



## Message from the President

Dear members,

*Improve vision and eye health by providing high-quality, cost-effective, optometric and optical services across Europe.*

ECOO's vision is simple and clear and is the underlying driving force for all our activities. Since the beginning of the year ECOO has been busy on a number of initiatives: for instance, increased engagement at the European level where ECOO has provided input to the EU on our position on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications Directive (RPQ) and to the challenges of e-commerce.

Many of you have also taken part in the survey on Driver Vision Screening, which has been compiled into a full report in June and shared with the European Commission and a number of media representatives. The report highlights the variations in the assessment of drivers' vision across Europe and calls upon the European Commission to harmonise vision assessment in EU Member States to the standards in the best performing countries.

In addition, I was extremely pleased to see so many of you at the last General Assembly in Prague, which

has marked an important event, the official re-entry of France into ECOO. The Union des Opticiens (UDO) is an important and valuable addition to our membership base, and ECOO is looking forward to working closely with the UDO in the future.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that the bookings for the General Assembly in Athens are now open. Once again a busy agenda but also a beautiful country awaits us. One of the highlights will be the presentation of the comparative health economic study on the delivery of primary eye care in three countries, Germany, France and the UK, led by Professor Wasem of the University of Duisburg-Essen. On this occasion I would like to extend my warm thanks to all the sponsors, who have made it possible for the study to be launched and carried out.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Greece in November. In the meantime, I wish you a pleasant read!

Armin Duddek



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# Regulatory Update

## Situation for optometrists in Bulgaria remains unclear

Following the adoption of the amendments to the Law on Health ("LH") by the end of 2010, restricting refraction and prescription to ophthalmologists, the outlook for optometrists in Bulgaria remains unclear. ECCO's Bulgarian member NABOO (National Association of Bulgarian Optometrists and Opticians) has made active and consistent efforts to provide a counterweight to these developments.

The proactive measures undertaken by NABOO include among others:

*(i) two initiated proceedings and two issued decisions on competition advocacy before the Bulgarian Commission on Protection of Competition ("CPC");*

In its first decision the CPC has clearly stated that the optometrists, having acquired a respective qualification and educational level in Bulgaria or abroad, need to be granted the right to exercise their profession in Bulgaria and to determine the eye refraction. In the second CPC decision however the authority concluded that the amendments to the LH, in particularly the possibility granted to the eye doctors to enter the market of selling products and services in optic do not violate the Bulgarian competition legislation.

From a competition law perspective NABOO is now considering potential further steps before the relevant European institutions and courts.

*(ii) one proceeding before the Ombudsman of Republic of Bulgaria*

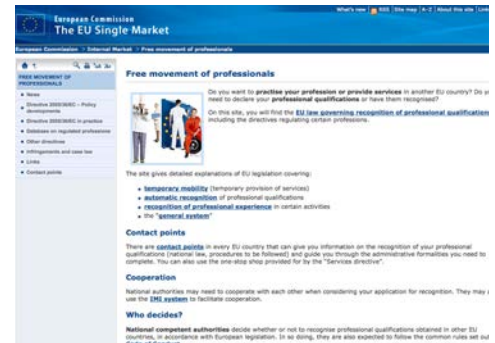
In its decision the Ombudsman basically has held that the constitutional rights and freedoms of Bulgarian opticians and optometrists have not been infringed by the introduced restrictive amendments in the LH.

*(iii) one proceeding before the Commission for Protection against Discrimination („CPD“);*

The proceeding before CPD is currently still pending. On 21 June the CPD provided the parties with a three month reconciliation period for settlement of the dispute as a prelude to the proceedings. The next hearing on the proceeding is scheduled for 26 September this year.

*(iv) ECCO's support to NABOO*

In addition, ECCO has supported NABOO's efforts by sending an official letter to the Bulgarian Council of Ministers and Ministry of Health. Unfortunately until now there is no official response to the ECCO letter, the Ministry of Health has acknowledged however the need to establish a legal regulation for training of optometrists and opticians as well as the need for harmonization of the professions of optometrists and opticians with the EU practices. The Ministry of Health further appreciates the efforts of ECCO in collaboration with NABOO to set off and to open the first Bachelor degree in Optometry at the Sofia University.



The outcome of NABOO's proactive engagement with this issue will become more apparent in the course of the next few months.

## Public Consultations on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications

In March 2011, ECCO submitted an answer to the public consultation launched by the European Commission on the Professional Qualifications Directive which aimed at gathering information on how to simplify the framework for the recognition of qualifications between Member States, how to integrate professions into the Single Market and how to increase confidence to make use of the system.

