

Summary of the IAPB Europe activities between 2012-2021

2012-2013

The 9-year-long period of the new IAPB Europe Board with the Chair of János Németh started in the IAPB General Assembly in Hyderabad, in September 2012. The Co-Chairs were invited in October: Nick Astbury, Sergej Branchevsky, Jan Keunen, Völker Klauss, Ivo Kocur, Serge Resnikoff, Petja Vassileva. Secretary was Erika Tátrai and later: Dorottya Szabó and Gábor Tóth.

The members of the Board of **IAPB Europe** met in Budapest in February 2013 to develop a five-year plan for advocacy and technical support in the European region. Besides the Chair and Co-Chairs, Peter Ackland (then CEO of IAPB), David Allen (RNIB), Robert Chappell (WCO, ECOO), Alexander Doga (S. Fyodorov Eye Microsurgery), Terje Iversen (NABP) and John Trevelyan (IAPB) also participated actively in the programme development.



The Board of IAPB Europe in the programme developing meeting in Budapest February 2013. From left to right: Sergej Branchevsky, David Allen, Robert Chappell, Petja Vassileva, Alexander Doga, János Németh, Serge Resnikoff, John Trevelyan, Peter Ackland.

The work was finished in June when the **IAPB Europe Action Plan for 2013-2017** was **approved** by the co-chairs and the members of IAPB Europe in a regional IAPB meeting in

Copenhagen, Denmark. The objectives and actions of the WHO Global Action Plan were considered when writing our regional action plan as our main purpose in the near future is to help the implementation of the GAP at country levels all across Europe. (See as Annex A.)



The Board of IAPB Europe in Copenhagen, June 2013. From left to right: Robert Chappell, Alexander Doga, David Allen, János Németh, Robin Percy, Petja Vassileva, Terje Iversen, John Trevelyan, Serge Resnikoff, Völker Klauss, Peter Ackland.

A *round-table discussion* was held in Copenhagen in 2013 with the participation of the representatives of some Eastern-European countries. The goal of the discussion was to identify the key issues in this region and to encourage the national key opinion leaders to connect with the Ministries of Health and work out a national action plan for the prevention of blindness.

The *European Coalition for Eye Health and Vision* held two meetings in 2013, one in London in 12th June and another in Brussels on 30th September. The Coalition was established in 2012 and is formed by several organizations, among them IAPB, European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO), Euromcontact, AMD Alliance, International Glaucoma Association, Light for the World, Novartis, Per Vedere Fatti Vedere, VISION 2020 UK and UK Vision Strategy. In January 2014, ECV prepared a European Parliament Elections Manifesto in order to call on the European Union institutions to use their power and influence to support the work in addressing the challenges described in details in the text of the manifesto (http://www.iapb.org/sites/iapb.org/files/Communications/Manifesto-ECV-final-cream_small.pdf). The launch of the ECV manifesto and the official launch of ECV were

celebrated in the European Parliament buildings in Strasbourg on the morning of 4th February 2014.

In 2013, the two main target diseases in Europe were retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) and diabetic retinopathy (DR). In May 2013, IAPB Europe sponsored *sessions on ROP* during the Black Sea Ophthalmological Society (BSOS) Meeting in Tbilisi, Georgia. The course was well-attended with over 60 participants. Professor Clare Gilbert was the main speaker and her lecture was followed by the presentations of 4 ROP specialists from the Eastern-European region. The talks were focused on the ROP situation and the benefits of implementing a national ROP screening programme. Another *ROP workshop* was held during the Annual Congress of the South-East European Ophthalmological Society (SEEOS) in June in Ohrid, Macedonia, organized with the help of IAPB. Here, seven ROP specialists from the region shared their experiences in the treatment of ROP and in the local screening programmes working in their respective countries.



ROP Workshop speakers in Tbilisi, May 2013 during the BSOS Congress. In the middle: Robin Percy, Clare Gilbert, Erika Maka.

