



Information

COVID-19 – Guidance to national optical and optometric associations

17 March 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of COVID-19, a disease caused by a novel strain of coronavirus, a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

ECOO is closely monitoring developments and acknowledges that responses to the pandemic vary between EU countries. The situation for optical and optometric professionals and their customers/patients therefore varies across Europe and is evolving on a continuous basis.

Based on this, ECOO encourages its members to issue guidance for opticians and optometrists in their respective countries (if not already in place), taking all national measures and developments into account.

ECOO has compiled the following points to guide this process:

General guidance:

- Provide information on how every individual can protect themselves. This may follow recommendations from national healthcare authorities or the [WHO guidance](#).

National guidance:

- Summarise the current national approach and encourage professionals to respect all national measures, whether they are lockdown, social distancing or travel restrictions, to name but a few. Reinforce any self-isolation advice.

Patient/customer and professionals' safety:

- For optical/optometric practices, issue key principles that should be followed when interacting with a customer/patient. This should follow national or [WHO](#) guidance and may include but not be limited to:
 - Asking about any symptoms, recent travel to risk territories, contact with infected people etc. Talk to the patient/customer about the risks of infection and if in doubt, postpone the appointment.
 - Make hygiene information clearly available in shop/practices.
 - Put in place a protocol to follow in the event that a staff member or customer/patient shows any symptoms in order to limit the risk of cross-contamination. This will likely involve inviting the patient to a designated isolated space and to follow relevant national guidance for next steps.

- During a consultation, ensure hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Remind people to keep a distance of 1m to 1,5m and to avoid shaking hands.
- Disinfect the practice/shop's equipment and hard surfaces on an ongoing basis.
- Regularly air the shop/practice and avoid air conditioning.
- The WHO offers a [free online course](#) for healthcare professionals. It may be advisable to encourage opticians/optometrists in every country to complete this training. We encourage you to visit the [openwho.org](#) for any new training that may become available.

Impact on business:

- As increasingly more countries are taking measures to tackle COVID-19 it has become clear that there will be an economic impact on the economy. As of 16 March 2020, several countries have imposed a full or partial lockdown, which means that optical and optometric practices also have to cease activity for a given time period. Even in countries which are not, or not yet, subject to such measures, people may postpone their check-ups and visits to opticians and optometrists resulting in a slow-down of the activity.
- ECOO members should closely monitor developments at national level and issue relevant guidance to the opticians and optometrists in their countries. They should in particular proactively clarify any government measures including whether practices/shops are required to cease their activity fully or partially, if applicable.
- National professional associations should also share information on any planned government measures to boost the economy and contact policy makers to ensure that the optical/optometric sector, especially SMEs, are included in any such plans.

EU level response:

- At European level, ECOO monitors any [measures proposed by the European Commission](#) and will keep its members informed accordingly. To summarise the main work strands, the EU is:
 - ensuring that necessary supplies to health systems are maintained within the single market,
 - ensuring state aid and fiscal flexibility is in place for Member States,
 - ensuring coordination of measures among EU Member States.

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