

GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ECOO

FABIENNE ECKERT
ECOO Secretary General



What is your professional background, and what is your role at ECOO?

Following my studies in international management, languages and politics, I completed internships in the European Parliament and the European Commission. I then worked as a consultant in European public affairs and communications in Brussels for over 8 years, completing a wide range of EU-related projects for clients in the healthcare field. I then launched my independent activity as a public affairs professional and coach. Since the early days of being a consultant I have specialised in stakeholder relations and association work. I have worked with ECOO since 2010 and became the Secretary General in 2013. In this role I am in charge of all organizational aspects of the association, including member relations, preparing the content for meetings, shaping and delivering the strategy together with the Executive Committee and representing the interests of opticians and optometrists at EU-level.

What are the most important skills/personal attributes needed to do your job?

I think a combination of skills are needed for this kind of job. Strong organisational skills, language and drafting capabilities but also sensitivity to pick-up on delicate matters and to deal with them diplomatically but assertively. I have worked with seven ECOO Presidents so far, so flexibility and the ability to adapt to different working styles is also important. Finally, I would add good lobby skills and relationship building for the EU work is key.

What has taken you by surprise in your work with ECOO?

I have worked for many associations and clients but ECOO really stood out for me thanks to their passion and human approach. The people involved in ECOO are collaborative, constructive and committed. They genuinely love what they do and dedicate their free time to add value to ECOO. The Executive Committee always has the best interest of its members at heart and works as a team. This creates an environment in which people not only work well together, but also feel comfortable to disagree, which is important to move forward and to build a very supportive community among professionals.

What is your biggest achievement at ECOO so far?

I would say from an organisational point of view, I am proud about having built and shaped the Brussels office of ECOO, in particular its presence at EU policy/political level. Building strong relationships with EU institutions and other stakeholders has allowed us to have our say and be heard, even as a small association compared to other players at EU-level. One example of this has been the recent classification of Fluorescein strips for contact lens-fitting as medical devices, which concluded a 10-year long lobby effort that I have managed.

What is the best piece of professional advice you have received?

Don't wait for opportunity, create it.

Bonus question:

When you manage to escape from ECOO or your day job, how do you like to spend your time?

I actually have too many hobbies, which can be a blessing or a curse. Next to spending time with my family, I enjoy contemporary dancing, painting and drawing, playing the piano and reading. I also love doing sports ranging from swimming over biking to skiing.