

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

MEETING

3RD OF FEBRUARY 2011 10.00-17.00

Draft minutes

1. INTRODUCTION BY THE COMMISSION

The Commission informed the participants about December's Council Conclusion on innovative approaches for chronic diseases in public health and healthcare systems, inviting the Member States to develop further patient centred policies in the field of chronic diseases.

An updated planning for the meetings and vision for 2011 has been presented. Tables with themes proposed for the meetings were distributed among the participants and the draft minutes of previous December meeting were adopted without any objection.

2. POLICY DEVELOPEMENTS

2.1. THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION COMMUNICATION "DEVELOPING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN SPORT" – DG EAC

The Communication sets out the Commission's ideas for an EU-level action in the field of sport. It purposes concrete actions for the Commission and/or the Member States within three broad chapters: the societal role of sport, the economic dimension of sport and the organization of sport. The chapter on the societal role of sport has 5 themes, one of them is enhancing health through sport. This indicates as a need to establish national physical activity guidelines, which should be endorsed by EU Sport Ministers, and as a necessity for subsequent review of these guidelines and mutual coordination. A Council recommendation could be foreseen in that respect. There is also visible need for support for transnational HEPA projects and networks. EU activity in the sport's field focuses mainly on policy, financial incentives, mainstreaming and structured dialogue with sport stakeholders as well as networks.

Policy

The 2007 White Paper on sport Public health and physical activity actions contains the development the physical activity guidelines with Member States (done), support to EU HEPA networks, mainstreaming and mobilisation the relevant EU programmes, as Youth, LLL, Citizenship.

The cooperation with Member States occurs through the Working Group of Sport & Health. It was created under the UK presidency and the participation in this Group is voluntary. The main outputs are the following: contribution to 2007 White Paper on obesity; contribution to EAC-SANCO-cooperation; proposals for 2007 White Paper on Sport; contribution to Eurobarometer 2009 on sport and physical activity; EU Physical Activity guidelines (2008); proposals for 2011 Communication on Sport.

EU Physical Activity Guidelines, prepared by the Working Group on Sport & Health, and endorsed by the EU Sport Ministers in 2008, introduced a cross-sectoral approach and gave recommendations to Member States, who adopted it in order to develop national guidelines and action plans, as it is the case of Spain and Germany.

At the policy level, the Council is preparing a Council Resolution on a multi-annual EU Work Plan for Sport and, as soft law, a Council recommendation on HEPA.

In the area of financial incentives, the following is planned:

- evaluation of ongoing projects carried out through the 2009 and 2010 Preparatory Actions will be undertaken, initiated by European Parliament;
- impact assessment of the Commission's proposal for incentive measures in the field of sport, and finally,
- formulation of Commission proposal for incentive measures for the next MFF.

The Sport Communication is very interesting and it is very relevant for health through the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity in Europe. It contains references to the strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues. The Communication focuses on such vulnerable groups as persons with disabilities, women, youth, and immigrants in order to help in their inclusion through sport.

Member States are very keen on sport policy aspect, the evidence of what can be seen from the successive Council Presidencies. The Hungarian Presidency is also working on it. The Commission needs to see the interest, signals and feedback from Member States in area of sport to contribute to an EU added value.

3. FOOD REFORMULATION

3.1. FOOD REFORMULATION – INTRODUCTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION - EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues, identifies food reformulation as an area for action. In particular, the Strategy sets out the Commission's intention to facilitate salt reformulation campaigns and other initiatives related to the nutrient composition of manufactured foods. After the successful launch of the salt reduction framework in the middle of 2008, a number of

High Level Group members asked the Commission to further develop this approach to work on further nutrients such as fats and sugars.

The Commission drafted a scoping paper, which was discussed by an expert group mandated by the High Level Group. The Conclusions of the expert group of November 2010 were presented briefly at the last High Level Group meeting in December. On this basis, the Commission produced a synthesis and a draft framework for action on fat(s) and energy, which should be discussed during the meeting in view of paving the way forward. The Chair underlined that it was a flexible paper, giving the space for manoeuvre for Member States to implement the framework at national level.

3.2. PROGRESS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPEMENT OF A FOOD REFORMULATION FRAMEWORK - EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) identified nutrients of public health importance for EU population, i.e. nutrients for which there is evidence of dietary imbalance that might influence the development of conditions such as overweight and obesity, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, hypertension, dyslipidemia, type 2 diabetes, osteroposis.

