EU Platform on diet, Physical Activity and Health

Monitoring Framework

Introduction

The Monitoring Framework is a document which provides guidance to Platform Members on how to take forward the monitoring of their commitments in the context of this specific process. The Monitoring Framework comprises an introduction, a users guide and a list of practical examples for information. The EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health was launched on 15th March 2005.

The aim of this Platform is to provide a common forum for all interested actors at European level where:

a) they can explain their plans to contribute concretely to the pursuit of healthy nutrition, physical activity and the fight against obesity, and where these plans can be discussed;

b) outcomes and experience from actors' performance can be reported and reviewed, so that over time better evidence is assembled of what works and Best Practice more clearly defined.

Platform members agreed to monitor their own performance in a transparent, participative and accountable way, so that there is a degree of multi-stakeholder involvement in reviewing progress and outcomes **that creates trust in the data**. There is also a general desire amongst participants to develop not only participative self-monitoring, but also some more ambitious good practice on monitoring, including aspects such as evaluation.

For the first time retailers, food processors, the catering industry, the advertising business, consumer and health NGO's, the medical professions and the EU troika presidencies are sitting round a table discussing what are the best voluntary actions towards promoting a healthy lifestyle. Despite differing opinions, size and levels all have agreed to put together a framework to allow for as consistent monitoring as possible where individual actions can be assessed against their own objectives. Nevertheless different commitments by different partners must show themselves **to be relevant to the general aims of the Platform.**

Monitoring of commitment plays a vital role in developing engagement, accountability and trust, in mapping progress and confirming the commitments undertaken.

Monitoring should be appropriate and proportionate to your type of commitment. It should help you to:

- gain a better understanding of your commitments and the relevance to the general aims of the Platform
- fine tune your commitment
- understand what needs to be done and how

- better integrate your commitment with other commitments undertaken in the Platform
- engender wider stakeholder trust in your commitment
- eventually duplicate good practices

A Users Guide on how to monitor the commitments

Members of the Platform have agreed on the necessity to monitor their commitments in a systematic, open and understandable way as a step in building trust. They should assess the progress of ongoing activities and identify the constraints for early corrective action. They should check if milestones have been achieved by key dates and, if possible, measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the commitments.

The following steps indicate the minimum agreed requirements to monitor a commitment:

1. The relevance of the commitment to the general aims of the Platform is clearly described (relevance)
2. For each commitment there is a clear set of objectives (objectives)
3. Where practical, the resources put in to each commitment are identified (inputs)
4. The commitment is assessed and what has been achieved is identified and made public (outputs)

Given the nature of this process, the timescale and range of commitments it is unlikely that we will be able to monitor if the outputs may actually lead to desired long term changes in the form of outcomes. It has been agreed that indicators related to outcome are not part of the minimum requirements and may be provided by those who are in a position to do so. Such data would significantly increase the confidence and information on the effectiveness of the commitment.

The following step goes above the minimum agreed requirements to monitor a commitment:

5. If possible, identify the ultimate impact of your commitment (outcome)

The monitoring of commitments should be carried out in an open and transparent way so it creates trust in data and should seek to capture information about any unexpected or unintended consequences of actions in furtherance of the commitments.

Examples have been provided in this text purely as helpful illustrations of the kinds of the various options available to members in completing their monitoring. The citing of examples does not mean that the provision of each and every example mentioned is a requirement. Members have to use their judgement. It is also to be noted that some data are commercially sensitive and can not be communicated.

1.   Assessing the relevance of the commitment

The Platform Member should be able to describe, in a relatively simple way, how their commitment is relevant (or pertinent, connected, or applicable) to the realisation of the general aim of the Platform.

Relevance can be judged from a number of perspectives. The Platform Member is responsible for defining the relevance of their voluntary commitment. The primary purpose of describing the relevance is to ensure that there is clarity as to: ***How it achieves the aim of the Platform***.

This is an essential step in building trust in data and in supporting a transparent, participative and accountable process.

