

Mandate
Working groups
Diet, Physical Activity and Health – A European Platform for Action

The Platform adopted the following mandate for its Working Groups at its meeting of 25/05/2005:

At their first meetings, the working groups should discuss the practical organisation of the work and agree on a common approach, especially as regards:

- frequency of the meetings, format and agenda of the meetings
- priority areas and sub-themes
- communications between members (e-platform etc.)

Thereafter, the Platform will give any additional guidance on the basis of a report from the Commission services.

Background

The purpose of the *Diet, Physical Activity and Health – A European Platform for Action* is to provide a common forum for all interested actors at European level where:

- they can explain their plans to contribute concretely to the pursuit of healthy diet/nutrition, physical activity and the fight against obesity, and where those plans can be discussed/evaluated;
- outcomes and experience from actors' performance can be reported and reviewed, so that over time better evidence is assembled of what works, and best practices more clearly defined.

The Platform document from the 15 March 2005 gives priority to the following working groups; Healthy lifestyle and Consumer education and information. It is stated that

The Platform will deepen its members' understanding of current levels of knowledge and evidence on key issues, notably in a first phase through working groups on "life style, including physical activity" and on "informing consumer behaviour: education; information, commercial communication". At the end of 2005 the Platform will review the scope for establishing other working groups if resources permit. Suggestions include dedicated working groups on food labelling and on marketing and advertising.

In addition, a working package on monitoring of the Platform will be established.

Composition

In order to ensure effective working, the aim is to have **a maximum of 20 participants** (plus additional observers) in each working group, with no more than two members from any organisation. A balanced representation of the different stakeholders shall be ensured. Working group and Platform members do not have to be the same, and indeed membership is flexible to allow organisations to nominate different 'experts' depending on the subjects under discussion in the working groups.

External experts may be asked to participate in the working groups meetings, in particular to present best practices in a specific area and to bring additional elements to the debate.

Mandate

The precise role of the working groups may be developed over time by the Platform. At this stage, the broad mandate is as follows:

To provide a forum to share relevant and useful information to support the action areas of the Platform, and to help the Platform's discussions both on areas of consensus and on areas of uncertainty or disagreement. The set of topics for discussion is determined by the Platform.

The success of the working groups will be dependent on the input of members who, in addition to giving expert and objective views, will be expected to contribute in terms of providing relevant information to help the work of the group. For example, supplying evidence to support the discussions, collating and presenting thoughts from within the organisation they represent, identifying examples of actions from outside the EU, etc.

Working Practices

These will also evolve with time and it is anticipated that they will be developed at the first meeting of each working group.

The groups will be chaired by the Commission who will also provide organisational support and guidance. The Chair may solicit support from members in carrying out its task.

However it will be up to members to decide issues such as how often the group should meet, whether work can be undertaken using e-platforms, how information is collected and shared, how the meetings should be structured, whether the working group meetings should each focus on a specific sub-theme, the frequency of presentation by external parties etc.

Organisational aspects

The meetings of the working groups will be convened by the European Commission and will normally take place in Brussels.

The agenda, documents tabled and results of the meetings will be available to public and posted on the Europa website. Commercial confidentiality will be respected.

The Commission may also provide support for carrying out targeted research where the working groups have identified a specific need in light of the advancement of the work of the working groups.

Expected achievements

The Working Groups should aim to provide the Platform with advice and insights that

- a) identify best practices among current action that could be developed further, either in extent or form, and that
- b) identify any ideas as to additional or novel actions that Platform members could conceivably carry out.

The Working Groups should also aim to identify and review state-of-the-art research and data of which the Platform should be more aware. If there are major gaps in knowledge, Working Groups should enable the Platform to consider ways to fill those gaps.

Initial List of Work

Research in this area is not insignificant and can be used by the Working Group when considering actions. In particular, the Working Groups should consider whether the rationale for specific actions is consistent with existing knowledge. It should also highlight results of research which might offer novel ways of influencing consumer behaviour.

The work of the Groups will evolve with time depending on the member's active involvement. Much will also be dependent on issues arising from the plenary sessions of the Platform and how good the communication is between the Plenary and the working groups. However, there are some generic issues to be addressed in the initial discussions within the Working Groups. These are:

Working Group on Informing Consumer Behaviour: Education, Information, Commercial Communication

- To consider the relative importance of education, information and commercial communication in informing consumer behaviour. For example, which of these has the greatest effect, can they work in isolation or are they more effective if linked, how important is a consistent message across the three areas, etc.
- Bearing in mind that obesity and diet related diseases only affect a proportion of people, is it more effective to have an action aimed at the general population or one which is focussed towards a specific target audience?
- Are the more traditional methods of communicating with consumers (labels, leaflets, TV adverts) going to remain the most important or will newer methods (internet, text messaging, etc.) take over?

Working Group on Healthy Lifestyle

- How can we raise awareness and what are the consistent key messages that should be given when promoting a Healthy lifestyle?
- What measures are needed to make Physical activity part of people's daily routine?
- Which kind of "multi-stakeholder actions" are expected to yield the highest impact, and how should they be implemented?
- How to engage employers in facilitating physical activity (showers, possibility to integrate PA into routine working day)?
- How to engage the society (parents, schools) in facilitating children's need for physical activity in daily life and at schools.

Working package on Monitoring

- Work together towards the establishment of an indicator and reporting system.
- Discuss data collection system.
- Review on a systematic basis the indicator system
- Study best practise and existing guidelines on monitoring.