

## How young Eye Doctors are helped

Dr. Nikolaus Luft



The European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons is a European scientific society headquartered in Dublin. It is open to international membership and today it counts as many as 5000 members from almost 100 countries. The main purposes of the society as written in the bylaws primarily are to promote research and experimental work in the field of eye surgery in the European Union. Another effort is to advance and promote education, study and practise in eye surgery.

In 2010 an observership or trainee programme (“The Young Ophthalmologists”) was established to support young European eye doctors who are at the beginning of their surgical training. The programme is open to trainees of 35 years of age and younger from all European countries who wish to travel outside of their own country and to experience clinical practice in a hospital or university setting. A total of 40 grants are available per year covering travel and accommodation costs. Today, 15 participating centers offer observership programmes in 11 European countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Austria, Greece, Spain, UK, Netherlands and Slovakia). No official figures have been published but a large proportion of applicants are in fact south-eastern Europeans applying for traineeships in north-western European centers.

I decided to share the YO programme at this workshop on skilled migration because it provides an incentive for young European professional (eye doctors) to make a career abroad in the EU. More importantly, the YO is a prototype of a nongovernmental organisation that fuels skilled intra-EU migration in a very specialised professional field (80 eye doctors per million capita in the EU). The question can be raised whether incentivising young, highly-skilled professionals to broaden their horizons, to go abroad or even to make a career abroad is necessarily a responsibility of the European Commission, or of national governments or whether this can be achieved more effectively by less rigid forces like NGOs or businesses.