In its answer ECCO explains that a broad and varied landscape has traditionally existed in the profession of optometry and optics across Europe. During the past years, the harmonisation of standards and qualifications in optometry and optics has therefore been one of ECCO's main priorities. With the development of the European Diploma of Optometry and the ongoing development of a European Qualification in Optics

ECOO and its member organisations are taking a leading and proactive role in the harmonisation debate so as to facilitate further the free movement and establishment of optometrists and opticians throughout Europe. Furthermore, ECOO explained that it sees a real need for clearer guidelines and better explanations of the procedure to professionals across Europe covered by the Directive.

The European Commission has recently launched a new public consultation on the modernization of the Professional Qualifications Directive, which is open until 20 September 2011 and for which ECOO is currently preparing a response.

### ECOO's response to e-commerce

Thanks to the work of the Economic Committee, ECOO has submitted a response to the public consultation of the European Commission on e-commerce in March 2011. Despite the Electronic Commerce Directive being adopted 10 years ago, the development of retail electronic commerce remains limited to less than 2% of European total retail trade. The aim of the consultation was therefore to gain insights on stakeholder experiences to improve the accessibility of Europe's population to more varied products, to more qualitative products, and exerting greater price competition in the on-line and off-line world.

In this context ECOO has expressed concerns about contact lenses being sold over the internet which are not up to the required standards for successful contact lens wear. Furthermore, the counterfeit branded ophthalmic products such as frames, being sold over the internet have also been mentioned as source of concern.

Given that many Member States impose restrictions on the supply of ophthalmic products because they are medical devices, ECOO clarified that national restrictions on the supply of medical devices should continue to be permitted where they are designed to protect the public, rather than to restrict consumer choice.

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## Updates from the General Assembly in Prague

### ECOO welcomes France back

The last General Assembly in Prague has marked the re-entry of France into ECOO. The Union des Opticiens (UDO) has formally applied to re-join ECOO in March 2011. Following vari-

ous meetings and the assessment of UDO's statutes, the Executive Committee invited the President of the UDO Mr. Saulnier as well as the President Mr. Marinacce of the adherent Syndicat National des Optométristes (SNO) to present its projects and views to the General Assembly.

UDO's political priorities include the validation of the diploma of optician and optometrist, which is considered as complementary and non-competing with the ophthalmologists as well as the promotion of mandatory continuing education. Furthermore, the market needs to be developed further. In this sense UDO believes that the development

of online sales is inevitable and distance selling needs to be made safe and secure.

The UDO has been welcomed back into ECOO with a unanimous vote by the General Assembly.

### Update on the planned CEN standard

ECOO has been considering developing a European standard on optometric and optical services since the beginning of this year. A standard has the benefit of filling the gap where no law exists. In the absence of EU legislation on optometric and optical services, it represents an al-





ternative route. Although not legally binding it offers a persuasive role and a common basis for all European Member States.

The ECOO working group, set-up to assess the possibility of a CEN standard, has discussed this option and has generally a positive feeling about engaging in the process of developing the standard. Work is currently being carried out on the first step, providing concrete information on the scope envisaged to the standardising body. This document will be finalised this month upon which the Executive Committee will assess and decide on how to move forward.

### Liberating the NHS: Eye Care - Making a Reality of Equity and Excellence

The report drawn-up by Professor Bosanquet (Professor of Health Policy, Imperial College London) entitled "Liberating the NHS: Eye Care - Making a Reality of Equity and Excellence" has been presented at the General Assembly.

The health economics report focuses on the demands on eye care services and the supply resources within UK hospital and community eye care. In the context of an ageing UK population, the demand for eye care services is expected to increase. Challenges however also include the insufficient capacity in hospital eye care, patient demanding greater choice and access as well as cost savings are needed in health budgets. The UK Government sets out its priorities in the "Equity and Excellence Liberating the NHS" document, which aims among others at keeping patients better informed

with more power to make choices, enhancing partnership between patients and professionals with a focus on outcomes whereby competition and choice will be central elements. Given the challenges of a static hospital capacity but increased demand, a shift from hospital ophthalmology care to more efficient and cost effective optometric and optical care is possible.

The link to the report is available on the ECOO website and under following link:

[www.epolitix.com/fileadmin/epolitix/stakeholders/liberating\\_NHS.pdf](http://www.epolitix.com/fileadmin/epolitix/stakeholders/liberating_NHS.pdf)



## Driving and Vision

### Report on Driver Vision Screening in Europe

In June 2011, ECOO in cooperation with EUROM I and EUROMCONTACT has issued a report entitled "Driver Vision Screening in Europe" available on the ECOO website.

