



EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF



OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS



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Newsletter

President's Message

"The eyes have one language everywhere"

Dear colleagues, dear friends!

George Herbert (1593–1633), a Welsh poet, orator and Anglican priest, who had prominent positions at Cambridge University and Parliament used this quotation, which could be the basis for ECOO's activities to unify the education and scope of practice of optometry and optics in Europe.

ECOO's history goes back to the year 1960 when the six founder members of the European Economic Community (EEC) Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and The Netherlands founded the Groupement des Opticiens du Marché Commun (GOMAC) and the year 1992 with the amalgamation of GOMAC and the Pan European Group (PEG) into the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO).

Today ECOO represents member organisations from 30 European countries with more than 75,000 practitioners.

Next year, at our meeting in Dresden, ECOO will celebrate 50 years of organised optometry and optics in Europe. I am looking forward to a great event organized by our German colleagues.

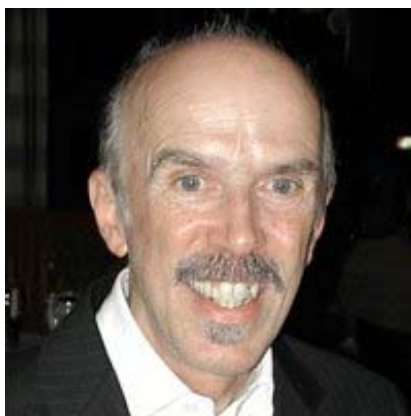
One of the reasons why optometry is becoming more and more important for the public is the rising cost of medical care and the declining numbers of ophthalmologists in more and more countries of Europe; for that reason, primary eye health care is transferred increasingly to optometrists and opticians. But the ability of optometrists and opticians to develop beyond their traditional handicraft activities and to offer primary health care is not uniform; and that is the challenge and opportunity for ECOO and optometry in Europe.

At a time of almost unaffordable health-care systems, in which there are not even enough places for interns for today's students of medicine, let alone specialist education, optometry is an alternative in the field of eye and vision care.

It was against that background that ECOO established the European Diploma of Optometry and that ECOO initiated the European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

The European Academy will play a central role in advancing and promoting research and education in optometry and optics and related subjects.

ECOO as the European professional body for optometry and optics and the European Academy as the educational body for our



profession will together make optometry and optics even stronger for the needs of our profession and the benefit for the public (as I mentioned in ECOO's November newsletter).

Looking back at the year which is now ending, I think I can say that the activities of ECOO and its member organisations have been a success for ECOO and optometry in Europe. Therefore I would like to thank everybody who has been involved in ECOO's business and that of its different member organisations. I would especially like to thank all ECOO's officers, committee chairmen and members and also the representatives from the different countries who also have had an important part in ECOO's success and the

development of optometry in Europe.

Let me finish my editorial with the words of Larry Wilde, the author of "The Merry Book of Christmas": "never worry about the size of your Christmas tree. In the eyes of children, they are all 30 feet tall."

Wishing you and your families a merry Christmas and a new year full of health, prosperity and happiness!

Wolfgang Cagnolati

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2009: A Year of Progress for ECOO

It is worth repeating the point: ECOO has member organisations from 30 countries of Europe, which directly or indirectly represent 75,000 opticians and optometrists throughout the continent. ECOO is recognised by the institutions of the European Union. ECOO is part of the governance of the World Council of Optometry, which is recognised by the World Health Organisation. ECOO can be proud of its progress in 2009 and the preceding years. Yet, at the same time, ECOO's ambitions are greater than its resources. It has a small budget, a secretariat which is part-time only, and it relies on officers and collaborators who are unpaid volunteers. The challenge to ECOO, therefore, is to determine its priorities in the years to come. (Another challenge is to persuade our French colleagues to join ECOO.)

There is no doubt that ECOO exists to provide a forum for communication between its member organisations, with other organisations and companies in the sector, and with the outside world, including politicians, legislators and civil servants. Here ECOO's progress has been striking in 2009. Under the presidency of Wolfgang Cagnolati, the publication of regular newsletters has continued. ECOO's website has been improved, and more information has been posted on the public sections of the website. ECOO has also introduced two innovations: first, the issuing of press releases aimed at a wider audience on clinical and consumer subjects which the profession highlights and on which it gives advice; and, second, the commissioning and publication of position papers by acknowledged experts, again on clinical and consumer subjects, by which ECOO seeks to be seen as a source of information and advice. (See the further article below.)

