

ECOO NEWS

ECOO brings educators together to collaborate and advance optometric education

In 2024, the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) organised two key consortium meetings, gathering 30 to 40 educators from across Europe to discuss collaboration to advance optometric education. The meetings, organised and chaired by Professor Julie-Anne Little, Chair of the ECOO European Qualifications Board, which oversees the European Diploma in Optometry accreditation work, focussed on addressing challenges in curriculum development, enhancing clinical training opportunities, and harmonising educational standards through the ECOO accreditation process.

First consortium meeting: Sharing knowledge and building foundations

The first meeting, on 2 May 2024, provided educators in optometry and optics with a platform to share knowledge and build connections. Dr Bente Monica Aakre presented the *Oculus* project, funded by Erasmus+ and led by the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN), which highlighted the success of cross-border collaboration in optometric education. A representative from Erasmus USN also discussed funding opportunities, encouraging participants to explore financial support for future educational projects.

Interactive break-out sessions, facilitated by Professor Ariela Gordon

Shaag, allowed attendees to delve into key challenges in optometric education, including curriculum development, the ECOO accreditation process, and expanding clinical training for students. These discussions laid important groundwork for future collaborative efforts.

Second consortium meeting: Tackling challenges and developing solutions

The second consortium meeting, on 20 September 2024, built on the progress made in the first session. Participants identified and discussed the main challenges in optometric education, such as the variability in educational standards across countries, limited clinical training opportunities for students in all countries, and the need to modernise curricula to reflect technological advancements in eye care.

Participants explored how working as a consortium could help address these challenges, with the idea of developing a collaborative project to seek funding. A key priority was the development of mechanisms to support educational institutions with the accreditation process for the ECOO European Diploma in Optometry, to ultimately ensure consistency and quality in optometric training across Europe.

Next steps: Facilitating institutional pairing and supporting accreditation

Looking ahead, ECOO will facilitate the pairing of educational institutions to enable them to exchange experiences, particularly with regard to the ECOO accreditation process for the European Diploma in Optometry. The next consortium session will focus on the clinical experience students need to fulfil the portfolio requirements of the European diploma and how different institutions manage this.

The two consortium meetings held so far underscored a shared commitment to advancing optometric education across Europe

and showcased the expertise and enthusiasm of optometric educators to exchange ideas and share advanced pedagogical practice. By fostering collaboration among educators, ECOO has set the stage for future projects that could be funded with a view to strengthening optometric education across Europe, helping institutions meet accreditation requirements and equipping the next generation of optometrists with the skills and knowledge necessary for comprehensive eye care.

To find out more about this work visit: <https://ecoo.info/ecoo-accreditation-agency/>

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 25 countries who together represent more than 200,000 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.

ABOUT THE ECOO ACCREDITATION AGENCY

ECOO has developed the European Diploma in Optometry (EDO) and European Qualification in Optics (EQO) as a syllabi and competency frameworks, and operates an accreditation scheme for institutions to benchmark against this framework. The Accreditation Agency has been set up to run this accreditation work.