

WHO releases long-awaited World Report on Vision The role of ECOO in a global web of stakeholders

On 8 October 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) released its long-awaited [World Report on Vision](#). It sets out the importance of healthy vision and highlights the burden of preventable sight loss around the world. The report also outlines guidance on how to expedite progress on tackling eye care challenges. In his foreword, WHO's Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus emphasises the importance of stakeholder collaboration in achieving results. The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) as the regional representation of the World Council of Optometry (WCO), an official partner of the WHO, is part of this global web of actors that contribute to realising the WHO's mission to improve eye care.

With the launch of this report, the WHO has set the global agenda on eye health and access to quality eye care. It notes that, in part as a result of changing demographics and lifestyles, 2.2 billion people experience some form of vision impairment worldwide, of whom at least 1 billion could have been prevented from having vision impairment or they are not yet being treated. The burden of preventable sight loss is particularly significant in low- and middle-income countries, whereas the prevalence of near vision impairment is highest in regions with longer life expectancies. The report therefore outlines several recommendations on how to tackle eye care challenges, which include raising awareness, implementing integrated people-centred eye care in health systems and integrating eye care in universal health coverage, promoting research that complements existing evidence for effective eye care interventions, and empowering people and communities about eye care needs.

ECOO has a key role to play in moving forward on the WHO's agenda in the European region; there is still much to be gained in terms of improving eye health in Europe. According to the World Report on Vision, age-related macular degeneration has the highest prevalence in Caucasian populations in Europe (57.4% of people between the age of 45 and 85 suffer from any age-related macular degeneration). Another challenge is the rising burden of myopia, a topic that is currently being addressed by ECOO's Professional Services Committee.

We also believe that ECOO's efforts in promoting the harmonisation of clinical standards and education through the European Diploma in Optometry and the Qualification in Optics could serve as an example for other regions. The World Report on Vision highlights that the optometric profession is still not recognised in many countries, notwithstanding the progress made on the training standards for optometrists, optometric technicians and optical technicians. The report points out that the lack of professionals that are accredited to carry out independent eye care services, could lead to decreased productivity. This will have an obvious effect on the access to quality eye care.

The report moreover identifies that there is a lack of quality data on eye conditions and that this lack of information for policy-makers stands in the way of obtaining tangible results on the preventable sight loss agenda. ECOO's upcoming 2020 Blue Book, outlining trends and data on optometry and optics in Europe, will offer a unique comparative and comprehensive view of the professions in Europe. This is exactly the type of data that could help policy-makers understand eye health challenges and the professional resources already available to respond to those challenges and thus help to develop fit-for-purpose policies.

The World Report on Vision was published just ahead of World Sight Day, on 10 October. With the new European Parliament installed and a new European Commission taking office on 1 November 2019, World Sight Day 2019 and the World Report on Vision come at a timely moment for putting preventable sight loss in Europe on the agenda. ECOO continues to be committed to this agenda and launched a [manifesto](#) for the 2019-2024 mandate of the European institutions to make sure the relevant policy-makers are abreast of the importance of improving eye health for all and of the economic and social need to eliminate avoidable sight loss.

For additional information on the World Report on Vision, please click [here](#).