



Sustainable practice: the role of eye care professionals

There is now a consensus that action is urgently needed on climate change - the European Union is one of the 2043 global jurisdictions to have declared a climate emergency. We all have our part to play. But it isn't always easy to see the immediate impact of our actions or indeed to know what role do eye care professionals have in this matter?

Earlier this year the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) published a [Call to Action](#) and [Guide](#) for environmentally sustainable practices in the eye health sector. These two documents set out how climate change impacts on eye health and eye care services, and how eye care services contribute to climate change. But most importantly they then suggest how optical professionals can address this challenge in their daily practice.

The 10 key areas of action include encouraging eye care professionals to take a leadership, education and advocacy role, to reduce the use of fossil fuels, conserve water and travel less in daily business, and to re-use and recycle wherever possible. And most importantly it sets out four principles of sustainable practice:

1. Disease prevention and health promotion.
2. Patient education and patient empowerment
3. Lean service delivery
4. Preferential use of medical technologies with lower environmental impact

As ECOO we officially launched our sustainability work strand in 2021 and are engaging with our members across Europe on the topic. We are heartened to see that many professionals, practices and associations have already started to take action – be that sourcing sustainable products, reducing packaging, or helping to make recycling easier.

In addition to the environmental and social reasons to take action, there is a sound business case. Sustainability matters to many customers/patients and can provide a marketing edge. Increasingly patients and customers will want to know what steps professionals have taken to be sustainable in their practice. This may for instance take the shape of seeking frames made from recycled or sustainable materials, or wanting to know that packaging, solution bottles and indeed old spectacles can be recycled.

Tackling climate change is a long-term and common effort which involves education, and sharing knowledge, expertise and ideas. It is important to remember that that every action makes a difference and small changes can have a big impact. ECOO aims to be at the forefront of this debate and promotes good practice with its member and with stakeholders from the sector.

About ECOO

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) represents the interests of optometrists and opticians across 25 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. Website: www.ecoo.info