

## Essilor mourns passing of Bernard Maitenaz, inventor of the first Varilux progressive lens

**(Charenton-le-Pont, 22 February 2021) – Essilor is deeply saddened to announce that Bernard Maitenaz, the inventor of the Varilux® progressive lens that improved the lives of millions of presbyopes globally and redefined an entire industry, has passed away in his home city of Paris, at the age of 94.**

**At this difficult time, the entire Essilor family's thoughts are with Bernard Maitenaz's family.**

Bernard Maitenaz's pioneering work revolutionized the eyecare industry and transformed people's lives: to date, more than 700 million Varilux® lenses have been sold since 1959. His passion for optics, unwavering faith in its future and valuable contributions have made him one of the most iconic figures in the optical industry.

Bernard was one of the founders of Essilor Group in 1972. At the helm of the company between 1981 and 1991, he oversaw a period of major international growth, which turned Essilor into the world's leading lens manufacturer. His commitment to Essilor continued well beyond his retirement, as Honorary Chairman of the Essilor Board of Directors, and as founding member of the Valoptec shareholders association.

In a personal tribute message, Paul du Saillant, Chairman and CEO of Essilor International, said: *"The entire Essilor family is truly saddened by the loss of our honorary chairman, friend and colleague, Bernard Maitenaz. A true pioneer and inventor at heart, Bernard will also be remembered for the values with which he led Essilor between '81 and '91, and which he promoted within Valoptec throughout his more than 70-year career. Without him and the invention of the Varilux® progressive lens, the optical industry and Essilor would not be what they are today. We owe Bernard enormously, and he will remain a source of inspiration for generations to come. On this sad day, our thoughts are with his family, sons and grandchildren."*

---

Before progressive lenses, presbyopia was generally corrected with bifocal lenses, an invention from Benjamin Franklin in the 18th century. Frustrated with his father's bifocals, and determined to improve his father's life by improving his sight, Bernard, who was then a 33-year-old engineer at La Société des Lunetiers in 1959, took on the task of creating a lens that would provide presbyopes with comfortable vision at any distance.

Bernard Maitenaz graduated with degrees in engineering from both Arts et Métiers in 1946 and Ecole Supérieure d'Optique in 1947.

## Worldwide accolades for his remarkable industry contributions

For his tremendous contribution to the field of vision, Bernard achieved significant stature in numerous areas of research and technology:

- Bernard taught optical engineering at the Ecole Supérieure d'Optique in Paris. He was also Technical Education Advisor at the Ministère de l'Education nationale, and President of the Centre d'Enseignement et de Recherche in Paris.
- He served as a member of several boards of directors, particularly with the Ecole Supérieure d'Optique for over 10 years, and with the Ecole National Supérieure des Arts et Métiers from 1990 to 1994. He was a board member of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) from 1992 to 2003, and was a member of the Conseil pour les Applications de l'Académie des Sciences (CADAS).
- He received numerous accolades for his contributions to optometry, including an honorary Doctorate of Ocular Science from New England College of Optometry in Boston in 1988 and an honorary Doctorate Honoris Causa from the School of Optometry of the Montreal University in 1993.
- He was the recipient of the 2014 Apollo Award, the highest award presented to the general public by the American Association of Optometrists, which honors individuals or organizations for distinguished service to the visual welfare of the public.

### **About Essilor**

*Essilor International is the world's leading ophthalmic optics company. Essilor designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of lenses to improve and protect eyesight. Its mission is to improve lives by improving sight. To support this mission, Essilor allocates more than €200 million to research and innovation every year, in a commitment to continuously bring new, more effective products to market. Its flagship brands are Varilux®, Crizal®, Transitions®, Eyezen™, Xperio®, Foster Grant®, and Bolon™.*

*It also develops and markets equipment, instruments and services for eyecare professionals.*

*Essilor International is a subsidiary of EssilorLuxottica. The EssilorLuxottica share trades on the Euronext Paris market and is included in the Euro Stoxx 50 and CAC 40 indices. Codes and symbols: ISIN: FR0000121667; Reuters: ESLX.PA; Bloomberg: EL:FP.*

*For more information, please visit [www.essilor.com](http://www.essilor.com)*

## CONTACTS

### **Corporate Communications**

Ginette De Matteis

Tel.: +33 (0)1 49 77 45 02

### **Media Relations**

Maïlis Thiercelin

Tel.: +33 (0)1 49 77 45 02