



EU Platform on Diet,  
Physical Activity and Health

## **Plenary Meeting Tuesday 21 November 2006 Summary Report**

### ***APPROVED AGENDA***

- 1. Introduction by the Commission**
- 2. Commitments report**
  - **Reporting by members**
    - **Compliance of television advertisements for food and beverage products in the EU against self-regulatory codes of conduct (WFA)**
    - **Consumer research on nutrition labels (EUFIC)**
    - **Nutrition Information Initiative (NII) monitoring research (Consumer Insights)**
    - **Freshfel commitments: achievements (Freshfel)**
  - **Commitments updates**
    - **Consumer research (CIAA)**
    - **Reporting on 2006 Actions & Commitments reporting template (EUFIC)**
- 3. Monitoring Working Group**
- 4. Updating synopsis for 2007 (Discussion)**
- 5. Joint commitment on health workplaces (Working document: Updated Commission paper – for decision)**
- 6. Platform networks (Working document: Updated Commission paper – for info)**
- 7. EU-US cooperation (Follow-up – State of play by the Commission)**
- 8. WHO Ministerial Conference: pre-conference commission press briefing; charter; prizes; partnership session; next steps'...feed-back**
- 9. Health gap figures and their implications for nutrition strategy (presented by Prof. Witold Zatonski, National Cancer Institute, Warsaw)**
- 10. Stakeholder consultation on policy options to combat child obesity (presentation by EHN)**
- 11. Any other business**
  - **Platform new membership (State of play by the Commission)**
  - **Outcomes of the EU Sports Directors meeting, 4-6 October 2006 (info by the Commission)**

## 1. INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION

Mr Madelin welcomes all Platform Members. Since there are no new agenda items, the agenda is approved as proposed.

## 2. COMMITMENTS REPORT

### Reporting by members

#### ***Compliance of television advertisements for food and beverage products in the EU against self-regulatory codes of conduct*** by Mr Loerke (WFA)

The European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) is an umbrella organisation of self-regulation organisations. National self-regulation organisations safeguard self-regulation codes. This involves complaint handling and compliance monitoring (of advertisements). The commitments of EASA are: (1) to implement adoption of the intern chamber of commerce framework for responsible food and beverage communications, and (2) to conduct a pan-European monitoring exercise. The aim of these commitments is to strengthen self-regulation standards in food and beverage advertising communication. EASA has performed a monitoring study investigating 3330 advertisements in 14 countries. This has resulted in the 'Xtreme alliance portfolio' database. This study showed that 96,2% of the advertisements adhered to the codes. Assessment of claim issues would require additional resources and scientific expertise. In the future EASA will review the codes, but at present there is more focus on the health claims as such. Various industry partners are willing to make the codes more strict. Chair Mr Madelin suggests the Platform to spend in the near future half a day on self-regulation issues.

#### ***Consumer research on nutrition labels (EUFIC)*** by Prof. Dr. Grunert

The aim of the study was to investigate the consumer response to nutrition information on food labels. The study was conducted in 15 EU countries in the period 2003-2006. The study consisted of a database research, a search via EU Platform Members and a Google search. In total 58 studies (of which 13 academic studies) were found, mostly from the UK. Both qualitative research (focus group interviews) and quantitative research (surveys) was included. Academic studies were in general small scale studies which used advanced statistical analyses and which included explanation. Stakeholder studies concerned mostly large scale samples, which used simple analysis methods and which were in general descriptive. Most of the studies did not include a theoretical framework. Some results across the studies are:

- 20% of the population reports always to read labels, 50% reports to read labels occasionally
- nutrition and health are not considered of prime importance when talking about food
- women, parents, older consumers and people from northern countries seem to have more interest in nutrition information
- consumers prefer simplified labels and 'front of pack'-labels
- there is little insight in the actual use of the information on the labels and in the long term and indirect effects.

Conclusion: there is widespread interest for nutrition information, particularly for simple labeling. However, more insight is needed in the determinants of liking, the real life settings, and the inference from the labels and finally more research is needed on the actual use of label information.

It is difficult, but possible, to reach people who are initially not interested in nutrition labeling. Quality, price and safety are still the most important determinants of buying foods, followed by nutrition. There is always a desire for additional education.

