

Evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the School Fruit scheme



STATE FUND AGRICULTURE PAYING AGENCY

136 Tzar Boris III Blvd.

Sofia, Bulgaria 1618;

Tel.: +359 2 81 87 528;

Fax: +359 2 81 87 508;

e-mail: fv_sector@dfz.bg

www.dfz.bg

I. Evaluation methodology

1. Indicators

The information collected in the course of the evaluation process concerning the implementation of the School Fruit scheme was based on a number of empirical indicators. Some of these indicators provide objective information related to the profile of educational institutions, which applied for and benefited from the scheme, children covered by the scheme, distribution of the institutions covered by the scheme (schools and kindergartens), as well as information about the institutions which dropped out of the scheme or were not approved. Other indicators show the difficulties in implementation, the positive and negative assessment of the scheme, as well as the particular stages of its implementation. The evaluation also encompasses indicators measuring the practices and preferences of children to different kinds of food, the duration of the scheme impact on the consumption of fruits and vegetables, the role of the family in stimulation of fruit and vegetable consumption, the awareness of parents and children about the scheme and the contacts with parents at the start of the scheme implementation. The group of indicators about children's health aims at giving a clearer picture of the link between eating habits and children's health.

2. Research

The purpose of evaluation of the implementation and effectiveness of the School Fruit scheme was achieved by means of quantitative and qualitative research, as well as methods of direct observation and analysis of documents. The diversity of research methods ensures the effective coverage of opinions of all parties involved in the process of implementation of the School Fruit scheme. The quantitative research carried out for the purpose of the evaluation covered several target groups – children in institutions covered by the scheme, children in institutions not covered by the scheme, parents of children in institutions covered by the scheme, parents of children in institutions not covered by the scheme, directors of institutions covered by the scheme, directors of institutions which dropped out of the scheme, directors of institutions not covered by the scheme, teachers in institutions covered by the scheme, teachers in institutions which dropped out of the scheme, teachers in institutions not covered by the scheme. The qualitative research (group discussions) was carried among children in institutions covered by the scheme, children in institutions not covered by the scheme, parents of children in institutions covered by the scheme, parents of children in institutions not covered by the scheme, teachers and directors in institutions covered by the scheme, teachers and directors in institutions not covered by the scheme. In-depth interviews with directors and teachers on the spot in the institutions allowed gathering of complete and accurate information about the problems arising during the scheme implementation. These activities complemented the empirical information because the evaluation was carried out in a period when the educational institutions applied for approval and respectively did not provide fruits and vegetables.

The evaluation process lasted from the beginning of September to the end of October 2011. The first stage included analysis of documents provided by the contracting authority, containing information about the applicant institutions under the scheme, supplied quantities of fruits and vegetables, on-the-spot inspections by responsible authorities, reasons for dropping out of the scheme. The next stage, after the start of the school year, included the interviews, questionnaires and group discussions with representatives of all parties concerned.

3. Instruments for analysis

The evaluation was made by means of 18 different instruments for analysis, including interviews and questionnaires and group discussions for research among the abovementioned

target groups, cards for recording the results of on-the-spot observations and cards for recording information collected during the document analysis. The diversity of instruments for analysis provides cross-sections by target groups, entities covered and not covered by the scheme. The analysis of the results collected by means of the diverse instruments and the results of each individual research shows the main points of difference between the groups covered by the scheme and the control groups. The analysis is structured upon the comparison between children and educational institutions covered and not covered by the scheme. Two samples were prepared for the purpose – a main one with children and educational institutions covered by the scheme, and control one with children and educational institutions not covered by the scheme. These two samples allow tracing of the scheme impact and evaluating its implementation, which will serve as a basis for making recommendations and drawing up an action plan for the next period.

4. Evaluation scope

The research for the purpose of the evaluation covered the following:

- **350 educational institutions**, covered by the School Fruit scheme, distributed in regions throughout the country, proportionally to the significance of the covered educational institutions in each administrative region.
- **250 educational institutions**, NOT covered by the School Fruit scheme. In view of the objectives of the contracting authority, the research included educational institutions which dropped out of the scheme (for the purpose of finding the reasons), as well as institutions not covered by the scheme (for the purpose of identifying changes in the consumption of fruits and vegetables).
- **8300 persons**, distributed proportionally in regions as follows:
 - **3500 children**, distributed proportionally in age groups covered by the scheme and a control group of children. The control group includes children in institutions not covered by the School Fruit scheme, as well as children in institutions which dropped out of the scheme.
 - **3500 parents** – distributed in two sub-groups: parents of children covered by the School Fruit scheme and a control group of parents of children not covered by the scheme and children in institutions which dropped out of the scheme.
 - **350 directors, deputy directors or other responsible administrative officials** in educational institutions covered by the scheme
 - **250 directors, deputy directors or other administrative officials** in educational institutions which have not applied or dropped out of the scheme
 - **350 teachers** in educational institutions covered by the scheme
 - **350 teachers** in educational institutions which are not covered or dropped out of the scheme

II. Structure of the educational institutions which have applied and benefited from the School Fruit scheme 2010 – 2011 – document analysis

1. Educational institutions which have applied under the scheme

Type of educational institution:	Number	%
School	437	40,2%
Kindergarten	649	59,8%
Total	1086	100%

2. Educational institutions beneficiaries of the scheme

	Number	% of applicants	% of all educational institutions
Covered educational institutions:	724	66,7%	17,9%
Covered children:	86988	65,5%	27,2%

	Number	%
Covered schools:	302	41,7%
Covered kindergartens:	422	58,3%
Total covered educational institutions:	724	100%

	Regional centre	Municipal centre	Settlement outside the municipal centre
Covered educational institutions by type of settlement	28,0%	24,8%	47,2%

3. Number of educational institutions which dropped out of the scheme

	Number	% of all applicants
Educational institutions which dropped out after submitted application(s)	64	5,9%
Educational institutions which did not start the scheme	261	24,0%
Educational institutions which applied but were not approved	37	3,4 %

- Number of schools; number of kindergartens

	Kindergartens		Schools	
	Number	%	Number	%
Educational institutions which dropped out after submitted	12	18,8%	52	81,3%

application(s)				
Not started	111	42,5%	150	57,5%
Not approved	12	32,4%	25	67,6%

