



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management
Health programme and chronic diseases

Annex Policy expectations for a Joint Action on the Implementation of validated Best Practices

Non-Communicable diseases are one of the biggest challenges in the area of health in all Member States. Death from major non-communicable diseases translate into around 3.4 million life years lost or 115 billion euros in potential economic loss each year. It represents a major source of human suffering and a huge economic burden for public and personal budgets. The most recent OECD estimates indicate that in EU countries obesity alone is reducing life expectancy by up to 4 years and removing up to 4,5pp of GDP growth. Up to 12% of the healthcare budget of EU countries is spent on obesity and related sick leaves, which costs 72 billion euros/year.

In this context, the Commission is proposing a Joint Action lending support to the Members States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 on reducing mortality caused by non-communicable diseases by 2030. This will also target the quality and effectiveness of public expenditure.

This Joint Action will focus on adapting, replicating and implementing evaluated effective health interventions (i.e., practices that have proven to work) in the areas of food reformulation monitoring, framing of aggressive marketing of food, and public procurement of healthy food in public settings.

The Member States represented in the Steering Group on Health Promotion and Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases agreed on 'nutrition and physical activity' to be the focus for best practice implementation in 2019 and selected the above-mentioned best practices for implementation.¹

The **objective** of the **Joint Action** is that each of the participating countries adopts or improves:

- A **monitoring system for reformulation** initiatives (for salt, sugar and saturated fat) which will regularly inform authorities, consumers and industry about the scope for improvements in food products.
Reformulation removes excess sugars, salt and fat from products that are bought every day in EU supermarkets. It helps citizens of all social backgrounds to have healthier diets and supports innovative companies. Monitoring the nutritional quality of food products in the EU will inform authorities, consumers and industry about the scope for improvements in food products. Since "what gets measured gets done", this can strengthen national reformulation initiatives and support consumer choice, innovation and a level playing field for industry.

¹ This directly supports the high interest that the Member States have been showing over the recent years in healthy lifestyles through the adoption of various Council conclusions (e.g. food reformulation, childhood obesity, healthy nutrition for children) and their accompanying Presidency conferences and roadmaps.

This outcome will be based on the successful experience of France (and also of Austria, Romania and the Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity). It will also build on the EU Framework for reformulation Initiatives in the areas of salt, saturated fat and added sugars.

- A **code of conduct** to reduce the exposure of children to (TV and digital) **marketing of foods and beverages** High in Fat, Sugar or Salt. This Code of Conduct will be coordinated with and make the best use of the opportunity of the transposition of the EU Audio-Visual Media Services Directive.

Parents in all Member States can relate to the challenge of protecting children from inappropriate ads, and existing evidence on children's exposure to food marketing, especially online, is alarming.

This outcome will be based on the successful experience of Ireland and Slovenia. It will also build on a study on the exposure of minors to TV and online marketing of foods high in fat, salt or sugar launched by the Commission.

The Joint Research Centre was asked to produce a mapping of initiatives to reduce marketing pressure to identify best practices that the Member States may wish to adapt or build on. Relevant initiatives by the UNICEF and the WHO Euro Action network on reducing marketing pressure to children are also under way and can be supportive of these efforts.

- The national **public procurement policy for food**, with the objective of improving its health impact and of promoting healthier supply and demand of food products, in particular in schools.

This may include the development of model or template tender specifications and contracts that include references to nutritional guidelines; the adaptation and roll out of web tools which would help schools draft better food catering contracts; the development of 'catalogues of foods', etc.

Public procurement of food represents an opportunity worth 80 billion euros/year to help steer both demand and supply of healthier food options, first of all in schools.

- This outcome will be based on the Slovene successful experience of improving its food public procurement policy and of developing specific tools to support school procurement. It will also build on the Joint Research Centre 2017 report on public procurement of food for schools.

By participating in this JA, the Member States will have the opportunity to decisively contribute to:

- Increase the healthy choices for food products available in their supermarkets, for the benefit for their citizens, while promoting innovative food companies;
- Better protect children from aggressive food marketing;
- Improve the health impact of public procurement of food, likely reducing its environmental footprint and increasing its local input.

To achieve this, the countries will be able to:

- Be inspired by, improve on and replicate the proven experiences from other Member States, that will be available to discuss their experiences (mistakes and successes, lessons learned);
- Participate in a European initiative that will support all participating countries with tools, engagement and financial support (6 million euros of EU co-funding).