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Consultation response to the European Commission's Green Paper, "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases", COM(2005) 637.

In its Green Paper, "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases", the Commission asked for consultation responses to 33 questions from interested organisations.

The questions concentrate on the current, probably escalating, epidemic of obesity seen in Western culture and possible courses of action in order to counteract this unfortunate trend. On the basis of experience from several projects and initiatives with an emphasis on the diet and physical activity of children and young people carried out during the last 5-7 years, Magistratsafdelingen for Børn og Unge i Århus Kommune ("The Department for Children and Youth at the Municipality of Århus") is hereby submitting its responses to questions 14-17 (enclosed).

The Municipality of Århus works on the assumption that healthy children become strong adults, and that a healthy diet and good habits with regard to physical exercise during childhood is important for the development and well-being of children. The Municipality maintains its commitment to providing a healthy, nourishing diet at its schools. This is reflected in the food served in our school canteens as well as the information provided to parents and the general curriculum. In terms of physical exercise, we are not lagging behind, but there is a need to increase our focus on this area, especially within work concerning consolidation and implementation of initiatives and experience gained in recent years.

Yours sincerely,
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Consultation response to the European Commission's Green Paper, "Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases", COM(2005) 637.

The Commission is asking 33 questions. Based on the experience gained in recent years, The Department for Children and Youth at the Municipality of Århus would like to comment on the following questions:

14. What are good examples for improving the nutritional value of school meals, and how can parents be informed on how to improve the nutritional value of home meals?
15. What is good practice for the provision of physical activity in schools on a regular basis?
16. What is good practice for fostering healthy dietary choices at schools, especially as regards the excessive intake of energy-dense snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks?
17. How can the media, health services, civil society and relevant sectors of industry support health education efforts made by schools? What role can public-private partnerships play in this regard?

Re 14. What are good examples for improving the nutritional value of school meals at the Municipality of Århus, and how can parents be informed on how to improve the nutritional value of home meals

Since 1996, the Municipality of Århus has provided a school lunch programme which covers all the 51 primary schools. The school lunch programme ensures that a uniform, nutritious lunch is offered to all school children in order to strengthen their health.

The key principle of the school lunch programme is that all food should have a high quality, including a high nutritional quality. All meals are evaluated, improved and developed in order to comply with official Danish dietary guidelines. This means that the food has reduced levels of fat and sugar and contains many healthy carbohydrates from bread, vegetables and fruit.

In order to satisfy dietary requirements, nutrient intake is calculated for all foods served, and they are evaluated for nutritional adequacy by an interdisciplinary nutrition evaluation group responsible for food quality control. The dishes we prepare are inspired by the fast food culture of the young, and all canteens have a common recipe book with recipes containing calculated nutrient intake.

Thus, the Municipality of Århus wishes to underline:

- that food should be fresh and of high quality
- that children learn more if they are not hungry
- that good, healthy diets are important for the children

It is important that parents are aware that the school lunch programme offers children a healthy diet every day at an affordable price. Apart from promoting the programme to parents via folders and brochures, we also offer them the possibility of using "Din skolebutik" ("Your school shop").

"Din skolebutik" is an online shop, where parents can order fruit, milk and mineral water, which their children can then obtain at the school canteen. There is a wish to extend the services of "Din skolebutik" to make it possible to order healthy food for the children and make it possible for parents to see the nutritional value of foods at the online shop.

The Municipality has engaged three nutrition advisers, who participate in meetings with parents and give talks to them at the schools, whenever there is a need to focus on nutrition issues. This autumn, the municipality will begin piloting home visits by dieticians to parents with overweight children. These visits will focus on eating healthy at home.

Århus Kommunes Sundhedspleje (the Municipal Health Care Department) is also part of the information service directed at parents. Health visitors measure and weigh the pupils starting school, and parents are here invited to a meeting with the health visitors.

Århus Kommunes Tandpleje (the Municipal Dental Care Department), which is also actively involved with regard to nutrition guidance, has developed a computer program about healthy diets for children which can be used by teachers at the schools of the Municipality. The Dental Care Department provides advice on healthy foods and beverages and instructs the children with regard to the sugar content of sweets and

soft drinks – not only with an eye to dental hygiene but also in order to advise against the intake of empty calories.