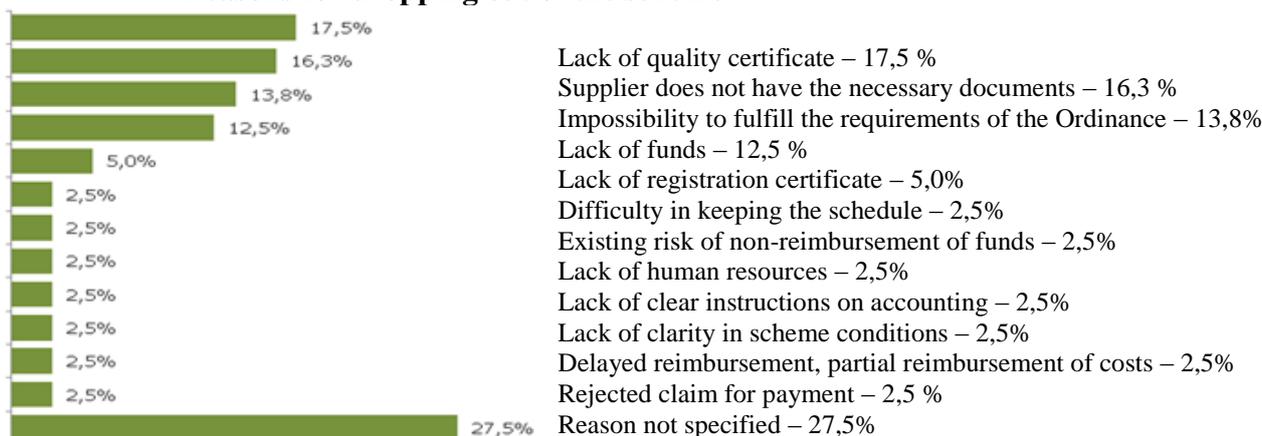
- **Number of children**

	Number	%
Children covered by the scheme	86988	65,5%
Children in educational institutions which dropped out after submitted application(s)	9284	7,0%
Children in approved educational institutions which did not start the scheme	29726	22,4%
Children in educational institutions which applied but were not approved	6808	5,1%
Total number of applicant institutions	132806	100%

- **Type of settlement**

	Regional centre	Municipal centre	Settlement outside the municipal centre
Educational institutions which dropped out	35,9%	23,5%	40,6%
Educational institutions which did not start the scheme	32,6%	29,5%	37,9%
Educational institutions not approved	64,9%	13,5%	21,6%

- **Reasons for dropping out of the scheme**



4. Number of children covered by the scheme

Children covered by the scheme		Preparatory class	I class	II class	III class	IV class	Total
In schools	Number	4142	15446	15399	16395	16234	67616
	%	6,1%	22,8%	22,8%	24,2%	24,0%	
In kindergartens							18612

5. Types of applicants

	Sole Trader		Educational institution		Municipality		Total applicants
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Covered:	30	9,8%	248	80,8%	29	9,4%	307
Drop-outs:	2	4,6%	40	90,9%	2	4,6%	44
Not started:	8	5,2%	139	90,8%	6	3,9%	153
Not approved:	1	2,7%	36	97,3%	-----	-----	37
Total:	41	7,6%	463	85,6%	37	6,8%	541

Basis: All applicants

	Applying through sole traders:		Independently applying schools/kindergartens:		Applying through a municipality:		Total:
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Covered:	190	26,2%	248	34,3%	286	39,5%	724
Drop-outs:	13	20,3%	40	62,5%	11	17,2%	64
Not started:	75	28,7%	139	53,3%	47	18,0%	261
Not approved:	1	2,7%	36	97,3%			37
Total:	279	25,7%	463	42,6%	344	31,7%	1086

Basis: All educational institutions

III. Evaluation of the School Fruit scheme implementation and its effectiveness

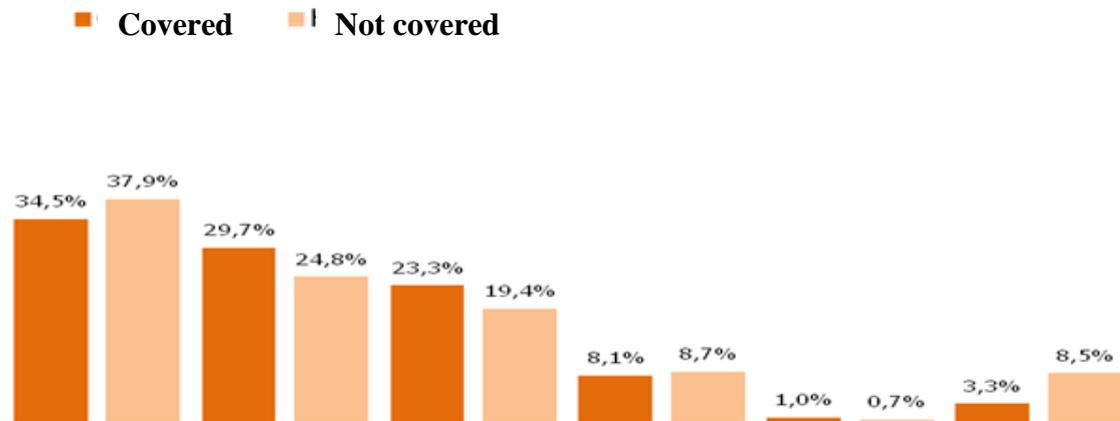
1. Analysis of data from the survey carried out among children of the target and control group

- Analysis of consumption level of fruits and vegetables among the target groups of children - comparison of the children covered by the scheme with the control group of the children not covered by the scheme
- Frequency of fruits/vegetables consumption

The consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables at home among the school children involved and not involved in the scheme is similar. 64% of the children covered and 63% of those not covered by the scheme eat fruits and vegetables at least once a day. 23% of the children involved and a slightly lower proportion (19%) of the children not involved in the School Fruit scheme eat fruits and vegetables several times a week. The share of the children covered and not covered by the scheme who consume fresh fruits and vegetables less than several times a week is relatively one and the same at an average of about 8 %. About 1 % of the children say that they do not eat any fruits and vegetables at home. Usually the reasons for the

low consumption of fruits and vegetables are other food preferences but in many cases there are social preconditions related to the family capacity to afford buying fruits.

Frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at home:

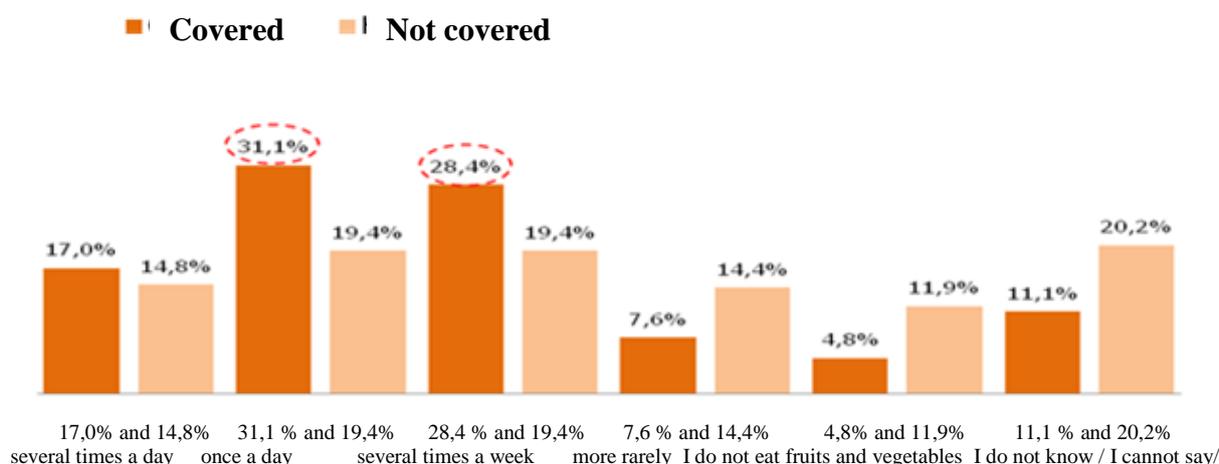


- 34,5% and 37,9% - several times a day
- 29,7 % and 24,8% - once a day
- 23,3 % and 19,4% - several times a week
- 8,1 % and 8,7% - more rarely
- 1,0% and 0,7% - I do not eat fruits and vegetables
- 3,3 % and 8,5% - I do not know / I cannot say/

