

# GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ECOO

**PER MICHAEL LARSEN**

Chair of the Public Affairs and Economics Committee



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

I am an optometrist. I qualified in 1980 and became a store manager for two optical shops where I spent several years getting the shops running very well. I then decided to get my own shop in 1987 and in 1997 we started our second shop.

I became a member of the board of the Danish national organisation for the optical industry - Optikerforeningen – in 1991 and was elected as chair of the board in 2003, continuing until 2014. From 2005 I also acted as business manager of the association, and was hired on a full time basis in 2011, at which point I sold my share in the shops. I have been CEO of the association since 2014.

Working with Optikerforeningen gave me the opportunity to attend the ECOO meetings. I got involved in ECOO's work first as a member of Public Affairs and Economics Committee (PAEC) in 2012 and then in 2014 I was elected Chair of the PAEC, which meant I also became a member of the ECOO Executive Committee. I was Chair of

the PAEC until 2020, when I returned to being an ECOO delegate for Denmark. But in 2024 I was elected again to Chair the PAEC.

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

I am business man, and know the importance of connecting the economic/business part and the clinical part of our professions.

I am very passionate about the clinical part of our role and the work our national organisations are doing to get recognition for our skills, to get higher levels of education and to win the right to use diagnostic drugs.

I see the profession as having three legs: the clinical which of course is very important; secondly we need knowledge about the products and devices available, to be able to advise the customer/patient as to the right choice for them; and the last leg is managing the sale in a way that satisfies the customer/patient.

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

I think the acceptance of the differences in the professions from different parts of Europe. But at the same time, the willingness to try to strengthen and harmonise the

education systems.

And of course at the heart of that is cooperation between the countries.

***What is your biggest achievement at ECOO so far?***

As an individual I don't have anything I would highlight. But through being a part of ECOO, I see the outcome of the fluorescein case as one of our best achievements.

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

I think it was one of the first managers I had as a student, when he told me that I should never judge a customer/patient on their dress or behaviour because there is much more behind the person. Just take time to know the person better, and you will find her/him to be a fantastic person.

***Bonus question:***

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

When I'm not working for my organisation or for ECOO, I go out playing golf. The time on the golf course is my way to relax.