Examples

> *- For a <u>leaflet</u> encouraging physical activity – because it spreads information and encourages the target population to do a specific exercise like walking for 30 minutes per day – documentation of effect from WHO, scientific literature etc.*
>
> *- For a <u>labelling</u> initiative – because consumers need to know what a product contains of in order to be able to make healthy choices*
>
> *- For product <u>reformulation</u> – lower the content of fat, sugar or salt has beneficial implications for health, see WHO technical report 916 2003.*
>
> *- For <u>implementation</u> of marketing, advertising or other principles – advertising has an effect on choices made by the target population, see Hastings report or similar.*
>
> *- For a mass media <u>campaign</u> on TV or a healthy lifestyle education campaign – spread information, encourage and educate target population on…….*
>
> *- For change of product <u>assortment</u> in canteens or vending machines – give the target population a choice and make the healthy option the easy one.*

2.   Setting the objectives

The objectives help to focus in more detail on what the commitment is aiming to achieve. They need to be concrete and precise as this will make it easier to monitor the commitments. In some situations it may be beneficial to divide the objectives into a short, medium or long term.

For all aspects of monitoring, Platform members may wish to utilize external bodies or organisations as these can bring specific expertise to help with the process.

For the reader to clearly understand what the objectives mean, it can be useful to apply the **'S.M.A.R.T.'** – procedure when writing or describing an objective. This means that objectives should be:

Examples

> - **Specific – clear about what, where, why and when the situation will be changed.**
>
> *What* do you want to achieve with this commitment (what are the objectives?) *Where* do you want to implement or execute the commitment?
>
> - Which setting? Restaurants, primary schools, community or workplace
>
> - Which geographical coverage? All European capitals, the four biggest cities of Germany
>
> - Which level? National, Worldwide, local

Why do you want to do this now (what is the underlying problem or the reason for the commitment)?

- No marketing communication for beverages aimed at children → aim: avoid exposure to tempting offers to vulnerable groups and decrease energy intake

- Reformulation of products → aim: lower fat content and calorie content of products and decrease energy intake

When do you want to see the results of your commitment?

- After 3 months, after one year, immediately after launch of the action

- **Measurable** – able to quantify or qualify the achievements, changes or benefits.

Choose objectives with measurable progress, so you can see the change occur. How do you know you have accomplished your goals? Be as specific and quantitative as possible! It is important to consider the timeframe of the action.

Example of a 'measurable' objective:

Objective: To introduce the 'Food Dude Healthy Eating Programme'
This objective is 'measurable' since it can be calculated how many schools introduce the programme and how many children are reached.

- **Attainable/achievable** – able to attain the objectives (knowing the resources and capacities at the disposal of all those concerned).

Are the commitments attainable or "do-able"? Do you have the attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to reach the goals?

- **Realistic** – able to obtain the level of change reflected in the objective.

How realistic are your expectations? Have you done it before or is there a similar initiative or research base that makes its effectiveness plausible?

- **Time bound** – stating the time period in which the objectives will be accomplished.

What is the *timeframe* for the commitment? Specific description of the time path of all activities of the actions should be given.

When will the inclusion of schools be finished, promotion material be ready, training of the teachers be given, education be given to the children, previous/baseline measurement be held and publication be ready?

Progress in fulfilling the commitment needs to be accompanied by specific indicators.

3. Measuring the objectives

Indicators are required to be able to monitor the commitments and build credibility and confidence in the work of the Platform.

a) Input indicators

Input indicators: measure the resources allocated to each action/activity depending of the objective of the commitment (funding, allocated resources, training etc) used for each activity

Input indicators measure the resources allocated to each action/activity, essentially what **did I do to try and undertake my objective?** Resources here means materials, people and time – like how many people are working on the project, what training is needed to carry out the action and what are the total costs of the action.

However confidentiality, marketing competition and commercially sensitive data are issues that need to be taken into consideration regarding which data can be made available. When input data is commercially sensitive Members should try to find imaginative help to define the input. Good data is necessary to identify good practices and where relevant, to produce a cost-benefit analysis. It is also an indication about what efforts are needed for further implementation of an action.

Examples

- For a <u>leaflet</u> encouraging physical activity who (background/funding) writes the message and what is the cost for printing and distribution.

- For a <u>labelling</u> initiative or product <u>reformulation</u> the production costs, technical costs, how many are working on it and how long).

- For <u>implementation</u> of marketing, advertising or other principles costs related, how many are working on it.

- For a mass media <u>campaign</u> on TV who plans it, who funds the research behind, how many works on it, costs.