In contrast to domestic consumption, school consumption is significantly lower. At the same time, the children covered by the scheme last year consume a considerably larger quantity and more frequently fruits and vegetables at school. 48% of them have fresh fruits and vegetables at least once a day when they are at school or kindergarten, while among the children not covered by the scheme this share is 34%. Furthermore, a significantly higher proportion of the children covered by the scheme than those not covered consume fruits and vegetables at school several times a week. Among the children covered and not covered by the scheme, those in kindergartens eat fruits and vegetables most frequently. The difference between children in kindergartens covered and not covered by the scheme is insignificant. These results show that the School Fruit scheme is a major factor for increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables at schools rather than in kindergartens. Because the kindergarten directors are obliged to ensure a daily intake of fruits and vegetables, the scheme for them is more a convenience rather than a requirement for establishing a healthy menu.

As few as 5% of the children who participated in the scheme say that they do not currently consume fruits and vegetables when they are at school. This share among the children not covered is much higher – 12%. Overall considerable differences are observed in the frequency of consumption of fruits and vegetables among the children covered and not covered by the scheme. A basic factor for the more active consumption of fruits and vegetables by the covered children is their participation in the programme last year, which has favoured the development of healthy eating habits and helped to increase the interest in fruits and vegetables.

Frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school:



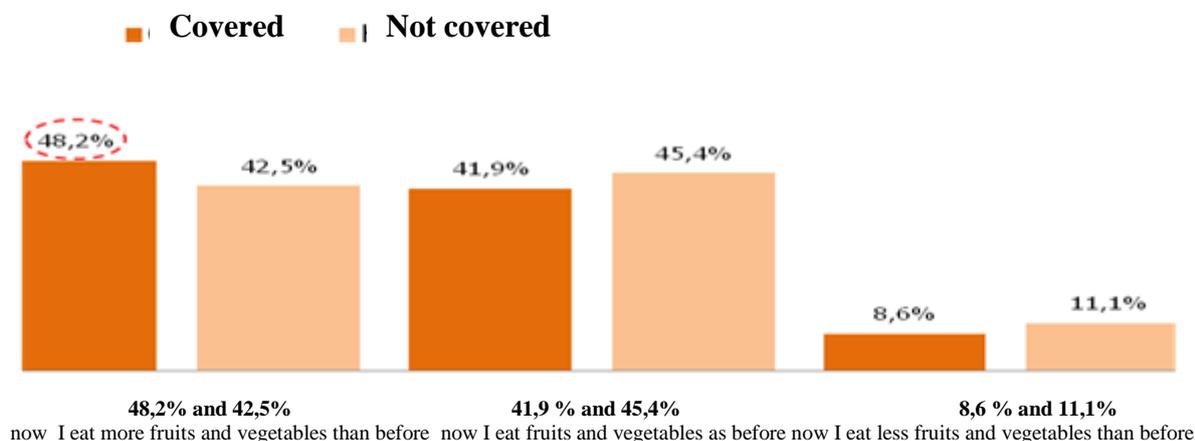
- **Change in the frequency of consumption of fruits and vegetables**

Many of the children report an increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables compared to the previous year. Among the children involved in the scheme this share is a little higher compared to the children not covered. 48% of them say that now they eat more fruits and vegetables than before, while among those not covered this share is 43%. Less than 1/10 were the children who participated in the scheme and reported that their consumption of fruits and vegetables has decreased compared to the previous year. Among the children not involved in the scheme this share is slightly higher – 11%.

Among the children covered by the scheme the largest share of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is observed in the capital and the regional cities. Among the children not covered the ones from Sofia as well as those attending kindergartens report a considerably higher consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables compared to the rest. Among the children at school, however, 47% of the ones covered by the scheme report an increased consumption, while among those not covered this share is only 10%.

In general, the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables of the children at school and kindergartens is due to various factors. In kindergartens it increases regardless of the participation in the scheme, while in schools the implementation of School Fruit is the major factor with a long-term effect on the increase of fruits and vegetables consumption.

Frequency of consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables compared to the previous year:



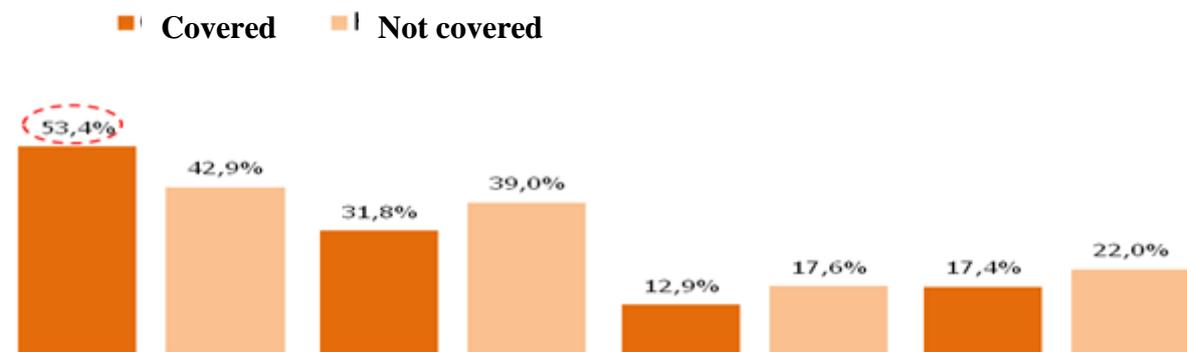
- **Impact of the scheme on the long-term consumption of fruits and vegetables**

The implementation of the School Fruit scheme last year found its reflection in the current level of intake of fresh fruits and vegetables. The main part of the consumption of fruits and vegetables at school is realized through the schemes and programmes for fresh fruits and vegetables implemented in schools. Most of the children who benefited from the scheme reported that they were served fruits and vegetables. The same was confirmed by an even larger group among the surveyed parents of such children.

In spite of the opportunities for consumption of fruits and vegetables at school, which the scheme and other programmes provide, still many children rely on fruits and vegetables received from their parents. One of the reasons is the fact that the schemes (or another programme) provides fruits just twice a week, while in the rest of the time parents give their children fruits from home. Nevertheless, the share of the children from beneficiary schools who bring fruits from home is lower. The distribution of fruits and vegetables in schools facilitates parents to a large extent and significantly supports those who are in a difficult financial situation by providing a healthy menu for the children.