International Scientific Conference on Retinopathy of Prematurity was held in April, Moscow by Professor C. Gilbert (UK), Professor B. Darlow (NZ), Dr A. Vinekar (India), Dr. G. Quinn and Dr. A. Richards (USA) and a National ROP workshop in Bulgaria for teams. All of these 4 events mentioned above were supported from Shreveport Sees Russia (SSR) funding. SSR is continuously providing IAPB Europe with funds for ROP activities and with this support, we were able to increase the awareness of ROP and also of the importance of ROP screening programmes in the Eastern-European region. As the first step in this work, data collection was started on the two meetings mentioned above. The participants have filled a questionnaire containing questions about the ROP services (diagnosis and treatment) in their respective units and countries, in order to determine the needs and look at ways to provide support for the development of ROP programmes.

As part of the Eastern European ROP programme, UK parent guidelines were made available after being translated into native languages in 14 countries in Eastern Europe, where the prevalence of ROP was growing and the awareness of the society and the parents was still low. The translation of the guidelines, as most of the ROP-related activities of IAPB Europe, was supported by Shreveport Sees Russia (SSR).



ROP Session participants in the SEEOS Congress in June 2013, Ohrid, Macedonia. Erika Maka, left, and Slobodanka Latinovic, Petja Vassileva and Magdalena Antova Velevska in the center.

IAPB Europe also helped to organize a workshop on DR during the SEE-ARVO session at the SEEOS Congress in June, Ohrid, where experts from the region presented important aspects of

epidemiology, screening and management of DR. The debate at the end of the one-hour symposium, with an audience of about 80 people, was very vivid and emphasized on partnership in the region for most optimal solution of the problem of diabetic blindness.

An international course on diabetic retinopathy was held in December 2013 in the Lions Ophthalmology Educational Centre, Prague organized and financed partly by IAPB Europe. Eighteen resident doctors participated in the two-day course from 8 Central and Eastern European countries and learned about the epidemiology, diagnosis and therapeutic possibilities of diabetic retinopathy.

A Symposium entitled **“Experiences in raising the profile of eye care for resource allocation”** was held in June in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the Annual Congress of the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE), with the participation of IAPB with prominent speakers from the US and Europe. The topics of the talks were mainly about advocacy on a national level and one could also see examples on well-structured national blindness prevention programmes.

IAPB Europe has started to improve its website for the region in the second half of 2013. More information was provided through the webpage about the work of IAPB Europe and about the workshops and courses organized in Europe with the contribution of IAPB. The visitors could also get access to many useful documents on advocacy and blindness prevention (i.e. the WHO Global Action plan for 2014-2019).

2014

A **two-day workshop on ROP** was held in June 2014 in Budapest, Hungary as the follow-up of the courses at the BSOS meeting in 2013, supported by SSR (Shreveport Sees Russia). 48 participants (neonatologists, paediatric ophthalmologists and paediatric nurses) attended the workshop from 6 countries in the Black-Sea Region. The main goal of the workshop was to bring together all those who are responsible for the care of premature infants and to explore the difficulties of neonatal eye care in these countries. The main speakers were: Clare Gilbert, Shad Husain, Graham E. Quinn, Julie Flanagan, Erika Maka; and the organisers were: Robin Percy, Erika Tátrai, Viktória Szabó, János Németh.

Furthermore, a national ROP workshop was also held in October in Bucharest, Romania organized by IAPB Europe in order to identify training needs and opportunities in this region.



Workshop on ROP in June 2013, Budapest, Hungary.

A **VISION 2020 Symposium** was organised for the next **SEEOS meeting in 2014 in Bucharest**, which is traditional from the beginning of the SEEOS and is arranged each year as a plenary session. Usually, the SEEOS board members hold a lecture about the last year developments and present the actual state of their national Vision 2020 programs (demographic data on blindness and low vision, prevention and rehabilitation activities and results, etc.). As the chair of IAPB Europe, I gave a talk about the worldwide state of the Vision 2020 and about the new WHO Global Action Plan to raise some attention on it among the key opinion-leaders in this part of Europe.

Articles on the WHO Global Action Plan in 2014. IAPB Europe is working on bringing the new WHO Global Action Plan closer to the ophthalmologists and making it more widely known among practicing ophthalmologists and key opinion leaders in Europe. As the first step, an Editorial about the goals and brief content of the eye health plan is being written by the chair of IAPB Europe in cooperation with Ivo Kocur from WHO. The paper is focused on the goals and required actions by the Member States in order to encourage them to implement those on a national level. Another article on the achievements of the Vision 2020 program in Hungary is also going to be published in the European Edition of Ocular Surgery News in

March 2014. The article also addresses the work of IAPB Europe and the WHO Global Action Plan 2014-2019 and contains a call for the readers to develop national blindness prevention programs and to implement the goals actions included in the action plan at national levels.