- For healthy lifestyle <u>education</u> who plans it, who funds the research behind, how many works on it, costs etc.

- For change of product <u>assortment</u> in canteens or vending machines number of machines, number of people involved, costs, investments etc.

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b) Output indicators

Output indicator: used to measure the outputs or products that comes about as a result or a product of the process. It measures from a quantitative point of view the results created through the use of inputs (schools visited, audience targeted, sports organised etc)

Output indicators measure the products or the achievements of the commitment through the use of inputs or, simplified, **what did you do with the money and resources**?
It is also important to have a good insight into the process of implementing or executing the action in a clear timeframe. Therefore it is necessary to have process indicators available, which can be monitored throughout the action. In this monitoring, it is essential to consider the timeframe and to define this in advance.

It is essential that the process- or output indicators are linked to the objectives and are made as explicit as possible.

Very often one objective can trigger several output parameters. Examples of this are summarised below.

Examples:

- For a <u>leaflet</u> encouraging physical activity it would be useful to know how many copies were printed, how many and how they were distributed.

- For a <u>labelling</u> initiative or product <u>reformulation</u> it would be helpful to state details of what changes were made to the labels or the product and how many products have been changed (label or content), how many shops are selling these products and what the sales figures were before and after the action.

- For a mass media <u>campaign</u> on TV it would be useful to know how often is has been shown, at which time, which channel, what the ratings were and how many people have been reached by the campaign (penetration/reach).

For healthy lifestyle <u>education</u> it would be useful to know the materials (brochure, book) that have been used, the main message (physical activity, healthy diet, low fat etc), frequency of meetings and attendance rates, and satisfaction among the professionals which give the education.

- For change of product <u>assortment</u> in canteens or vending machines in would be necessary to know which products have been changed (i.e. chocolate bars, chips, regular soft drinks for fruit, water, light drinks), how many canteens or vending machines have changed their assortments and selling rates.

4.   Outcome and impact indicators

Outcome and impact indicators go above the minimum agreed requirements to monitor a commitment. They measure the quality and the quantity of the results achieved through the actions in the commitment. In other words, ***how successful have my commitments been in relation to my original objectives?***

Depending on the nature of the commitment some basic evaluations are possible and should be done. The indicators to be used may include:
- Determinants of behaviour
- Attitudinal change
- Changing behaviour itself
- Biological parameters
- Incidence of the diseases.

The expected outcomes can also be different depending on the scope of the commitment. There may be short term outcomes (such as increased knowledge), intermediate outcomes (such as change in behaviour towards a healthier lifestyle) or long term outcomes (such as reduction in incidence of cardiovascular disease due to a healthier diet and more physical activity).

Ideally the effects on better health, improvements on diet and increased physical activity – as the ultimate goal of all commitments – could be evaluated, preferably on the longer term. However, given the current nature and timeframe of the Platform process, it is unlikely that we will be able to monitor the effects in the short term.

In some cases it will not be possible for the Platform members to perform this type of effect evaluation**.** Reasons for this might be that actions are spread over a large area (for instance marketing activities) or that resources are insufficient to perform an effect evaluation in accordance with 'scientific gold standards' (which, for example, would require a control condition or a control region). In those cases it might be worthwhile to make use of existing monitoring framework systems, preferably nationwide ones.

Examples:

- For a <u>leaflet</u> encouraging physical activity it would be useful to know how many people have changed their mind about physical activity (attitude). This can be done by short questionnaires before and after the action

- For <u>implementation</u> of principles it would be useful to know the effect. What is the effect of codes of conduct for commercial communications? What has the qualitative and quantitative impact of self-regulatory principles been on marketing communications? What is the average compliance level with the self-regulatory rules?

Effect on the target group. What is the effect of less commercial communication? Decreased sales figures of unhealthy products? Increased sales figures? Do those who have accepted them subscribe the principles fully?

- For a mass media <u>campaign</u> on TV it would be useful to know whether people are more aware or have changed their mind about the topic. This can be assessed by questionnaires before and after the action.

- For healthy lifestyle <u>education</u> it would be useful to know whether knowledge about healthy diet and physical activity has increased and how many persons have adopted a healthier lifestyle. Both quantities can be measured by questionnaires before and after the action. .

