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Enclosed please find Finnish Heart Association's response to the Green Paper:

IV.3 Health across EU policies

In order to succeed in promoting a healthy diet and physical activity a comprehensive research on consumer behaviour would be helpful. It is necessary to find out what influences people's behaviour and what makes him/her change his/her habits and which factors are decisive when he/she is making choices regarding physical activity and diet.

IV.4 The Public Health Action Programme

Awareness of the role which physical activity and dietary habits have should be raised amongst decision makers, health professionals, media and the public by strengthening health information and ensuring the necessary media resources. Co-operation between government officials producing data on health, non-governmental organisations and mass media should be developed. In addition we should ensure that health related issues (nutrition and physical activity) are included when health science is taught in schools. We should help day care and school to become credible actors in the health promotion field. Preventive health care should be guaranteed adequate resources.

V.1 Consumer information, advertising and marketing

When providing information about the nutritional content to the consumer the most important nutrients to be considered are energy, fat, hard (saturated) fat, sodium, sugar and fibre. To help the consumer make informed choices we need symbols and sensible nutrition claims, e.g. definitions of nutrient content claims (such as low fat etc.) in various product groups.

To ensure that the consumers understand the information given on food labels we must make sure that health related issues (such as nutrition and physical activity) are included in health science studies at school. Consumer's food label literacy must be improved by including this in the curriculum.

V.2 Consumer education

To help the consumer make informed choices we need information guidelines and good co-operation between health professionals and media as well as ethical guidelines for co-operation between public sector, private sector and NGO (non-governmental organisation) actors. Key messages have to be crystallized from official nutrition and physical activity recommendations by the actors that have been involved in making the recommendations and by all other actors involved in health promotion education and information and are committed to the information guidelines.

V.3 A focus on children and young people

The nutritional quality of food served in schools can be improved by introducing the nutrition criteria developed for institutional catering. Parents can be informed about nutrition with family focused lifestyle counselling.

In order to ensure regular physical activity in schools physical activity must be made into a core component of every school day, so that it is a natural part of breaks, school journeys, and school clubs and as many subjects as possible. The number of hours devoted to physical education must be increased and the course based system in physical education must be cancelled. We must also make sure that school yards invite children to physical activity.

Promoting healthy nutrition in schools means monitoring the nutritional criteria and quality of food and snacks provided in schools. We should promote the eating of healthy school meals and give all pupils the possibility for a healthy snack. Candy and soft drink vending machines must be replaced with healthier choices. No advertising of unhealthy products in schools should be allowed.

Information guidelines (and good co-operation between health professionals and media) as well as ethical guidelines for co-operation between public and private sector and NGO actors are needed to enable support from the health sector, civil society and when appropriate also the business sector.

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

Employers can offer healthy meal choices at work place canteens and improve the nutritional value of the meals if the nutritional criteria developed for institutional kitchens are made a part of the process when purchasing and competing canteen services. We should find out labour market organisations' possibilities to influence the development of healthy meal service during working hours for instance with agreement policy. We should increase the number of people who have access to work place canteens and find out possibilities of lowering VAT on healthy food served at work place canteens.

Employers should create the prerequisites for physical activity for people during breaks and their daily commute to and from work by organising lockers, storage rooms, and possibilities to shower. They can also create financial incentives and allowances in working hours related to physical activity. We should also find out the possibilities of tax allowances related to services and equipment used for physical activity and individual health care.



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