



## Message from the President

Dear members,

As the year 2011 comes to an end, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all for your effort throughout the year to contribute to ECOO's mission. The collaboration of our members and the exchange of information through ECOO is probably the most important aspect of our work and I am encouraging everyone to continue to make use of this rich source.

For ECOO it has been a very busy and successful year, to give a few examples:

- We have new health economic data through the completion of the "Comparative Analysis of Delivery of Primary Eye Care in Three European Countries" by Professor Wasem. The presentation by Professor Wasem in Athens has been very insightful and the new evidence should be used for national outreach whenever possible.
- Following the presentation of the study results to German politicians and experts in Berlin in collaboration with our German member, the Zentralverband der Augenoptiker (ZVA), I am very pleased to see that our new member, France, will organise a similar event in Paris early next year.
- Significant progress has also been made in the field of Vision and Driving with the European Parliament own-

Initiative Report on European Road Safety including ECOO's call for regular checks on drivers' vision.

- ECOO also actively engaged in the EU initiative on modernizing the Recognition of Professional Qualification and provided information on how the EU can help our profession, in advancing and harmonizing the practice of Optometry and Optics across Europe.

We are looking forward to continuing our efforts next year in terms of ongoing and new projects. The year 2012 is not only the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations but ECOO will also develop its standard on optometric and optical services and the accreditation report for the European Diploma will be presented at our next General Assembly in Dublin.

Finally, I would like to thank our Greek member once again for the excellent and successful meeting in Athens. You will find more information on all these topics including pictures from Greece in this Newsletter.

I am looking forwards to working with you all in the New Year. In the meantime, my best wishes for the festive season.



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# Pictures from the General Assembly in Athens



# Standard on Optometric and Optical Services

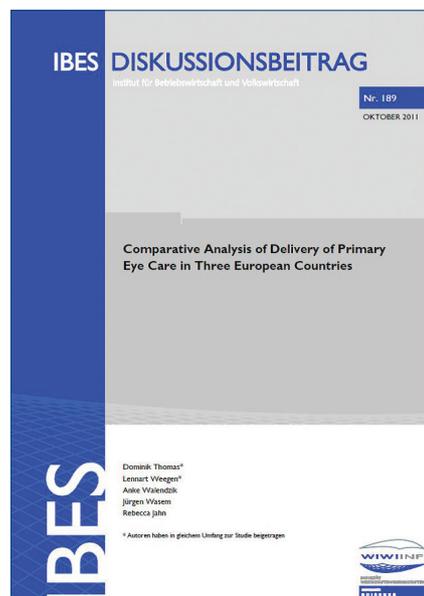
ECOO will engage in the process of developing a standard on optometric and optical services. Following the assessment of the option of creating a CEN-standard, it has been decided that at this moment in time, ECOO would be best served by developing

its own 'in-house' standard on optometric and optical services. A standard is a non-legally binding technical guideline. The aim is to define best practices and a common understanding within ECOO what a standard of optometric and optical services

should entail. A working-group has been set-up under the leadership of Julie-Anne Little, which will meet for the first time on 24 January 2012 in London. A first update on the work-in progress will be provided at the next General Assembly in Dublin.

## Comparative health economic study led by Professor Wasem

### Study "Comparative Analysis of Delivery of Primary Eye Care in Three European Countries" finalized



The „Comparative Analysis of Delivery of Primary Eye Care in Three European Countries“ commissioned by ECOO has been finalised in October 2011 by Professor Wasem and his

team from the Department of Medicinal Management at the University of Duisburg-Essen.

Professor Wasem joined ECOO's General Assembly in Athens to present the study results, which show that:

- a model based entirely on optometrists – such as in the United Kingdom – where optometrists are the primary eye care providers, is just as safe as a model based entirely on ophthalmologists – such as in France – where ophthalmologists are the primary eye care providers.
- in a country such as Germany, where optometrists and ophthalmologists currently share responsibilities, the provision of eye care would have collapsed if optometrists had not already taken on essential tasks in this area. This relates to the fact that currently in Germany around 73% of all visual aid prescriptions and around 67% of all primary care for contact lenses are carried out by optometrists.
- the clinical and academic training



of an optometrist is considerably more cost-efficient than that of an ophthalmologist, since costs are up to two thirds lower.