[www.ecoo.info/mm/ReportonDriverVisionScreeninginEurope.pdf](http://www.ecoo.info/mm/ReportonDriverVisionScreeninginEurope.pdf)

The report, which is based on the

survey filled out by a large number of ECOO members earlier this year highlights the substantial variations in the assessment of drivers' vision across Europe, and recommends that the European Commission should act to harmonise assessment in EU Member States to the standards in the best performing countries.

The report notes a number of European countries continue to rely on an out-dated assessment of vision

known as the 'Licence Plate Test', which is not consistent with the underlying EU standards. In addition, seven countries have no requirement for on-going assessment of vision for non-professional drivers, while many others only have limited assessment in place.

The Driving Licence Directive has therefore failed to harmonize the assessment of drivers' vision across the EU and the report recommends that

the European Commission should revisit the underlying conditions for vision testing in the upcoming review of the Directive. ECOO will continue to monitor and lobby on this issue and encourages its members to use the report in their outreach to decision makers and adapt the summary to their own national reality.

### Driving and Vision in Ireland

Keeping in mind that the European Commission target is to halve the number of road deaths in Europe by 2020 Mr. Martin O'Brien of the Association of Optometrists Ireland (AOI) gave an overview on the situation in Driving and Vision in the Republic of Ireland during the General Assembly in Prague.

Unlike in other countries, a new system for driving and vision has been implemented in Ireland and is in place



since February 2011. All drivers in Ireland are now assessed for distance vision, peripheral vision, and other visual functions that can compromise safe driving. Importantly, tests are performed by medical practitioner or optometrists. Group 1 (car and motorcycle drivers) and Group 2 (passenger transport and heavy goods vehicles) drivers are assessed before issuing provisional licence and reassessment on renewal for those who wear vision correction and regularly for all drivers from age 70. Group 2 drivers are as-

sessed to a higher standard at each renewal (every five years, and more regularly beyond age 65). Optometrists can for first time assess Group 2 drivers.

The AOI has issued detailed guidance for practitioners on assessing drivers' vision and ECOO members are encouraged to continue lobbying for changes in their country. Useful material is available through ECOO including the Position Paper on Driving and the Report of June 2011 on Driver Vision Screening in Europe.

## Upcoming Meetings and Events

### Booking for the next General Assembly in Athens are now open

Registrations for the next General Assembly in Athens are now open. Our host, the PEOO has spent the last months finalizing all arrangements. The meetings will take place in the Pentelikon hotel ([www.pentelikon.gr/hotel/en/cpage.asp?id=1](http://www.pentelikon.gr/hotel/en/cpage.asp?id=1)), in the outskirts of Athens. Given the uproars over the past months and the traffic congestions in the city center of Athens, the chosen hotel provides for an ideal solution combining accommodation and meeting facilities in a





pleasant environment. Furthermore, the ECOO General Assembly coincides with the 9th Panhellenic Congress of Optics and Optometry. The General Assembly on Saturday 12 November 2011 will com-

bine both events in nearby Helexpo palace on the occasion of Professor Wasem's presentation of the results of the comparative study on the delivery of primary eye care in three countries, Germany, France and the

UK, which will also be broadcasted. The remaining parts of the General Assembly will be held in private as usual.

Please register under following link: [www.peoo2011.gr/index.php?pid=8](http://www.peoo2011.gr/index.php?pid=8)

### The programme for the General Assembly in Athens:

#### THURSDAY

10 NOVEMBER 2011

Hospitality desk and Congress secretariat, Hotel Pentelikon

#### FRIDAY

11 NOVEMBER 2011

08.30 - 11.30 Meeting of the Board of Management, Hotel Pentelikon  
11.30 - 12.00 Coffee break  
12.00 - 13.00 Meeting of Board of Examiners, Hotel Pentelikon  
13.00 Business lunch at Hotel Pentelikon  
14.00 - 15.00 Meeting of Board of Examiners (continued), Hotel Pentelikon  
15.00 - 18.30 Executive Committee Meeting, Hotel Pentelikon  
16.00 Coffee break  
19.30 Welcome reception

#### SATURDAY

12 NOVEMBER 2011

08.30 - 09.00 In camera Meeting of the Economic Committee, Hotel Pentelikon  
09.00 - 10.30 Public Meeting of the Economic Committee, Hotel Pentelikon  
10.30 - 11.00 Coffee break  
11.00 - 12.00 In camera Meeting of the Professional Services Committee, Hotel Pentelikon  
12.00 - 13.00 Public Meeting of the Professional Services Committee, Hotel Pentelikon  
13.00 - 14.00 Lunch at Hotel Pentelikon  
14.15 - 14.45 Bus transfer from Hotel Pentelikon to Helexpo Palace  
15.00 - 18.00 Meeting of the General Assembly, Helexpo Palace (Presentation of Professor Wasem to be broadcasted)  
16.00 Coffee break  
18.30 - 19.00 Bus transfer from Helexpo Palace to Hotel Pentelikon  
20.00 ECOO dinner

