

Nutrition and Education in Europe: an overview

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Issue 7

Nutrition education: State-of-the-art A review and analysis of the literature



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NUTRITION EDUCATION SERIES
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NUTRITION EDUCATION: THE STATE OF THE ART
REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE

by

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United Nations Educational, Scientific
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Paris 1984

Status report on the European Commission's work in the field of nutrition in Europe

Public health



Health and Consumer Protection



European Commission

Status report on the European Commission's work
in the field of nutrition in Europe

October 2002

European Commission
Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection



WHO EUROPEAN ACTION PLAN FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY 2007-2012

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FOOD POISONING
OBESITY - PREVENTION AND CONTROL
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from the association

Position of the American Dietetic Association, School Nutrition Association, and Society for Nutrition Education: Comprehensive School Nutrition Services

ABSTRACT

It is the position of the American Dietetic Association (ADA), School Nutrition Association (SNA), and Society for Nutrition Education (SNE) that comprehensive, integrated nutrition services in schools, kindergarten through grade 12, are an essential component of coordinated school health programs and will improve the nutritional status, health, and academic performance of our nation's children. Local school wellness policies may strengthen comprehensive nutrition services by encouraging multidisciplinary wellness teams composed of school and community members, to work together in identifying local school needs, developing feasible strategies to address priority areas, and integrating comprehensive nutrition services with a coordinated school health program. This joint position paper affirms schools as an important partner in health promotion. To maximize the impact of school wellness policies on strengthening comprehensive integrated nutrition services in schools nationwide, ADA, SNA, and SNE recommend specific strategies in the following key areas: nutrition education and promotion, food and nutrition programs available on the school campus,

school-home-community partnerships, and nutrition-related health services. ing in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) adopt and implement a

POSITION STATEMENT

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100-108-268, §204) was enacted, mandating that school districts participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) participation has also expanded over the years, currently serv-

Healthy eating at school: a European forum

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At community/national level, countries mentioned:

- a) a lack of political will and the need to convince politicians and other leaders to facilitate healthy eating in schools;*
- b) families with low financial resources who cannot afford to pay for food provided in the schools;*
- c) a lack of funding for the schools themselves to implement programmes promoting healthy choices of food in schools;*
- d) monitoring and evaluation is not seen as essential.*

Main challenges for the achievement of healthy food provision in schools:

- 1) to motivate schoolchildren, parents, teachers and other school staff, community members and politicians to focus on healthy eating in schools;
- 2) to address overweight and obesity issues in schoolchildren by designing interventions;
- 3) to match the taught curriculum on healthy nutrition with the whole school approach;

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Main barriers to the implementation of healthy food provision programmes, including monitoring and evaluation:

- *a low priority for healthy eating;*
- *unsupportive school environments towards healthy eating;*
- *school staff who were unmotivated or too overburdened to give attention to healthy eating;*
- *inadequate monitoring and evaluation, partly due to low priority and partly to lack of knowledge on how to set up.*

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10 key points that should be part of policies on healthy eating for young people (The Council of Europe 2003):

1. A whole school or health promoting school approach should be used.
2. Policy development needs to actively engage and involve young people and take account of the realities of their lives outside the school.
3. While we need to offer young people choices in relation to food, we can develop policies and strategies that facilitate the healthy choices.
4. Given the many important roles food plays in our lives we should move from talking about nutrition education to focussing on the promotion of healthy eating.
5. Healthy eating policies need to consider environmental issues in relation to food production.
6. The role of the training of teachers and food providers.
7. Some countries have already demonstrated good examples of partnerships with parents, young people, teachers, food producers and cross-sectoral government agencies.
8. The evidence is emerging that partnership work is the way ahead.
9. There is a need to review the existing research evidence on effectiveness.
10. The methodologies that are effective for promoting healthy eating will normally be shared with other special interest areas, such as physical activity and smoking prevention.