[for more information, see also the document “Presentation EUFIC” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

***Nutrition Information Initiative NII monitoring research*** by Mr. Fairgrieve (Consumer Insights)

The aim of the study was to develop nutrition information for meals eaten outside the home, using a consumer-driven approach. The study has started in November 2004. Research was performed in France, UK and Spain, among both low and high income/educational groups.

Nutrition information (NI) should be informative, engaging, fun, non-language dependent, industry and brand relevant and have nutritional validity. The language of science differs from the language the consumer needs and it is needed to bridge this gap. From earlier research it seems that consumers balance their diet when eating out by adapting the diet during the rest of the day. The traffic light systems are likely to work for people with a low education. However, there is little resonance with the consumer, partly because of (a) lack of background knowledge, (b) lack of consistent framework and (c) lack on continuity in approach. There is a need for a uniform system. The developed bar charts have been evaluated among consumers, staff and opinion formers. Around 88% consider the NII as a good idea, particularly consumers with children and with a high SES showed a positive response. However, consumers claimed that the information would have little effect on their actual behavior. The bar charts were piloted in various countries and related to sales analyses (300 McDonald restaurants in 4 months period). Based on this study, there are indications that the bar charts resulted in a reduction in consumption of sugar containing softdrinks. End 2007 the whole system will be introduced in 30,000 McDonald's restaurants.

***Freshfel commitments: achievements*** by Freshfel

Freshfel represents the interests of the European fresh fruit and vegetable industry. Freshfel has three commitments. The first commitment concerns a booklet on the consumption monitor 2006. The monitor was based on 1998-2005 fresh fruit trends in EU-25 and the results show a huge difference in consumption across Europe. The second commitment is the program “Food Dudes” in UK. At present this program is implemented in 46 schools. Aim of the program is to reach 150 schools. In the future physical activity will also be included: the so-called ‘Fit Food Dudes’. The third commitment is offering fruit and vegetables at the work place.

[for more information, see also the document “Freshfel presentation” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

**Commitments updates**

***Consumer research: family research dynamics (CIAA)*** by Mrs Morgan

The aim of the study was to explore the motivation and barriers for children to undertake healthy eating and physical activity. Up to now, the CIAA research has been focussed on desk research. Key research issues were identifying modes that may raise awareness, such as multi-media, advertising, dual targetting and influencing behaviour. Special attention was given to experiences from Spain, Greece, Poland and Sweden. The speaker addresses the potential role of websites (interactive games) and experiential learning. This research showed that responsibility for healthy lifestyles among children seems to lie particularly in the local community and in schools.

Chair Mr. Madelin requested all Platform members to submit their information on projects related to consumer research to CIAA.

***Reporting on 2006 Actions & Commitments reporting template*** by EUFIC

EUFIC has developed a template by which the commitments can be monitored in a standardized and structured way. This is helpful in communicating commitments to external partners such as journalists. This template is a brief overview. It has been tested among journalists, who seem to find it user-friendly and valuable. Mr. Madelin underpins the importance of this design for profiling.

BEUC stresses the importance to focus one's attention on the relevance of the commitments, particularly in the private domain, instead of publishing the commitments. Mr Madelin states that there is no objection to discuss the relevance, but every party is already in the position to present the relevance of their own commitments. The EHN agrees that every party should communicate their commitments but indicates that it is also important to communicate that not all the Platform Members support all commitments.

Mr. Madelin concludes that there are no objections against the template format.

**3. MONITORING WORKING GROUP**

Mr. John Bell presented the progress made by Monitoring Working Group. He strongly underlined the necessity for the Platform Members to comply with the reporting dates set, in order to have a monitoring report ready by the 2nd anniversary of the Platform. The Commission has received information on the monitoring progress for only 35 of the commitments. The next meeting in the monitoring working group will be the last meeting and the Platform members have to accept the report as it is presented then. He also informed that the new contractor (RAND) would help the Platform members in how to report on their commitments. The next and last meeting of the working group will be on January 17th.

Mr. Madelin expressed his disappointment in the low response rate of the Platform Members to submit their contribution before the 1st of November. Because of this low response rate, the meeting in December had to be cancelled. All Platform Members must send their Monitoring reporting forms to Jonathan Back **before the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December** in order to be sure that the information will be analysed and reported.

