



EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

March 15th, 2005

Statements from Founding Members of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

The EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health brings together a broad spectrum of stakeholders who wish to contribute to promoting healthier diets and lifestyles in Europe. Over the coming months, these representatives of the food industry, advertisers, retailers, catering trade, public authorities, consumers and health NGOs aim to initiate and implement actions to encourage EU citizens to eat more healthily and take more exercise. As the Platform was launched today, its founding members have been outlining their reasons for establishing the Platform and what they hope to achieve.

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CONFEDERATION OF THE FOOD AND DRINK INDUSTRIES OF THE EU (CIAA)

The Confederation of the food and drink industries of the European Union, CIAA, welcomes the establishment of a European Platform for action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health as a forum where relevant interested groups can share plans for action with the aim of defining the most effective good practices. The CIAA believes that this is an important step in raising awareness and tackling the obesity issue throughout Europe. Partnership is the key to success and by bringing all the key stakeholders to the table, and the CIAA believes that the European Platform can be a key driver in galvanizing the necessary changes in society. Tackling the issue of obesity will require multiple strategies, the integrated efforts of many sectors and long term resolve. The food and drink industries have a long history of collaboration with public health authorities, as individual companies or through their associations and sectors, to promote healthy eating and physical activity. They are now committed to continuing to work constructively with other stakeholders, including public health authorities, healthcare, educational, governmental and other organizations, to help find evidence based solutions to the complex issues surrounding obesity.

EUROCOMMERCE

EuroCommerce recognises the need for a Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and welcomes the establishment of an EU Platform for Action where European stakeholders can explain their plans, actions and experiences. As part of its contribution to the work of the Platform, EuroCommerce will encourage its members to adopt steps and implement, at national level, policies related to “diet, physical activity and health”. It will incite its members to back up national campaigns in this field developed by public authorities and to engage in dialogue with other relevant stakeholders in their country. EuroCommerce believes that the successful and realistic involvement of retailers should be based on the assumption that all foodstuffs complying with legal requirements have a place in a balanced and varied diet and it is the consumer’s responsibility to choose a healthy diet and lifestyle. Moreover, the public authorities should take primary responsibility for the crucial task of educating and informing consumers on healthy living. Finally, any actions taken must be science-based, drawing on existing experience and supported by all public and private players.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF CONSUMER COOPERATIVES (EURO COOP)

EURO COOP is the European Community of Consumer Co-operatives. Its primary objectives include representing to the EU institutions the interests of consumer co-operatives and their 22 million consumer-members across 17 European countries. Founded by consumers for consumers in the 19th century, they have always worked towards improving the health and well-being of their members. Today, obesity has become one of the greatest threats to the health and well-being of consumers; a threat which EURO COOP member organisations take seriously. EURO COOP therefore welcomes the establishment of the European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, as it believes that the current obesity epidemic can only be successfully overcome by the active co-operation of the widest possible range of stakeholders. EURO COOP member organisations across Europe have already for many years devoted resources to helping consumers make informed choices and encouraging them towards healthier lifestyles, with several of them carrying-out ground-breaking initiatives at national and local-level, such as the schools education programme supported by ANCC-Coop in Italy, the blanket ban on advertising to children observed by SOK in Finland, the use of descriptors like HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW for all nutrients by the Co-op in the UK, etc. EURO COOP member organizations commit to continuing this positive trend into the future in order to ensure a high, common level of consumer health across Europe.

EUROPEAN CONSUMERS' ORGANISATION (BEUC)

BEUC is glad to support the Platform. BEUC’s commitment will take the form of a Campaign for Better Nutrition, focusing on the issues most relevant for a consumer organisation. Ultimately, nutrition depends on decisions taken by individual consumers. We will look at the factors that may encourage or hinder appropriate choices or that influence tastes and eating habits, the availability of correct information, the availability of relevant products etc. We believe that industry is an important part of the solution to the problems of obesity because in some respects it is part of the problem. We

are concerned about the manner in which certain foods are marketed and advertised, especially those with high levels of sugar, fat and salt. We believe that the promotion, marketing and advertising of certain foods puts unfair pressure on children and their parents. In our Campaign we will seek to restore credibility to health and nutrition claims, and to ban the use of health claims on products with certain nutritional profiles. We will look for restrictions on the promotion and marketing of foods for young children, and will campaign for understandable nutritional labelling. We will encourage industry to reduce the levels of salt, fat and sugar in food products. We will highlight the consumer need for positive advice and information on nutrition.

EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY (*observer*)

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) is pleased to contribute as an observer to the work of the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. EFSA provides independent scientific advice on matters within its mandate related to food and feed safety, and advice on nutrition in relation to Community legislation. At the request of the European Commission Health and Consumer Protection Directorate General, EFSA's Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA) has recently accepted a new mandate including the provision of advice on Population Reference Intakes for macro- and micronutrients and guidance on the development of food-based dietary guidelines. The Commission's proposal for a future Regulation on nutrition and health claims also foresees a role for EFSA in developing "nutritional profiles" for products carrying such claims. Through this work, and other activities of the NDA Panel, EFSA aims to provide an appropriate scientific basis to underpin and support European initiatives to promote healthy diets and lifestyles. Further information on the activities of EFSA's NDA Panel can be found at: http://www.efsa.eu.int/science/nda/catindex_en.html

EUROPEAN HEART NETWORK

The European Heart Network (EHN) is a Brussels-based alliance of 30 heart foundations and likeminded non-governmental organisations in 26 countries across Europe. The EHN plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular disease through advocacy, networking and education, so that it is no longer a major cause of premature death and disability in Europe. In 2004, the EHN started a project, part-funded by the European Commission, to tackle the obesity epidemic among children and young people, "Children, obesity and associated avoidable chronic diseases". During its 32-month duration, the project will carry out a mapping and scoping of the current situation with regard to commercial marketing to children of foods high in fat, sugar and salt. Results of this research will be made available in May 2005. The project will also develop guidelines to tackle childhood obesity based on consensus at European and national level, setting out actions examining a wider range of factors, including promotion of physical activity. EHN members carried out more than 150 activities related to nutrition and physical health in 2003 and 2004. These included education and information campaigns in schools, dancing competitions, cooking classes for adults, group walking or cycling events and food labelling schemes.

