



EUROPEAN COALITION FOR VISION  
*Better Eye Health for Europe*

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European Parliament Elections Manifesto 2014

Europe is facing an invisible epidemic. 20.4m Europeans are suffering from serious vision impairment, including 2.3m people who are blind. Two-thirds of these cases could be treated or prevented. The cost to individuals, their families, Member States and the EU as a whole, undermines European goals of social cohesion and participation, and hinders economic growth and development.

The solutions – proven, simple and cost-effective – are available but overlooked in the same way as the crisis: regular eye care for all, easy access to care and rapid intervention when necessary will tackle most of this burden. People living in Europe would benefit greatly from improved eye health; and for Member States healthcare savings and productivity gains would be considerable. Therefore we urge the European Parliament to address this challenge under its next mandate.

People living with sight loss have the same rights as those without a disability but often these rights are not fulfilled. Europe must do better in providing rehabilitation programmes, assistive devices and removal of barriers to access health, education, social support and employment. We call on the European Parliament to use its significant powers to improve the lives of people affected by sight loss.

## CALL TO ACTION FOR MEP CANDIDATES

-  **Encourage** the European Commission and EU Member States to prioritise vision and eye health as part of their public health strategies.
-  **Adopt** an EP resolution to encourage Member States to ensure fair and equitable access to eye care, including free sight tests and treatment, for the most at risk and vulnerable groups (including those on low incomes).
-  **Ensure** all relevant legislation and regulations improve access to and use of eye care services and promote an inclusive society that supports the rights and independence of blind and partially sighted people.
-  **Improve** the consistency and standard of EU and Member State data collection on the status of vision and eye health and the inclusion of people with sight loss.



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The European Coalition for Vision is an alliance made up of professional bodies, patient groups, European NGOs, disabled people's organisations and trade associations representing suppliers. The coalition exists to raise the profile of eye health and vision, help prevent avoidable visual impairment and secure an equal and inclusive society for those with irreversible blindness or low vision in Europe.

Please visit [HTTP://WWW.ECVISION.EU/](http://www.ecvision.eu/) for more information.

The 2010 Global Burden of Disease Vision Loss Group has recently published estimates of the causes of visual impairment in three European sub-regions of the world - there are 20.4m Europeans that are either blind or have a serious vision problem which impedes their ability to work, learn and participate in normal life. The main causes were found to be cataract and uncorrected refractive error (which together account for more than half of the disease burden), plus glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. These can affect people from childhood to old age, and the numbers at risk are expected to increase dramatically over the forthcoming years, mainly due to the ageing European population.

In May 2013 the World Health Assembly adopted Resolution 66.4 which included the global Action Plan "Universal Eye Health – a global Action Plan 2014 -2019". It is now of paramount importance that the 28 Member States of the EU each develop country specific plans to achieve implementation of the Plan. Universal health coverage, including social protection measures to ensure free access to eye care and rehabilitation services for the most vulnerable and at risk groups including pensioners, children and the unemployed, is a necessity.

Although the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities clearly articulates the entitlement of persons with disabilities to have the same rights as others, it is a reality that people with sight loss are disadvantaged and denied the support required to enable them to participate in society. Data that is collected across Europe to measure the inclusion of people with sight loss is inadequate and there is a lack of consistency in the standards used to measure and record data. This needs to be addressed in consultation with disabled people's organisations.

The European Coalition for Vision has come together to call on the European Union institutions to use their power and influence to support our work in addressing these challenges.

For further information visit [www.ecvision.eu](http://www.ecvision.eu) or email Zoe Gray at [zgray@iapb.org](mailto:zgray@iapb.org)