**4. UPDATING SYNOPSIS FOR 2007**

The present version of the Synopsis Commitments (version of the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2006) is the one that was adopted in the last Plenary Meeting (19 September 2006) with some additions and modifications based on the remarks of Platform members in the September meeting. Reason for putting it up the agenda now, is to stress upon the importance of an update of the database. At present not all commitments are described. The Commission wants all the Platform Members to provide information on the commitments, using the commitment form, no later than **10<sup>th</sup> of January 2007**. Platform members should provide an overview on all commitments where activities were underway in 2006, the achievements (time of action, development of action, outputs and outcomes) and new commitment tabled for 2007. The aim of the synopsis report is to describe what the members do, what the target audience is and what the time of action is, etc. The aim of the monitoring report is to keep the audience updated on what the Platform achieved so far. Both reports will be published by the Commission in March 2007.

[for more information, see also the document "Proposal for structure Synopsis commitments " on the Circa site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

## 5. JOINT COMMITMENT ON HEALTHY WORK PLACES by Philippe Roux

The Platform had already decided to launch in 2007 a new initiative to improve work place health, in particular as regards promoting physical activity at work and promoting healthy and balanced food choices. Platform Members would focus on this challenge in their own organisations. There are still some concerns with several Platform Members for a joint commitment on healthy workplaces. Nevertheless, the Commission will start together with other organisations with the preparation of a workshop on healthy workplaces in March 2007.

Mr. Roux requested the members to volunteer in organizing the workshop. EMRA already expressed their interest to participate.

[for more information, see also the document “Joint Commitment on Healthy Workplaces” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

## 6. PLATFORM NETWORKS

At the previous meeting Chair Mr Madelin requested all Platform members to provide the Commission with a list of persons who are the first point of contact for other organisations within their country. Up to now, only half of the Platform Members have filled in this list. Therefore Mr. Madelin repeated his request to those Platform members who have not yet provide names, to do so **before 22 December 2006**.

[for the present version of the Directory, see the document “Contributions to the Directory” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

## 7. EU-US COOPERATION

The members of the Platform are informed that the Commission has started the development of a web-based database to assemble and diffuse grey literature on nutrition and physical activity initiatives from both sides of the Atlantic. It is suggested that prof. Alan Utter (American College of Sports Medicine) cooperates with the DG EAC Sport and Health working group on the development of guidelines for physical activity.

Mr. Madelin expects that the database will be public by 15 March 2007.

## 8. WHO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The purpose of the WHO ministerial conference was to put obesity high on the political agenda, to give high level support to obesity policy and to stimulate action at the intersectoral level.

According to the WHO, the conference was successful because there was a strong political commitment to the Charter and many intersectoral departments were represented (20-25% of the Member States had representatives from other sectors than health, such as from economy, agriculture and sport). The WHO was pleased with the presence of the Commissioner and the presentation by the Platform. From now onwards, the Charter must be made more visible. A draft of the Second Action Plan on Food and Nutrition was presented and will be further developed. It is expected that the Action Plan will be ready by May 2007.

The Commission will develop a strategy paper in 2007 covering a broad range of tools and will also engage other sectors of the European Commission. The Commission will make proposals for future actions based on community competence. It will propose how the Community may support member states and other stakeholders. The objective of the actions is to improve diet and physical activity across the whole population and to contribute to creating environments that

support individual decision making. This global comprehensive approach will stress the need for monitoring, and for effective partnerships.

Concerning the pre-conference press event, some Platform members considered the praising of some food companies inappropriate. Mr. Madelin mentioned that members are free to communicate their views to the Commissioner.

## **9. HEALTH GAP FIGURES AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR NUTRITION STRATEGY** by Prof Zatoński, National Cancer Institute, Warsaw

There has been a steep decline in life expectancy (and an increase in mortality) in eastern Europe related to public health problems between 1960-1990, followed by a steep increase in life expectancy (and a decrease in mortality). This was consistent for both sexes and various age groups. The cause for this change may have been related to changes in diet. There was a steep increase in vegetable oils and reduction in butter after 1990. Also the ratio polyunsaturated/saturated fatty acids improved and fruit consumption increased. This could be due to the fact that healthier products became cheaper. However, there is still a gap in fish and fruit consumption between Poland and Europe. Therefore, there is a need for cooperation with other countries, in addition to countries from eastern Europe.

[for more information, see project website: [www.hem.waw.pl](http://www.hem.waw.pl)].

## **10. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON POLICY OPTIONS TO COMBAT CHILD OBESITY (EUROPEAN HEART NETWORK)** by Tim Lobstein

Two research projects are presented. Both projects concern policy development.