Finally, food and nutrition is a substantial part of the school subject of domestic science, where the children learn to make healthy, nourishing food.

Re 15. What is good practice for the provision of physical activity in schools on a regular basis?

At the Municipality of Århus, the coordination of day-care institutions, schools and social clubs for children has now been combined into one municipal administration, which makes it possible to provide a coordinated effort with regard to health and physical exercise for the age group 0-18 years.

Within the realm of day-care, one of the most significant contributions has been the effort to establish sports kindergartens in the Municipality. The aim is to "maintain and develop the joy of movement and to integrate the culture of physical exercise as a natural, healthy part of the children's lives". It is up to each day-care institution to decide if they want to become a sports kindergarten, and the remaining day-care institutions may decide for themselves how to integrate physical activity into daily activities.

Within school activities, the Municipality is partly bound by the somewhat tighter provisions of a circular under "Bekendtgørelse af lov om folkeskolen" (the Danish Primary School Order). Under "Common objectives", the circular provides physical exercise objectives for each class level. These provisions only allow for a limited set of further initiatives with regard to physical activity at schools. However, the following are common characteristics of the objectives :

- *"The pupils must be aware of the local facilities for physical exercise, play and other physical activities"*. This to a certain extent obliges physical education teachers to look at the opportunities of cooperating with local partners in the organisation of classes, more specifically local sports organisations, etc.
- The opportunities for interdisciplinary approaches abound, thereby providing for physical activity beyond the hours designated to sports in the timetable.

Tidfordelingsplan		Klassetrin:									Vejledende timetal	
Årsnormer - klokke timer	Minimumstimal	Bh.kl	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.		9.
Humanistiske fag	Minimumstimal				1000			955			1320	
	Dansk		300	270	240		180	180	180	180	180	180
	Engelsk				60		60	60	60	60	60	60
	Tysk/fransk								90	90	120	120
	Historie				30		30	30	60	60	60	30
	Kristendomsk.		60	30	30		30	30	60		30	30
	Samfundsfag									60	60	120
	Vejledende timetal											1860
	Udgåede klokke timer											570
Naturfag	Minimumstimal				560			515			790	
	Matematik		150	150	150		120	120	120	120	120	1170
	Natur/teknik		30	30	60		60	60	60			300
	Geografi								30	60	30 (*)	120
	Biologi								60	60	30	180
	Fysik/kemi								60	60	60	210
	Vejledende timetal											1170
	Udgåede klokke timer											300
Praktiske/musiske fag	Minimumstimal				430			690			325	
	Idræt		30	60	60		60	60	60	60	60	600
	Musik		30	60	60		60	30	30			270
	Billedkunst		30	60	60		60	30				240
	Håndarbejde						60	120	120			360
	Slejd											
	Hjemkundskab											
	Vejledende timetal											600
	Udgåede klokke timer											270
Valgfag	Minimumstimal									60	60	120
	Vejledende timetal											120
Klassens tid	Minimumstimal				70			70			85	
	Vejledende timetal											85
Klassens tid	Minimumstimal		30	22,5	22,5	22,5	22,5	30	30	30	30	240
	Vejledende timetal											240
Samlet minimumstimal					2060			2230			2520	6810
Basistimer pr. år			600	600	660	660	660	660	660	660	660	660
Børnehaveklasse - minimumstimal		600										
10. klasse - minimumstimal		840										
Minimumstimal dansk (1. - 3. Kl.)												810
Minimumstimal matematik (1. - 3. Kl.)												450
Vejledende timetal i alt												7320

(*) Fra skoleåret 2016/17 indføres i nærværende klasseplan Fælles lærer på 6. klasseplan. Fælles lærer på 6. klasseplan 7. klasseplan 1. august 2016 eller senere vil

Within the after-school programmes at schools, the situation is quite different.

Through several projects, the Municipality of Århus has gained considerable experience with sports within the framework of SFO (the after-school programmes at schools). This specifically applies to the projects:

- Børn lærer gennem kroppen ("Children learn through their bodies")
- Idræt og SFO ("Sports and After-School Activities")
- The current project "Sammen bevæger vi os" ("Together we move")

These projects are all based on partnerships between the municipality and local volunteer-driven sports organisations.