ICO Diabetic Retinopathy Guidelines was translated to Romanian language and distributed to 1000 ophthalmologists on CD-ROM by IAPB Europe.

2015

IAPB Europe helped finding partners from Europe for the Diabetic Retinopathy Barometer Study and gave logistical support in their study participation.

ROP Session and Survey in the Congress of the South-East European Ophthalmological Society (SEEOS) in Budva, Montenegro.

IAPB European Regional Workshop on the Global Action Plan. IAPB Europe meets with National Ophthalmological Society Leaders in a closed meeting. “Towards universal eye health in Europe. Meeting on the implementation of the WHA66.4 Universal eye health: a global action plan 2014-2019”. Closed meeting during the SOE Congress, 9 June 2015, Vienna, Austria. IAPB Europe session in 2014. An own session will be organized by IAPB Europe at the annual congress of the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) in 2015 in Vienna, Austria. This year we plan to achieve a better attendance by inviting key opinion leaders and presidents of the national ophthalmology societies as speakers. We ask them to talk about one of the most significant causes of blindness in their country and to suggest possible solutions on improving eye health care in their region.

The meeting was followed by active post meeting email interactions and further information delivery.

From IAPB blog about this workshop posted by Robin Percy:

“Vienna, a city packed with imperial history, was the site for the IAPB regional workshop on the Global Action Plan: ‘Towards Universal Eye Health in Europe’, held with the support of our WHO partners. This workshop brought together the Heads of National Societies of Ophthalmology from across Europe to discuss the Global Action Plan, look at its relevance in their countries and to identify what needed to be done to turn the plan into action when they get home.

It was a fascinating meeting with 21 countries represented, covering a vast slice of the globe – from Ireland, to Norway, to Turkey, to Russia. I think this was the first time that IAPB has arranged a regional meeting for representatives from every country in Europe and from the enthusiastic response of participants they truly appreciated the opportunity to work together.

We were lucky to have Hugh Taylor with us, with his wealth of experience, and both Peter Ackland and Ivo Kocur who spoke about the experience of rolling out the GAP in other regions.

By the end of the workshop every representative had committed to speaking to those with influence and decision making power in their countries to make them aware of the GAP and what needed to be done. The message for us all was that each person had a responsibility to do this and to pick out one thing that could be achieved by World Sight Day.

What I found fascinating and exciting was the evolution of informal partnerships between people and countries, in the past we have seen links develop between Moldova and Turkey and I am sure that similar alliances were forged over this meeting.

A last word on the team from Moldova, led by Professor Bendelic, who had already lined up a meeting with the Ministry of Health for the following week to discuss how they would go about developing their National Eye Health Plan.”



IAPB European Regional Workshop on the Global Action Plan in June 2015, Vienna, Austria.

Meeting and advocacy in the Ministry of Health. Chisinau, Moldova. The results and conclusion of the Moldova RAAB Study were presented to the deputy Minister of Health by the local leaders of the study and the discussion on the possible steps forward was supported by the chair of IAPB Europe. Untreated cataract was the most common cause of blindness in

rural areas. Prevalence of diabetes was 11.4%, among them 55.9% had some form of retinopathy.

2016

Data collection and advocacy. Moldova, Hungary have performed European national **RAAB-DR surveys**. The results of the studies were published:

Zatic T, Bendelic E, Paduca A, et al. Rapid assessment of avoidable blindness and diabetic retinopathy in Republic of Moldova. Br J Ophthalmol. 2015;99:832-836.

Szabó D, Sándor GL, Tóth G, Pék A, Lukács R, Szalai I, Tóth GZ, Papp A, Nagy ZZ, Limburg H, Németh J. Visual impairment and blindness in Hungary. Acta Ophthalmol. 2018;96: 168-173.

Tóth G, Szabó D, Sándor GL, Szalai I, Lukács R, Pék A, Tóth GZ, Papp A, Nagy ZZ, Limburg H, Németh J. Diabetes and diabetic retinopathy in people aged 50 years and older in Hungary. Br J Ophthalmol 2017;101(7):965-969.