### *Project CHOB (EHN)*

In 2004 EHN started a 32-months project on ‘Children, obesity and associated avoidable chronic diseases’ (CHOB). The aim of the project was to contribute to tackling the obesity epidemic among children and young people. The first phase concentrated on marketing of unhealthy food to children. Information was collected on the extent and nature of food marketing to children in 20 European countries and on existing measures at national level with regard to counteracting the effects of food marketing to children. Phase two was dedicated to disseminating the results of the data collection which were published in a report “The marketing of unhealthy food to children in Europe”. During the third and last phase of the project a Europe-wide stakeholder consultation on policy options took place with a view to achieving consensus on policy options to be achieved as priorities. The ten policy options that scored highest were: food and health education; controlling sales of foods in public institutions; controls on food and drink advertising; subsidies on healthy foods; change planning and transport policies; improve communal sports facilities; improve training for health professionals; improved health education; Common Agricultural Policy reform; and mandatory nutritional information labelling.

[for more information, see also the document “EHN Policy options to prevent child obesity” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

### *PorGrow Study*

The aim of the PorGrow study was to analyse how stakeholders feel about the various policy options for responding to the growing challenge from obesity. The results reveal a broad consensus of opinion that a portfolio of measures will be needed to slow and then reverse the rising trend on the incidence of obesity, supported by a general acceptance that the costs of the various policy options are less important than their social and health benefits, efficacy, acceptability and practical feasibility. Policy-makers can be assured by the PorGrow findings that

a comprehensive portfolio of policy measures, integrated into a coherent program, would be well-supported by broad coalitions of stakeholders. There is a clear need for a pan-EU strategy, but there is no need for a new agency. DG Sanco may initiate far-reaching changes under current treaties.

[for more information, see also [www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/porgrow](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/porgrow)]

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### ***Platform new membership***

The Platform had already accepted full membership of the Federation of the European Play Industry (FEPI), the European Health and Fitness Association (EHFA) and the Fruit Vegetable and Horticultural Association - European Regions (AREFHL) at its plenary meeting of 19 September 2006. On suggestion of the Commission services the Platform now also accepted full membership of the International Sport and Culture organisation (ISCA) and the European Association of Fresh Fruit Producers (EUROFEL).

[for more information, see also the document “Platform new membership” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

### ***Outcomes of the EU Sports Directors meeting 4-6 October 2006***

Following the EU Sports Directors Meeting in Finland on 4-6 October 2006, the Finish EU Presidency has summarized the main conclusions. These conclusions concern among others the role and status of voluntary sport organisations, sport and health policies, the fight against doping in the sport, and the economic dimension of sport. The Sports Directors also welcomed the initiative of the European Commission to issue a White Paper on Sport, and expressed their appreciation to the Commission to be involved in the consultation process of the preparation of the document.

[for more information, see also the document “Outcomes of the EU Sports Directors meeting” on the CIRCA site in the folder of the Plenary meeting of 21 November 2006]

### ***Short issues***

- Within the Platform more parties from the physical activity arena are needed. Not only the sport sector but also other sectors may help to increase the level of physical activity within the EU.
- The coming months WHO will develop the Second Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2007-2012. At the same time the EU will also develop an action plan. It is important that the messages are consistent and similar. WHO has already offered to the Platform their information gathered for the Ministerial Conference of November 2006.
- The next Platform meeting will be on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2007. The morning session will be on Commercial communication and will among others include a presentation based on the Advertising Roundtable Report. The afternoon session will include monitoring and an update on preparation of the second anniversary of the Platform.

### ***Dates of Plenary meetings in 2007***

- 5 February
- 19 April
- 4 July
- 20 September
- 15 November

### ***Key dates***

- 15 December 2006: Members to alert Mr. Philippe Roux on contributions they may wish to make at the Commercial communication session of 5 February 2007

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- 22 December 2006: Members to fill-in the Monitoring report forms for each commitment and to send them to Jonathan Back by 22 December at the latest
  - 22 December 2006: Members to provide the Commission with a list of persons who are the first point of contact for other organisations within their country (Contributions to the Directory)
  - 10 January 2007: Members to update the database in using the Commitment form no later than 10 January.

[for more information, see also the document “Follow-up check list” which was distributed to the Members by Mr. Philippe Roux by e-mail on 30 November 2006]

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