The project "Together we move" is a spin-off from the project "Sports and After-School Activities", in which the emphasis is on local partnerships instead of centralised sports activities in the municipality.

The target group consists of children considered by educational staff to have special needs with regard to physical activity.

The children selected visit local sports organisations, whose instructors take care of them, instructing them on specific sports with a 100% emphasis on a playful approach and based on the needs of the children.

The children get to see where local facilities for physical exercise are situated. They meet instructors and experience the culture specific to sports; throughout this exercise, they are accompanied by their peers and a member of staff from their own institution.

At the same time, 20 members of staff from participating after-school programmes are taking Bachelor level courses in health and physical exercise at Peter Sabroe Seminarieret.

The project also has a research component, which is divided into a psychosocial and a medical investigation.

Within the medical investigation, among other things, the BMI (Body Mass Index) of the children is measured¹. At present, international BMI values are accessible for children as young as pre-school age, and this would be a good opportunity for e.g. sports teachers at all class levels at the schools of Århus to measure the BMI of children once or twice a year. This would not take more than an hour per class, and the results could be used at consultations with parents in specific situations where the sports teacher in collaboration with the other teachers of the class see a correlation between the overall well-being of a child and its performance in class.

The data gathered would also be a unique instrument for a targeted approach towards specific pupil groups in specific geographical areas or at specific age levels in Århus.

The sports teachers who are given this task will thus be "mandated" to interfere in an area normally associated with taboos and considered the private sphere of families.

¹ *The BMI cannot be used to diagnose individual children, but can contribute to the description of the health status of specific groups and provide individuals with an indication of the present health status.*

Nevertheless, there is a need to have an open dialogue on respectful terms with parents about these problems.

"Together we move" has not yet been fully evaluated, but the evaluation done by the central organ of "Idræt og SFO" ("Sports and after-school activities") gave the following results:

- 35-40% of children in the target group have started practising a sport as a result of the project.
- The approval rate among parents is at 93%.
- The parents rate the physical benefits of the children at 83%.
- The parents rate the mental benefits of the children at 81%.
- The parents rate the social benefits of the children at 79%.
- The parents rate the significance of the project at 91%.
- The children rate the "fun factor" at 87%.
- The children rate the improvement in physical exercise at 85%.
- The approval rate among childcare staff is at 94%.
- The parents rate the significance of the project at 90%.
- The childcare staff estimate that the target group has been reached with an 80% rate.
- The childcare workers rate the physical, social and mental benefits at 80%.

Re 16. What is good practice for fostering healthy dietary choices at schools, especially as regards the excessive intake of energy-dense snacks and sugar-sweetened soft drinks?

Parents can rest assured that their children get a quality meal for the money they pay for their school meal. Thus, ice-cream and sweets are not part of the range of foods offered at school canteens. In cases where sugar is part of the lunch at the canteen – e.g. in "risengrød med sukker og kanel" or "koldskål" - the sugar content has been limited as much as possible.

The canteens have a group of products labelled "Lidt ekstra" ("a little extra"). These are grissini, rice crackers, dried fruit, fruit juice, crispbread and such. The canteen staff make a point of providing guidance especially to the younger pupils, so that they do not buy exclusively from this product group.

There are no vending machines for sweets or fizzy drinks at the schools of the Municipality of Århus, and soft drinks cannot be bought from "Din skolebutik either". The children are offered water and milk.

Re 17. How can the media, health services, civil society and relevant sectors of industry support health education efforts made by schools? What role can public-private partnerships play in this regard?

Århus Municipality has concluded supply contracts with private companies ensuring that foods delivered to school canteens are consistent with its policy in terms of less fat and sugar.

The Municipality draws upon national guidelines when providing information and teaching materials for pupils, such as the website of Fødevarestyrelsen (Danish Veterinary and Food Administration), altomkost.dk.

The campaigns of the Veterinary and Food Administration with regard to diet and physical exercise and the materials supplied are supported by the Municipality and distributed to all day-care institutions, schools and leisure clubs for children.

This applies, for example, to a course, "Krop skal der til" ("It takes a body"), offered to class levels 3 and 4 in February 2003.

The results of recent investigations with regard to physical health, diet and physical exercise issues are being analysed and distributed to the relevant parties via Børn og Unges netværk (Children's and Young Persons' Network).