

For Immediate Release!

## **Quality Sunglasses – Fashion Accessories or Essential Health Care?**

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### **UV is a Risk!**

79 % of the population know a lot about the danger from UV exposure for our skin. But worldwide only about 6 % of the population are aware of the consequences by absorbing UV-radiation, esp. violet and blue light.

Since many years dermatologists and public health authorities warn people against too much sun because it can lead to skin-cancer. But our eyes have to be protected as well! 36% of all Europeans still do not wear any sunglasses at all. This is one of the results of the European consumer surveys realised in the past years by the European Sunglass Association ESA. Within the context of increasing UV and light induced eye diseases, one of the main missions of ESA is to raise the awareness of the public for eye protection. UV over exposure can cause eye damages like acute or chronic damage to ocular structures, lesions (well known as snow blindness or welder's disease), cataract of the crystalline lens or eye-cancer. Increasing age of populations and "sun – seeking" lifestyle are further reasons why an offensive campaign to educate and inform people on UV Protection for the eyes is essential.

### **Children at Special Risk - Visual Cells "do not forget".**

Children and teenagers are likely to spend more time outdoors than adults. It is estimated that individuals receive almost half of their life time sunlight exposure until the age of 18-20. Children spend hours playing in the sandbox, in the snow etc. - places where sunlight exposure may be significantly enhanced by strong reflection: fresh snow: 88%, old snow: 59%, sea foam, surf: 30%, dry sand:18%, concrete pavement:12%.

Furthermore, the cornea and lens of children possess the highest transmission for visible light including blue light, which also can cause severe damage to the eyes. Even small fractions of UVA may be transmitted to the retina of children. This so called "UV – window" is thought to be closed upon puberty. Therefore, lesions acquired during childhood may accumulate over decades of life.

### **Adults at Special Risk**

Some groups of the general population are at a higher risk of light–induced lesions to ocular tissues, like

outdoor workers, people with high exposure to sunlight (e.g. sportsmen, gardeners,...), blue eyed fair skinned people, sunbathers, people with eye operations.

### **Perfect Protection for your Eyes with Quality Sunglasses**

Less sun is more! Quality sunglasses can help. What to consider while buying quality sunglasses:

- 100% absorption of UVA and UVB up to 380nm is the minimum requirement of good sunlenses
- Optical Class 1: best optical quality - the equivalent to prescription lenses (the same as for RX-lenses)
- Reduction of visible light for better Visual Comfort and against Eye Fatigue
- Eye Coverage to protect from vertical and horizontal UV rays
- Mechanical properties (Impact resistance, skin protection from irritations)

Additionally ESA recommends the blue light blocking ability of sunglasses. Under certain conditions (e.g. long exposure to high UV radiation) and for special target groups (adults at special risk and children), a 100% UV/Visible Light absorption up to 400nm and further the cut out of Blue Light is highly recommended.

### **ESA Activities 2006**

ESA has established a range of communication tools to inform its Members, to teach opticians and to inform consumers on the most important topics around the sun protection of the eyes:

- the education and training booklet "Sunglass Instructor" targeted to opticians and all sunglasses professionals; release autumn 2006
- the ESA-Film "Protect your Eyes" will convey key information about sunlight, health, protection and quality in an understandable format; release late summer 2006
- ESA Yearly Conference in Vienna from June 8 to 9. Registration for ESA Members and Non-ESA Members still open.

More information under [www.esa-sunglasses.com](http://www.esa-sunglasses.com).

ESA Press Office