

White Paper on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues

European Parliament resolution of 25 September 2008 on the White Paper of 30 May 2007 on nutrition, overweight and obesity-related health issues (2007/2285[INI])

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Commission’s White Paper of 30 May 2007 entitled “A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity-related Health Issues” (COM[2007]0279),

– having regard to its resolution of 1 February 2007 on promoting healthy diets and physical activity¹,

– having regard to the Second World Health Organization (WHO) European Action Plan for Food and Nutrition Policy 2007–2012, adopted by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe in Belgrade, 17–20 September 2007, and the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity, adopted by the WHO Regional Office in 2006...

G. whereas eating habits established in childhood often endure into adulthood and research has shown

that obese children are more likely to become obese adults;

- H. whereas European citizens are living in an ‘obesogenic’ environment in which sedentary lifestyles have raised the risk of obesity...
- K. whereas physical activity, coupled with a healthy balanced diet, is the primary method of prevention against overweight; whereas an alarming one in three Europeans do not exercise at all in their free time, while the average European spends over five hours a day sitting down; whereas many Europeans do not consume a balanced diet;
- L. whereas the number of lessons devoted to sport has decreased in the past decade at both primary and secondary school level, and there are major

¹ OJ L 183, 12.7.2002, p. 51.

disparities among Member States with regard to facilities and equipment...

- P. whereas overweight and obesity should be tackled by means of a holistic approach acting across government policy areas and at different levels of government, especially at national, regional and local level, with all due regard for subsidiarity...
 - V. whereas all multi-stakeholders' initiatives should be facilitated in order to improve dialogue, the exchange of best practice and self-regulation, for example through the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health as well as the Working Group on Sport and Health and the EU network Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA)...
07. Recognises the substantial role of self-regulation in fighting obesity, and stresses the need for clear and concrete targets for all parties concerned and independent monitoring of these targets; notes that regulation is sometimes necessary to deliver substantive and meaningful change across all sectors of industry, particularly when concerning children, in order to ensure consumer protection and high standards of public health; notes with interest 203 commitments undertaken in the context of the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health aiming at product reformulation, reduction in advertising to children and labelling for the promotion of a balanced diet...
15. Notes that the provision of areas where children and young people can experience nature gives them an alternative to traditional leisure activities and at the same time enhances the faculties of imagination and creativity and the urge to explore...

Our priority: children

19. Invites the Commission and all actors to set as a priority the fight against obesity from the early stages of life, bearing in mind that eating habits established in childhood often endure after many years;
20. Calls for information campaigns to raise awareness among pregnant women about the importance of a balanced and healthy diet, with an optimal provision of some nutrients during pregnancy, and for women and their partners to be made aware about the importance of breastfeeding; recalls that breastfeeding, delaying weaning until babies are six months old, introducing children to healthy foods and controlling portion sizes can all help to prevent children becoming overweight or obese; stresses, however, that breastfeeding is not the sole means of fighting obesity, and that balanced eating habits are acquired over a long period; emphasises that awareness campaigns should bear in mind that breastfeeding is a private matter and should respect women's free will and choice...
23. Considers that it is primarily at school level that steps have to be taken to ensure that physical activity and balanced eating become part of the behaviour of a

child; calls on the High Level Group on Nutrition and Physical Activity to develop guidelines on nutrition policies at school and for the promotion of nutritional education as well as the continuation of such education in the post-school period; calls on Member States to include the benefits of a balanced diet and physical exercise in school curricula;

24. Further, asks Member States, local entities and school authorities to monitor and to improve the quality and nutritional standards of school and kindergarten meals including by means of specific training and guidelines for catering staff, quality control of caterers and guidelines for healthy food in canteens; underlines the importance of adapting portion sizes to needs and including fruit and vegetables in these meals; asks for more nutrition education on a balanced diet and encourages a move away from the sale of foods and beverages high in fat, salt or sugar and of poor nutritional value in schools; advocates instead making fresh fruit and vegetables more available at points of sale...
26. Asks Member States, local entities and school authorities to ensure that healthy options are provided in school vending machines; considers that sponsorship and advertising for so-called HSSF products (those high in sugar, salt, fat) of poor nutritional value in school buildings should be subject to the request or with the express permission of school authorities, and should be monitored by pupil-parent associations...

Informed choices and availability of healthy products

30. Believes that product reformulation is a powerful tool for reducing the intake of fat, sugar and salt in our diets and encourages food producers to further engage in reformulation of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods in order to reduce fat, sugar and salt and enrich their fibre, fruit and vegetable content; welcomes commitments undertaken on a voluntary basis by producers to implement nutrition criteria for the formulation of foods;
31. Stresses that nutrition labelling must be mandatory and clear to help consumers make a healthy choice of food;
32. Calls for an EU-wide ban on artificial trans-fatty acids; urges Member States to follow good practice in controlling the content of substances (e.g. salt) in food and calls on the Commission to draw up a programme for exchanging best practice across Member States; points out that special exemptions should be provided for PDO (protected designation of origin), PGI (protected geographical indication), TSG (traditional speciality guaranteed) and other types of traditional products in order to preserve original recipes; to this end, has high expectations of the future Green Paper on quality policy in agriculture in terms of better quality and PGI schemes;

33. Stresses that the present state of scientific knowledge shows us that an excessive consumption of trans-fatty acids (over 2% of total energy intake) is linked to significantly higher cardiovascular risks; deeply regrets, therefore, that only a few European governments to date have acted to reduce European consumers' cumulative exposure to the artificial trans-fatty acids and saturated fatty acids that are present in numerous processed products of low nutritional value...
35. Calls for an analysis of the role played by artificial flavour enhancers such as glutamates, guanylates and inosinates, particularly in ready meals and industrially produced foodstuffs, in order to determine their influence on consumption patterns;
36. Calls on industry to review single-serving portion sizes, providing a broader range of smaller portion options;
37. Welcomes the Commission's new proposal for the revision of Council Directive 90/496/EEC of 24 September 1990 on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs¹; urges it to ensure that labelling is visible, clear and easily understandable to the consumer...

Media and advertising

39. Calls on all operators in the media sector, in co-operation with the Member States and sports organisations, to create additional incentives for more physical exercise and taking up a sport in all media;
40. Is aware of the importance of the media in informing, educating and persuading in relation to promoting a healthy and balanced diet as well as their role in the

- creation of stereotypes and body image; considers the voluntary approach adopted in the Audiovisual Media Services Directive¹ on the advertising of food of poor nutritional value directed at children to be a step in the right direction, to be specifically monitored, and asks the Commission to bring forward stricter proposals if the 2011 review of the Directive declares the voluntary approach to have failed in this field; calls on Member States and the Commission to encourage media service providers to develop codes of conduct regarding inappropriate audiovisual commercial communication relating to food and beverage products and urges operators to come forward with concrete actions at national level to implement or to strengthen this directive;
41. Calls for the industry to exercise particular care when advertising food products specifically targeted at children; asks for protected times and for restrictions on commercials for unhealthy food specifically targeted at children; any such restrictions should also cover new forms of media such as online games, pop-ups and text messaging...
51. Calls on the Commission to promote Europe-wide information campaigns aimed at the general public and, in particular, at the medical profession, to raise awareness of the risks of abdominal obesity;
52. Calls for serious account to be taken of nutrition in all European policies and options;
53. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission and to the governments and parliaments of the Member States and candidate countries and to the World Health Organization.