ECOO continues to be active in the field of education. The ECOO European Diploma of Optometry is being updated and restructured. Its external examiners have been helpful with their comments and suggestions. The General Optical Council (the regulatory authority in the UK) remains interested in the Diploma. A proposal has been made to introduce, alongside the Diploma, a separate ECOO certificate in optics. (The proposal is currently being studied by the Board of Management.) And significant progress has been made in the pilot projects to accredit other academic qualifications as an alternative route towards being awarded the ECOO Diploma. (See the further article below.) The step towards accreditation is potentially highly significant for the future of optometric and optical education in Europe.

The apex of 2009 was ECOO's creation of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics. As everybody knows, the Academy has its inaugural meeting in May in Lausanne. This was a happy occasion, and ECOO looks forward to the membership of the Academy growing to include all the relevant academic institutions throughout

Europe and as many individual researchers and practitioners as possible. Like a growing child, the Academy will crawl, then walk and then run. We wish it well.

It is clear that the publication in 2008 of ECOO's 'Blue Book' on the profession in Europe has helped many to understand better the scope and regulation of the profession in many of our countries. That they remain so different is, frankly, a problem – not only for ECOO but also for the profession in those countries where either regulation is non-existent or the scope of practice is severely restricted. The Blue Book was a first step. Much more work is still to be done. And related to this question are the economic aspects of practice, dispensing and selling optical appliances. As our discussions in ECOO in 2009 have shown, for example about the internet, our member organisations want more guidance from ECOO about regulations and, by implication, about business models.

Inevitably, in such a large organisation bringing together members from so many countries, different countries have different priorities. Thus, in 2010, ECOO will ask its member organisations to explain in detail what they want from ECOO. Their priorities will help ECOO to set its priorities for the future. In reply, ECOO will also ask its member organisation to make greater use of ECOO's website.

Finally, ECOO wishes to thank its sponsors for their generosity in 2009: CibaVision, Johnson & Johnson, Transitions Optical and Hecht Contactlinsen.

Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Renews Support for ECOO

Johnson & Johnson Vision Care has kindly renewed its financial support for ECOO, following a recent meeting between the two organisations. ECOO's President, Wolfgang Cagnolati, has expressed his gratitude to J&J's Senior Director of Professional Affairs, John Meyler, for the company's generosity.

ECOO and JJVC look forward to working together to enhance contact lens awareness and education across Europe.

CONGRESS ON **2010** **European Optometric Education**

BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC, FEBRUARY 5-7, 2010

ALL-EUROPEAN MEETING FOR OPTICAL AND OPTOMETRIC EDUCATORS

The very successful congress that Association of Czech Opticians has initiated about nine years ago and for the last two years has been organising in close cooperation with ECOO will continue.

Next Brno congress will be held in February 2010 in new meeting rooms of a brand new Pavilion of the Brno Exhibition Centre. The Congress will be two days long and believes to be attractive for educators from all Europe. In past two years about 120 educators from 25 countries have participated in the event and we wish this success will continue.

Please, encourage your national educational institutions to participate as the Brno Congress is very important platform for the harmonisation of optometry education and thus all the profession within the EU. All detail information including programme, lecturers, accommodation details and also the on-line registration can be found on www.scoo.cz accessible also through www.ecoo.info

Programme:

Saturday, February 6, 2010

Lectures:

Communication with Patients; Colleagues and other Professionals; Record Keeping; Optometrists Providing Optometry Eye Care; Developing VIMOC and Case Studies; ICEE and the Mozambique Eye Care Project; Cataract; Optometric Management of Macular Degeneration; BVV The Influence of Brno Congress: New Optometry Studies and Practice in School of Optometry, University Novi Sad, Serbia; Building up primary eye-care practice in The Netherlands; New Standards in Russian System of Eye Care Professionals Training.