Food and nutrition policy for schools

A tool for the development of school nutrition
programmes in the European Region

Programme for Nutrition and Food Security
WHO Regional Office for Europe
Copenhagen 2006

The curriculum needs to cover several broad categories:

- ***nutrition and personal health;***
- ***food preparation, preservation and storage;***
- ***consumer awareness and rights and media literacy;***
- ***food and emotional development (body-image, self-esteem, children's own responsibilities);***
- ***food production, processing and distribution, sustainability and ecology;***
and
- ***eating habits and sociocultural influences***

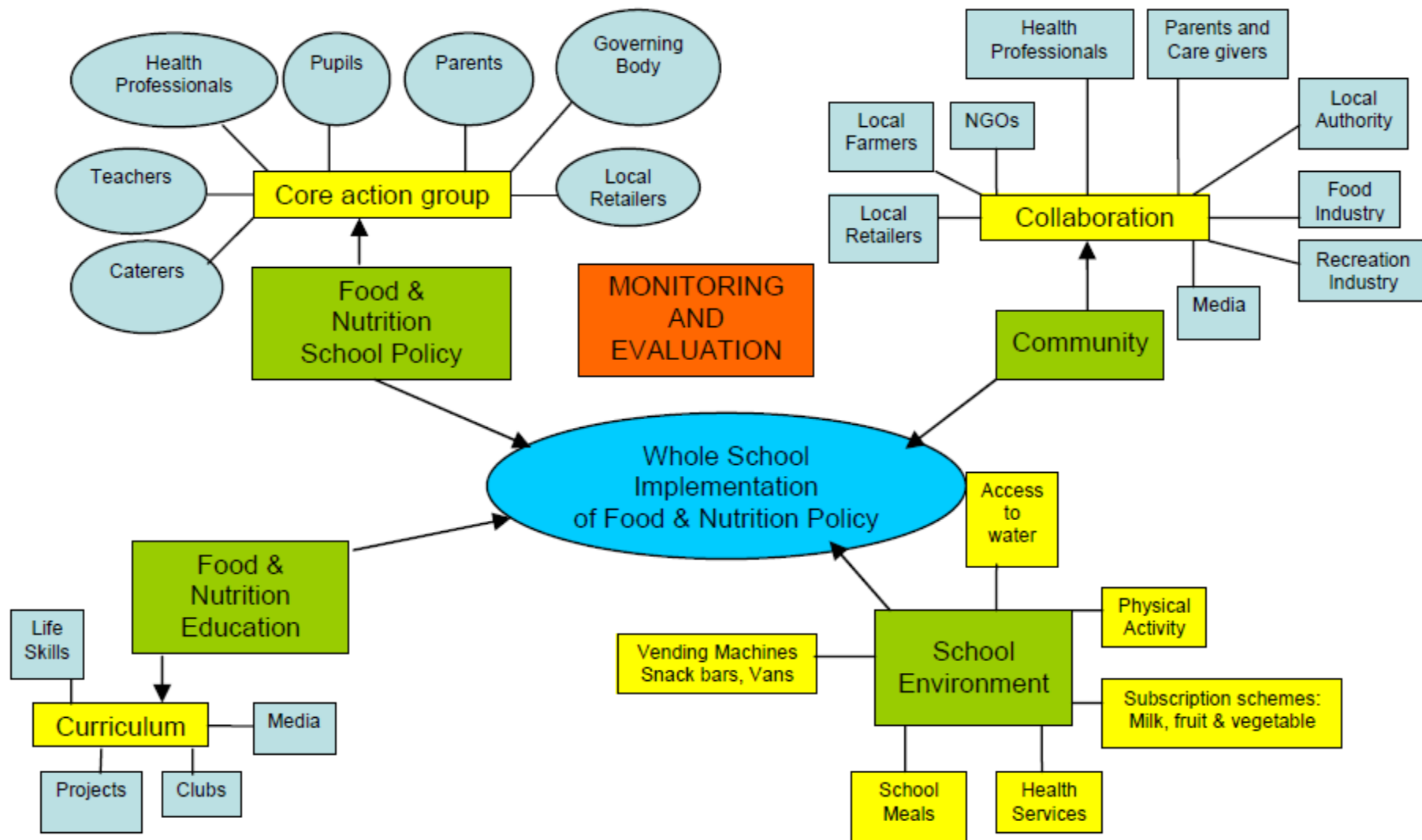
The rationale

- **Nutrition is a major environmental influence on physical and mental growth and development in early life.**
- **Food habits during infancy can influence preferences and practices in later life.**
- **Good nutrition contributes to improving the wellbeing of children and their potential learning ability, thus contributing to better school performance.**
- **Children and young people who learn healthy eating habits, are encouraged to be physically active, to avoid smoking and to learn to manage stress.**
- **Policy strategies are formal and informal rules adopted on a collective basis to guide individual and group behaviour.**

The rationale

- Food patterns during infancy and childhood influence growth and development have an impact on health also on the potential development of risk and protective factors related to the onset of chronic diseases later in adulthood.
- Food habits that persist during adolescence are more likely to track onto adulthood.