Németh J, Szabó D, Tóth G, Sándor GL, Lukács R, Pék A, Szalai I, Papp A, Resnikoff S, Limburg H. Feasibility of the rapid assessment of avoidable blindness with diabetic retinopathy module (RAAB+DR) in industrialised countries: challenges and lessons learned in Hungary. Ophthalmic Epidemiol. 2018;25:273-279.

Tóth G, Szabó D, Sándor GL, Nagy ZZ, Karadeniz S, Limburg H, Németh J. Diabetes and blindness in people with diabetes in Hungary. Eur J Ophthalmol. 2018;29:141-147.

Tóth G, Szabó D, Sándor GL, Szepessy Z, Barsi Á, Nagy ZZ, Limburg H, Németh J. Rural-urban disparities in the prevalence of diabetes and diabetic eye complications in Hungary. Spektrum Augenheilkd. 2019. Doi:10.1007/s00717-019-00433-6.

Pék A, Szabó D, Sándor GL, Tóth G, Papp A, Nagy ZZ, Limburg H, Németh J. Relationship between diabetes mellitus and cataract in Hungary. Int J Ophthalmol. 2020;13:788-793.

Sándor GL, Tóth G, Szabó D, Szalai I, Lukács R, Pék A, Tóth GZ, Papp A, Nagy ZZ, Limburg H, Németh J. Cataract blindness in Hungary. Int J Ophthalmol. 2020;13:438-444.

The Hungarian RAAB study showed that RAAB+DR survey can be successfully conducted in industrialised countries. Prevalence of blindness was 0.9% in Hungary among 50+ people. AMD and other retinal diseases were the most common causes of blindness. This study showed us that cataract is still a significant cause of visual impairment. Prevalence of diabetes was 19.3% and every fifth diabetic patient had diabetic retinopathy.

Based on the analysed results, the advocacy was started in both countries. For this reason, **Hungarian National Committee for Eye Health was founded** in 2016 with the outside support from the Social and Health Secretaries of State. IAPB Europe will try to encourage other countries to perform similar data collections and advocacy based on the positive experiences in Moldova and Hungary.

The Board of the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) has decided to found a new **SOE Pilot Committee on Public Eye Health Issues** in June 2016 in Belgrade. The first action was a data collection from all national ophthalmic societies in Europe: a questionnaire was circulated about what have been accomplished in the field of blindness prevention and vision rehabilitation in the country level.

Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP) Projects. Eye Samaritans International (earlier known as SSR) is providing IAPB Europe with funds for ROP activities and with this support, it was possible to continue to increase the awareness of ROP and also of the importance of ROP screening programmes in the Eastern-European region. Professor Brian Darlow (neonatologist) and Julie Flanagan (neonatal nurse) attended the Russian neonatal conference in April 2016 where they presented and also ran a ROP course. In June a team (Alan Richards, Graham Quinn, Shad Husain (Neonatologist) held a ROP workshop in Yekaterinburg.

Based on the IAPB proposal, Medicor started ROP programs in Romania - 2 years ROP training to roll out the national ROP guidelines across the level 1 and 2 NICUs.

A lecture was delivered by IAPB Europe at the Baltic Congress of Ophthalmology on the 20th August 2016 in Riga, Latvia.

A **VISION 2020 Symposium** was organized in the SEEOS Congress on 29th September 2016 in Bratislava, which was traditional from the beginning of the SEEOS congresses and is arranged each year as a plenary session. This year, Prof Wei He (co-Chair of IAPB Western Pacific) held the opening lecture about the Chinese model for large volume, high quality and low cost cataract surgery. Besides, 7 other speakers spoke on the different European and national aspects of blindness prevention.

IAPB continues to chair and take a lead role in the work of the “**European Coalition for Vision**” (**ECV**). The next ECV meeting will be in 13 October 2016 in Brussels.

The **IAPB Europe Board** met and organized an **open forum** in the evening of 29th October 2016 during the IAPB GA in Durban, South Africa. The discussion was about the IAPB Europe main activities for the next 4 years, about the main aims, actions, strategic areas, disease and geographical targets. Actually the earlier IAPB Europe action plan was extended. Besides, discussion on the possible partners to work with and on the financial background is also planned.