- demographic change owing to an aging population is fundamentally leading to an increase in age-related eye conditions, which must be recognised and treated early; for "age-related macular degeneration (AMD)" alone, the authors of the study suggest an increase in Germany from 875,000 cases in 2007 to 1,769,000 by 2050; this in turn causes a need for more primary

eye care providers in the future.

- a country such as France, where ophthalmologists have almost exclusive responsibility in this area, needs to see a clear increase in the number of primary eye care providers in the future owing to demographic changes and a decreasing number of ophthalmologists.

The full study is available [online](#).

### Study presented to German Members of Parliament and experts in Berlin

Our German member Zentralverband der Augenoptiker (ZVA) and ECOO organized a launch event of the study with German Members of Parliament (Bundestag) and experts in Berlin under the patronage of Mr Erwin Rüdell, Member of the German Bundestag. The study results, presented by Professor Wasem have been well received with great

interest.

A similar event is planned by ECOO's French member Union des Optométristes (UDO) for early 2012 in Paris. Following some first media coverage on the study results in France, a good attendance by policy makers and media is expected.



## European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012

As the year 2012 is upon us and the reflection on what the new year will bring has begun, it is interesting to note that 2012 will be the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It marks the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Action Plan on Ageing in response to the demographic challenge all EU member states are facing. The aim of this dedicated year is to promote active ageing in employment, active ageing in the community through volunteering

and caring whilst also promoting independent living and enhancing solidarity between generations in order to create a society for all ages. The challenge for politicians and stakeholders will be to improve opportunities for active ageing. For ECOO members, this may be a good opportunity to present relevant activities linked to age related visual impairment, preventable blindness, vision in the workforce and vision and the information age. It may also be an opportunity to share

best practice examples and to raise awareness on the contribution that older people make to society and the importance of eye sight in this context. To access the official website of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations [click here](#). Several national organisations are understood to be planning events. Some of these have already been announced and are available [online](#).

## Country News – Finland

### Finnish law expands scope of practice of Optometrists

As a result of the activities by the Finnish ECOO member Suomen Optikoliikkeiden Liitto (SOL) a new law has come into force in July 2010, making diagnostic medicines an essential part of the Finnish basic studies of Optometry. Since then, two courses for already practicing optometrists to receive the extra education and license to use diagnostic drugs in their practice have been launched. The first group of 19 optometrists has already been licensed to use diagnostic medicines. The second group started their studies in November of this year. The Metropolia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki is currently the only school authorized to give the pro auctore licenses to optometrists. A new study plan will give students the direct right to fit contact lenses and use diagnostic medicines.

Since the 1970's a contact lens fitting-permission was only granted if optometry had been practiced for one year, followed by special training and an extra post graduate education. Now, following the changes to the law regarding diagnostic drugs, contact lens training was introduced into the basic study for current and future optometric students. For optometrists who have passed their studies earlier, it is still possible to get the permission by following additional training.

Prior to 2010 it has not been possible for the optometrists to use diagnostic drugs in Finland although they had passed studies for example in the UK or in the USA. Now also these optometrists can apply the right to use diagnostic drugs without any extra training. So far already two optometrists have done so in August this year, at the same time as the first special group passing their examination.



