

# ECOO NEWS

## VISION AND EYE HEALTH IN POLICY MAKING

Dr Matjaž Mihelčič, ECOO President


It is one of my privileges as President of ECOO to work with a wide range passionate and committed people who dedicate much of their time and energies to promoting the importance of eye health and vision. At ECOO we provide support and information to our members – on clinical issues, on practice management and market data. But I believe our real strength is in speaking out for the eye care sector and promoting the importance of vision and eye health.

We have been doing just that for over ten years on the issue of vision and driving, and I am hopeful that our work will soon finally bear fruit. The position of the European Parliament on the revision of the Driving Licences Directive for instance recognises the importance of vision requirements for driving. If you are required to demonstrate that you have adequate vision to drive safely, then it surely makes sense that the tests of a person's vision are clearly understood by those that carry them out and that they are applied consistently. We should also make it easy for people to have their vision tested for driving, which means respecting national law when deciding who can test vision.

The ECOO amendments will ensure clarity and consistency of the existing requirements and fully respect the subsidiarity principle. The trilogue negotiations to finalise the Directive will take place after the June European Parliament elections, meaning that it will fall to the next European Parliament to take this forward. We remain hopeful that our work will finally prove successful.

We also work to help our members understand future changes that are likely to impact on eye care providers and their patients, to understand the challenges they might pose, and how they can make most effective use of the opportunities they bring. Developments in technology used in eye care, combined with a growing interest across European countries in integrated, patient-centred care provide us with a real opportunity in the coming years – indeed for many in the coming months.

In this spirit, ECOO is delighted to be part of an international group of retina experts, led by Medical University in Vienna, who have secured EU-funding for the I- SCREEN project. The consortium will develop an efficient and cost-effective AI-based infrastructure for the early detection of AMD and the monitoring of disease progression. This will ultimately empower



local eye care professionals to offer reliable screening, revolutionising AMD care through a novel concept of AI-driven shared care.

These are all themes that ECOO members have addressed at our General Assembly meetings in recent years. And there will be a focus on how technology will impact on how eye care services are delivered, and what support and guidance will be needed for that to be effective, at our next meeting in Helsinki in May 2024. They also underpin our [Manifesto for Eye Health and Vision](#), published earlier this year, which we call on politicians and policy makers in this election year to endorse.

### **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.

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