On average, about 1/5 of the children report that they do not consume fruits and vegetables at all when they are at school. Despite the lack of mechanisms for such provision in these schools, many of the children in them compensate with more active consumption of fruits and vegetables at home.

***Do you eat raw fruits at school?:**



53,4% and 42,9% - Yes, the school/kindergarten provides it

31,8 % and 39,0% - Yes, I bring from home

12,9 % and 17,6% - Yes, I buy from a shop near the school

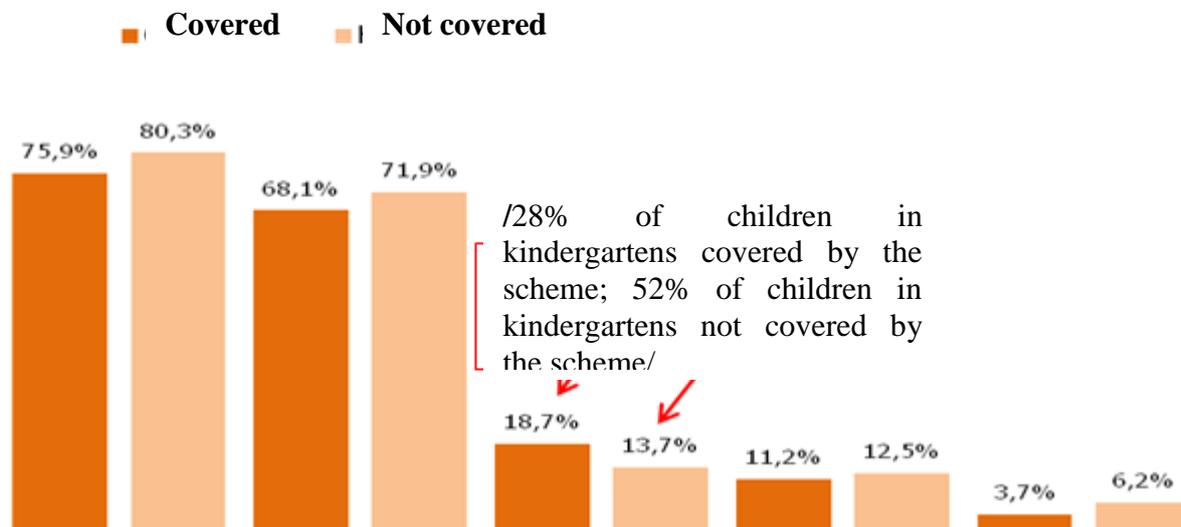
17,4 % and 22,0% - I do not eat fruits/vegetables at school

- **Reasons for the consumption/ non-consumption of fruits and vegetables**

The fresh fruits and vegetables are food preferred by children for two main reasons: on the one hand they are aware that their consumption is good for the health and on the other hand they like the taste. These reasons for consumption of fruits and vegetables most frequently reported by both children from schools covered and not covered by the scheme are an important precondition for a positive attitude to the scheme and the effect of its implementation. Nearly 1/5 of the children involved in the School Fruit scheme have been influenced by the consumption of fruits and vegetables of their peers in school/kindergarten

and this has drawn their attention to fruits and vegetables. The importance of such types of motives is especially visible among children in kindergartens. 28% of the children in kindergartens involved in the scheme and 52% of these in the institutions not involved report this reason as the basis for their own consumption of fruits and vegetables.

***Why do you eat fresh fruit and vegetables?:**



75,9% and 80,3% - because it is good for the health

68,1 % and 71,9% - because they are delicious

18,7 % and 13,7% - because the children in school/kindergarten eat them

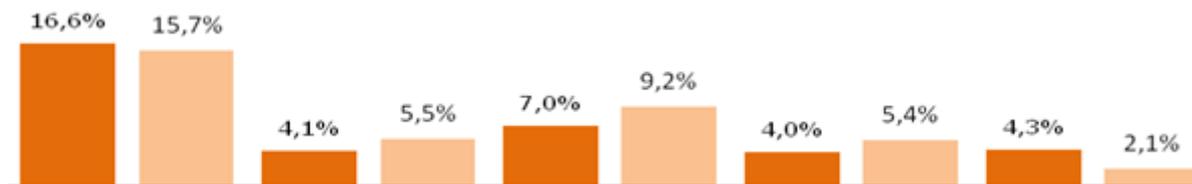
11,2 % and 12,5% - only because my parents make me eat

3,7% and 6,2% - other reasons

Although only 3,5% of the children say that they do not like fresh fruits and vegetables, a considerably larger proportion of them cite specific reasons for excluding fruits and vegetables from their menu. The most frequently cited reason about that is the fact that the children have other favourite foods (17% of the children covered and 16% of the ones not covered). In order to secure their place in the daily menu of children, fruits and vegetables have to compete to mostly with paste products (pizza, sandwiches, pasta) and sweet products. Such preferences were reported within the group discussions both by children from schools and kindergartens covered and not covered by the scheme. Still the financial factors or the lack of habits of the parents represent a serious obstacle to the regular consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables by children. 7% of the children covered and nearly 1/10 of the ones not covered report that they do not consume fresh fruits and vegetables because their parents do not buy them any. Similar concerns were expressed also by the parents who took part in the group discussions. Some of them really struggle to provide certain fruits and vegetables for their children because of their high sale prices.

