

The World Council of Optometry

Meeting of the General Delegates to be held on 05 June 2009

Europe Regional Report – ECOO - June 2009

Recent and Current ECOO Activities

Overview

During 2008, the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) held its normal cycle of meetings, namely the Diploma Boards, Executive Committee, Professional Services Committee, Education Committee and General Assembly.

At ECOO's meeting in November 2008 in Istanbul, three applicant organisations from Iceland, Latvia and Ukraine were admitted to membership of ECOO by the General Assembly. Thus, ECOO now has member organisations from 30 countries.

Elections in Istanbul resulted in **Wolfgang Cagnolati** (Germany) becoming the President of ECOO, **Armin Duddek** (Switzerland) Vice-President, **Feike Grit** (Netherlands) Immediate Past President, **Jesus Garcia** (Spain) Treasurer, **Tone Garaas** (Norway) Chairman of the Professional Services Committee and **Roger Anderson** (United Kingdom) Chairman of the Education Committee, replacing **Roger Crelier** (Switzerland), who had stood down.

Regarding appointed posts, Wolfgang Cagnolati has been replaced by **Bob Chappell** (UK) as Chairman of the Diploma Board of Management; and **Michael Goldschmidt** (Switzerland) has indicated that he will step down from the position of Chairman of the Board of Examiners.

The College of Optometrists was appointed to run the secretariat of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics, due to have its inaugural meeting on 16/17 May 2009 in Lausanne, Switzerland.

General Assembly Istanbul

The main points of discussion in the General Assembly in Istanbul were as follows:

- The admission as new members of the Icelandic Optometric Association, the Association of Opticians and Optometrists of Latvia, the Association of Opticians of Ukraine
- The posting of the Blue Book on ECOO's website and the preparation of a text in book form
- The appointment of The College of Optometrists (after a competitive tender) to run the secretariat of the new European Academy of Optometry and Optics,

which would have its inaugural educational conference in May 2009 in Lausanne

- The constitution, memorandum and articles of association of ECOO would be updated and rules of procedure would be written
- Following a presentation by Helmer Schweizer of Euromcontact and CibaVision on the EU directive of 2006 on driving licences, ECOO will commission a position paper by experts on the visual requirements of licence holders for use by member organisations for discussion with national authorities about the implementation of the directive
- Bob Hughes of the AOP explained the scope and function of professional insurance in the UK. (In some member countries of ECOO such insurance is either not required by law or not the norm.)
- The new draft EU directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare was subject to consultation at European and national levels. It was unclear what impact it would have on the optical sector. ECOO and member organisations would consider whether to lobby the appropriate institutions.
- Helmer Schweizer gave an update on the CLEER project to log adverse incidents relating to the wearing of contact lenses. (See the recent publicity in the optical press.) The project will terminate and the results will be published in the second half of 2009
- ECOO is continuing to develop a model scheme for Continuing Education and Training (drawing largely on the UK model) and will circulate a paper for comment
- An alternative method of calculating members' subscriptions to ECOO was proposed. Like the existing method, it would be based on countries' gross domestic product and population. However, the new method would not take account of the number of organised optometrists and opticians (which are currently included in calculations) because of the difficulty of obtaining accurate figures. Nevertheless, the General Assembly decided to continue using the existing method.
- The dates of ECOO's meetings in 2009 were confirmed as:
 - 14-16 May 2009 (Academy 16-17 May) in Lausanne
 - 16-18 October 2009 in Budapest (revised dates).

Professional Services Committee

ECOO's Professional Services Committee is currently considering carrying out a further survey of the scope of professional practice in member countries, partly on the basis of the questionnaire used for ECOO's Blue Book and also on a questionnaire being prepared by the World Council of Optometry. The committee is also developing of a code of conduct for use by ECOO's member organisations.

Education Committee

The main focus of ECOO's Education Committee is the creation of a website forum ('*EduNET*') for exchanges of information on education matters across Europe. The idea came out of the conference of universities and schools of optometry and optics held in Brno (Czech Republic) in February 2008, designed essentially to encourage cooperation between western and eastern Europe. A further conference is about to be held in Brno, where the main themes include the impact of legislation on optometric and optical education, the funding of cross-border cooperation in education, the building of good bibliographies, the writing of good conference papers and posters, presenting successful lectures, degree programmes in Europe, summer schools and the progress of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

ECOO European Diploma of Optometry

Roger Anderson has resigned as an external examiner, in view of his election as Chairman of ECOO's Education Committee. Mary Cregg has been replaced as the other external examiner by **Anelli Demberg** (Norway) of Glasgow Caledonian University.

New candidates for the Diploma must pass the written and practical exams and, also, present a satisfactory portfolio of their clinical experience during training.

There were 48 candidates for the written exams for the Diploma in September 2008 in Saint Etienne. (Not all candidates took all three parts.) The next practical exams will be held in March 2009 in Cologne. In due course, it is intended to restructure the practical exams. The purpose will be to cover more competencies in the station exams and fewer in the portfolio, thus reducing the number in the portfolio from 18 to 12. Any alteration in the balance between MCQs, practicals and the portfolio will have to be checked. Alternative techniques, using videos and case scenarios, will be considered. These changes are unlikely to be introduced before 2010.

Bob Chappell, Adrian Jennings (UK), **Frank Buijs** (Netherlands) and **Peter Möst** (Germany) are seeking to develop a system, whereby ECOO could accredit schools and universities' qualifications in relation to the ECOO Diploma. One possible way forward would be for ECOO to invite universities to compare the competencies taught by them with the competencies of the Diploma. On the basis of a questionnaire prepared and assessed by ECOO, universities could apply for partial or full accreditation of their course as leading to the Diploma. However, candidates from such courses would still be required to produce a satisfactory portfolio of clinical experience in order to be awarded the Diploma. ECOO is planning to initiate a small number of pilot projects in 2009 to test such a questionnaire.

Wolfgang Cagnolati (President)

Richard Carswell (Secretary General)

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