

Mgr. Mário Kulašik
Department of European Affairs
Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
tel.: +421 2 5937 3243
fax : +421 2 5477 7949

**Answers to questions and attitude towards the material
Green Paper „Promoting a healthy diet and physical activity: The European dimension
for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases“.**

IV.3. Health across EU policies

What are the concrete contributions which Community policies, if any, should make towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity, and towards creating environments which make healthy choices easy choices?

- The Common Agricultural Policy of the EU (CAP), i.e. control of agriculture, the food industry and price setting addresses nutrition policy worldwide. The EU is the largest importer and exporter of foodstuffs worldwide. The current version of the CAP is not in accordance with a policy of sustainable environmental development and public health policy in EU. The Swedish Institute of Public Health recommends specific procedures for the amelioration of the CAP concerning support for population health.
- The most important are:
 - terminate/exclude support for the consumption of dairy products with a high fat content,
 - redistribute support for agriculture in the sense of an increased consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables,
 - cease/exclude agricultural practices of animal feeding which can lead to harm to consumers health (administration of antibiotics, hormones and animal proteins),
- Coordinate the CAP with the sustainable development of the environment and with recommendations for optimal nutrient intakes.
- Enforce a policy in the food industry and a fiscal policy targeted to health support.
- Support education and employment throughout the EU.
- Create an uniform system of non-infectious disease surveillance and their determinants or indicators throughout the EU.
- Create a uniform system of food labelling within the EU.
- Enforce a policy for the uniform regulation of marketing food intended for children under 14 years throughout the whole EU
- Enforce uniform recommendations for the creation or conservation of minimal areas aimed at free time recreational activities in urban agglomerations.

Which kind of Community or national measures could contribute towards improving the attractiveness, availability, accessibility and affordability of fruits and vegetables?

- Radically reassess the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU (CAP) concerning the prices of fruit and vegetables, which currently are artificially held at too high a level. Fruit and vegetables must be affordable to the whole population in terms of

price and geography. Fruit and vegetables are not accessible at their current prices to the 20 percent of the population that live under the limit of poverty in Slovak Republic. Villages are worse supplied by commodities which they cannot grow due to unsuitable climatic conditions.

- Support the affordability of fruit and vegetables of domestic production for the whole population by means of fiscal policy.
- Support the ecological culture of fruit and vegetables as well as the sustainable development of the countryside by means of fiscal policy.

On which areas related to nutrition, physical activity, the development of tools for the analysis of related disorders, and consumer behaviour is more research needed?

- Updating and improvement of uniform monitoring system focused on tracking the trends in nutrition conditions, body constitution and their socio-economic and environmental determinants in population.
- Support for model project to evaluate the initiatives in a broad community spectrum (schools, institutions, restaurants, sanitary facilities, hospitals, etc.).
- Promotion of studies focused on the elucidation of further relationships between body constitution and morbidity/mortality.
- Support for the development and validation of indicators of biologic and genetic determinants of overweight or obesity.
- Support for the development of instruments identifying persons with normal body weight but with a high risk of weight gain.
- Support for research concerning the effect of various procedures used for food labelling in relation to the nutritional habits of the population.
- Fostering the development and validation of indicators of psycho-social and environmental determinants of weight gain.
- Fostering research focused on the possibilities of supplying the population with ecological agriculture, organic food, organic fruit, organic vegetables.
- Support for research concerning the relation between overweight / obesity and mental health and potentially its disorders.
- Research focused on the rate of demand for sport activities and their consequent adaptation of sport activity opportunities. Research into the accident rate during sports activities, the prevention of injuries and the use of personal protective equipment in course of sport activities.

IV.4. Public Health Action Programme

How can the availability and comparability of data on obesity be improved, in particular with a view to determining the precise geographical and socio-economic distribution of this condition?

- Standardization of overweight and obesity indicators in adults, adolescents and children including abdominal obesity. Creation of a European project for the participation of primary health care, employers and schools into gathering data on obesity.
- Participation of primary health care providers, employers and schools in the collection of valid data on body constitution and population nutrition.
- Creation of dispensaries for persons with overweight / obesity as well as screening programs for all population groups.

