

Obesity round Table – 14 December 2004

Summary Report

1. The Chairman (Robert Madelin, Director General SANCO) introduced the paper “Nutrition and Health – a European Platform for Action”, which had been sent to the Round Table Participants ahead of the meeting. The Platform will step up the Obesity Round Table to establish a more formal process, which will bring together all relevant players willing to enter into binding and verifiable commitments that could help to halt and reverse current obesity trends. It will also enable all individual obesity-related initiatives to be more promptly shared amongst potential partners and emulators across the European Union as a whole. The objective is to have the approach outlined in the paper – which has already received a favourable opinion from Commissioner Kyprianou – adopted by March 2005. The Platform will constitute a “*no regrets policy*” which will not need to be fully comprehensive at the start, and which will not be designed to pre-empt other initiatives at national, regional or local level. It will also contain a review clause allowing any necessary reorientations in 2006.
2. The Platform approach as outlined in the paper met with very broad agreement amongst the participants of the Obesity Round Table, and there was a general willingness to join the process. The main questions raised and suggestions made concerned:
 - the title of the initiative, which some participants suggested should include the physical activity perspective;
 - the need for the Platform to deliver concrete actions based on measurable and time-specific commitments;
 - membership, which should possibly be extended to include paediatric associations, education authorities, family associations, agricultural associations (COPA/COGECA), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)...
 - the difficulty for certain organisations to make short-term changes in their long-standing planning process;
 - the justification for the suggested threshold of 85% membership involvement;
 - the nature of commitments to be made within the Platform;
 - the methods for monitoring and verifying these commitments;
 - the suggested timing of the baseline (2004) against which progress is to be measured;
 - the number and scope of working groups to be established under the Platform.
3. The Chairman concluded that:
 - there was general support for changing the title of the initiative to “Diet, Physical Activity and Health - a European Platform for Action”, in order to better reflect the Platform’s scope, and to bring it in line with WHO terminology;
 - while the Platform can also act as a forum to develop greater understanding on less well known issues, and to foster agreement around controversial questions, its primary purpose will be to generate action;

- membership of the Platform could be extended in a sequenced way. The revised Platform document will be submitted for opinion to a broader group of stakeholders in February 2005;
 - while in some cases it may be difficult for economic operators to make profound changes to their already established planning for 2005, concrete long-term commitments are vital for the success of the Platform process;
 - the content of commitments made within the framework of the Platform, and the way in which these will be monitored and verified, are key issues which will be discussed in detail in a meeting of the group in the 2nd half of January 2005;
 - the threshold percentage question will be a key issue (85% had been suggested in order to ensure credibility and viability);
 - the baseline against which progress in 2005 and 2006 will be measured should cover both resources and actions;
 - the division into working groups still needs further reflection. Any proliferation of working groups within the Platform should be avoided.
4. The Chairman asked all participants to forward written comments on the draft platform document by 6 January 2005 at the latest. A new version of the document will be circulated after this date.