

GET TO KNOW THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN ECOO

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SECRETARY TO THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

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

I qualified as a dispensing optician in 1985 but decided I didn't want to stay in practice. I became a Varilux Consultant – one of only 3 in the whole of the UK. That meant seeing non-tolerance cases around the UK and liaising with universities and colleges.

I then went on to Essilor International in France, working in education, sales, marketing and professional relations.

I left industry in 2007 and moved into international professional development supporting opticians in two member organisations.

Later I completed a BSc (Hons) in Vision Science and followed that with a MSc in Dementia. I have a special interest in healthy ageing and protecting vulnerable groups.

My current role is as a consultant for SILMO, working as the Scientific Director for SILMO Academy. I also lecture part time on the ophthalmic dispensing programme at the University of Lancashire.



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

The first attribute needed in my work with eyecare professionals around the world is respect and a willingness to understand cultural differences and professional challenges. I've learned to eliminate pre-conceived ideas, be flexible and available, and to keep an open mind when meeting or working with people from different backgrounds. Knowing how to listen, filter information, support and advocate where appropriate, is essential in my work for SILMO and also for ECOO. I enjoy talking to people, learning from them, listening to their successes, failures and aspirations.

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

The amount of information that has to be understood and followed by the secretariat and Executive has surprised me. Also the frustrating stop/start nature of working with European legislators, when elections can suddenly interrupt any progress made in advancing a project. This has a direct impact on the length of time progress can take, so patience and perseverance are needed.

What is your biggest achievement at ECOO so far?

I try to fly the flag for opticians in a very optometry dominated landscape. I was also key to bringing SILMO on board as a new partner member. Shining a light on potential disruptors in the optical landscape through the adoption of Smart Eyewear has also been important.

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

I was fortunate to work with two great men who had a profound influence on me personally, and on my career path.

One was Bernard Maitenaz, the inventor of the Varilux lens. I appreciated his modesty and humility – rarely seen in someone who is a “living legend”. He is the embodiment of his mantra - **“be interested instead of interesting”**.

The other was Prof Irvin M. Borish, widely considered to be the godfather of modern optometry in the US. His lesson to keep improving and to be obstinate and bold in the pursuit of worthwhile goals. He famously said “I would like to see more optometrists devoted to and loyal to the field, but dissatisfied with it. In this way they keep the profession moving forward with a combination of loyalty and dissatisfaction.”

Bonus question:

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

There are three important beings in my life: my daughter, Lana, who is a senior school teacher; and our two rescue dogs, George and Tori.

I follow the French national rugby team with Lana (which often involves us travelling to matches).

I follow world politics, watch a lot of foreign TV to get international perspectives on issues, and play the piano.