



## **Consultation Response Health in Europe: A Strategic Approach**

### **Response**

EHFA welcomes the adoption of the principle of “health in all policies”, as advocated by the Finnish presidency and adopted by the current German presidency.

It is not within the remit of EHFA to comment on the full extent of this paper. Therefore, this response is focused on specific questions on which EHFA feels it can contribute to the debate.

### **Specific Answers to Questions**

- 1) EHFA believes that the EU should contribute in the effort to educate the general public of the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. The method of delivering this information needs some thought. Some national governments have already put programmes in place. It is essential that the EU does not saturate the public with information coming from too high a level. DG Sanco should concentrate on identifying bodies that are delivering at a local level and support them. It should determine where existing best practice is in place and provide levels of support that may not be available at the national level.
- 2) In the long-term, the Commission and its partners should endeavour to secure broad knowledge and acceptance of the benefits of health enhancing physical activity. In the short-term, DG Sanco should engage with and support those groups already active in this area in order to meet long-term objectives.
- 3) With respect to physical activity, EHFA believes it is unfeasible and unnecessary to consider legislation targeting the individual. However, DG Sanco could push for a level of conformity across the member states in their public health policy. For example the EU could urge all member states to create a ring-fenced fund for the promotion of physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle.
- 4) In terms of key settings, DG Sanco is entirely correct that the biggest changes can occur in environments such as schools and workplaces. An EHFA member, the Fitness Industry Association (UK), has considerable experience coordinating physical activity interventions in these areas. The results have shown significant success in increasing physical activity levels, especially in workplaces where exercising with colleagues and allowances by employers have led to lifestyle changes in other health determinants.
- 7) DG Sanco should be congratulated on its extensive efforts to draw stakeholders into the process of consultation, primarily via the Platform for Action on Nutrition Physical Activity and Health. However, it concerns EHFA that the Platform may have lost its way and the process needs reinvigorating to refocus the participants on the goals of the platform. Some of the participants seem to attend the Platform as a defensive measure to stave off

legislation. This, of course, is entirely understandable and the efforts they make should be received graciously. However the effect of this is to antagonise other groups on the platform and prevent real progress being made. This is no fault of the Commission but efforts to mitigate the negative effects of the dynamics of the group should be considered.

From the perspective of EHFA, more consideration of issues relating to physical activity would be welcomed. Opportunities to hear from Platform members on this subject would focus the groups on existing interventions and give those actors coordinating physical activity projects an opportunity to gather support from other platform members. In light of this, EHFA welcomes the announcement at the last Platform meeting of a proposed day to focus on healthy workplaces. EHFA would like to see this extended into a regular part of the Platform's activities with additional focus on physical activity interventions in other areas such as schools and for old people.

### **FURTHER COMMENTS – ADDITIONAL NOTES**

#### **The European Health and Fitness Association Background**

EHFA is the standards setting body for the European health and fitness industry.

It is a non-profit organisation, which exists to advance and promote the role of fitness training as an activity able to improve health and social conditions.

By doing this, EHFA brings together European health and fitness professionals in a permanent, trans-national and wide reaching forum.

EHFA is divided in to 5 main working groups and commissions:

- European Network of Fitness Employers Commission
- European Network of Exercise Professionals and Registers Commission
- Higher Ed. and Vocational Training Group
- Labour Market Research Group
- Health and Public Affairs Commission

#### **Relevance**

As a member of the Platform for Action on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health, EHFA is responding to this consultation document due to the inclusion of health determinants as one of five core issues.

#### **The European Health and Fitness Industry – A Comparison**

##### **General Information**

	<b>EU25</b>	<b>Europe</b>	<b>USA</b>
Population (Million)	456.88	682.36	293.65
Population per km <sup>2</sup>	114.87	28.37	32.1
Unemployment rate	9,2%	9,3%	5,5%
Inflation Rate	2,1%	2,4%	3,2%

##### **Fitness Market**

Fitness Clubs	33,800	36,900	29,069
Members in million	36.86	38.65	41.3
Average per club	1,090	1,047	1,421
Average penetration rate	8.06%	5.66%	15.7%

(SOURCE:IHRSA EUROPEAN MARKET REPORT 2006)

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