#### SUNDAY

13 NOVEMBER 2011

09.30 - 12.30 Meeting of the General Assembly (continued) Hotel Pentelikon  
11.00 Coffee break  
13.00 Lunch at Hotel Pentelikon

### Programme for accompanying persons

#### SATURDAY

12 NOVEMBER 2011

10.00 Visit of the Acropolis Archaeological site Lunch in Plaka Free time for shopping

#### SUNDAY

13 NOVEMBER 2011

10.00 Athens city tours and visit of Acropolis New Museum

## NEW! Events calendar goes online

The ECOO secretariat has developed an online calendar on the ECOO homepage to facilitate the coordination of meetings and events while also serving as an interesting source of information on other member's activities and initiatives. The calendar will include all important ECOO events for the year ahead. The calendar is a living tool and in order to be useful to all interested parties, it needs to be updated regularly. Members are invited to send their key events to the Secretariat to be shared on the calendar website. [www.ecoo.info/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=77383](http://www.ecoo.info/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=77383)

### Presentation of the health economic study on the delivery of primary eye care

The comparative health economic study on the delivery of primary eye care in three countries, Germany, France and the UK, led by Professor Wasem of the University of Duisburg-Essen will be finalised by the end of September 2011. The study looks at the economic and the health aspects of primary eye care and examines the financing of primary eye care by

national health systems, insurance companies and private expenditure.

Following the broadcasting of the presentation by Professor Wasem at the General Assembly in Athens an event to promote the results of the study will be organised in Berlin with the support of the German ECOO member ZVA on 22 November 2011. The Member of the German Parliament Dr. Rolf Koschorrek has kindly agreed to host the event and a number of experts; politicians and media representatives will be invited.



## News from the European Academy of Optometry and Optics



The next joint meeting of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics and ECOO will be held from 20-22 April 2012 in Dublin, Ireland. Details of the event, including hotel and booking information, will be announced at the ECOO Autumn meeting in Athens in November.

If you are interested in giving an oral and/or poster presentation as part of the Academy's programme in Dublin, please register your interest



online ([www.eaoo.info/en/eaoo-2012/index.cfm](http://www.eaoo.info/en/eaoo-2012/index.cfm)) to make sure you receive information on how to submit your abstract. The call for abstracts will be released later this month (September). Details will also be available on the Academy website.

Thank you to those who provided such positive feedback on our joint meeting in Prague. To see pictures of the event and to read a full report on the Academy's programme, please visit ([www.eaoo.info/en/events/Academy-Events/Academy-Conference\\_2011\\_Prague](http://www.eaoo.info/en/events/Academy-Events/Academy-Conference_2011_Prague)

[Report/index.cfm](http://www.eaoo.info/en/Report/index.cfm))

Conference 2011 Prague Report  
The Academy will also be releasing details of its 2012 Fellowship Programme ([www.eaoo.info/en/about-us/academy-fellows/index.cfm](http://www.eaoo.info/en/about-us/academy-fellows/index.cfm)) later this month. In 2011, seven Academy members were awarded Fellowship for their contribution to the eye health care professions across Europe and the USA. The recognition of these individuals by the Academy has prompted new international interest in the Academy, its work, its members and in its event – even

more reason to make sure you have the Dublin dates in your diary for next year so you can book early!

Over the summer months, the Academy has been receiving interest in its new tri-party sponsorships to support students' involvement with the Academy. In July, a unique three year agreement was signed between Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz, Knecht & Müller AG, Switzerland and the European Academy of Optometry and Optics and now in the Netherlands, a similar agreement is being put into place with Utrecht University and Oovision. To read more please visit [www.eaoo.info/news](http://www.eaoo.info/news). If you are interested in setting up a similar arrangement in your country, please contact Jane, Academy Manager at [jane.kielb@eaoo.info](mailto:jane.kielb@eaoo.info)

A full Academy report will be presented in Athens, however for regular updates, please visit [www.eaoo.info](http://www.eaoo.info) or follow us on Facebook. [www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/pages/EAOO-European-Academy-of-Optometry-and-Optics/126265774098375](https://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/pages/EAOO-European-Academy-of-Optometry-and-Optics/126265774098375)

## 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](mailto:secretariat@ecoo.info)

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### ECOO Sponsors