These include nutrients which might be consumed to excess, e.g. saturated and trans fats, energy, total fat and sugars as well as those for which intake might be inadequate, e.g. essential unsaturated fatty acids, dietary fibre, as well as some vitamins and minerals.

The occurrence of such nutrient imbalances varies between countries.

As for the target variable for fats, according to EFSA, the intake of saturated and trans fats is recommended to be as low as possible within the context of a nutritionally adequate diet.

WHO and national recommendations range mostly around < 8 to 10 % of the energy intake for saturated fat and < 1 to 2 % of energy provided by trans fats.

Data from Member States bring to light that the current average intake levels for saturated fats exceed national recommendations in nearly all Member States.

Some Member States indicate that the intake of trans fats exceed recommendations in certain groups of the population.

Concerning the target variables for energy – total fat, while fat facilitates the absorption of fat-soluble dietary components such as vitamins and provides essential fatty acids, there is evidence that high-fat diets may increase cardiovascular risk and that moderate fat intake helps to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

For total fat consumption, EFSA recommends between 20 to 35 % energy from fat, while WHO and national recommendations range from between 15 up to 40 % energy. In most Member States, current intakes are at the upper level of the national recommendation, or above.

Target variables for energy – sugars, EFSA: insufficient evidence to set an upper limit for intake of sugars, as possible health effects are mainly related to patterns of food consumption – i.e. the types of (high sugars) foods consumed and frequency of consumption.

WHO recommends a limit of 10% energy from added sugars. EFSA noted that the average intake of (added) sugars in some EU Member States exceeds 10% total energy intake, especially in children.

EFSA: evidence on the relationship between patterns of consumption of sugars-containing foods and dental caries, weight gain and micronutrient intake should be considered when establishing nutrient goals for populations and recommendations for individuals and when developing food-based dietary guidelines.

For sugars EFSA found that data show links between high intakes of sugars in form of sugars-sweetened beverages and weight gain.

Most Member States provide dietary guidance to restrict the intake of sugary food & drink either generally or in quantitative recommendations on frequency of consumption or the contribution of sugars to overall energy intake. Such guidance takes into account the dietary habits in the individual Member States and is adapted to the national situation.

The High Level Group members shall commit to work simultaneously on all five elements of the framework:

1. Determine additional data needs;
2. Benchmarks (if applicable), major food Categories;
3. Develop actions to raise public awareness;
4. Develop reformulation actions with industry (if applicable) and
5. Monitor & evaluate actions.

National approaches may also target other product categories than indicated in the table for product reformulation and/or for reduction of portion sizes and consumption frequency.

Apart from targeting specific food categories, working with mass caterers generally or in specific priority settings such as schools and kinder gardens to reduce the amount of nutrients such as saturated fats, trans fats, total fats and added sugars in the meals offered or appropriate portion sizes and frequency of offering can be part of a national plan.

Specific benchmarks are not set at this point of time for nutrients (depending on the outcome of discussions benchmarks could be considered for trans fats and portion sizes; the timeframe to reach the benchmark levels in designed food groups is by the end of 2013).

National benchmarks and plans could be developed and could differ from the general framework.

In case of replacement of saturated fat by other fats, this should be done with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fat. Likewise, where a product is reformulated to reduce trans fat it should not be replaced by saturated fat. The various saturated fats may also differ in their effects on chronic diseases risk factors.

There is a need for the rise of public awareness. In some cases, consumers can modify their intake not only by choosing reformulated products or smaller portion sizes, but also by simple behavioural changes such as by avoiding visible animal fat. Progress may be achieved in partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations, industry, media, the health sector and national platforms.

Benefits include that public awareness creates 'buy-in' from consumers as regards reformulation activities and thus supports reformulation action; reformulated or reduced-portion options are chosen preferably; consumption frequency can be reduced for certain product categories or sub-categories.

Monitoring and evaluation: options of monitoring approaches include self-reporting frameworks by the industry, monitoring of the nutrient content of foods and intake data, measuring the awareness level of consumers and actual behavioural change as well as intake levels via dietary surveys.