*** Why don't you eat fresh fruits and vegetables?:**

Legend: ■ Covered ■ Not covered



16,6% and 15,7% - because I have other more favourite foods

4,1 % and 5,5% - because I do not like them

7,0 % and 9,2% - because my parents do not buy me

4,0 % and 5,4% - because I do not get any free at school

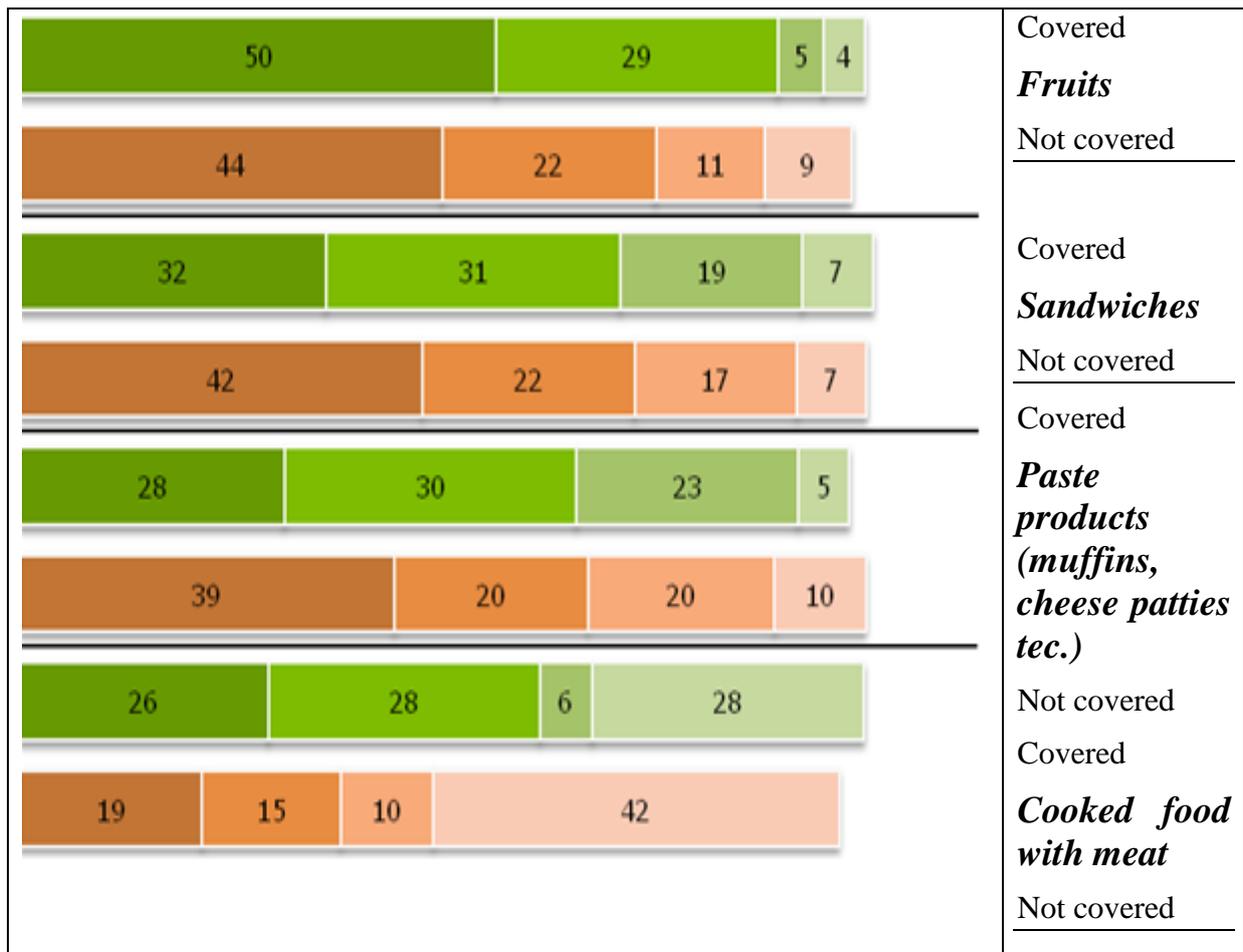
4,3% and 2,1% - other reasons

Practices of consumption of various types of foods – comparison of the children covered by the scheme with the control group of the children not covered by the scheme

- **Frequency of consumption**

Fruits and sandwiches are the most frequently consumed foods in schools and kindergartens. The paste products are also ranked as significant competitors of the fresh fruits with regard to the frequency of consumption, and fresh vegetables in the form of salads are not eaten often by the children due to the lack of conditions in educational institutions for distribution of such food. The survey clearly shows that the consumption of fruits and vegetables by covered children is higher than the one by children not covered. While the children involved in the scheme, to a higher degree than the ones not involved, say that at least once a day they consume fruits in school or in kindergarten, those not covered are more active in the daily consumption of sandwiches, paste products, crisps and sweet products. The parents who participated in the group discussions said that children were strongly attracted by paste and sweet products offered in school canteens and often allow themselves to consume them. According to them this destroys the habits formed at home and largely influences the diet of the children. In addition, however, parents report that they send their children to school or even kindergarten, where the feeding is all day long, with paste products and sandwiches for breakfast. This is the main target of criticism by teachers and directors regarding the way parents influence the nutrition of children.

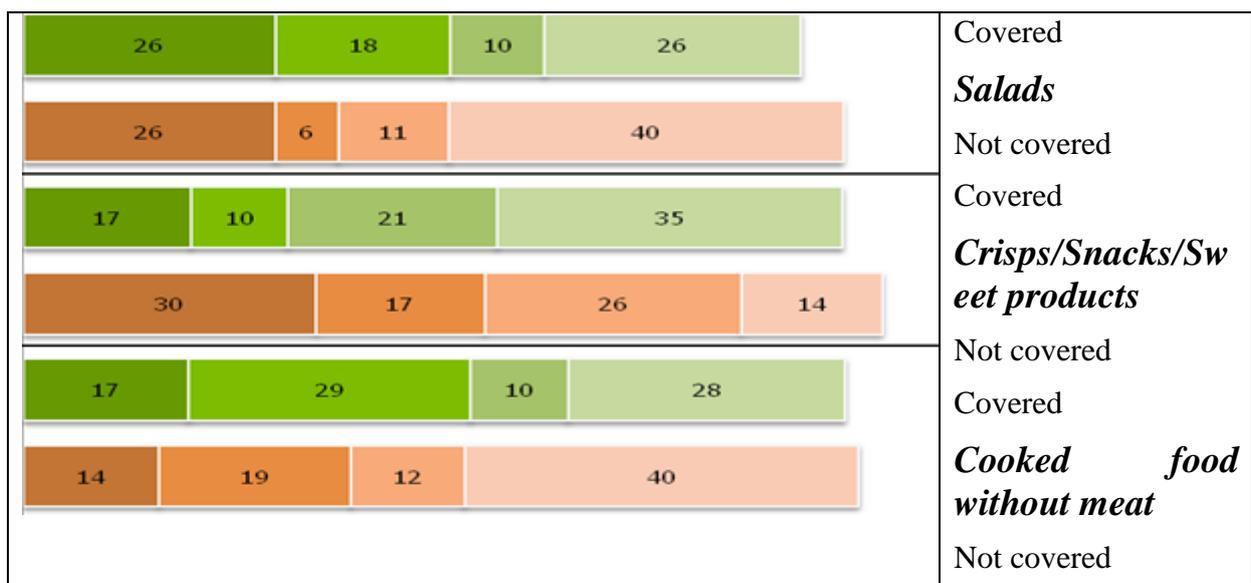
Frequency of consumption of types of food in educational institutions/1 (%)



The total is less than 100 % because of refusals to answer



Frequency of consumption of types of food in educational institutions/ 2 (%)



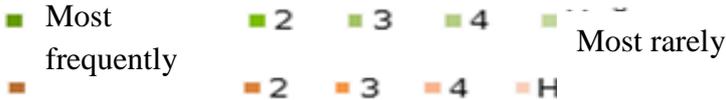
The total is less than 100 % because of refusals to answer

At home children eat most frequently fruits and salads. The number of children who eat fruit at least once a day is considerably higher among children not covered by the scheme than those who benefitted from it. Salads are also often chosen by a larger proportion of children who are not covered. The logical explanation of this fact is the satisfied need of children of fruits and vegetables in covered schools and kindergartens, as these institutions often apply schemes for provision of such foods. The frequency of consumption of cooked meat dishes by covered and not covered children is almost the same. Within the group discussions all children expressed strong preferences for cooked food with meat at home. Children pointed meatballs and meat-and-vegetables hash as two of their favourite foods.

Frequency of consumption of vegetables in one of the following states (%)



The total is less than 100% because of refusals to answer.