- In 2002, the **European Commission through the Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection** launched the *Status Report on the European Commission's work in the field of Nutrition in Europe*. One of the main conclusions was that “*Public information and education about nutrition and the composition of healthy diets should be more prevalent, especially in the educational systems*”. After ten years later, efforts have been made but still clearly insufficient.

The complexity: Whole school implementation of a food and nutrition policy



Health promotion in the school setting

- **School-based nutrition education should:**
 - (a) address the needs and interests of students, the teachers and the school;*
 - (b) be relevant to programme goals;*
 - (c) take into account what children already know and can do;*
 - (d) be culturally appropriate;*
 - (e) be delivered in a way children can understand and teach the skills and knowledge required to improve or strengthen healthy eating habits.*

Health promotion in the school setting

- *Nutrition education needs to be incorporated into the school curriculum actively involving teachers, family and other community professionals.*
- *Provision of nutrition information, but also the development of skills and behaviours related to food preparation, food preservation and storage; social and cultural aspects of food and eating; positive body image, etc.*
- *All of these areas are conducive to healthier food choices.*

Health promotion in the school setting

- **Teaching methods:** *from classroom discussions, worksheets and keeping food records; to shopping exercises, tasting, creating, or drama.*
- **Extra-curricular activities:** *school gardening, developing cooking skills, exhibitions, etc.*
- **New technologies** *such as the Internet, the World Wide Web and CD-Roms for interactive learning experiences.*
- **Nutrition promotion strategies must be creative, engaging, inexpensive and widely disseminated.**

