



Message from the President

Dear members,

At the beginning of the new year I would like to give you a brief overview of our priorities for 2011 and the projects that ECOO will be involved in throughout the coming months.

This year offers a number of opportunities to make significant progress in working towards a higher degree of harmonization of our profession and of the education in optometry and optics in Europe.

One core element for ECOO to achieve our goals is to facilitate and intensify the ongoing exchange between ECOO members and assist each other whenever regulatory challenges and opportunities at national level arise. In addition, and with the newly established Secretariat in Brussels, ECOO will put a strong focus this year on lobbying and outreach activities at the EU level.

Our upcoming ECOO meetings in Prague and Athens (please note the change of date) will serve as important platforms to discuss the progress of our work and define future activities. In this context, I would like to express once more my gratefulness to Thomas Truckenbrot, Jochen Goerdts and the team from the ZVA for making the General Assembly in Dresden in October 2010 such a great success.

Another important element for ECOO in 2011 is to strengthen and expand our membership basis. For many years, France has unfortunately been a blank spot on the map of ECOO members. One of our main aims for this year therefore is to welcome France back in ECOO again. Following a number of highly constructive meetings during the past months in Paris, I hope to be able to communicate some positive news to you on this in the near future.

In addition, ECOO is embarking on a number of important and challenging flagship projects in 2011. I would like to mention in particular:

- ECOO's reinforced advocacy efforts in the field of Driving & Vision, with the aim of replacing antiquated 'number/licence plate test' of drivers' vision with an appropriate Snellen-based assessment in all EU Member States
- the comparative health economic study of the delivery of primary eye care in Germany, France and the United Kingdom (Wasem Study) which is expected to be completed in May
- the submission of an ECOO response to the European Commission's consultation on the Professional Qualifications Directive
- the launch of a proposal to the European standardisation body CEN for the development of a standard on optometric and optical services
- the roll out of the accreditation of schools for the European Diploma so as to have an increasing number of school diplomas and European diplomas awarded at the same time

I am looking forward to advancing on these issues in close cooperation with all of you throughout 2011!

Armin Duddek



Inside this Newsletter

Message from the President	1
First 100 Days of the new Secretary General	3
Driving & Vision: ECOO Position Paper published, advocacy at EU level	3
The Wasem Study is taking shape	4
Recognition of Professional Qualifications (RPQ): European Commission opens consultation, ECOO to submit response	4
CEN project to be formally launched in April	4
REGULATORY UPDATES	5
• Profession of optometrist to be officially recognized in Serbia	5
• Bulgaria passed amendment restricting refraction and prescription to ophthalmologists	5
• European Court of Justice (ECJ) rules on the prohibition of selling contact lenses online	5
UPCOMING ECOO MEETINGS	6
• Bookings for the ECOO Spring Meeting in Prague are open	6
• New date for General Assembly meeting in Athens	6
New Executive Committee meets in Zurich	7
Dr Wolfgang Cagnolati elected Life Fellow of the College of Optometrists	7
Interview – Richard Carswell	8



First 100 Days of the new Secretary General



Dear members,

My first 100 days as Secretary General of ECOO can be summarised as highly dynamic, interesting, and insightful. I am particularly delighted having already had the opportunity of having been directly in touch with many of you in the last three months.

I am pleased to have joined ECOO as the new Secretary General in such exciting times. Thanks to the kind support and help of my predecessor Richard Carswell the transition of the Secretariat to Brussels has been smooth and will be fully completed by the end of February. Next to taking over the administrative tasks and day-to-day running of the Secretariat, quite a number of developments have taken place within and outside

ECOO during the past weeks on which you will find updates in this Newsletter.

Together with my colleague Fabienne Eckert at the Secretariat, I look forward to supporting ECOO in advancing on its goals in 2011 and beyond and look forward to meeting you again in Prague this spring.

Ulrich Adam

Driving & Vision: ECOO Position Paper published, advocacy at EU level

ECOO's position paper on Vision and Driving has been finalised and published on the website. In the context of Member States' implementation of the latest EU Directives on driving licences or its renewals, ECOO's aim in this field is for Member States to scrap the 'number/licence plate test' of drivers' vision and any other unscientific assessment of drivers' vision and replace it with an appropriate Snellen-based assessment. This assessment is similar to the one used in countries like Finland, Germany and Ireland and should be completed by all applicants for a provisional driving licence to ensure that their vision is adequate to learn to drive.

Many of the current national systems to check drivers' vision have been in place since the 1930s and are thus outdated. The position paper sets out a series of recommendations for a successful implementation of the EU Directives. Please refer to the complete position paper on ECOO's website for further insights and details: http://www.ecoo.info/mm/ECOO_Position-Paper_Vision-and-Driving.pdf





The Wasem Study is taking shape

Led by Professor Jürgen Wasem from the University of Duisburg-Essen, this study is a comparative health economic study of the delivery of primary eye care in three countries: Germany, France and the United Kingdom (UK). The three countries were chosen as economically comparable countries but, in terms of the delivery of primary eye care, 'archetypically' different. Based on interviews and literature searches, the study examines the financing of primary eye care by national health systems, insurance companies and private expenditure. In so doing, the study will provide new insights and shed fresh light on the:

- mode of delivery of primary eye care in the three countries
- comparative clinical outcomes
- comparative economic costs
- impact of national arrangements on primary eye care.

