

A manifesto for eye health and vision

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) has a straightforward vision: To improve the vision and eye health of European citizens by providing high-quality, cost-effective optometric and optical services across Europe. Healthy eyes and good vision are paramount for independent and active living at all ages. Across Europe, primary eye care professionals such as opticians and optometrists are the first point of contact for people to maintain good vision and eye health.

And yet, despite some progress, an understanding of the role of eye health and vision, and the invaluable role played by eye care professionals, remains limited at both the national and the EU level. This has an impact on the ability to deliver many aspects of the wider political and policy agenda.



ECOO therefore calls on politicians across Europe to commit to promoting:

- Enhanced awareness of the importance of vision and eye health, including the need for access to primary eye care.
- The integration of primary eye care provision by optometrists and opticians within primary and secondary care systems.
- The inclusion of all primary and secondary health care providers when developing e-health mechanisms.
- Eye health to be taken into account in all relevant policy areas.
- Harmonised educational and professional standards for optometrists and opticians across Europe.
- Environmental sustainability across all sectors and industries.

About ECOO:

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) represents the interests of optometrists and opticians across Europe. Our members are national professional associations from 23 countries who together represent more than 150,000 opticians and optometrists. ECOO aims to promote eye health to the public across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe. Find out more about ECOO's work at www.ecoo.info.



Enhanced awareness of the importance of vision and eye health including the need for access to primary eye care.

In 60% of cases visual impairment or sight loss is avoidable if early and targeted interventions are initiated. Regular eye checks with a qualified eye care professional can help to identify eye conditions at an early stage. Early detection allows for tailored treatment, reducing the socio-economic burden of preventable sight loss. Every European country should ensure that all their citizens, including children, have access to primary eye care.



The integration of primary eye care provision by optometrists and opticians within primary and secondary care systems.

Devolving more care to the most clinically appropriate level provides a range of benefits. It frees up clinician time in hospitals to manage the more serious conditions and enables patients to receive care closer to home in more convenient settings. It also ensures [holistic care](#) of the individual patient.



The inclusion of all primary and secondary health care providers when developing e-health mechanisms.

For example, the European Health Data Space is now being implemented. Access to it must be shared with optometrists and opticians, most of whom operate in the private sector but provide primary eye care services. E-health solutions should promote good practice and safety and have the best interests of patients at their heart. See our policy position [on better vision and eye health through digital development](#).



Eye health to be taken into account in all relevant policy areas.

Eye health and vision are not just health issues, they impact on a wide range of other policy agendas such as ageing, education, employment and tackling economic and social inequality. We are committed to working with European institutions and European countries on a variety of subjects to ensure policy solutions are fully informed. For example, we continue to support the implementation of adequate and effective visual standards for driving. See [ECOO's policy papers](#) to find out more about how eye health and vision affect a variety of policy agendas.



Harmonised educational and professional standards for optometrists and opticians across Europe.

As the ECOO [Blue Book](#) shows, the scope of practice in optometry and optics varies across Europe. A skilled workforce is paramount to ensuring timely diagnosis of eye conditions and access to health care. With the right competences and educational framework, primary eye care professionals are better equipped to identify vision and eye health issues at an early stage and to take any necessary action. ECOO has developed the [European Diploma in Optometry](#) and the [European Qualification in Optics](#) to harmonise educational standards at the highest level.



Environmental sustainability across all sectors and industries.

The impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human health has been widely recognised, this includes specific effects on eye health. Eye care providers play an important role in minimising the environmental impact of their industry and services. It is important that they are encouraged to contribute to policies designed to address environmental sustainability, for example the current proposals to restrict use of Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS), to ensure that all such decisions are fully informed. See our [resources on eye care and sustainability](#).