

ECOO ARTICLE

THE EXPERIENCE OF ECOO'S RECENTLY APPOINTED STUDENT VISITORS ON THE ACCREDITATION PANEL

December 2023

The student visitors, who joined the accreditation panel at the end of 2022 undertook their first accreditation visits this year. ECOO interviewed two of the four students about their experiences so far as a visitor and their thoughts on the ECOO European Diploma in Optometry.

Chiara Maria Mariani and Rita Dassouli are two highly motivated students who decided to take on this extra task in addition to their studies. Rita's motivations to join the panel ranges from learning about how optometric education is structured and taught in other European countries to furthering her understanding of audit and quality assurance principles. Chiara's aim is to elevate the quality of optometry education in her home country, Italy, and become an influential educator for future generation.

In early 2023, Chiara joined the accreditation visit to Hadassah Academic College (HAC) in Jerusalem,

Israel, while Rita joined a visit to the Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv, Israel. They both appreciated and enjoyed the experience of observing the teaching methodologies, talking to students and staff. The dedication of teachers and researchers to prepare the students for their future profession was in particular highlighted by them.

On the importance of involving students as visitors Rita noted that *"having a student visitor on the visitor panel is a good idea as it can be easier for them to interact with the students. More communication with the university students can provide more input on their thoughts, experiences and valuable input to the accreditation process."*

It is not only the accreditation process that is important to this new generation of visitors but also the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) in itself because it ensures quality education, a common language and promotes professional development. For educational institutions Chiara recognises that the EDO *"not only validates their education but also reflects a commitment to maintaining high-quality eye care standards."* Rita highlighted that the accreditation process *"encourages universities to improve their standard of education*

and can provide them with useful recommendations on how they can increase competence and improve courses in their education programme”.

ECCO is delighted to involve students in its work and to also build a strong EDO alumni network that shares the vision of harmonising optometric and optical services and education across Europe at the highest level, leading to increased recognition of the

professions across the board. *“For the future I hope that the different eye care professionals can collaborate to recognise the work of the speciality areas (paediatric, geriatric, training, sports, low vision, and more) to talk a common language and to have health as a fundamental common goal.”* concludes Chiara.



Rita Dassouli is studying for the Bachelor in Optometry at the University of South-Eastern Norway, in Kongsberg and is in the third and final year of her studies. [Read the full interview with Rita.](#)



Chiara Maria Mariani is a second year student, studying for the Professional Master Degree in Clinical Optometry at the University of Riga in Latvia. [Read the full interview with Chiara.](#)

ABOUT ECCO

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECCO) represents the interests of optometrists and opticians across Europe. Our members are national professional associations from 25 countries who together represent more than 150,000 opticians and optometrists. ECCO aims to promote eye health to the public across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe.