



Health Promotion in Europe: Tackling Obesity through Better Prevention Strategies and Lifestyle Choices

“Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health. A crude population measure of obesity is the body mass index (BMI), a person’s weight (in kilograms) divided by the square of his or her height (in metres). A person with a BMI of 30 or more is generally considered obese. A person with a BMI equal to or more than 25 is considered overweight.

Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for a number of chronic diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer. Once considered a problem only in high income countries, overweight and obesity are now dramatically on the rise in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in urban settings.”

- World Health Organisation, 2010

The Silken
Berlaymont Hotel
Brussels

17 May 2011



Centre for
Parliamentary
Studies



“An International Symposium for gathering knowledge, discussing the latest challenges and sharing best practices in tackling obesity and developing effective health promotion strategies in Europe”

"According to the EC/OECD Report "Health at a Glance" published last December, the rate of obesity has more than doubled in the past 20 years in most EU Member States. The prevalence varies from country to country, from less than 10% to over 20% some Member States. On average, an estimated 15% of the EU adult population is obese. Currently, 1 in 7 children in the EU are overweight or obese - and it is likely that the figures will rise even further. This is worrying, as children who are obese or overweight are more likely to suffer from poor health later in life, with greater risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, some forms of cancer, arthritis, asthma, a reduced quality of life and even premature death."

- Health at a Glance Report 2010, OECD 2010

"I would like to take this opportunity to call on Member States to take up the obesity challenge heads on. I believe a more focused and a more innovative approach to children, young people and low socio-economic groups is needed. Obesity rates are higher among the poorer, who have fewer resources to make healthier food choices or to exercise. We must make sure that healthier food and physical activity become a real and affordable choice for all. We would need all partners to think and work with us, to see how we can increase physical activity."

- John Dalli, European Commissioner for Health, December 2010

Abstract and Programme

Obesity has reached epidemic levels in recent years. Currently, the average obesity rate in the European Union is 15.5%, whilst in Britain it is 24.5% of the total population.

Overweight and obesity in childhood are known to have a significant impact on both physical and psychological health. Whilst a great deal of research continues on the mechanism behind the development of obesity, it is clear that it is a condition with multiple causes. Environmental factors, lifestyle choices, and cultural environment each play a pivotal role in the rising prevalence of obesity worldwide. In general, overweight and obesity are assumed to be the results of an increase in caloric and fat intake. Furthermore, there is a great deal of supporting evidence that excessive sugar intake by soft drink, increased portion size, and steady decline in physical activity have been playing major roles in the rising rates of obesity all around the world. Consequently, both over-consumption of calories and reduced physical activity have had a direct impact on levels of childhood obesity.

The general consensus amongst researchers is that prevention could be the key strategy for controlling the current epidemic of obesity. Until now, most approaches have focused on changing the behaviour of individuals in diet and exercise. It seems, however, that these strategies have had little impact in terms of reversing obesity levels. It is difficult to reduce excessive weight once it becomes established, and therefore, the focus needs to shift towards children and early intervention strategies. Prevention may be achieved through a variety of interventions targeting built environment, physical activity, and diet. Some of these potential strategies for intervention in children can be implemented by targeting pre-school institutions, schools or after-school care services as natural settings for influencing the diet and physical activity.

This timely International Symposium reignites the debate on how to work towards an EU-wide strategy on promoting healthy diets and stimulating physical activity. It will provide a platform for the discussion of a better European regulatory framework aimed at strengthening the evaluation and interventions to promote healthy eating habits and determine factors in food habit formation. The Symposium will support the exchange of ideas and encourage delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate whilst sharing best practices and lessons learned.



Tuesday 17th May 2011
The Silken Berlaymont Hotel, Brussels

- 09:00** *Registration and Morning Refreshments*
- 10:00** **Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks**
Dr. Tim Lobstein, Director of Policy, International Association for the Study of Obesity, London (confirmed)
- 10:10** **Session One:**
Obesity – Causes and Risk Factors
- Food and Nutrition Policies in Europe – Implications for Behavioural Nutrition
 - Obesity Trends and Identifying Links – Overweight Linked to Health Problems and Social Issues
 - Determining Eating Behaviour – Interactive Perspectives from the Individual, Family and Environment
 - Health Consequences – How Can the Burden Be Reduced?
- Speakers:**
Dr. Tim Lobstein, Director of Policy, International Association for the Study of Obesity, London (confirmed)
Mr. Tam Fry FRSA, Honorary Chairman, Child Growth Foundation; Board Member/Spokesperson, National Obesity Forum, UK (confirmed)
- 10:35** **First Round of Discussions**
- 11:05** *Morning Coffee Break*
- 11:25** **Session Two:**
Tackling Obesity – Creating Synergies and Prevention Formulas
- Greater Policy Integration – Food Law, Nutrition and Food Labelling
 - Prevention of Socioeconomic Inequalities in Physical Activity and Diet
 - Enhancing Dialogue: Multilevel Comprehensive Approach
 - EU Platform for Action – Nutrition, Diet and Physical Activity
 - Implication and Challenges - the EU Legislation and Future Initiatives
- Speakers:**
Mr. Basil Mathioudakis, Head of Unit, Food Law, Nutrition and Labelling, DG SANCO, European Commission (tbc)
Dr. Geof Rayner, Research Fellow, Centre for Food Policy, City University London, UK (confirmed)
- 12:15** **Second Round of Discussions**
- 12:45** *Networking Lunch*



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Session Three:

Nutrition, Sports and Leisure – Innovative Programs for Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity in Schools

- Safe Sports and Physical Activity Behaviour – Promoting Physical Activity Using Creative Schemes
- School Based Nutrition Interventions – Establishing Healthy Eating Habits in School Canteens
- School and Local District Wellness Councils
- Collecting Data and Best Practices – Lessons Learned

Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Ilse De Bourdeaudhuij, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Department of Movement and Sport Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium (confirmed)

Mrs. Margret Ploum, Teamleader Preventing Overweight, Netherlands Nutrition Centre, The Hague (confirmed)

14:40

Third Round of Discussions

15:10

Afternoon Tea Break

15:25

Session Four:

Case Studies – A "Responsibility Deal" in Practice

- The "Energy Project" – Obesity Prevention in 10 to 12 Year Olds (European Energy Balance Research to Prevent Excessive Weight Gain among Youth)
- Malnutrition and Youth – a UN Perspective
- Health and Equality – Study on the Levels of Obesity Among Social Groups

Speakers:

Prof. Hans Brug, Director, EMGO Institute for Health and Care Research; Chair of Division VI and Professor of Epidemiology, VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (confirmed)

Prof. Lea Maes, Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium (confirmed)

16:15

Fourth Round of Discussions

16:45

Chairman's Summary and Closing Remarks

16:30

Networking Reception and Refreshments