- Broad cooperation on overweight/obesity screening for several community members (schools, employers, insurance institutions, primary healthcare providers).
- Support for national surveys on **representative sets**, organized throughout Europe.
- Motivation of health insurance institutions to provide their information on the costs of diseases connected with nutrition and physical activity.
- Standardization of data collection methods; in some European countries, there is no data collected concerning socio-economic conditions.

How can the programme contribute to raising the awareness of the potential which healthy dietary habits and physical activity have for reducing the risk for chronic diseases amongst decision makers, health professionals, the media and the public at large?

- Several programs exist with positive results e.g. Northern Karelia. This experience should also be implemented in other European countries.
- By the clear and unambiguous elaboration of tasks for individual responsible departments to ensure their execution.
- By the creation of information systems, which would be available for various levels of administration – from a local up to a state-wide level.
- Serious political decisions have to be compulsorily supplemented by health impact studies which have to be generally accessible.

Which are the most appropriate dissemination channels for the existing evidence?

- A population interest in health and a healthy lifestyle was repeatedly confirmed in the course of the implementation of the CINDI Program in Slovak Republic. There was a high proportion of inhabitants who wanted to change their lifestyle positively, as well as those who were successful in this respect during the intervention. The most important factors for lifestyle adaptation are **family, work place, school, overall atmosphere in the society formed by communal policy and public media**.
- All public media, only if they bring serious, adequately proved information. Criminal sanction of incomplete, false, misleading information in media.
- TV programs on cooking with an offer of interesting and innovative recipes for the preparation of simple and healthy food.

V.1. Consumer information, advertising and marketing

When providing nutrition information to the consumer, what are the major nutrients, and categories of products, to be considered and why?

- Information should be tailored according to the status of the national nutrition situation, epidemiology of non-infectious diseases. It is necessary to confront current food consumption trends with target nutrition values given in the **National policy of health nutrition**.
- Utilize WHO CINDI diet recommendations and its 12 steps to healthy nutrition.
- First of all to attract attention to nutrients, which are consumed excessively in our population (meat, fats, sugar, total energy intake).

- It is equally essential to point out nutrients, which are consumed to an insufficient extent in our population (vitamins, minerals – iron, calcium, iodine, dietary fibres).
- It is necessary to focus on evidently health beneficial nutrients, especially on cereals, pulses, fish, soured milk products, cottage cheese, low fat cheeses, fresh fruit and vegetables, potatoes, mushrooms, herbal and fruit teas.

Which kind of education is required in order to enable consumers to fully understand the information given on food labels, and who should provide it?

- Guarantees of the truthfulness of information in connection with the nutritional value of foodstuffs should be national authorities reviewing and inspecting their quality - State veterinary and food administration, Regional offices of public healthcare. Information interpretation should be publicly accessible in all media.
- Visual advertising (posters, booklets) with data mentioned in the previous reply in trade networks and the most watched public media.
- Create a legislative framework for monitoring the truthfulness of data given on food packaging and adequate sanctions.
- Introduce uniform standard procedures for the form and content of information on food packaging.
- Publish negative advertisements in highly watched public media dealing with the consequences of improper dietary habits and a sedentary lifestyle with humorous overtones / parody as a part of public education, which should be funded by the state.

Are voluntary codes (“self-regulation”) an adequate tool for limiting the advertising and marketing of energy-dense and micronutrient-poor foods? What would be the alternatives to be considered if self-regulation fails?

- The inefficiency of self-regulation mechanisms has been shown up by the example of tobacco.
- Not keeping to approved recipes and the manufacture or advertising of food products not complying with principles of healthy nutrition should be sanctioned as a conscious injury to public health.
- Effort to strengthen positive self-regulation through the enhanced education of population.

How can effectiveness in self-regulation be defined, implemented and monitored? Which measures should be taken towards ensuring that the credulity and lacking media literacy of vulnerable consumers are not exploited by advertising, marketing and promotion activities?

- By monitoring the consumption of particular products.
- Increasing the professional surveillance of advertisement from the point of view of misleading the consumer.

V.2. Consumer education

How can consumers best be enabled to make informed choices and take effective action?

- Fiscal regulation of agricultural production and the food industry in the interests of public health.
- Use financial resources from the Euro funds for the wide education of population with the aim of improving the nutritional habits of all segments of the population.
- Truthful and unambiguous labelling of food products. E.g. unsuitable for overweight persons, not for people with high blood pressure, not good for diabetics...
- Allow penal sanctions for untrue, incomplete and ambiguous statements.