3.2.1. DISCUSSION

The discussion concerned requests for specific changes in the text of the document. Several representatives asked for changes in the title of the document. They highlighted the differences in approaches already existing in Member States like for example the Key hole system in Scandinavian countries. In Denmark, more than 1000 reformulated products have already been labelled. The need to share good practices between Member States was underlined. As catering is important for the reformulation, it should be taken into account when discussing with industry reformulation actions.

Some Member States were concerned about the monitoring capacity. Due to the lack of capacity and limited resources, Small and Medium Enterprises cannot follow the framework as only big companies can afford the labelling rules.

Some High Level Group members suggested merging salt framework with other nutrients frameworks. The Commission explained that currently it prefers to keep it

separate due to different advancement in the work and maintain the visibility of salt reduction initiatives.

After gathering the comments and suggestions of High Level Group members, the working paper "**EU Framework for National Initiative on Selected Nutrients**" was distributed among participants. Two steps approach was introduced: first of all, general framework, which covers the selected nutrients and secondly, the subtitle – *By selected nutrients the framework refers to a complex set of target variables that may vary nationally, such as saturated fat, trans fat, energy, total fat content, added sugars, portion sizes and consumption frequency. Member States' initiative may cover one or a combination of these elements.* The final text was agreed by the High Level Group.

4. MEMBER STATES' DEVELOPMENTS

4.1. FOLLOW UP OF THE HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF EU AND MEMBER STATES' STRATEGIES ON NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY RELATED HEALTH ISSUES - BELGIUM

Under the Belgium Presidency, the High Level Conference on Monitoring and Evaluation of EU and Member States' strategies on nutrition, physical activity, overweight and obesity related health issues took place in Brussels on 8-9 December 2010. The exchange of experiences and views on the progress and the future of policies to help reduce overweight and obesity in the EU; to consolidate monitoring and evaluation processes proved very successful.

Among the speakers at this event were Jean Marc Delizée, Belgian Secretary of State for Social Affairs; Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe, Glenis Willmott, Member of the European Parliament, Paola Testori Coggi, Director General of DG Health and Consumers and John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy.

During various parallel sessions experts discussed different interesting subjects such as health inequalities, public private partnerships and health in all policies. This conference brought together Member State delegations, the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical activity, WHO Monitoring National Focal Points and Nutrition Counterparts of the European Region and the EU Platform for action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.

This conference demonstrated the successful collaboration with DG SANCO. All presentations given at the conference were published on the web-site. As the main result, the conference participants pointed out that it was time to act towards the improvement of eating habits and physical activity, to work with food industry and to target audiences. The important thing is to preserve the results of the conference, and for the delegations, to give their feedback about it.

4.2. NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY POLICY ACTIONS IN HUNGARY

Hungary conducted several policy actions since the Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues (2007), for example: national nutritional surveys in schools and pre-schools, National Dietary and Nutrition Status Survey, OTAP2009, WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative, STOP Salt! National Salt Reducing Initiative and School-based nutritional interventions.

The way forward - FNAP 2010-2013, includes the EU framework for further reformulation and legislation on mass catering.

The rationale for doing the surveys is to underline the importance of actions for decision makers and to provide high quality data for international and national comparability.

All primary and secondary schools were concerned with the national survey in schools (2008) and 20% of pre-schools was included in the pre-schools survey (2009).

The National Dietary and Nutrition Status Survey, OTAP2009, is a representative survey on adults ≥ 18 years. It is carried out in the framework of European Community Health Indicators. Its measurements are in line with a standard international protocol, such as body weight, height and waist circumference. The results of the survey show the prevalence of overweight 60% in entire adult population.

WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative is a national representative survey on 7-year old children. Measurements were done in accordance with a standard WHO protocol (body weight, body height). The survey was composed of two questionnaires on school environment, including physical activity facilities. The results demonstrate that every fifth boy and every fourth girl are overweight.

The Ministry of Health at a stakeholder meeting on 2nd February 2010 launched STOP Salt! National Salt Reduction Initiative. Raising awareness campaign produced many

deliverables, such as website, articles, flyers and posters, magnet, t-shirts etc. There was good cooperation and agreement with partners, for example from Academic Area Association of Hungarian Medical Society, Hungarian Society of Hypertension, National Heart Foundation, Hungarian National Committee of Pharmaceutical Care, Hungarian National Public Health and Medical Officer Service and partners from the industry, as well as Eurest and other potential companies (Unilever, Univer, Pick, Sodexo, SPAR, Hungerit, Detki); other Non-Governmental Organizations - Consumer Protection Association and TET Platform.

