

GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ECOO

GABRIËLLE JANSSEN
PRESIDENT-ELECT OF ECOO



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

I have worked as a project manager and optometrist in both private and public sectors. I am now the Chair of the Optometristen Vereniging Nederland (OVN), where I am leading the efforts to strengthen optometry in the ophthalmic care sector throughout the Netherlands. Having recently joined the ECOO Executive Committee as President-elect, I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. I believe that by working together, we can achieve great things and make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

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

Because I am an optician, optometrist, and also a business administrator, I need a diverse range of competences to tackle complex issues in a strategic manner.

The technical skills I have from my background as an optician and optometrist mean I can give informed recommendations and insights. But alone they are not

enough. Analytical and strategic thinking is essential to navigate the complexities of the business world and develop effective policies. Additionally, my years of experience have taught me that adaptability is key to success; it is essential to remain flexible and open-minded, always looking for new ways to tackle challenges and innovate.

But, above all, it is the love of the industry that motivates me to work hard and a commitment to excellence which means I continuously strive to improve the quality of the services we provide.

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

ECOO is a warm bath, a place where people from different countries come together with a shared passion for our beautiful work. This shared passion makes me feel energized and inspired to get involved and contribute to the organisation.

The fact that ECOO is so well-run, the commitment and dedication of everyone involved make it effective in achieving its goals. But even more than that, it makes the time I commit to ECOO even more fun and valuable because I know we make the best use of everyone's strongest competences.

What is your biggest achievement at ECOO so far?

One of my most significant accomplishments has been working in Vietnam with ophthalmologists and the Brian Holden Vision Institute with May Ho to establish an education programme for optometry. After many years of effort, our hard work paid off in 2013, and we successfully

established the University of Optometry in Vietnam. Today, the University is thriving, and it is an honour to have played a part in its success.

I am also proud that, after years of lobbying, in the Netherlands we successfully reached a consensus in 2020 that a portion of eye care should be referred to optometrists instead of ophthalmologists by general practitioners. This allows optometrists to contribute more fully to the care of patients and provides greater access to care for individuals with eye health concerns. But these achievements were not accomplished alone. The successes I have achieved are the result of the collective efforts of many committed individuals who came before me. I believe that we can all make a difference in the world by working together towards a common goal.

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

I have received valuable advice from many people that has helped me grow both personally and professionally. As human beings, we are social creatures, and we learn by observing and listening to others. If I had to choose one specific piece of advice that has helped me the most, it would be the importance of observing before judging. Taking the time to observe helps us make more informed decisions..

Bonus question:

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

Taking long cycling holidays with my husband brings me a lot of joy. We love exploring the Netherlands and

other parts of Europe. There's something truly special about travelling slowly through a landscape on a bicycle. It allows us to notice so much more, and the rhythm of cycling gives us plenty of time to think, reflect, and develop good ideas. We can have deep conversations, discussing topics that we just don't have time for in our busy daily lives.

So if you're looking for a way to slow down, connect with nature, and spend quality time with someone you love, I highly recommend taking a cycling holiday. It's a wonderful way to explore new places, make memories, and nourish your mind, body, and spirit. You are welcome in Amsterdam as a stopover!