What contributions can public-private partnerships make toward consumer education?

- System of certified offices for spreading scientifically substantiated information and recommendations.
- Properly aimed campaign focused on diet and physical activity.

In the field of nutrition and physical activity, which should be the key messages to give to consumers, how and by whom should they be delivered?

- Population targets on nutrition and physical activity according to the National policy of nutrition remediation.
- 12 steps to healthy nutrition according to WHO CINDI.
- New pyramid of healthy nutrition.
- Information should be spread by staff members of public healthcare and specialists in health support as well as general medical practitioners.

V.3. Target group: children and young people

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?

- Example of North Karelia and Finland
- Educational programs for a healthy diet for parents on the school premises.
- Education of school kitchen staff
- Enable education and control of school catering by the Regional offices of public healthcare.
- Increase state financial grants for school catering in such a range, for this catering to be affordable for all children, even from socially poor families.
- Active participation of children and young people in the creation of programs for nutrition remediation in schools and families.

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

- Innovate a program of physical education in schools of all levels, including kindergartens; to take care of children's motivation, including compensation exercises during school lessons, especially where concentration requires a static, not physiological working position, e.g. computational technique.

- Abolish classification in physical education. Abolish prescribed limits and performance in the curriculum for physical education.
- Abolish the prescription of limits and performance.
- Strictly keep the frequency of lessons of physical education, 3-times weekly.
- Train pedagogues in curative physical education for children excused from normal physical education.
- Safeguard sustainable conditions of gymnasiums, sporting areas and sports equipment.
- Ensure the execution of State health surveillance of physical education in schools at all levels, directed at the physical curve of daily and weekly performance and the compensation of static and neuro-psychic burden of children.
- Ensure the use of all breaks for free movement, if possible in the open air.
- Create instruments for children's motivation by systematic participation in out-of-school sports activities.

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?

- Support the choice of healthy food in schools – by a comprehensive choice in school canteens.
- Legislative prohibition against the placement of dispensers offering an unsuitable assortment of fast foods in school buffets and schools of all levels.
- Selection of low fat sour milk and yoghurt drinks, herbal teas, mineral water, fresh fruit and vegetables in school buffets and dispensers.
- Advantageous pricing and attractive packaging of mentioned “healthy alternatives”.
- Understanding of school catering as a part of the program of healthy diet education.

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?

- To create an appropriate legislative basis for public media in the EU for the implementation of scientifically founded information on a healthy diet and physical activities in a proper form for children.
- Visual exhibition of food preparation for children and parents in schools, school clubs and TV programs concentrated on the promotion of diet remediation.
- Professional guarantee of Public healthcare institutions against the engagement of any industrial sector in health education in schools.
- Improvement of communication and cooperation of health advisory groups and school facilities

V.4. Food availability, physical activity and health education in the work place

How can employers succeed in offering healthy choices at workplace canteens, and in improving the nutritional value of canteen meals?

- Introduction of vegetable buffets as a part of each main course.

- Announcing the energetic value of each food served.
- Adjustment of the energetic and nourishing value of served food according the energetic intensity of work performed.
- Creation of system control and evaluation of public catering facilities.
- Introduction of certification for catering facilities. Certificates are obtained by facilities respecting the principles of healthy nutrition.
- Application of new and modern technologies of food preparation and enlargement of the choice of healthy foods.

What measures would encourage and facilitate the practice of physical activity during breaks, and on the way to and from work?

- Creation of bicycle routes and parking.
- Building showers and changing rooms in the work place.
- Grant a 30 min break for physical activity during each working day.
- Provide area/rooms for physical activities.
- Offer benefits and reductions on sport facilities for employees.
- Organizing of joint sport activities for employees.

V.5. Building overweight and obesity prevention and treatment into health services

Which measures, and at what level, are needed to ensure a stronger integration aiming at promoting healthy diets and physical activity into health services?

- Create legislative tools motivating health insurances to compensate activities connected with health support in primary healthcare.
- Legislative adjustment of the responsibilities of health insurances to provide databases of insured persons (without personal data), for the statistic evaluation of trends of chronic diseases, their risk factors, especially of overweight and obesity.
- Educational programs of healthy diet and physical activities for healthcare professionals.

V.6. Addressing the obesogenic environment

In which ways can public policies contribute to ensure that physical activity be “built into” daily routines?