Sunday, February 7, 2010

Accreditation of the ECOO European Diploma in Optometry:

Why the European Diploma?; European Diploma Structure and Examinations; Why Accreditation?; Accreditation Process; Experiences - Accreditation Pilot Project (Buskerud University College, Norway and Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic); Accreditation - What Have We Learned?; European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

All questions and requirements address to Mr. Pavel Šebek, congress2010@volny.cz, 00420 777317117

Question for European Court:

Does the Sale of Contact Lenses Constitute Medical Advice?

A Hungarian court has asked the European Court of Justice for an interpretation of the EU's directive on electronic commerce, in relation to the sale of contact lenses via the internet. In particular, the question arises whether a sale via the internet requires the physical examination of a patient ('medical advice') under the directive. If not, then the further question arises: is the Hungarian law requiring contact lenses to be sold only in 'specialist medical accessory shops' incompatible with the EU's treaty provisions on the free movement of goods within the single European market.

The case (C-108/09) will be heard by the European Court during 2010. A preliminary ruling will be issued thereafter.

EU Ministers Fail to Agree Directive on Cross-Border Healthcare

Meeting at the beginning of December, ministers of the EU's member states failed to agree on the draft directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. According to CEPLIS in latest newsletter, several member states were worried that, once approved, the directive would give patients travelling abroad an entitlement to be treated by private healthcare providers which they would not be able to have in their home country. Trinidad Jiménez García-Herrera, Spain's minister of health, insisted that she did not want to exclude private providers but wanted guarantees on quality. Spain also feared being faced with the bill for the healthcare costs of the large number of pensioners from northern Europe who have retired in its country.

The European Commission says that it may now abandon the proposal, leaving the European Court of Justice to decide when patients are entitled to be reimbursed for healthcare treatment in another EU member state.

According to the Commission, EU member states spend about 1% of their public healthcare budgets on cross-border care, mainly on patients with rare diseases and people living in border areas. It estimates that the directive would increase costs by about €90 million a year, two thirds of which would be administrative costs.

CEPLIS is the European Council of the Liberal Professions and is based in Brussels.

ECOO Accreditation

Several years ago the General Assembly agreed that ECOO should develop a role as an educational accreditation agency. Now an accreditation scheme has been designed and it is being piloted with Optometry/Optics training programmes in two ECOO member states. The basis of the scheme is that the training programmes are benchmarked against the learning outcomes and competencies of the European Diploma

What are the benefits of an ECOO Accreditation scheme?

All European Optometry/Optics programmes can be compared against an agreed international standard, the European Diploma.

It will form the basis of a system for offering exemptions from parts, or all, of the European Diploma examinations to graduates of accredited programmes.

Training Institutions will be encouraged to match their programmes to all or part of the competency-based European Diploma. This will help to harmonize Optometry within Europe.

It may help training institutions, in the course of their national academic accreditation, if they can demonstrate that all or part of their programme meets the European standard.

National "competent authorities" may find it easier to evaluate the training of applicants from another EU country. This will help to facilitate free movement of professionals.

How does the Accreditation scheme work?

The syllabus of the European Diploma defines the required level of knowledge and clinical skill as the Learning Outcomes and Competencies of each of the twenty-four theoretical and clinical topics. The Institution applying for Accreditation uses the European Diploma syllabus as a self-assessment document and identifies within its own syllabus those topics in which its graduates meet the European Diploma standards. Following verification of the self-assessment document, graduates of the programme may be given exemption by ECOO from part or all of the European Diploma examination.

How far have we got?

Two optometry departments, Buskerud University College, Kongsberg, Norway and Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic, have agreed to take part in the Accreditation pilot project and are at the stage of completing the self-assessment document. It is anticipated that these self-assessment documents will be submitted to ECOO in the spring of 2010.

What next?

On Sunday, 7 February 2010, at the European Optometric Education meeting in Brno, the Accreditation scheme will be discussed. The staff of Kongsberg and Olomouc will present their experience with the scheme so far and their hopes for its further development. There will be opportunity for general debate and we invite all interested training institutions to attend and contribute.