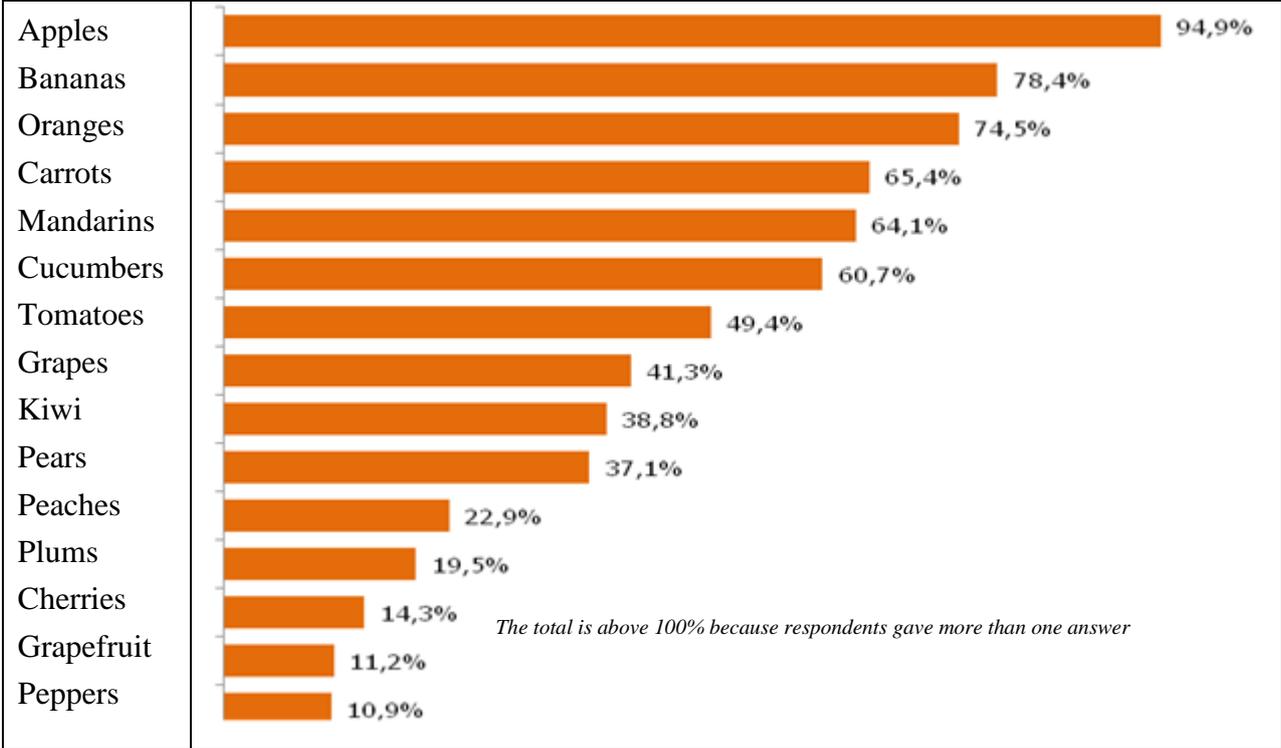
- **Most frequently consumed fruits and vegetables in schools/kindergartens**

The absolute leader according to children is the apple, which is obviously the most distributed fruit. The second place (in terms of frequency of provision) is held by bananas and oranges.

Vegetables appear on the third place - carrots and cucumbers, which have almost an equal share with mandarins. Next come tomatoes which according to half of the interviewed are the most offered products under the scheme.

Another group follows with three kinds of fruit with equal frequency of supply: grapes, kiwi and pears. Less than a quarter of the children mention peaches, plums and cherries, and the grapefruit and pepper hold the last place (one tenth of the children mention them).

- **Most frequently consumed fruits and vegetables last year**



- **Overall evaluation of the School Fruit scheme**

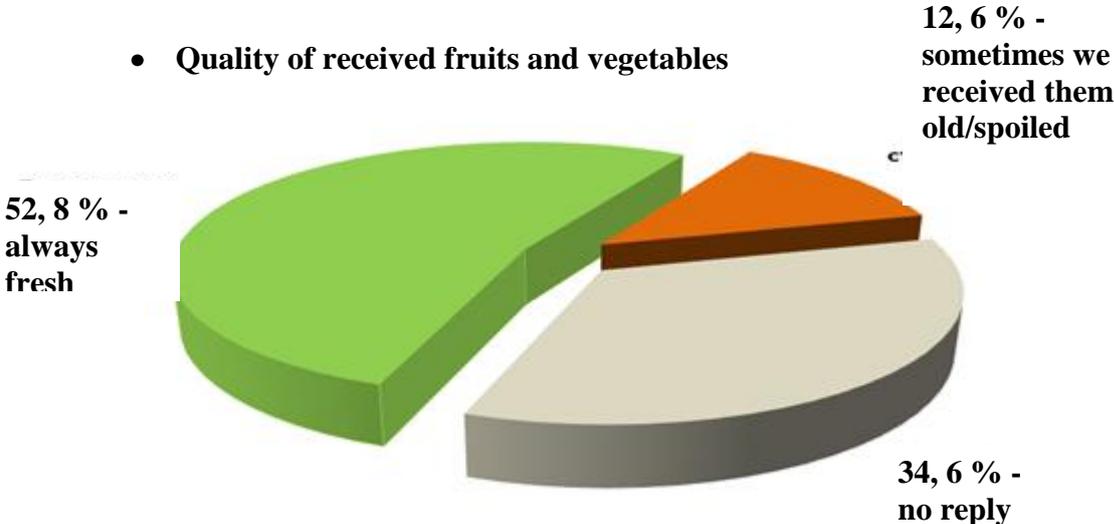
The School Fruit scheme is assessed positively by the majority of teachers and directors in the educational institutions schools from the target group. However the representatives of schools and kindergartens which benefitted from the scheme are considerably more willing to express positive assessment. 79% of the covered institutions and 54% of those not covered assess positively the scheme to a different degree. The difference of 25% comes mostly from refusals to answer or respondents without particular opinion representing the institutions not covered. The results of group discussions with teachers and directors from institutions not covered showed that even the general awareness about the scheme in this group is extremely low. However the high level of information and clarity about the implementation of the scheme among the representatives of covered schools and kindergartens produce a quite positive attitude towards the scheme.

- **Quality of received fruits and vegetables**

The majority of respondents (53%) reported that the supplied fruits and vegetables under the scheme are always fresh. 13% of directors and teachers however claimed that sometimes they received old/damaged products. In the group of non-respondents, just over 1/3, the directors predominate. Perhaps they were to a lesser extent than teachers direct witnesses of the state of the products distributed to children and received secondary information from teachers about

such problems. Keeping in mind the fact that 80% of children respond that the fruits and vegetables they received were always fresh, it is more likely that the high number of non-respondents is due not to embarrassment of giving a negative assessments, but to insufficient information about the problem.

