

EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

24th February 2014 10.00-17.00

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 196 ALEXANDRAS AV. 11521 ATHENS, GREECE

CHAIR: Acting Director John F. Ryan

FINAL Minutes

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. EUROPEAN COMMISSION

1.2. GREEK PRESIDENCY - THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE, MS ATHINA KYRLESI

1.3. JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE - WHAT IS NEW

The Chair, Mr John Ryan, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and explaining that the main purpose of the session was to discuss the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity.

The Director General of Public Health and Quality of Life, Ms Athina Kyrlesi, welcomed the High Level Group on behalf of the Greek Presidency and underlined the importance of having a High Level Group meeting in Athens the day before the High Level Conference on Nutrition and Physical Activity.

Mr Jan Wollgast from the Commission's Joint Research Centre provided a comprehensive overview of the latest scientific news and developments in the field of nutrition and physical activity.

The Chair confirmed that there were no comments on the minutes of the previous High Level Group meeting held on the 25th November 2013 and the minutes were therefore adopted.

2. ACTION PLAN ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

2.1. INTRODUCTION, PRESENTATION BY MS URSULA O'DWYER, IRISH MEMBER OF THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP

Ms Ursula O'Dwyer, Department of Health, Ireland, presented the latest version of the draft Action Plan.

The Action Plan focuses on eight working areas, including operational objectives and concrete EU targets:

- Support a healthy start in life;
- Promote healthier environments, especially in schools and preschools;
- Make the healthy option the easier option;
- Restrict marketing and advertising to children;
- Inform and empower families;
- Encourage physical activity;
- Monitor and evaluate;
- Increase research.

It was highlighted that the drafting process had taken less than one year (since the March 2013 call of the EU Presidency to the High Level Group members). It was further noted that, in early January 2014, the members of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health had had a first opportunity to signal ongoing commitments which could contribute to the priority areas of the Action Plan (included as an annex in the draft).

2.2. DISCUSSION

The members of the High Level Group discussed the last pending suggestions and comments, walking through the entire document.

Issues such as the definition of less healthy food options, children's overweight and obesity definitions and the group's position on breastfeeding were debated and agreed upon.

The action list was also revised in some points (adjustment of wording, indicators, responsible parties) and it was proposed that the Action Plan should be revisited in three years to evaluate whether its objectives and actions remain relevant.

FI voiced that the annex listing Platform stakeholders commitments should not be considered as an integral part of the Action Plan. FR and SL suggested it to be removed from the document and that position was agreed to by the group. The members of the High Level Group subsequently decided to invite the EU Platform to develop new commitments on childhood obesity, linked to their core businesses and in line with the Action Plan.

EL noted the advantage of adding a reference to the DAFNE project in the Action Plan. The Chair added that there will be no financial envelope directly assigned to the Action Plan and thus funding will not automatically follow to any of the actions or projects wherein mentioned. EL clarified that the initial comment referred to the project solely as a potential source of information relevant to the Action Plan.

PT further voiced the concern that the implementation of some of the actions of the Action Plan would require resources that may difficult to summon in the Member States.

Following a statement from NL, it was agreed to add the following footnote to the Action Plan: "the Netherlands cannot support the Action Plan at the current moment, because it considers most of the actions lacking cross-border elements and having a dominant national character, thus falling under national responsibility. Therefore the Netherlands regards the Action Plan as not being sufficiently in line with subsidiarity requirements in order to legitimise an Action Plan coordinated by the European Commission". SE noted its agreement with the statement.

Following these discussions, the High Level Group endorsed the Action Plan.

The High Level Group Action Plan was communicated at the Greek Presidency Conference on Nutrition and Physical Activity (which took place on 25-26 February 2014, also in Athens). At this occasion, the Greek Minister of Health, Mr Adonis Georgiadis welcomed this High Level Group initiative on childhood obesity. Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General at DG SANCO, underlined the importance to ensure rapid sharing of good practices in countering children obesity in particular in a period of crisis so that we can build more effective responses.

3. JOINT ACTION, PRESENTATION BY MR PHILIPPE ROUX, DG SANCO

Mr Philippe Roux updated the Group on the ideas already presented by some Member States for the development of a Joint Action under the EU Health Programme. This Joint Action may naturally include initiatives contributing to the Action Plan.

The Commission was able to reserve € 1,200,000 to support this Joint Action and France has tentatively volunteered to be its leader.

A brief introduction to the possible work packages ensued.

The Chair informed that the Commission would circulate a summary of the suggestions for the work packages, based on Member State input. The Member States should voice their interest to join the initiative until the end of April and progress with the discussion on the work packages.

The Joint Action will again be discussed during the June meeting of the High Level Group.

4. CONCLUSIONS OF THE CHAIR

The Chair

- congratulated the group on its agreement to the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity, to be presented at the Greek Presidency Conference 25-26 February 2014;
- confirmed that the members of Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health will be informed, in advance of the June 2014 Joint Meeting, on the possibility to propose commitments in support of the implementation of the Action Plan;
- noted that France volunteered to be the leader of a Nutrition and Physical Activity Joint Action and that a number of Member States again reinstated their willingness to participate.

The Joint Meeting between the High Level Group and the Platform will take place in the afternoon of 10 June, followed by a High Level Group meeting on 11 June.