So far, the data collection has progressed well and interviews with relevant stakeholders in the target countries are being carried out. In February, ECOO representatives will have a meeting with the research team at the University of Duisburg-Essen to review progress to date and discuss the timeline until the completion of the study which is expected for May 2011. The study should provide new insights regarding the regulation of the primary eye care sector that will be relevant well beyond the immediate focus of the three target countries.

Recognition of Professional Qualifications (RPQ): European Commission opens consultation, ECOO to submit response

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the Professional Qualifications

Directive, which is aimed at gathering stakeholder's views on how to modernise the current provisions. The Directive allows professionals qualified in one EU Member State to seek professional recognition of their qualifications in another Member State for the purpose of practising their profession in that host Member State. The current Directive was adopted in 2005 but in fact mainly consolidated and simplified 15 previous Directives, some of which date back to the 1960s.

Making the Directive more user-friendly is important also for professionals in the field of optometry and optics who wish to take full advantage of the potential of the European Single Market or wish to extend their business into another Member State. The public consultation allows stakeholders to comment among others on the need to strengthen cooperation between different national authorities and on the scale of problems related to the language skill requirements that professionals have to demonstrate.

ECOO will attend the Commission's consultation event on 21 February 2011 in Brussels. In addition, ECOO's Professional Services Committee is drafting a written response to be submitted to the EU by 15 March 2011. A final evaluation report and a Green Paper will be published by the European Commission in autumn 2011. This will then be followed by a legislative proposal for modernising the Directive in 2012.

CEN project to be formally launched in April

ECOO is currently working on a proposal to the European standardisation body CEN for the development of a European standard on optometric and optical services. Given that the EU will not introduce legislation to harmonise our profession, the CEN project is an alternative route to promote our aims. Although a European standard is not legislation in the strict sense, it has a persuasive force and automatically replaces any national standards in the same area. The scope of a future CEN standard on optometric and optical services would consist of the harmonisation of:



- the provision of optometric and optical services, namely the testing of patients' sight;
- the provision of corrective optical appliances (if required);
- the referral of patients for medical attention (if required);
- the ancillary services associated with those main functions, such as after-care and monitoring of patients.

REGULATORY UPDATES

Profession of optometrist to be officially recognized in Serbia

The Serbian Ministry of Health in cooperation with the University of Serbia is in the process of classifying 20 occupations, which are currently not recognised in the country. This is part of Serbia's overall harmonisation process with European standards. On the occasion of a direct meeting with the Ministry of Health, the Association of Serbian Opticians and Optometrists (UOOS) have successfully put forward "optometrist" to be part of these new recognised professions. Given that the profession already exists in an official state document, the process is expected to start soon. On another positive note, cooperation between the UOOS and the Ministry is envisaged to be carried forward in the future. The official recognition of optometrist as a new profession represents an important milestone towards improving citizen's access to high quality optical services in Serbia.

Bulgaria passed amendment restricting refraction and prescription to ophthalmologists

At the end of 2010, the Bulgarian Parliamentary Commission of Health has adopted an amendment on the law that regulates the services of ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians. The amendment imposes that only doctors are allowed to make health consultation in optical shops. Bulgaria is one of the few countries in

Europe where refraction and the prescription of corrective spectacles are still prohibited to optometrists. The regulation of the profession is a national competence in Europe and can therefore not be regulated at the EU-level.

ECOO's Bulgarian member NABOO (National Association of Bulgarian Optometrists and Opticians) has been very active over the past months in its efforts to prevent and ultimately counteract these developments. Following a personal meeting with the Minister of Health, its most recent effort include a procedure in the Competition Commission against the Amendment and a notification to the Discrimination Commission. In addition, a protest in front of the Government building has been organized together with the presentation of detailed and motivated letters from colleagues and ECOO. The opposition from the ophthalmologists is fierce, however NABOO's efforts are still ongoing and the outcome remains to be seen.

European Court of Justice (ECJ) rules on the prohibition of selling contact lenses online



The European Court of Justice (ECJ) released its judgement on the case Ker-Optika bt v ÁNTSZ Dél-dunántúli Regionális Intézköz on 2 December 2010. The case concerned the Hungarian firm Ker-Optika who was selling contact lenses through



its website until the Hungarian public authorities placed an on-line sales ban. The local legislation required that contact lenses be sold only by specialised optical shops, which met certain conditions as to the qualification of personnel and as to the minimum required floor surface. Ker-Optika challenged this rule. **The European Court of Justice ruled that EU Member States cannot prohibit the selling of contact lenses via the Internet.** Consumer health has in fact to be protected by less restrictive measures.

