

# THE POLISH FOOD BASKET

## WARSAW

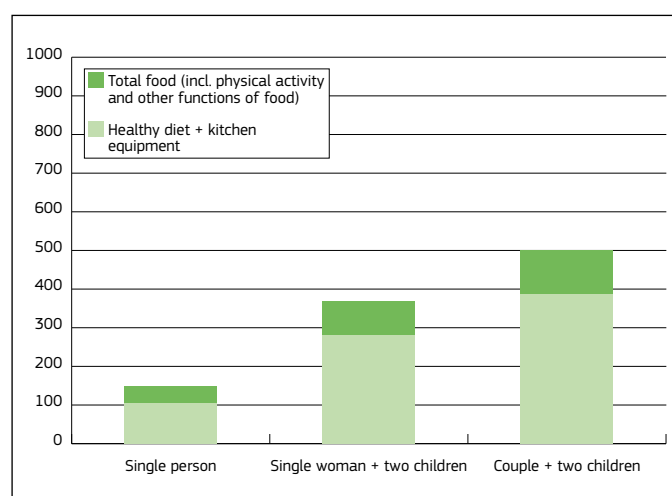
- ➔ The European Reference Budgets Network is a project financed by the European Commission that aims to develop cross-national, comparable reference budgets in all EU Member States. Reference budgets are baskets of goods and services considered necessary for an individual household to achieve an acceptable standard of living within a given country, region or city. Preparing reference budgets with a common methodology can help EU Member States to design effective and adequate income support measures and to encourage mutual learning and the exchange of best practices. More information about the project as well as the full country reports can be found on the European Commission website: <http://europa.eu/!CC79TD>

The Polish food basket indicates the monthly budget required for an adequate food intake by three reference households (consisting of children and people of working age, in good health, without disabilities and living in the capital city). The basket includes a budget for food and for the kitchen equipment required to prepare, serve, consume and preserve this food. Furthermore, it takes into account the necessary budget for physical activity

and for other functions of food, such as its social function for example. The food basket has been developed in accordance with nutritionist recommendations and national dietary guidelines, and takes into account the cultural specificities of Polish eating habits. The feasibility and acceptability of the basket have been verified through focus group discussions involving citizens with different socio-economic backgrounds.

## 1. Key findings

The Polish Food Budget: monthly amounts in euros <sup>(1)</sup>, Warsaw, March 2015



- The monthly budget required for a healthy diet in Poland is **EUR 104 for a single person** and **EUR 388 for a family of two adults and two children**.

**two adults and two children.** If the budget needed for the other functions of food (eating out, holidays, etc.) is taken into consideration, the **total monthly food budget** amounts to **EUR 148 for a single person** and **EUR 501 for a family of two adults and two children**.

- An unhealthy food basket was developed to integrate products that are not accepted as part of a healthy diet by the nutritionists, but are commonly consumed by Polish people, such as tea and coffee, sweets, and pizza. The budget for the unhealthy food basket is about EUR 22 higher for a single person and EUR 43 higher for a household composed of two adults and two children.
- Poland has a long tradition of developing reference budgets. The Institute of Labour and Social Affairs, an advisory body of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, has established indexes on subsistence minimum and social welfare minimum. The results obtained using the method of the European Reference Budgets Network are higher. This can partly be explained by the different scope of the respective budgets. While the European reference

<sup>(1)</sup> EUR 1 = PLN 4.13

budget aims to identify the minimum required for an adequate participation in society, the social welfare and subsistence minimum capture what is needed to satisfy consumption requirements at a relatively low level.

## 2. National specificities

Developing cross-national, comparable European reference budgets requires the differences between the respective budgets of the Member States to be explained according to the institutional, cultural, climatological and economic context of the country concerned. The Polish food basket takes the following factors into account:

### ➔ Dietary habits

A 2014 survey on the nutrition styles of Poles revealed some typical traits of Polish eating habits. It showed that 82 % of Poles eat at least three meals a day. In the past four years, the popularity of restaurants and fast food has increased slightly, as well as ordering home delivery. Poles generally perceive their diet as balanced. Nevertheless, 60 % indicate that they do not eat enough fish, and fewer said the same regarding rice (29 %), fruits (23 %) and vegetables (18 %). A national dietary survey conducted in 2000 showed that 41 % of men and 28.7 % of women were overweight, and 15.7 % of men and 19.9 % of women were obese. Further surveys revealed an increase in the rates of excessive body mass, triggering concerns and justifying intensified action related to a healthy diet and sufficient physical activity.

### ➔ National food guidelines

The exact composition of the healthy food basket has been developed in accordance with the national food guidelines. Established in 1963, the National Food and Nutrition Institute has developed the first Recommended Dietary Allowances, which have been updated, extended and published in the course of subsequent decades. Food-based dietary guidelines were published for the first time in 1989 in the form of 10 principles for a healthy diet. One year later a food pyramid was developed. The guidelines

were based on the Mediterranean diet, well known for its health benefits. Taking into account the results of a 2009 survey, the dietary guidelines and the food pyramid were recently revised and a specific food pyramid for children and adolescents was developed. The pyramids are divided into six food groups: cereals; vegetables and tubers; fruits; milk and dairy products; meat, fish, eggs and legumes; and oil.

### ➔ The pricing of the basket

The pricing of the food basket was conducted in March and April 2015. All the prices were collected in Polish Zloty (PLN) and subsequently converted into Euro. The choice of the shops was based on survey data on consumption patterns and on suggestions made by focus groups participants. Two discounters were selected, as those appear to be the most popular, to offer a wide variety of products of acceptable quality and at low prices and to be well spread over the country. All prices were checked in both shops. After comparison of all categories of products, the cheapest price was chosen for the pricing of the basket.

### ➔ Physical activity

Besides the budget required for a healthy diet, the food basket also includes a minimum budget for physical activity, as this is presented in the national guidelines as a general requirement for a healthy lifestyle. Adults are recommended to undertake 45 minutes of moderate to intense physical activity daily. For children and teenagers, 60 minutes are suggested. The proposed activities include walking and cycling, no extra budget for physical activities has been included in the food basket.

### ➔ Other functions of food

The food basket also incorporates gastronomic, cultural, religious, emotional and social functions of food that have been identified as necessary for an adequate participation in Polish society. Eating out once in a while, inviting friends and family over and cooking traditional meals for important holidays and celebrations, such as Christmas or Easter, are seen as constitutive functions of food.