 2021.

The normal cycle of events would be for the elected Vice President Bernd Schwenson to take on the Presidency in 2021, but he had to withdraw for personal health reasons in the summer of 2020. I volunteered to

remain Chair until 2022 when we are scheduled to resume the joint ECOO/EA00 annual spring meeting and conference hosted with our partners the AOI in Dublin. An auspicious year as Ireland will be celebrating 100 years as an independent country.

Our Chair of the Academy EdComm, José Manuel González Meijome, will be working with AOI Head of Education Martin O'Brien and will shortly be calling for papers. Meanwhile, our Fellowship coordinator Rupal Lovell-Patel is already receiving applications for Fellowship.

The Academy is very grateful to the support received from the AOI and I would like to thank Sean McCrave, Eugene Lynch and Mary Coyle as well as Kelli Smyth as they have picked up the pieces. Please bear with us as everything settles down.

Academy contact details remain admin@eaoo.info



UPDATE FROM THE WORLD COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY

Our volunteers and staff have been working tirelessly to launch new programming as well as continue programming that has been affected by COVID-19. Listed below are a few of the major initiatives we have been working on so far:

Global State of Optometry Survey

- Launching a 2–3-year project to map global optometry including human resources, scope of practice, education, and legislative regulations.

Fellowships

- In addition to the traditional fellowships offered by WCO, we have added fellowships for Educator Mentorships.
- The goal is for educators from established and developing programs to mentor faculty from less established programs.

Advocacy & Leadership Program

- Building on the past successful advocacy program, this year's 8-week online program began in September. The goals and expectations are to have the participants graduate with the leadership and advocacy tools to enable them to effect change at both policy and practice levels in their countries.

EYES AROUND THE WORLD - A GLOBAL DAY OF LEARNING

On 20 November 2021, WCO live-streamed a variety of lectures for practicing clinicians and optometric educators across 3 time zones for a full day of continuing education. Multiple lectures were COPE & CET authorized.

WORLD SIGHT DAY 2021

This World Sight Day, WCO joined with [IAPB](#) as a World Sight Day Global Partner. Hear from WCO's Immediate Past President, Current President, and President-Elect on their messages for this global day of awareness. [Read More.](#)

MYOPIA RESOURCE SITE

This site, jointly developed by the World Council of Optometry and CooperVision, provides resources and approaches to enable optometrists regardless of geographic location to apply a standard of care to manage the condition. [Click here](#) to visit the site.



The MYOPIA epidemic

myopia.worldcouncilofoptometry.info

Everything you need to
know about making myopia
management standard of care in
one place!

Visit our [online resource](#) today!



UPCOMING MEETINGS

We are delighted to announce that the ECOO spring General Assembly and meetings and the EAEO Academy Event will be taking place in Dublin at the Aviva Stadium from 12 to 15 May 2022.

The ECOO meetings will take place 13-14 May. 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 12 May 2022.

We will send full details to all members when registrations open. Members will be informed of the detailed agenda at least one month ahead of the meetings.

In the meantime, to find out more visit the website at <https://visiondublin2022.com>

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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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