EUROPEAN MODERN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

The European Modern Restaurant Association (EMRA) members are proud to contribute to the European Commission's initiative to launch a European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. EMRA stresses that all objectives resulting from this programme need to have a sound scientific base and that any action undertaken needs to add value and be relevant for consumers. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that customers visit restaurants for enjoyment and not necessarily to count calories. Moreover, the modern restaurant sector is highly complex, and given the special nature of the Food Service sector there is a need for a flexible framework. Taking these factors into account, EMRA's members will work towards contributing actions in the fields of "Consumer Information", "Choice" and "Composition of Foods". With regard to "Consumer Information", EMRA members, through their company-owned outlets, will aim to provide customers with more information on nutrition and on leading a more balanced lifestyle, using tools such as leaflets, menus, logos, staff training and information and websites. As to "Choice", EMRA company-owned restaurants will aim to include foods that create more choices for balanced diets (e.g. low fat dressings, low sugar desserts, non-carbonated drinks). Finally, "Composition of Foods" will entail all company-owned EMRA

restaurants continuing to work with suppliers and food developers to look at feasible ways to reduce sugar, salt and fat in our dishes and preparations.

EUROPEAN VENDING ASSOCIATION

The European Vending Association (EVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that represents the whole of the vending industry, responsible for about 4.5 million vending machines throughout Europe. The EVA is participating in the Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health because it shares the view that while no one is guilty for the preoccupying rise in obesity rates in the EU, everyone should feel responsible for seeking to tackle the issue according to their own means. The EVA has taken a pragmatic approach to the obesity issue, and adopted a set of Best Practice Guidelines that promote open dialogue between the vending operator, parents, schools and health/education authorities. The EVA is committed to driving its members towards setting up such dialogue and being open to options such as wider choice of products, non-branded machines and limitation of accessibility in schools. Using benchmarking with success stories of “school platforms”, the EVA trusts that those associations ahead of the others will quickly propel the others towards the Guidelines becoming good operating practices in vending. The EVA is also committed to educating and raising awareness of associations and companies, through information material and sessions at member meetings and conferences.

INTERNATIONAL OBESITY TASKFORCE

The International Obesity TaskForce (IOTF), as part of the International Association for the Study of Obesity, and working closely with the European Association for the Study of Obesity, is pleased to support the formation of the European Platform for Action. Europe is facing a major public health challenge to improve the quality of diet and physical activity for the benefit of all its citizens. Comprehensive measures are needed requiring the active commitment of all sectors of society to address this critical issue. We welcome this opportunity to engage all stakeholders in a determined effort to develop both public and private sector strategies that will help to combat the rising epidemic of overweight and obesity affecting not only 200 million adults, but at least 14 million children throughout the EU member states. The IOTF will contribute to the Platform both in a monitoring role and in bringing forward the best evidence, as it develops, of the benefits of a range of different preventative strategies whilst recognising that a multiplicity of initiatives are needed to tackle such a major problem.

STANDING COMMITTEE OF EUROPEAN DOCTORS (CPME)

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) is an international, not-for-profit association representing around 2 million physicians in the EU/EEA. The medical profession is very much concerned by the continuing challenge of promoting healthy eating, sensible lifestyle and regular physical activity in a world where overweight and lack of activity are spreading dramatically. The CPME is particularly worried by the gravity of the problem in children, as overweight affects 1 in 10 children worldwide. As a founding member, CPME very much welcomes the launch of the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. CPME intends to be a very active member and to share its experience and knowledge with fellow members of this alliance. The aim is to reverse the present trend and enable EU citizens to become well-educated and informed, so as to make healthy choices for themselves and their children.

WORLD FEDERATION OF ADVERTISERS

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) is the Brussels-based organisation representing advertisers in Europe and worldwide, including 50 national advertiser associations and numerous corporate members. The WFA has agreed to join the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health in the belief that the proposed multi-stakeholder partnership is a constructive approach to deal with the issues at hand at EU level. Conscious that this complex issue will only be resolved by actions on the part of all the stakeholders involved, the WFA also wishes to contribute to finding workable solutions to this complex issue. The WFA is particularly active in promoting responsible advertising and will bring to the table proposals to help ensure that best practice in responsible food and beverage advertising is applied consistently across Europe, not least through the application of effective codes of conduct.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (*observer*)

The World Health Organization (WHO), as an observer at the European Commission (EC) Round Table on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, has seen that the goals of the EC Round Table coincide to those of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The goal of the WHO Global Strategy is to reduce the risks for, and incidence of chronic, non-communicable diseases through healthy diet and physical activity. The WHO Global Strategy recognizes the interdependence of nations, communities and individuals and WHO recognizes that governments have a central role, in cooperation with other stakeholders, to create an environment that empowers and encourages individuals, families and communities to make positive, life-enhancing decisions on health diet and physical activity.