- For change of product <u>assortment</u> in canteens or vending machines it would be important to know the total and product specific sales figures before and after the action, to investigate whether people have changed their diet by substituting unhealthy foods by healthier foods or that they have bought the healthier foods as surplus.

PRACTICAL CASES ON HOW TO MONITOR THE COMMITMENTS

In order to help you monitor your commitments, here are a few tips and examples:

1) *Try to identify the relevance of your commitments to the wider aims of the Platform.* To what extent are the commitments relevant and consistent with the aim of the Platform? It is for the Platform member to set out in a transparent way its justification for the relevance of its commitments. It should be accompanied by a clear description of how it addresses the overall aims of the Platform. It should justify on what basis they consider the commitments to be relevant. The burden of proof is on the organisation making the commitments. Where evidence is available it should be cited.

Example **advertising:** Encourage Members to implement the Principles

Relevant because it reduces chances for misleading information to consumers according to Research X, Y and Z.

Example **intervention program:** Program X will be introduced to X children.

Relevant because this program will encourage children to be more physical active and research X shows that this program works and it is improves health.

Example **website:** Disseminate information

Relevant because information on X is needed according to research Y and it will improve the diets for the target population.

Example **quality label:** Label X ensures the quality

Relevant because according to research Y consumers are confused about different dietary options. Label X ensures a certain quality and research Y show that consumers change behaviour and chose the healthy option.

2) *Try and give clear, consistent and coherent descriptions of the commitments in the Platform database*, including a specification of various levels of objectives (e.g. short, medium, long term objectives).

- Example **advertising**:
  Commitment: The Member will encourage their members to implement the Principles. These principles are designed to ensure that the products do not encourage ……. *The contents of the principles can be viewed at website… or …*
  Objectives: By the end of 2007, X % of members to implement the principles completely;
  - All member states to comply with at the end of 2007, X% of members implement the principles completely;
  - All member states comply with principles regarding TV-adverts during 2007-2010;

- Example **intervention program**:
  Commitment: The Programme will be introduced to over X primary school children consisting of videos, rewards etc. The program is designed to positively change children's long-term behaviour in x and y. *The contents of the programme can be viewed at website… or …*
  Objective: In June 2008 the programme will be completed by X primary schools, with a good geographical spread and include large, small, urban and rural schools and all socio-economic groups.

- Example **website**:

Commitment: The Member will build a consistent strategy for web-based communications, in order to maximise coherence, outreach and impact to the general public on a European level.
Objective: In June X 2006 the renewed web-site www.XXX will be launched.

- Example **education**:
Commitment: The Member will implement the "Programme" *consisting of* ... The program is designed to develop XX in children between 6 and 12 years old. *The contents of the programme can be viewed at website... or ...*
Objective: To implement the programme in potentially all primary schools in country A,B C by the end of 2006, D,E, F in 2007 and G and H in 2008.

- Example **health professionals**:
Commitment: The member from all EU Member States will set an example for the public and ..... by adopting a healthier lifestyle if necessary.
Objective: *At the end of 2007, X% of the target population adapts to these principles and X% of them will positively change their lifestyle by ......t.*

- Example **quality label**
Commitment: Label X is a quality seal for courses of ...... in clubs, primarily addressed to those who do not .... *The criteria of this quality seal can be viewed at website... or...*
Objective: To improve both Quality seal programs and co-operation between the bodies involved in country X in the period X to Y.

3) *Try to find suitable indicators to measure progress.* Indicators are identified as variables which help to measure changes and that facilitate the understanding of where we are, where we are going and how far we are from the underlying goal. They are measurements used to answer questions in the process of monitoring and evaluating an activity, the selection of indicators should be guided to the purpose for which they were established. Platform members should describe what quality-control procedures are in place for assuring data accuracy.

- Example **advertising**:
Output indicators: - number of members that have implemented the Principles. -.. Change from baseline in number of adverts for all ... categories that do/do not comply with the Principles.

- Example **intervention program**:
Output indicators: - Total number of schools in which the programme is implemented. Number of large, small, urban, rural schools in which the programme is implemented. – change of behaviour in 16-day intervention period. – Number of children that watched the video. – Number of children that received a reward. – Satisfaction of in-school coordinators, teachers, parents and children.

