



EUROPEAN COALITION FOR VISION
Better Eye Health For Europe

Dear MEPs

World Sight Day - 8 October 2020

As you will recall, 2020 is a totemic year for eye health and visual impairment. It marks 20 years since the VISION 2020 global initiative was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) to eliminate the main causes of preventable and treatable blindness by the year 2020. Much has been achieved but eye disease linked to age and myopia in young people are both increasing. This led to the launch of the first WHO World report on vision last year [\[LINK\]](#) and the adoption of a World Health Assembly Resolution on 'integrated people centred eye care' this year. The resolution was sponsored by all of the Member States of the European Union.

In Europe uncorrected or under-corrected refractive error – one of the themes of the report – is responsible for approximately half of vision impairment and cataract the next most common cause, despite both being easily treatable. Inequality gaps persist for people with these and other diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease and macular degeneration in the following areas...

- awareness of risk and risk factors for eye disease and blindness
- access to services early enough to prevent blindness
- life opportunities

... all linked to social status, ethnicity and living with a visual impairment everywhere in Europe. This is not only unfair in terms of human rights and equality, it also results in significant health and social care costs to economies including exclusion from the workforce and lost productivity.

Therefore, the European Coalition for Vision is calling - on this major anniversary - for a major effort to reduce and close these inequality gaps in all European countries, as well as at European level, over the next 10 years by 2030. We are calling this initiative 'Equal-eyes 2030'.

Twitter

To promote this initiative on World Sight Day (WSD) 8 October the ECV will be tweeting

European Coalition for Vision calls for an end to eye health and vision inequalities in Europe by the year 2030 – Equal-eyes, Hope in Sight - World Sight Day 8 October 2020

This is in line with aims of the WHO World report on Vision, this year's World Sight Day theme of *Hope in Sight* and the World Health Assembly Resolution on 'integrated people centred eye care' championed by European Member States.

How you can help

It would be extremely helpful if your office would 'like' or retweet this message on World Sight Day 8 October to show your support and thank you in advance for helping us publicise these important health and social goals.

New Data

When I wrote to you on 1 January this year, I promised we would be highlighting new prevalence data for eye disease during this year. Your office can access data on the EUROVISION project that has looked at the numbers of people who report problems with their eyesight in a survey of more than 300,000 people across Europe and associated risk factors. [An embargoed proof can be viewed [here](#) with the final paper to be published in Acta Ophthalmologica Scandinavica on or before World Sight Day 8 October 2020]. In brief they show that 3% of men over 50 years report severe difficulty with vision and 4% of women, rising to 12% and 17% in those aged 85 and older, respectively. Aside from the inequality between men and women, being vision impaired was significantly associated with depression and social isolation and more common among those with lower income and less education.

We will be presenting this new information in a symposium to European public health experts at the virtual 16th World Congress on Public Health on Friday 16 October 2020.

Thank you in advance for helping prevent blindness and for supporting equality for visually impaired people across Europe.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

David Hewlett
President