

Translation of the document named Amningshjälpen  
European Commission  
DG Health and Consumer Protection  
Unit C4 –Health Determinants  
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Opinion concerning the GREEN PAPER issued by the Commission of the European Communities, COM(2005)

It is a very important initiative to establish a common document for the EU Member States such as the GREEN PAPER promoting healthy diet and physical activity for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases.

However, there is one basic perspective that the GREEN PAPER fails to address, namely the start in life, breastfeeding.

The document “EU Project on Promotion of Breastfeeding in Europe. Protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in Europe: a blueprint for action.” European Commission, Directorate Public Health and Risk Assessment, Luxembourg, 2004 (1), which can be downloaded from:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph\\_projects/2002/promotion/promotion\\_2002\\_18\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_projects/2002/promotion/promotion_2002_18_en.htm)) states the following:

“The protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding is a public health priority because:

- Breastfeeding is the natural way to feed infants and young children. Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life ensures optimal growth, development and health. After that, breastfeeding, with appropriate complementary foods, continues to contribute to the infant’s and young child’s nutrition, development and health.
- Breastfeeding is not fully promoted and supported. Many health care and social institutions provide services that often represent obstacles to the initiation and continuation of breastfeeding. As a result, not all children in Europe get this ideal start to life.
- Low rates and early cessation of breastfeeding have important adverse health and social implications for women, children, the community and the environment, result in greater expenditure on national health care provision, and increase inequalities in health.” (León-Cava N, Lutter C, Ross J, Martin L. Quantifying the benefits of breastfeeding: a summary of the evidence. Pan American Health Organization, Washington DC, 2002. [http://www.paho.org/English/HPP/HPN/Benefits\\_of\\_BF.htm](http://www.paho.org/English/HPP/HPN/Benefits_of_BF.htm))

This document is based in part on the following documents:

- United Nations General Assembly. Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York, 1989. <http://www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm> (2)
- World Health Organization. Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2003. [http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/New\\_Publications/NUTRITION/gs\\_iycf.pdf](http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/New_Publications/NUTRITION/gs_iycf.pdf) (3)

- World Health Assembly. International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes. WHO, Geneva, 1981. [http://www.who.int/nut/documents/code\\_english.PDF](http://www.who.int/nut/documents/code_english.PDF) (4)
- UNICEF/WHO. Innocenti Declaration. Florence, 1990. <http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/innocenti.htm> (5)

There is a convincing corpus of research and documentation on the importance of breastfeeding for preventing health problems in later life, not least overweight and obesity.

With reference to the above-mentioned documents (1, 2, 3, 4 and 5), *Amningshjälpen* (the Swedish Nursing Mothers Support Group) considers it extremely important to:

1. include the “protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding” as a strategy for preventing overweight and obesity – we would suggest this should be included under points IV.3, IV.4 and V.3;
2. include the ethical marketing of breast milk substitutes under points V.1.1 and V.1.2, in line with the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (4), and give responsibility to an authority for all educational material on breastfeeding and child-rearing, addressed to children, adolescents, parents and health care personnel. In plain English: this responsibility must not be given to the food and babyfood industry, which has potential conflicting interests.

*Amningshjälpen* (the Swedish Nursing Mothers Support Group) is a non-profit voluntary organisation which provides support to mothers who want to breastfeed their children, disseminates information and knowledge about breastfeeding and promotes a breastfeeding-friendly culture ([www.amningshjalpen.se](http://www.amningshjalpen.se)).

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on behalf of *Amningshjälpen*

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