2017

UNESCO United Kingdom has nominated the **Commonwealth Eye Health Consortium's** Open Education online eye health training courses as their submission for the UNESCO Prize for the use of Information and Communication Technologies for Education 2017 (Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust).

Performed operations annually (about 850,000 operations) increased 5% in 2017 compared to previous year (S. Fyodorov Eye Microsurgery Federal State Institution).

IAPBs **ROP** programme in Romania: it is in 2017 in its second year and has supported **4 regional workshops** for NICU teams. Facilitated the establishment of a national ROP Steering Committee, Supported the review of 4 neonatal protocols and the drafting of updated ROP guidelines. Funded by Medicor.

IAPB support **ROP** program in Russia – In December 2017 a team of 3 (neonatologist, 2 neonatal nurses) spent 2 weeks on a sponsored ROP **observer-ship** – 1 week at Homerton Hospital, London and 1 week at St Mary's ,Manchester. The team found the visit hugely inspiring, interesting and have already held discussions with their Senior Management to identify changes to strengthen their services. Funded by Eye Samaritans International.

The **national Ophthalmological Societies** participated in the celebration of **World Sight Day** in 15 European countries in 2017.

Annual meeting of Black Sea Ophthalmological Society in Sofia, Bulgaria, May 2017: **Diabetic Retinopathy Workshop** was held in cooperation with Professor Sehnaz Karadeniz (Chair of IDF Europe) from Istanbul, Turkey.



Diabetic Retinopathy Workshop in Sophia, May 2017.

A successful **campaign for the prevention of firework eye injuries** was initiated by the SOE (European Society of Ophthalmology) President. The initiative was endorsed by the ICO, AAO and IAPB, among others in 2017.

The patron of VISION 2020 Netherlands opened the **Vision 2017 Congress**, the 12th International Conference of the International Society for Low Vision Research and Rehabilitation. The main theme was: “*Low vision rehabilitation: a global right*”. One thousand attendees came to The Hague and VISION 2020 Netherlands organized the opening session (VISION 2020 The Netherlands).

An official meeting of the Dutch Parliament was held in April 2018 in The Hague on the danger of consumer firework (including avoidable blindness due to eye injuries) (VISION 2020 The Netherlands).

National media attention on television in prime time & in the major newspapers for avoidable blindness by consumer firework; at the same time publication of an opinion article of VISION 2020 Netherlands on the public danger of consumer firework in one of the highest ranked serious newspapers in 2018 (VISION 2020 The Netherlands). ICO position paper consumer's firework was published in 2018. Twenty-five European countries sent back reports on firework injuries for the survey register.

IAPB Europe presented its activities and plans in regional congress: Astrakhan, September 2017 – Priorities of the IAPB Europe in the next four years.

National Eye Health Plan is signed in Moldova after a long advocacy process.



Signature of the Moldova National Eye Health Plan in 2017. Tatiana Ghidirimschi, Director LOW VISION Centre, Stela Grigoraş, Minister, The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Gheorghe Bregam, Deputy Prime-Minister, Corina Fusu, Minister, The Ministry of Education, Ruxanda Glavan, Minister, The Ministry of Health, Hans Bjorn Bakketeig, president, the charity organisation "Hjelp Moldova" Norway.

2018

„Prevention of Blindness and Eye Health from European Perspective” symposium was held at WOC 2018 Barcelona with IAPB participation.

WOC Barcelona, 19 June 2018, Presentations on Experiences of VISION 2020 Netherlands Over the Past 5 Years during, invited **Symposium** *Prevention of Blindness and Eye Health from European Perspective and Firework accidents: avoidable blindness in Europe? A perspective from VISION 2020, Invited Symposium Explosive SOE Session Firework Related Eye Injuries.*

2019

International Centre for Eye Health co-facilitated a **workshop on ROP** in Ukraine in June 2019.