### New study shows that special VDU glasses improve vision and performance in VDU work

The Optical Information Center together with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health has made a study on ageing workers and the benefits of VDU glasses. According to the study, the use of VDU glasses provided a reading speed that was 4.5% higher than with regular progressive glasses, which in the period of a single work day amounts to a total of five more pages read. According to calculations performed, VDU glasses would repay their cost in increased productivity of work in as little as three months. [Read the press release.](#)

## Vision and Driving

### Own-Initiative Report on European Road Safety includes ECOO's call for regular checks on drivers' vision

The European Parliament passed the Own Initiative Report initiated by the German Member of the European Parliament Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (Group of the European People's Party - Christian Democrats) on the European Road Safety on 27 September.

A "zero death toll" is the long-run aim that guided Mr. Koch MEP in drafting this resolution. Concretely, the objective is to reduce the number of road deaths by half, serious injuries by 40% and child deaths by 60% between 2010 and 2020. Currently road deaths amount to 35,000 per year and cause costs of 130 billion EUR per year. Members of the European Parliament call on the European Commission to develop a new road safety action



plan as a matter of urgency, and recommend harmonising road traffic rules, road signs, roadworthiness tests and blood alcohol limits.

As regards driving and vision, the Economic Committee and the ECOO Secretariat have met with a number of Members of the European Parliament this year to ensure that regular eye tests were considered in the own-initiative report which now *“calls for an eye test for all drivers in categories A and B every 10 years and for drivers older than 65 years every 5 years; calls on the Member States to establish an obligatory medical check for drivers at a certain age, to identify the physical, mental and psychological ability required to continue driving on the basis of their statistical accident data for the respective age groups;”* [paragraph 37]

In terms of next steps, the European Commission will consider these proposals when discussing its overall orientation. ECOO, in partnership

with EUROMI, EUROMCONTACT and ECFLIN has also contacted the European Commission and looks forward to arranging a meeting with them in due course.

### **New health provisions of the driver-license law in Austria**

In Austria, up to now, an ophthalmological certificate was necessary for people wearing contact-lenses in the framework of the driver license check-up.

Through the amendment to the health provisions of the driver-license law (Führerscheingesetz-Gesundheitsverordnung - BGBl. II Nr. 280/2011), which came into effect on 1 October 2011, the requirement for people wearing contact-lenses to use contact lenses whose adequacy



has been approved by a specialist for eye care and optometry, does not apply anymore.

The refraction assessment of the Optician/Optomestrist cannot be older than 6 months at the time of the check-up by a specialist.

With this revision, the long standing position of the österreichischen Bundesinnung der Augenoptiker (ECOO's Austrian member) have been taken into consideration.

## Regulatory Update

### **European Parliament report on Recognition of Professional Qualifications adopted**

Following the public consultation on the modernization of the Professional Qualifications Directive, to which ECOO submitted its response, the European Commission is currently in the process of drafting the legislative proposal.

In the meantime, a debate on the European Parliament report on the implementation of the Professional Qualifications Directive led by Emma McClarkin (UK Member of European Parliament, European Conservatives and Reformists Group) took place on

14 November 2011 in the European Parliament plenary session and was adopted one day later.

The European Parliament report recognises the need to facilitate professionals' mobility through amongst other greater transparency, shorter delays for recognition of diplomas, an online portal and possibly a professional card. At the same time, MEPs strongly call for better guarantees of patients' safety including tests and language requirements, and a rapid alert system between Member States.

On this occasion, Commissioner Barnier (Internal Market and Services) said the Commission will publish its

draft legislative proposal on 20 December 2011. Bernadette Vergnaud (French MEP, Socialists & Democrats) is expected to be the rapporteur on the modernised Professional Qualifications Directive for the European Parliament.

### **ECOO responds to consultation on cross-border prescriptions**

The European Commission has issued a public consultation on measures for improving the recognition of prescriptions issued in another Member State. The Commission consults stakeholders to see how the recognition of cross-border pre-

scriptions could be improved in the context of the implementation of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive. Amongst others, stakeholders are asked to provide input on future measures enabling a health professional to verify the authenticity of cross-border prescriptions, measures to facilitate the correct identification of medicinal products and measures to increase the comprehensibility of the information to patients. ECOO is currently in the process of drafting a response to the public consultation, which closes on 8 January 2012.