- **Quality of received fruits and vegetables**

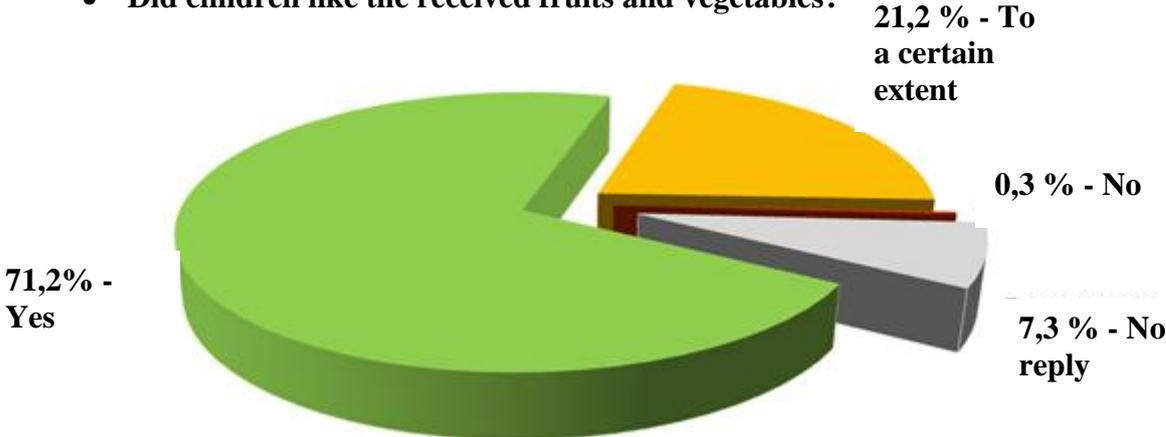


- **Satisfaction of children with received fruits/vegetables**

The opinion of 71% of the teachers and directors in educational institutions which benefitted from the scheme is that the children liked the fruits and vegetables given to them. According to 1/5 of respondents the products were liked by the children to a certain extent. The research among the children covered by the scheme confirmed these results completely and the share of children who said they liked the fruits and vegetables given to them reached 77%.

The staff employed in kindergartens expressed the conviction, to a higher degree their colleagues in schools, that the children liked the received fruits and vegetables, while the difference between the children in kindergartens and schools was not so pronounced.

- **Did children like the received fruits and vegetables?**

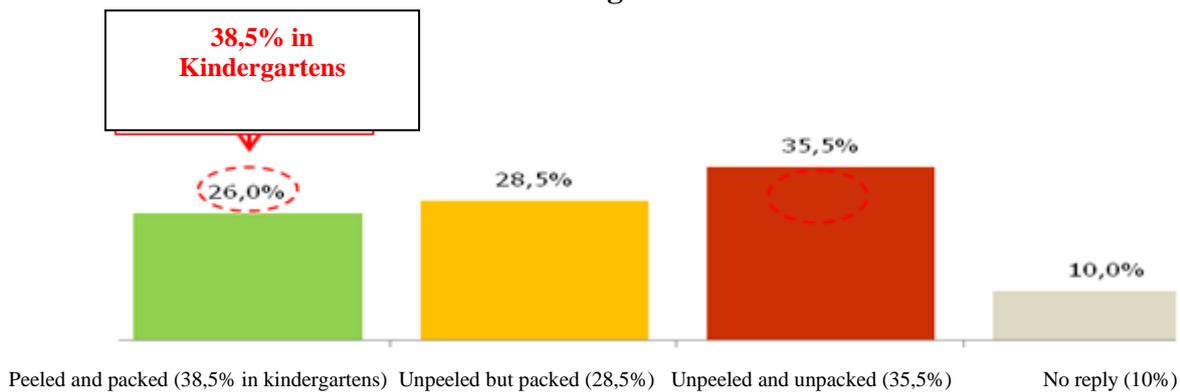


- **Form of received fruits and vegetables (condition)**

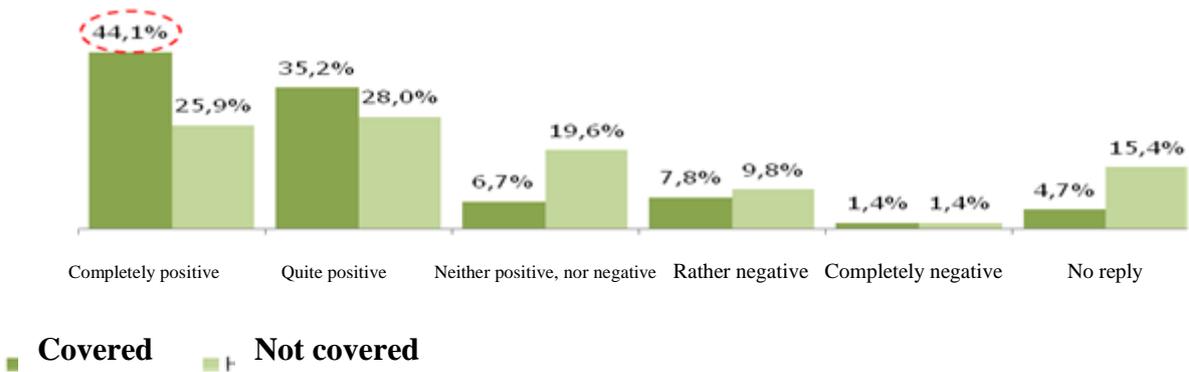
The largest share of teachers and directors respond that the fruits and the vegetables under the scheme were received by the children unpeeled and unpacked (36%). An even larger proportion of the children share this opinion (43%). In only ¼ of all cases the delivered fruits and vegetables were packed and peeled, i.e. in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance on implementation of the scheme.

Unlike school staff, the teachers and directors in kindergartens report to a higher degree that the fruits and vegetables under the scheme were distributed to the children peeled and packed. Logically, in kindergartens, where the groups are smaller and compact, it is considerably easier to turn the products to a form suitable for use by children.

- **State of received fruits and vegetables**



- **Opinion about the mechanism of financial aid within the School Fruit scheme**



- **Advantages/Disadvantages**

Teachers and directors from both covered and not covered institutions consider the major advantage of the scheme the opportunity for encouraging the healthy diet and habits of children. The intake of fresh fruits and vegetables is also identified as a key factor in child development, which is favoured by the implementation of the scheme. Among the main advantages pointed by teachers and directors is also the social importance of the scheme in supporting parents, especially those who have difficulties in providing a healthy menu for their children. The teachers and directors who participated in the scheme logically identified the particular strengths of the scheme to a higher extent than those who were not involved in it. The positive aspects of the scheme are noted to a relatively equal extent by teachers and directors in beneficiary institutions and their colleagues from institutions which dropped out

of the scheme. In this case the participation in the scheme, even prematurely terminated, is an important resource for its positive perception.

IV. Summary and recommendations

1. Findings and recommendations

1.1. Scope and impact of the scheme

The schools and kindergartens included in the scheme School Fruit represent 18% of all institutions in the country which educate children from the target groups and the children attending them form 27% of all children at the target age, attending schools and kindergartens. This scope during the first year of implementation shows that the scheme has succeeded in covering every fourth child of all targeted by it.