ROP trainings and donations in Ukraine: Dr. Shahid Husain (Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, United Kingdom) and Dr. Alan Richards (Eye Samaritans International) visited Ukraine the week of May 20-26 to assist with the prevention and treatment of ROP. They **met with the Deputy Minister of Health** to outline the program of Eye Samaritans International in Ukraine. They made presentations on ROP, and how to improve organization and delivery of care to preterm infants. Equipment was donated to the unit to facilitate eye exams in neonates (specula and scleral depressors), and a streak retinoscope was delivered to the pediatric ophthalmologist along with training on how to use the retinoscope and hands on training in proper retinal exam in a preterm infant to detect ROP. They visited the NICUs in Kyiv, Lviv and Ternopil, assessed the needs of each NICU, made presentations on ROP and neonatal care, and donated equipment and gave one on one instruction in the use of the equipment. They made presentations to the National Neonatology Conference on ROP the extent of the problem and Dr. Husain had outlined concrete steps to be taken with preterm infants to improve survival and reduce complications from prematurity.

Lviv, Ukraine **ROP Conference**: Eye Samaritans International sponsored neonatologist Shahid Hussain MD and NICU nurse and instructor Julie Flanagan to travel to Ukraine to

speak at the 2nd Congress of the Ukrainian Academy of Pediatrics, and to visit and work with the NICU in nearby Ivano-Frankivsk, as well as the NICU unit in Lviv.

Armenia work by Eye Samaritans International in 2019: **Donation** of a compressor to the NICU of the Republican Hospital in Yerevan, Armenia to allow preterm infants to receive blended oxygen (oxygen blender with air to allow less than 100% oxygen to be given). \$19,000 was donated in NICU equipment (air oxygen blenders and pulse oximeters) to the NICU of the Republican Hospital NICU in Yerevan, Armenia. Sponsorisation of two neonatologists and one NICU nurse from Yerevan, Armenia to spend two weeks training at elite NICUs in London and Manchester in March 2019.

Clearly **launched an animation** made by comedians Grace Cambell and Loyiso Gola aimed at getting Commonwealth nations to get “Glasses in Classes”. “Glasses in Classes” campaign is urging schools across the world to get on board and hold a lesson focused on vision.

Eye Care Program in Kyrgyzstan by Swiss Red Cross and Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan. Swiss Red Cross conducted a **RAAB survey** with a national partner in Kyrgyzstan in more cycles. The main conclusions were as follows: a) Lower prevalence of blindness than expected, b) Majority of causes blindness are avoidable causes, c) High proportion of glaucoma blindness, d) Cataract surgical coverage was high. Government of Kyrgyzstan has also support the survey. Conducting of the study was very complicated, because 90% of the country is mountains. Local government would like to build in the results of the RAAB study in **national health strategy**. Swiss Red Cross will ask later the help of IAPB to support us guiding in policy questions with the government.

Firework eye injuries

- SOE Secretariat informed and encouraged national ophthalmological societies to perform national surveys on firework eye injuries in each country, because the problem is now underestimated. ICO Position Paper (2 pages) needs to translate to national languages and advertised on homepages of national ophthalmological societies in their own languages and asking data collection in SOE Firework Survey on-line.
- Dutch Safety Board official report was published at <https://www.onderzoeksraad.nl/nl/page/12057/annual-reports-and-budgets>

SOE Public Eye Health Session including 2 lectures of **Fireworks eye injuries** was organized in the **SOE Congress** (2019 in **Nice**), invited speakers were: Jan Tjeerd de Faber (Netherlands), Eugene Bendelic (Moldova), Aselia Abdurakhmanova (Kyrgyzstan), Serge Resnikoff (Switzerland), Ivo Kocur (Switzerland), Philip Rizzuto (United States).

After the publication of the **Myopia** White Papers in IOVS, SOE Board started **formation of a working team** (including SOE Board members) for European adaptation.

SOE Board decided to improve **inclusion of young ophthalmologists to public eye health** issues. A proposal was under development for national representatives that the national ophthalmic accreditation and specialisation exam need to include questions about public eye health, epidemiology and prevention of blindness, and on vision rehabilitation.

With the lead of WHO, data collection, **WHO ECSAT**, was performed for evidence based advocacy in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Serbia, Russia, Bulgaria. Some of the results were presented during the **SOE 2019 Congress** in **Nice**.

Joint meeting of SOE Pilot Committee on Public Eye Health and IAPB Europe at SOE Congress 13 June, 2018, **Nice**. One of the main topic was the planning European launches of WHO World Report on Vision.



Joint meeting of SOE Pilot Committee on Public Eye Health and IAPB Europe June 2018, Nice.