- Consistent evaluation of the results of each public policy in state administration and self-government, both at national and EU level.
- Legislative assignment of sustainable development sports facilities and playgrounds as an element of urban housing estates.
- Legislative assignment of sustainability of urban greenery, cycling routes and pedestrian zones.
- Promotion of the development of the countryside and agro tourism.

Which measures are needed to foster the development of environments that are conducive to physical activity?

- The consistent evaluation of the results of each public policy in state administration and self-government, both at national and EU level.
- Consistently respect the sustainable development of the environment.
- Development of infrastructure focused on promoting physical activity.

V.7. Socio-economic inequalities

Which measures, and at what level, would promote healthy diets and physical activity towards population groups and households belonging to certain socio-economic categories, and enable these groups to adopt healthier lifestyles?

- By the consistent application of sustainable interventionist community programs.
- By providing rationing coupons, valid only for the purchase of food beneficial to the health beneficial and nutritionally valuable (fruit, vegetables, pulses, fish, poultry, cereals, sour milk products, low-fat cheeses...).
- By considering the alimentation of children in educational facilities as an educational activity focused on children and their parents.
- Measures focused on the price reduction of health beneficial food.

How can the “clustering of unhealthy habits” that has frequently been demonstrated for certain socio-economic groups be addressed?

- By the consistent application of sustainable interventionist community programs.
- By activating employment policy.

V.8. Fostering an integrated and comprehensive approach towards the promotion of healthy diet and physical activity

Which are the most important elements of an integrated and comprehensive approach towards the promotion of healthy diets and physical activity?

- Changes in the common agricultural policy of the EU (CAP).
- Education of all population groups.
- Legislative regulation of agriculture, the food industry and the food products trade (fiscal policy, marketing).
- Education of state administration and self-government.
- Consistently uphold the evaluation of the health impacts of each public policy in state administration and self-government.
- Education of employees on the public alimentation of children and adults.
- Education of teachers and instructors of physical education.
- Support for domestic producers of fruit and vegetable.
- Support for ecological forms of fruit and vegetable growing.
- Consistent quality control of food in the shop network and public alimentation including criminal sanctions for deficiencies.
- Systematic evaluation of the health impact of social and economic policy of the state.

Which role at national and at Community level?

- The Community has to initiate a reassessment and changes in the CAP.
- The Community, in the name of public health, has to initiate unity among policies as follows:
 - Agricultural
 - Food industry
 - Price
- Put political pressure on countries.
- The guidelines of the Community contribute to the efficiency of national authorities, but national authorities should also put pressure on the Community to generate pragmatic guidelines; they must cooperate.

V.9. Recommendations for nutrient intakes and for the development of food-based dietary guidelines

In which way could social and cultural variations and different regional and national dietary habits be taken into account in food-based dietary guidelines at a European level?

- Food-based dietary guidelines should be based on national and regional dietary habits.

How can the gaps between proposed nutrient targets and actual consumption patterns be overcome?

- By education and pricing.

How can dietary guidelines be communicated to consumers?

- Via all channels accepted by consumers.

In which way could nutrient profile scoring systems such as developed recently in UK contribute to such developments?

- The efficiency of nutrient profile scoring recently developed in the United Kingdom, should be carefully scientifically assessed.

V.10. Cooperation beyond the European Union

Under which conditions should the Community engage in exchanging experience and identifying best practice between the EU and non-EU countries? If so, through which means?

- Initiation and support for the creation of a global network public for healthcare specialists from the field and research.
- Scientific evaluation of good practices examples and experiences from countries which are not EU members.
- Financial support for research focused on the problems of nutrition and health problems caused by an improper diet – see answer to question IV.3/3

V.11. Other issues

Are there issues not addressed in the present Green paper which need consideration when looking at the European dimension of the promotion of diet, physical activity and health?

- Issues on the relation between healthy diet, physical activity and sanity are not discussed in the Green Paper.

Which of the issues addressed in the present Green paper should receive first priority, and which may be considered less pressing?

- Primary responsibility of the state in building health-promoting legislation and price policy.
 - Responsibility of local government and Upper-Tier Territorial Units in forming the conditions and environment for a healthy diet, physical activity and health.
-

This paper represents the views of its author on the subject. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission's or Health & Consumer Protection DG's views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.