The survey shows that unlike domestic consumption, the intake of fruits and vegetables at school is significantly lower despite the fact that children spend most of their time at school. In this direction precisely is the major effect of the School Fruit scheme – the children who participated in the scheme eat more fruits at school/kindergarten than the ones not covered, while the children not covered consume more frequently sandwiches, paste products, crisps and sweet products. These results show that the School Fruit scheme is a significant factor for increasing the daily intake of fruits and vegetables of the children from the target age groups.

The evaluation shows the positive impact of the School Fruit scheme on target groups of children in the following areas:

- √  Children attending covered educational institutions consume more and more frequently fruits and vegetables at school/kindergarten than those from institutions not covered. The effect of this impact has lasted until now because children from covered schools indicate that currently they consume more fruits and vegetables than a year ago. Moreover, children attending covered educational institutions consume less paste products, snacks and crisps compared to children from institutions not covered.
- √  The programme has favoured the development of children's healthy eating habits and increased the interest in fruits and vegetables. It has changed children's eating conditions in educational institutions thus creating conditions for a healthy diet and at the same compensating the lack of opportunities for healthy nutrition of children from socially disadvantaged families.
- √  In general, the programme has added to the efforts of parents to provide a healthy and balanced menu by provoking children's interest in fruits and vegetables and at the same time offering a real opportunity to increase their consumption. Furthermore, the programme was able to extend the established good practices of healthy eating in kindergartens to the primary school classes

and overcome the vicious excessive consumption of paste products, snacks, crisps and confectionary.



- √ The children love the programme and the provided fruits and vegetables and look forward to its continuation.



- √ Despite the opportunities for consumption of fruits and vegetables at school, provided by the scheme and other programmes, still a lot of children bring fruit from home. This shows that the scheme fails to satisfy fully the children's needs of fruits and the role of the family to secure the fruit intake at school continues to be significant. This is also due to the fact that the scheme (or another programme) provides fruits twice a week while in the rest of the time parents have to give their children fruits from home. And yet the share of children who bring fruit from home is lower in the schools involved in the scheme. The distribution of fruits and vegetables among children largely facilitate parents and significantly support those who are in a more difficult financial situation by providing a healthy menu for their children.



- √ According to parents the availability of paste products and snacks on the territory of the educational institutions spoils children's eating habits and it is a precondition for unhealthy and unbalanced diet. That is why parents approve the scheme and the way it is implemented. The negative opinions about the programme are only 6% and they address primarily the quality and freshness of fruits and vegetables. This share, however, is statistically negligible and shows that the positive evaluation of parents predominates.

At the same time parents, directors and teachers share the opinion that fruit consumption drops with the increase of age. Therefore, the possible expansion of the programme to higher age groups would have a direct beneficial effect on them and would play a preventive role for keeping the habits of fruit and vegetable consumption among children from higher classes.

Parents tend to think that their children should have a healthy diet. This is an important and discussed theme and most of them are trying to offer balanced and healthy food to their children. Consumption of fruits and vegetables is an integral part of this idea and parents provide them to their children. In addition, according to parents all children love fruits and eat them every day. This is an additional prerequisite for the positive evaluation of the programme and its impact.

Parents hold the opinion that apart from the family environment, schools/kindergartens also play a key role in the formation of eating habits. This attitude is important and refers to the purpose and the main objective of the School Fruit scheme. Parents are exceptionally positive about it and support its existence mainly because of their fears that their children eat mostly paste products and junk food.

The major motive of teachers and directors for applying for approval under the School Fruit scheme is the care for children's health and the encouragement and formation of healthy eating habits. Another key motive of educational institutions to apply is the opportunity to

save financial resources. On one hand this opportunity is recognized as supporting families by providing free fruits and vegetables to children and on the other hand supporting the school budget which in many cases turns out to be insufficient in terms of providing daily healthy nutrition of children.

According to teachers and directors of kindergartens the lack of information about the scheme is far from being the major factor for not applying. The leading obstacle turns out to be the lack of funds for products' delivery – a requirement related to the scheme implementation mechanism. This is a particularly serious problem as regards the budgets of kindergartens and 55% of their representatives indicate a similar argument for not applying. According to directors the obligation of paying for the supply of fruits and vegetables in advance is a serious difficulty for educational institutions, some of which do not yet operate with delegated budgets and therefore they are practically excluded from the scheme. Another impediment is the quite high risk associated with the advance payment and subsequent reimbursement.

Another major obstacle preventing the application is the impression of too high and unachievable requirements in the process of application and implementation as well. The participants in the group discussions, who implemented the scheme in the last school year, express similar opinions. According to them it is practically impossible to keep the requirements and criteria, set in the scheme is practically impossible because the administration of all activities under the scheme is carried out by the teachers themselves rather than specifically hired staff for the purpose.

The key reasons for dropping out of the scheme specified in the documentary analysis are confirmed by the results of the research. More than half of the interviewed representatives of educational institutions dropped out of the scheme because of the lack of a quality certificate of the fruit and vegetable supplier. This reason is even more frequently reported by the educational institutions which participated in the scheme through the application of a sole trader (ST) or a legal entity i.e. in the cases when the supplier himself applied. This implies that such a requirement is not usual practice for suppliers and it might even be impossible for some of them to comply. Within the group discussions particular cases were mentioned when due to the systematic lack of approved standard quality certificates of suppliers, the educational institutions were forced to give up the implementation of the scheme because the funds paid in advance would not be reimbursed without any of the required documents.

Kindergartens' interest in the scheme is still low. Logically, the majority of children covered by the scheme attend school (78%), while 21% attend kindergarten. This is due most probably to the fact that kindergartens can afford within their budgets to include fruits in the daily menu of children but they also face the difficulty of finding funding for supplies.

2. Recommendations

The following recommendations for activities and corrective measures on the scheme, for the purpose of a better coverage of the target groups of children, can be derived on the basis of the evaluation:

1. Optimizing the process of awarding funds in order to account for and overcome the main problems faced by the target groups included in this report. A possible step in this direction is the granting of certain funds in advance for school operation and a smaller share of funds for administration of the programme (coverage of administrative costs).
2. Training of directors/financiers or other administrators to improve the process of applying, managing and reporting within the scheme.

3. Simplification of requirements in order to facilitate their fulfillment by applying and covered educational institutions.
4. Promotion of the scheme among target groups and raising the awareness of applicants about the mechanisms of reporting and management. Better promotion of the scheme among parents and other representatives of the parties concerned.
5. Providing opportunities for electronic submission of documents, optimizing communication with maximum preference for electronic form.
6. Improving communication with parents and better promotion of the programme among them in the process of its implementation.
7. Encouraging educational institutions to prepare a wider range of accompanying measures to be presented, to parents as well, and reported within the scheme.
8. Extending the programme to children of higher age groups for the purpose of maintaining good healthy eating habits and fruit consumption for a long time.
9. Expanding the programme to a larger share of children from target groups (for example 50%-60%).
10. Improving the mechanism of fruit distribution and raising the control on packaging, cutting and peeling of fruits and vegetables.