The school-based intervention Happy Week 2010 is a pilot study carried out since 2007 (education and free availability of water in school). In 2010, those interventions covered 17 counties and the capital (Budapest) - 77 schools. The sustainability element was introduced, it means education seems to be sustainable, however the majority of schools would need financial support to provide free drinking water. This action's aim is to provide healthy food for children, give healthy choices through education.

School fruit scheme has been in life since January 2010, financed by the European Commission and the Hungarian Government. Its implementation is regulated by annual legislation and coordinated by Ministry of Agriculture. 96% of children take one apple every day.

School Breakfast Program is a national pilot program. There were 14 interventions and 10 control schools (5th and 8th grade), involving headmasters, teachers, parents, mass caterers and local media. Interventions took 6 weeks, combining standard education and free healthy breakfast. All these interventions show that 43.7% of children are skipping breakfast, significant part eats unhealthy food (soda, energy drinks). Knowledge about healthy food was improved, but habits did not change.

Actions in the area of FNAP 2010-2013 comprise legislation on mass catering, making healthy options available, better-informed consumers, monitoring and evaluation.

The expert level conference Actions for Prevention under the Hungarian Presidency on Member States' activities on Nutrition, Physical activity and smoking-related health issues will be held in Gödöllő, Hungary, 30-31 May 2011. Its aims are to indicate the need to act urgently and to support Member States in implementing their strategies at national, regional and local level. A poster sessions and exhibition are foreseen. The target audience are experts and policy makers from ministries and national institutes, relevant WHO EURO National Counterparts, EU National Focus Points, High Level

Group Members, representatives of DG SANCO, WHO EURO, European Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, relevant European Agencies, health professionals and non-profit organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations. The cost of participation of two representatives per Member States will be covered by Hungary.

Hungary has adopted Physical Activities Guidelines for prevention of diseases. The Hungarian Ministry of Human Resources Development has two State Secretaries, one competent for health and one for sport.

3.3. SALT REDUCTION INITIATIVE – EUROPEAN COMMISSION

3.3.1. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS – EUROPEAN COMMISSION

3.3.2. DISCUSSION

It was agreed within the Framework on Salt Reduction that participating Member States should provide evaluation and monitoring reports to the Commission. The Commission sent out questionnaires to Member States to obtain these data and has asked a contractor to draft a report to be published on the Commission's webpage. The outcomes of the draft report will be presented at the next High Level Group meeting.

5. PROJECT PRESENTATION

5.1. "FOOD4U: ITALY GATHERS AND EDUCATES YOUNG EUROPEANS THROUGH NUTRITIONAL AWARENESS" -

The aim of the FOOD4U campaign, promoted by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies, is to raise awareness and inform young Europeans on the importance of healthy eating and informed diet choices.

The FOOD4U campaign strongly grows throughout the years, by reaching out thousands of schools, peaking in 2010. In 2011, FOOD4U will outreach over 50 000 schools, over 12 million students and teachers. The 2011 edition is aimed at high school students (aged between 14 and 19) coming from the 27 European Union countries plus Norway.

Many organizations and institutions are supporting this campaign, as for example European Parliament, EESC, AEDE, ESHA, EUFIC, European Schoolnet, Obessu and others.

Students are invited to reflect, with the support of their teachers, on the importance of a healthy diet and to creatively express their points of view by creating TV spots on

proper eating habits and the importance of well balanced diet within a context of healthy physical activity and life-style.

After a careful selection carried out by an international jury of experts, students and teachers with the best spots, according the FOOD4U Competition Guidelines, are invited to an award stay in Italy.

Among the nutrition and health-related video spots, one is selected as the winner of the yearly FOOD4U Award.

The campaign guidelines are as followings: awareness of health-related issues, such as anorexia, overweight and obesity; intention of a creative method based on brainstorming, teamwork, networking, interactive learning, multicultural context; insight into advertising an film-making; interactive exchange of information and discussion among young people; respect the cultural differences and strong belief in multicultural interaction.

Slovenia suggested using partnership with national TV networks and social media as Facebook or Twitter to disseminate and distribute the materials of this campaign. The Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies is convinced on the importance of broadcasting in national TV and it is ready for any suggestions and comments, future collaboration to promote FOOD4U spots. The project will be presented in March at the European Parliament.