

Consultation on Green Paper
'Promoting healthy diets and physical activity:
A European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases'.

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Q: 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?

A: The benefits of physical activity to better health are no longer subject of debate. It is the local sports club, largely volunteers' based, that is very well equipped to make such physical activity accessible. Besides making physical activity accessible, the sports club also offers physical activity on a regular basis, in a social environment and in a responsible way.

In order to have sport contribute to health as much as possible, it is important not to unnecessarily burden sport with (European) rules and regulations. For that reason it would be very helpful if an instrument is developed, a so-called the sports check, to be applied to (new) Community policies to increase, where possible, the sports friendliness of (new) Community policies or at least decrease the sports unfriendliness thereof. In practice it would probably mean that a particular body of the European Commission (most likely the Sports Unit) applies such a check.

Q: 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?

A: Quite some research has been done on the relation between physical activity and health. The research is usually linked to a norm. There is an international norm of 30 minutes of physical activity 5 times a week, which brings along health benefits. That norm is also being used in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands there is also a norm leading to better health and at the same time to more fitness, requiring 3 times 20 minutes of intensive physical activity. What is not or less known is what the effects are of physical activity of other length and frequency than mentioned in the accepted norms. As individuals have their individual pattern for physical activity, it would be welcome to have research done on the health and fitness effects of more variables of physical activity in order to give more insight in what kind of regular physical activity would best for a particular individual.

In line with that it would be very interesting to also look into the various sports and a whole range of 'popular' diseases. Research could lead to a matrix, outlining vertically all kinds of sports and horizontally all kinds of diseases. This matrix would be a user friendly tool making clear what kind of sports would be beneficial for people in different medical conditions. Evidently the matrix would need to be consulted with support of for instance a general practitioner, who can give additional advice. Ideally every medical condition even gets a graph of its own, in which the suitable (ways of) physical activity being mentioned.

Q: 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?

A: Although sport is convinced (on the basis of research done) that it is healthier to be fat and fit than lean and not fit, the message brought across by sport on the subject of obesity, which is increasingly a problem in society, is a different one. It is different because sport does not operate alone on this. The key message is that a healthy life (style) is the result of a life long physically activity AND a responsible diet.

Intake on the one hand and activity on the other should thus be in balance. When aiming for or remaining in balance, sport can play a very important role though. He/she who exercises regularly often chooses healthier food as well. Moreover when introduced to sport at young age, the fun of being active and the experienced contribution to one's well being, the persons concerned is likely to continue being physically active/involved in sport at a later age.

It is crucial that all institutions and organisations involved in the fight against obesity bring forward the same message: a message on the importance of balance (between intake and physical activity). So the sports organisations also refer to healthy nutrition and the food industry includes the importance of being physically active (in sport) in its communication.

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

A: The first good practice is that The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and the national sports umbrella NOC*NSF have joined forces in order to have 90 % of the primary and secondary schools have sports activities during or after school 5 times a week.

The alliance formed focuses on the following (good practices) in order to increase physical activity in schools on a regular basis. For the implementation additional partners from government, education and sport joined the team.

1) Sports offered at school

- a. Physical activity/sport offered in school is brought in line with what is offered in the sports club to realise a so-called continuing learning line. As school and the sports club complement each other. This also means that the PE lesson at school becomes more sports focused and the sports training at the club gets elements of PE incorporated.
- b. Besides content, it is also important to pay attention to logistics (how can the complementary products and services of school and sports club be best organised?) to allow the continuing learning line.
- c. To promote sports mindedness of secondary schools, there is also the annual election of the most sports minded school of the year.

2) Accommodation

Accommodations of both the school and the sports club are to be optimally used. A manual is being developed for the kind of accommodations the school and the sports club should have, in order to make it suitable for both school sport activities and for sports club activities, and how these accommodations can be best exploited.

3) Human Resources

The staff at work in the school and in the sports club is offered a combined function. This so-called dual hiring increases efficiency and more possibilities for physical activity for children and youth on a regular basis. Future staff of the sports club (and the school) is also given a quality boost by making the sports club a learning place for interns too.

4) Talent development

To increase physical activity in secondary schools for sports talented pupils, which is a special group that can also be inspirational for others, requires special arrangements, varying from more schools offering the combination of a good education with opportunities to develop the sports talent to building a few centres that include the educational institutes and residential facilities.

5) Communication

To increase physical activity in schools on a regular basis it is important to share the good practices. The most effective messenger to the 'non converted' are the schools that have successfully incorporated sport in their school already, leading at those schools to better quality of school, of lesson programmes, of achievements of pupils, of image, and to less drop outs etc.

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

A: In the Netherlands we have so-called business sport. It is a true trend these days for businesses to be active in the field of health for the benefit of their employees (integrated part of HR policy), and it works too. It can be done in several ways. One way that is gaining popularity is active involvement of

the local sports club(s). There are a number of sports federations that are very active at the moment, supporting their clubs to become active with businesses at the local level. At that local level the sports club comes to an agreement with a company and then the sports club technical staff provides training and sometimes also the sports facilities that the sports club normally uses are made available. In order to stimulate business sport more, there will be one desk or window where all related information will be available.