### Glasses and lenses product market considered a well-functioning market according to European Consumer Scoreboard

The European Commission published its latest Consumer Markets Scoreboard in October 2011. The Consumer Market Scoreboard has been developed to make the market more transparent and accountable to citizens. It does so by measuring key indicators such as the degree of satisfaction of consumers, the prices they pay or the choices they have.

The Scoreboard is based on the results of survey questions on the four key aspects of consumer experience:

- 1 the ease of comparing goods or services
- 2 consumers' trust in retailers / suppliers to comply with consumer protection rules
- 3 the experience of problems and the degree to which they have led to complaints
- 4 consumer satisfaction (the extent to which the market lives up to what consumers expect)



A positive outcome for all ECOO members is that the 'glasses and lenses' product market is seen by consumers across the EU as a very well-functioning market. It was identified as one of the best ranked

markets and as a market with which consumers are most satisfied.

### Fluorescein strips

In the past, Fluorescein had been manufactured as well as distributed as a medical device. The relevant European legislation has been changed over the years, including the Directive 2001/83/EC on the community code relating to medicinal products for human use, in a way that Fluorescein strips may now be considered medicinal products. If this was the case, manufacturing as well as distribution would have to undergo fundamental changes to meet the increased requirements that are applicable for a medicinal product instead of a medical device. For optometrists, who are making use of fluorescein strips, such a move would cause major problems, as for many years fluorescein strips have been safely applied in contact lens fitting by optometrists. ECOO has commissioned an expert assessment on this issue and will liaise directly with the European Commission to clarify this issue.

## Update from the European Academy of Optometry and Optics

### Bookings open for Dublin 2012

Bookings are now being taken for the Academy's next annual conference from 20-22 April 2012 in Dublin, Ireland. The event will bring together key figures in optometry, optics and vision sciences from across Europe to discuss and share the latest

research and best-practice.

In a move that will strengthen the Academy's links with the host nation, Ireland, the welcome dinner and drinks will be held in collaboration with the Association of Optometrists Ireland.

The conference will appeal to delegates with a diverse range of clinical,

research and educational interests, and offers a wide range of learning opportunities:

- leading researchers and academics will deliver a series of lectures focusing on some of the key areas of concern for the profession;
- workshops at The Dublin Institute of Technology will support the de-



- development of practical skills;
- a series of poster presentations will explore a diverse range of research areas, providing excellent learning and networking opportunities;
- case study and discussion forum sessions will offer interactive debate on issues of clinical practice and education; and
- forums based on special interest groups will be held exclusively for Academy members covering ar-

eas of Binocular Vision; Optometric Low Vision Rehabilitation; Optical Education; Primary Eye Care; Cornea, Contact Lenses and Refractive Technology; and Community Eye and Vision Care Services

The conference will also feature key note speeches from Professor Pablo Artal (University of Murcia, Spain) on adaptive optics with a focus on new research; and Dr Kathryn Saunders

(University of Ulster, UK) on clinical practice in relation to paediatric care. Certificates of attendance will be awarded to all delegates and may be used as evidence in local continuing professional development schemes (CPD/CET).

Professor Roger Crelier, President of the European Academy, said:

“We are delighted that bookings for Dublin 2012 are now open. This event will help delegates from across Europe keep up-to-date with latest research, learn from their peers and provide a forum to disseminate and share research, information and best practice. I would urge you to attend.” Please see [www.eaoo.info/dublin](http://www.eaoo.info/dublin) to view the programme and to book your place.

To make sure you stay up-to-date with all the latest Academy news, please also join us at [www.facebook.com/OptometryAndOptics](http://www.facebook.com/OptometryAndOptics).

## 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:

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### ECOO Sponsors






### Christmas break - ECOO Secretariat

Please note that the ECOO Secretariat will be closed from 22 December 2011 until 6 January 2012 included.