

REASONS WHY

By

Rafael Anson

Secretary General, Spanish Nutrition Foundation
President of the Royal Spanish Academy of Gastronomy

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- 1) Both the present and future state of health and wellbeing of the population is deeply conditioned by their type of nutrition. In the case of school children, this fact is of particular importance since any action undertaken to instil healthy eating habits involves them directly, and also takes into account their role as "transmitting agents" with regards to their parents. This role leads, many times, to parents adopting the healthy habits of their children.
- 2) According to the WHO global school health initiative, educational institutions are an important place to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge on health and nutrition, since this is the place where students spend most of their time. Schools should become one of the basic pillars to prevent the epidemic of obesity by changing the inadequate eating habits that are spreading in today's society.
- 3) The European Commission White Paper "A Strategy for Europe on Nutrition, Overweight and Obesity related health issues" refers to childhood as a fundamental period to instil healthy habits and learn how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. It also refers to schools as the scenario where efficient long-term actions to change habits can take place.
- 4) Schools count on spaces and instruments that can contribute to both learning about and how to handle food. Schools also help establish eating habits that, together with regular and moderate physical activity, contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

Classrooms and eating halls are the right places for children and adolescents to be involved in the nutritional education process. Both spaces have a great impact on the establishment of healthy lifestyle habits, and mainly of a healthy nutritional state, and active lifestyle and eating habits. This education cannot only be theoretical. Different culinary techniques and sensorial topics require hands-on experience. This is why, together with the needed theoretical knowledge, the taste, touch and smell of our school children must also be educated in order for their senses to enjoy a meal that is also healthy.

- 5) On 24 April 2010, a meeting entitled "Nutrition in Schools across Europe: the role of the Foundations" of the European Network of Nutrition Foundations, held in the headquarters of the Spanish Agency of Nourishment and Nutritional Safety, of the Spanish Ministry of Health, made evident the need to mainstream nutrition into the school curriculum. A unanimous decision was made to transfer this need to the European Parliament and the European Commission.

6) For all the above, the European Ideas Network is sensitive to initiate a debate that should lead to incorporate the knowledge on nourishment/nutrition and the culture of nourishment/gastronomy into the educational systems of the EU Member State countries. The goal is to:

- Preserve the state of health of the population. An unhealthy diet is the main cause of being overweight, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular illnesses and some types of cancer. These are the most important pathologies of developed societies that lead to enormous health care expenses, both public and private. An adequate nutrition will entail, without a doubt, an increase in life expectancy and quality of life. This will lead to a drastic decrease of these health care related expenses.
- In addition, nutrition and gastronomy are becoming one of the greatest tourist attractions. The interaction of tourism/gastronomy/nutrition is having a very positive impact on the promotion of tourism. The eating and cultural habits of Europeans are a rich socio-cultural inheritance that we are obliged to transmit from one generation to another. It is also why schools, together with families, are the best place to acquire this knowledge.

The orientation of the education system towards these goals will benefit the health and wellbeing of the population.