Public eye health related sessions at SOE Congress 2019 Nice: Public Eye Health Session (including Fireworks Session). Priorities for Eye Care Services in Central and Eastern Europe

Vision 2020 and Education - Public Eye Health Session in the Congress of the South-East European Ophthalmological Society (SEEOS) 2019 in Pristina, Kosovo – organized by Petja Vassileva, Janos Nemeth, Slobodanka Latinovic.

Joined IAPB-Europe and SOE publication: The **SOE Board Survey** results and the European plans of future targeted public eye health activities were published as an Editorial in the European Journal of Ophthalmology: „The 18 country data showed us, that primary possible actions of ophthalmologists in Europe could be to focus on blinding retinal diseases (including those of older generations, including age-related macular degeneration, DR, and anterior ischemic optic neuropathy), retinopathy of prematurity, as well as on the projected increase in myopia and pathological myopia, and cataract. Starting discussions on the targets and possible actions is our national task in the ophthalmological societies, and in the SOE at the European level.²

Németh J, Tóth G, Resnikoff S, Tjeerd de Faber J. Preventing blindness and visual impairment in Europe: What do we have to do? Editorial. Eur J Ophthalmol. 2019;29(2): 129-132.

2020

Vision 2020 The Netherlands. The Dutch government approved full financial support for a 3-year trial in which district nurses perform **eye screening in home healthcare patients** (*'Online nurse-assisted eye-screening in home health care: implementation and socio-economic evaluation (the iScreen study')*). Sixty percent of frail elderly home healthcare patients in The Netherlands do have an ophthalmologic condition. Although a large number was already known in eye health care, >20% was referred with an unrecognized ophthalmologic problem (see at the end). Basic ophthalmologic screening by home healthcare nurses might be a potential tool to reduce the burden of avoidable age-related vision loss. The study is a combined effort of 3 Dutch university clinics and will be coordinated under supervision of the *VISION 2020 Netherlands* board. It is the first time since 2003 that *VISION 2020 Netherlands* is recognized by the government as scientific partner.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a huge burden for European countries, people, health care and economy. COVID19 pandemic greatly reduced the possibilities of advocacy for the WHO WRV. COVID19 pandemic is expected to cause delay and or cancellations of the Continental European Launch and many of the planned country launches.

However, there were some **virtual meetings** regarding Europe.

Integrated People-Centred Eye Care (IPEC). World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution on **IPEC** has been adopted by all member states of WHO. This decision strengthens the WHO's global strategy on eye care and a very important and significant news for all the leaders of the National Societies of Ophthalmology in Europe. The information was distributed across European IAPB partners asking them to advocate for and to implement of the WHO World Report on Vision program in their country, making a step forward for the improvement of eye care services in their own country and advocate and discuss with their Ministry of Health along this WHA Resolution.

Firework eye injuries. Working against fireworks is a great success in The Netherlands. It is on political agenda, they are dangerous, polluting, expensive and cost a lot of eyes. Germany started now their third survey on eye injuries, number of doctors who provide data on eye injuries is increasing. Survey on firework injuries in The Netherlands survey was really successful. To international database data were provided 425 reports from 25 countries. Firework injuries are a global problem, also for the European Union due to lack of borders and free flow of goods.

IAPB Italy made a **podcast** on the risk of eye check-ups being halted during the Covid-19 pandemic, a 16th podcast by the National Low Vision Centre on rehabilitation and low vision during the Covid-19 Pandemic. On the **World Sight Day** 8 October 2020 in Italy it was organised through the website www.giornatamondialedellavista.it a virtual conference with institutional representatives and ophthalmologists and Extended online session with eye specialists. ***Proteggi la sua vista*** [Protect their sight], prevention campaign for pre- and post-natal eye conditions was organised through www.proteggilasuvista.it website and sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Health. Informative leaflets and flyers were distributed in all of Italy's maternity hospitals (450). On 10th of December 2020 an online event was organised with the participation of a paediatrician, a neonatologist, an ophthalmologists and mum bloggers.