- Example **website**:
Output indicators: – Details of what changes are made. - Launch of revised website. - Change from baseline in total number of visitors. Change from baseline in number of visitors from each Member State.

- Example **education**:

Output indicators: - Number of schools in each country that have implemented the programme. – Awareness among children of the programme.

- Example **health professionals**:
Output indicators: - Number of professionals that adopted the healthy lifestyle principles at the end of 2007. - Number of professionals that positively changed their lifestyle and weight at the end of 2007.

- Example **quality label**
Output indicators: - The number of labels awarded each year. – The number of people following courses each year. – The number of trainers or educators that participate in quality circles each year. – Satisfaction of co-operating bodies. – The number of evaluated projects each year.

4) *Try and facilitate progress reporting to the Platform*. In order to measure progress it is important to set, from the beginning, clear goals/targets to be achieved. A reporting template is likely to include the following questions:

- What is the current status of the commitments?
- Have you encountered obstacles?
- Have you achieved your objective?
- Is the commitment relevant to the aim of the Platform?
- What are the input indicators?
- What are the output indicators?
- Any outcome?

5) *Try to enable transparent participative monitoring review.* Relevant questions could be; Who actually monitors the commitments? What do the monitors look for? What procedures are in place to ensure adequate feedback of information to Platform members and decision-makers?

Example **website**:
Commitment
The Member will build a consistent strategy for web-based communications, in order to maximise coherence, outreach and impact to the general public on a European level.
Objectives
Short term: To develop a strategy how to change the website. Timeframe: September 2005 – February 2006.
This could be done by carrying out an online-survey to identify the needs of the organisation X website visitor and compare this with in-house analytical work.
Medium term: To build the website www.xxx.eu and launch it in June 2006.
Long term: In 2007 the website will reach X million visitors per month and will have impact on their knowledge about diet, physical activity and health.
Output indicators
Short term: - Number of people that filled out online questionnaire. – List of criteria to which the website should comply on different levels, including content, presentation, user-friendliness, interactive. – Overview of what changes should be made on all levels.
Medium term: – Details of what changes are made on all levels. - Launch of revised website.
Long term: - Change from baseline in total number of visitors. Change from baseline in number of visitors from each Member State. - Number of sites that link to www.xxx.eu

Outcome indicators
Long term: - Change in knowledge of visitors about diet, physical activity and health. This could be measured by online questionnaire before and half year after launch of the new website.

Example **intervention program**:
Commitment: The Member will introduce to over X primary school children the Programme consisting of videos and rewards and a 16-day intervention period. The program is designed to positively change children's long-term behaviour. The contents of the programme can be viewed at website… or …
Objective: In June 2008 the programme will be completed by X primary schools, with a good geographical spread and include large, small, urban and rural schools and all socio-economic groups.
Output indicators: - Total number of schools in which the programme is implemented. Number of large, small, urban, rural schools in which the programme is implemented. – Change of behaviour in 16-day intervention period. This could be measured by stating the number of pieces supplied and number of pieces left over. – Number of children that watched the video. – Number of children that received a reward. – Satisfaction of in-school coordinators, teachers, parents and children. This could be measured by questionnaires by an independent institution.
Outcome indicators
Short, medium and long term: - Change in knowledge about X. – Change in attitude and other behavioural determinants of X consumption. – Change in self-reported consumption of X
This could all be measured by a questionnaire at baseline and after the programme is completed after six months and after one year. Another option is to question the parents or execute structured interviews.

Example **health professionals**:
Commitment: The Member from all EU Member States will set an example for the public and ….. by adopting a healthier lifestyle if necessary.
Objectives
Short term: - Agree on the principles of a healthy lifestyle by each national association in 2006.
Medium term: - In 2007, X% of the target population adopts these principles.
Long term: - At the end of 2007, X% of X positively changed their lifestyle.
Output indicators
Short term: - Overview of healthy lifestyle principles for each national association.
Medium term: - Number of X that adopted the healthy lifestyle principles at the end of 2007. This could be measured by the number of X that registered to change lifestyle.
Long term: - Number of X that positively changed their lifestyle at the end of 2007. This could be measured by a questionnaire.
Outcome indicators
Not applicable. This action is oriented at an intermediate group and not directly at the general public.
An option is to use nation wide monitor system and if possible add some. This will provide some indication about the potential impact on behaviour of the general population.