What is counterproductive in this respect are some tax regulations. In case of a company offering fitness training that takes place partly during working hours or immediately following working hours, it is not considered salary in kind. But if the employer offers sports opportunities detached from/outside working hours, it is considered salary in kind. This situation is not productive when aiming to make more people physically active.

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

A: A sports friendly health insurance will help. In the Netherlands there is an insurance package that includes such things as coverage of injury consult (first and second opinion) in sports medical institutions, an annual sport medical check-up, sports glasses or sports contact lenses, coverage for sports medical related research, inlays for extra support in sports shoes. For members of sports clubs who hold the so-called sports pass there is a discount for this insurance monthly premium. This deal is a sports sector initiative (coordinated by national sports umbrella NOC*NSF).

More and more the message of how important it is to be physically active and participate in sport is conveyed by all kinds of representatives from the health sector themselves, such as General practitioner, school doctors, dietitian, physiotherapist etc. This is a positive development.

There are also new ways of incorporating physical activity during treatment of serious illnesses, instead of only after being declared recovered. There is for instance a research in which physical activity and even sport for cancer patients is made accessible during their disease and even during the treatment itself (biking on a home trainer during chemo therapy).

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

A: Public policies should promote the increase in physical activity in general. That can be done by f.i. an alliance of government with the national sports umbrella and others. The alliance partners then set themselves measurable targets, all related to this increase in physical activity.

Public policies should not be counterproductive, e.g. through tax regulations frustrating efforts aimed at realising an increase in physical activity.

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

A: Conducive to physical activity is all kinds of affordable sport being offered, adapted to the needs, wishes and possibilities/restrictions of the public. In the Netherlands, sports organisations are actively supported to develop a range of products and services tailored to the different target groups. One of the target groups are (potentially) obese children and adults. Connecting obese children, who take part in summer camps where they learn to live a healthier life, with sports clubs also helps maintaining the results booked.

In order to make sport more accessible there will also be an instrument that is called the Sport Match Club Finder, which helps finding your sports club. And what also helps are all kinds of sports introduction events. In the Netherlands we have special activities and events for children (Zappsport, Zapp Summer Games, Mission Olympic) and for everyone (The National Sports Week).

Conducive is also making available sports accommodations and having new ones as close to where people live, work or go to school as possible. Shared use of accommodation (school accommodation used by sports club and sports club accommodation used by school) also helps in this respect. Co-

operation with municipalities is crucial here. Also a long term vision (the basis for a 'space claim' for sport) is needed.

Conducive is also doing things together. For instance food related actors and sports organisations. In their communication they refer to both the importance of sufficient physical activity and of a responsible diet.

Examples of actions from the side of food:

- The Federation of Dutch Food Industry puts an energy logo, including the calories of the food concerned on packages, but in other communication (including websites), they also refer to the amount of a specific exercise required to compensate for the intake of particular food or drinks.
- That same industry developed pictograms (e.g. a fitness halter with hamburgers on each side; rollerblades with doughnuts as wheels) that support the 'balance message' of intake and physical activity.

Examples of actions from the side of sport:

- There are sports federations, e.g. the Dutch Volleyball Federation, that include the subject of nutrition when educating new sports technical staff. Volleyball involved for this additional part of the training a higher level educational institute.
- The so-called Healthy Sports Club is a qualification awarded by the national sports umbrella and can be earned by sports clubs that are smoke free, have a responsible policy with regard to alcohol, serve healthy food etc..
- With the increased focus on the 'balance message' sports organisations will start introducing the so-called healthy sports canteen as well, again with support of the national sports umbrella.
- Introduction of Sport fit (similar to the German Sport pro Gesundheit): a package offered by the sports club, starting with a test and ending with a test (condition, fat percentage) and also advise (also food related), giving information on what sport can do for leading a healthy life.

Q: 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 life styles?

A: As the sports club is largely volunteers' based, the prices for joining a sports club remain relatively low. Still this is too high a price for families in the lowest socio-economic categories. Therefore there is a Fund (Dutch Youth Sport Fund) allowing children and youth from these families who have difficulties putting it all together financially to become a sports club member at a zero tariff or at a reduced price. The money required for this form of support, benefiting physical activity of persons belonging to certain socio-economic categories, does not go to the person(s parents) concerned, but directly to the sports club concerned.

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

A: Most important is to form a coalition, consisting of a whole range of parties. All parties involved should not only state but also follow up their commitment.

In the Netherlands there are two national coalitions worthwhile mentioning here:

- a coalition against obesity, with participation from government (Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport), sport (NOC*NSF), the food industry, but also the national employers organisation, and several branch organisations, including the organisation for Health Insurance companies
- a coalition for school and sport, with participation from national government (Ministry of Education; Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport), sport (NOC*NSF) and local government related institutes.

In both cases the parties involved signed an agreement, which was followed by an implementation plan. Each and everyone has been busy giving content to the plan since then. Each of the partners should also spread roughly the same message.

Konsultationsverfahren EU-Grünbuch

Grünbuch der Kommission der europäischen Gemeinschaften:

**„Förderung gesunder Ernährung und körperlicher Bewegung:
Eine europäische Dimension zur Verhinderung von
Übergewicht, Adipositas und chronischen Krankheiten“**

Stellungnahme

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