Armenian Eye Care Project (AECF) conducted a **nationwide screening program for diabetic retinopathy using state-of-the-art AI technology** (EyeArt AI Eye Screening System – Eyenuk Co, Los Angeles, USA) in Armenia. Based on the project 10,000 patients were screened, 1,000 patients were identified as having diabetic retinopathy and 360 patients received sight-saving treatment due to vision-threatening diabetic retinopathy. The EyeArt System provides fully automated diabetic retinopathy screening, including imaging, grading, and reporting in a single visit, without the need for eye dilation. Shortly after photographing the retina and while the patient is still in clinic, a report is issued, which is used to determine whether the patient needs to be evaluated by a specialist right away for potential treatment or seen again in 12 months. In November 2020 AECF was presented the project at the launch event of the WHO Guide for Diabetic Retinopathy Screening.

2021

Myopia guideline was developed and published in cooperation of IAPB, SOE and International Myopia Institute:

Németh J, Tapasztó B, Aclimandos WA, Kestelyn P, Jonas JB, De Faber JHN, Januleviciene I, Grzybowski A, Nagy ZZ, Pärssinen O, Guggenheim JA, Allen PM, Baraas RC, Saunders KJ, Flitcroft DI, Gray LS, Polling JR, Haarman AE, Tideman JWL, Wolffsohn JS, Wahl S, Mulder JA, Smirnova IY, Formenti M, Radhakrishnan H, Resnikoff S. Update and guidance on management of myopia. European Society of Ophthalmology in cooperation with International Myopia Institute. Eur J Ophthalmol. OnlineFirst 2021 Mar 5:1120672121998960.

Now, we are developing dissemination and **advocacy** actions based on the main messages of this European Myopia Management Guidance. Till today the open access guideline has reached 6400 views and downloads.

IAPB Italy was organised **online event** to further investigate refraction errors at age 0-3, with an ophthalmologist and blogger mums on 26th of February 2021. On 26th of March 2021, online event was organised to further investigate the development of sight at age 0-3, with an ophthalmologist and mum bloggers. **World Glaucoma Week** was organised through the website www.settimanaglaucoma.it between 8-14 March. Informative cards and flyers were distributed in 160 supermarkets.

VISION 2020 Netherlands has a new chair: associate prof. Ruth van Nispen from the Amsterdam University. She will be appointed this summer as full professor of *Low Vision Rehabilitation in visually disabled persons*. Prof. van Nispen succeeded former VISION 2020 chair prof. Jan Keunen who was appointed in October 2020 as member of the Dutch Senate in The Hague. The Netherlands now have a prevention of blindness advocate in its political heart. Prof. Ruth van Nispen and prof. Keunen will start this year the iSCREEN multi-center study.

Update of the **IAPB Europe website**.

Upcoming European Meetings. The original plans were changed into organizing a **Webinar** on avoidable visual impairment of 30 minutes followed by Prof. Jan Keunen 30 minutes' lecture in Dutch on the achievements made by the VISION 2020/IAPB program in The Netherlands on 4 June 2021. About 200-250 nurses, optometrists, ophthalmologists, students etc. will follow the Webinar. VISION patron princess Margriet and her husband and a small delegation of the States-General (the Dutch Senate and Congress) will be present. The leaders of IAPB and IAPB Europe are invited to present short video presentations during the webinar. This will be followed by a safe and corona-proof European IAPB-WHO meeting in The Hague in 2022 for the official **Dutch and European launch of the World Report on Vision**.

The planned **national World Report on Vision launches** were postponed. The personal meetings were also cancelled and online meetings were organized instead.

Challenges, opportunities due the COVID-19 pandemic and new advocacy efforts.

Due to the lockdown during the first wave of the pandemic elective ophthalmic surgeries were postponed in most of the European countries. During the second wave, most of the cataract surgeries were cancelled. There are longer waiting lists and more difficult accessibility to the eye care for patients. Now, publications are presenting irreversible vision loss consequences of the delayed eye care service delivery.

The increase of myopia may well be exacerbated by changes in working patterns during and following the Covid-19 pandemic (increased time indoors, increased time on electronic devices, etc.), so, the topic is even more important today during the COVID lockdowns. IAPB Europe in cooperation with IAPB Central Office, European Society of Ophthalmology and

International Myopia Institute have started *advocacy campaign* to deliver information and to reduce myopia onset and slow down its progression.

Budapest, 31 March 2021

Dr. János Németh
Chair of IAPB Europe (2012-2021)