Position Papers to Come from ECOO

ECOO has two positions 'in the pipeline' and due to be published early in 2010. The first concerns the contents of an optometric eye examination. It describes the elements and procedures that would constitute a full primary eye exam, taking into account the different clinical conditions of patients. The paper also recognises the variations in law between countries, some of which reserve certain procedures to the medical profession. However, an increasing number of countries in Europe are moving towards a 'full scope' optometric eye examination, although the use of diagnostic and therapeutic drugs by optometrists is still confined to a small minority of countries.

The other position paper, on vision and driving, considers the possibilities for influencing national governments in their implementation of European legislation on driving licences. The EU directive is due to come into effect in 2013. In the meantime, governments are preparing changes to their national laws. The directive allows member states to require licence-holders (drivers) to have more frequent checks of their physical (and visual) health than now. The question is whether governments will introduce such requirements and on which conditions. The position paper also summarises some of the scientific evidence relating to vision and driving. The separate issue of which profession can test drivers' visual functions remains a delicate one in some countries.

News from Turkey



ECOO's member, the Turkish Association of Optical and Optometric Professions (TAOOP), under the energetic leadership of its president, Abdullah Aydin, has been active in promoting the benefits of sight tests in elementary schools in Turkey. In a period of 3-4 weeks in October and November - and with the assistance of ophthalmologists and the authorities - TAOOP arranged for the Snellen-testing of 190,000 students at 739 schools, of which 60,000 had further testing and 10,000 were prescribed corrective spectacles. The project was based in the town of Mardin

in south eastern Turkey, a country where primary eye healthcare is scarce in some areas. The project will continue until May 2010 and be extended to ten other towns and cities. The intention is to test the sight of over three million children in over 6,000 schools.

TAOOP has also launched another series of further education courses for dispensing opticians in Turkey, in collaboration with the Further Education Centre of Fatih University (FÜSEM). Courses are being offered in eight towns and cities to the value of 96 credit hours. The courses cover physical and visual optics, ocular pathology and anatomy, contact lenses, dispensing and management and marketing. TAOOP recently signed an agreement with the government's agency on professional qualifications (MYK) regarding the fixing of competency standards for the profession.



Cyprus Optical Association (1979)

Member of the



EUROPEAN COUNCIL OF OPTOMETRY AND OPTICS

Press Release



Adolfos Kannetis

The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus has appointed a new General Optical Council for the next two years as announced in the official Gazette on December 11, 2009

The seven Members of the new Optical Council include three Members of the Civil service one of them is an Ophthalmologist one Ophthalmologist in private practice and two Opticians (Optometrists) and a Technical (Dispensing) Optician.

The Members from the Optical Profession are all Members of the Cyprus Optical Association

Andreas Tsaggaris

Theodoros Vassiliades

Adolfos Kannetis

The Government appointed Adolfos Kannetis as the President of the Cyprus Optical Council.

The appointment of our President in this position reflects the respect and the value placed in his personality, knowledge and activities regarding the legislation and regulation of the profession since the application of the Optician's Law in 1992.

Limassol Cyprus 21st December 2009

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Newsletter

The newsletter will be sent to members by e-mail or fax and we want to make sure it is received by every member:

Are your details up to date?

Telephone or email Charlotte at:
+44 (0)20 7202 8169

charlotteverity@aop.org.uk

ECOO member state organisations should send relevant news and information which is of interest to all ECOO members to the ECOO office. Please email to: charlotteverity@aop.org.uk

ECOO Advertises for New Secretary General

ECOO is seeking an organisation to provide secretarial support from October 2010, as well as replacing its current Secretary General, Richard Carswell, who relinquishes his position next year. A formal invitation to apply to provide the secretariat of ECOO has been issued and is also available on ECOO's website www.ecoo.info

Organisations which are interested in applying have been asked to indicate:

- how they would provide the service, as described in the invitation
- the name of the person who would act as ECOO's Secretary General
- the cost of providing the service.

The deadline for replying is 31 January 2010

100 Years of German Optometry

Postage stamp specially created to celebrate 100 years of optometric education in Germany



***Merry Christmas to you
and a happy and prosperous new year***