UPCOMING ECOO MEETINGS



Bookings for the ECOO Spring Meeting in Prague are open

As you will have seen on the ECOO website and in your inboxes, bookings for the Spring Meeting 2011 in Prague are open! The ECOO spring meeting 2011 will be held in collaboration with the European Academy's annual conference. The combined event will run for 2.5 days, from Friday 6 May to Sunday 8 May 2011 and will be held at the Clarion Congress Hotel in Prague, Czech Republic.

This year, there are three ticket choices for ECOO members available:

1. ECOO meetings only
2. ECOO meetings and attendance at the ECOO Get Together Dinner and the Academy Dinner
3. ECOO meetings, attendance at the ECOO Get Together Dinner and the Academy Dinner and entry to the Academy's conference programme - shaping optometry and optics in Europe

The deadline to register is Friday, 8 April 2011. Please check the ECOO website for further information on the programme, hotel recommendations and to download the registration form.

New date for General Assembly meeting in Athens

Please note that the date of the General Assembly meeting to take place in Athens has changed to **10-13 November 2011**. Please mark your calendars accordingly.



New Executive Committee meets in Zurich

On 8 and 9 January 2011, the new Executive Committee met for the first time in Zurich (Switzerland) for a strategy and planning meeting. The meeting was designed to help the new members of the Committee to get to know each other and discuss and agree on the roadmap for ECOO for 2011. In addition, the meeting served to define more clearly the respective roles and responsibilities of the different Committees so as to ensure a smooth exchange of information between them and enable closer cooperation with the Academy. As part of this process, the remits of the Professional Services Committee and the Economic Committee were reviewed and refined. The next meeting of the Executive Committee will take place on 25 and 26 March in Brussels.



Dr Wolfgang Cagnolati elected Life Fellow of the College of Optometrists

The Immediate Past President of European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) Dr. Wolfgang Cagnolati has been elected for Life Fellowship to the College of Optometrists in recognition of the outstanding contribution he has made to academic optometry in Europe and the United States.

The Awarding of the Life Fellowship took place on the occasion of the Diploma Presentation Ceremony of the College of Optometrists Tuesday 30 November 2010 at the Central Hall Westminster, London.



Left: Dr. Cindy Tromans, College President. Right: Dr. Wolfgang Cagnolati, Immediate Past President ECOO



Interview – Richard Carswell

At the end of 2010, Richard Cardwell retired as Secretary General of ECOO. After 9 years in that position, we asked Richard to share his experiences and his views about the future of ECOO.

Richard started his career as an official of the European Commission in Brussels and then went on to work for various consultancies in London and Brussels, which specialised in European public affairs and legislation. One of his clients was the UK Association of Optometrists which he joined thereafter. Following the retirement of Ian Hunter, Richard was elected the Secretary General of ECOO in 2001.

How do you value your career inside ECOO? What have you learned that has added value to you as a person?

I have enjoyed my career with ECOO, although it has also been frustrating at times, because I was only a part-time Secretary General. (So far, ECOO has not been able to afford to pay for a full-time secretariat.) Sometimes, ECOO has wanted to do more than its resources permitted. On the other hand, it is good that ECOO has been – and continues to be – such an ambitious organisation. Personally, I have learned many things: more languages and the need for diplomacy! I have also benefited from meeting many European colleagues. Essentially, they all want the same things: greater development of the profession; and a good service for their patients and clients.

Through the years of your participation in ECOO what changes have you experienced? What are the major goals that ECOO has succeed in your years of involvement in its affairs?

Over the years, ECOO can claim many achievements. It has grown and now has member organisations from 30 European countries. It has become more focussed in its thinking and knows better today what it wants, compared to 20 years ago. It has developed greater authority in the clinical field (see, for example, its position papers). In the educational field, it has created the ECOO

European Diploma of Optometry and has started work on creating an ECOO European Certificate of Optics. There is no doubt that the Diploma is having a harmonising effect on the teaching of optometry and optics in schools and universities throughout Europe. ECOO was responsible for stimulating the establishment of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics (www.eaoo.info). And, in the political field, ECOO is recognised by the institutions of the European institutions as the primary interlocutor for our sector.

How do you foresee the future for ECOO? What is its perspective?

The perspectives for ECOO are good, provided it continues to receive the support of its member organisations. It is currently developing many important projects. For example, in the absence of a European directive to harmonise the scope of practice of optometry and optics, ECOO is preparing a proposal for a European standard for optometric and optical services. It is hoped that such a proposal will be accepted by CEN (Centre Européen de Normalisation) in Brussels. If adopted as a CEN standard, it will have an important influence on national practice.

Another important project is the comparative research study being done by the University of Duisburg-Essen on the delivery of primary eye health care in three European countries. The results could show the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the ophthalmological, optometric and mixed models of delivery.

I wish ECOO every success in the future!



Newsletter

The Newsletters are sent to ECOO's members and contacts via e-mail. 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 Fabienne Eckert or Ulrich Adam at the ECOO Secretariat:

E-mail: secretariat@ecoo.info

Telephone: +32 (0)2 739 16 15

ECOO Sponsors