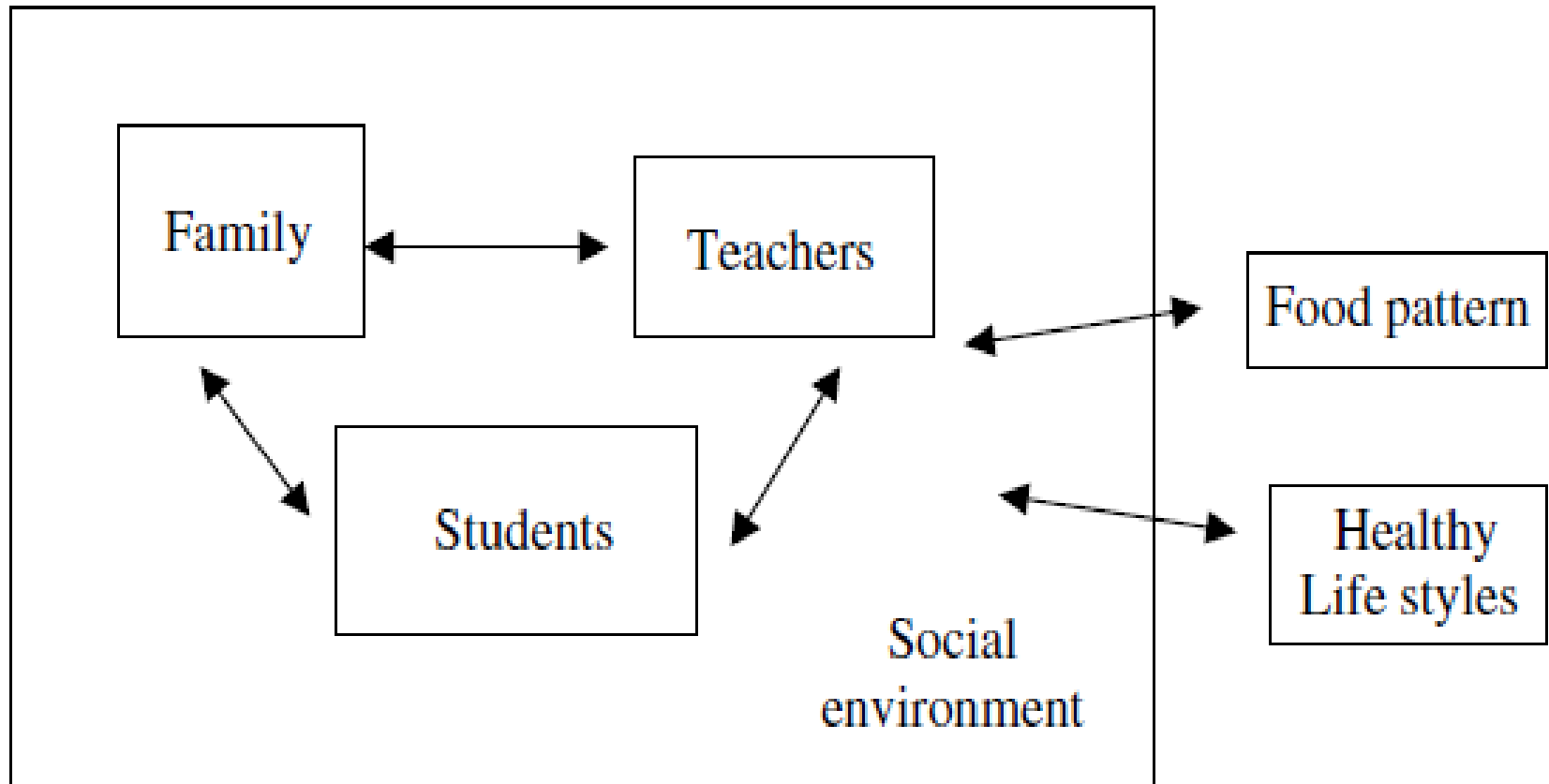
How to be implemented?

- *Complex and usually slow process.*
- *Pre-testing the curriculum allows adaptation, improvement in the design and time for the programme to gain acceptance.*
- *Teachers often complain about the lack of explicit curriculum, suitable materials or training experience.*

Environmental influence

- *Health education, physical education, health services, school food services, school counselling and social services, school-community efforts, faculty-staff health promotion and school environment.*
- *Include.... changes in food supply, point of choice nutrition information, collaboration with private sector food vendors, workplace nutrition policies and incentives or changes in the structure of health and medical care related to nutrition.*

Interactions between actors and environmental conditions



How to evaluate school nutrition education?

- *Evaluation is often missing, incomplete or uses inadequate design to assess the effectiveness of an intervention.*
- *Process evaluation focuses on programme implementation, quality control and monitoring that explains study outcomes.*
- *End points commonly used include increased awareness, positive attitudes and related knowledge and behavior change (i.e.- dietary habits, physical activity).*

The need for action and improvement in Europe I

- *Nutrition education and physical activity in primary and secondary schools need to be reinforced across Europe.*
- *Nutrition education curricula should aim to provide students with the required knowledge and skills, support self-efficacy and encourage behaviour change .*
- *Research on teaching methods, novel approaches and intervention strategies is urgent.*
- *School meals provide a valuable opportunity for nutrition education.*

The need for action and improvement in Europe II

- *Staff dealing with school meals should be properly trained, supported and integrated with teaching staff.*
- *Emphasis on environmental and behavioural factors in successful school-based physical activity and nutrition interventions highlights the importance of involving parents and other community members.*
- *Evaluation of progress must be sensitive and involve collaboration of all participants.*

Nutrition in schools across Europe: a summary report of a meeting of European Nutrition Foundations, Madrid, April 2010

E. Weichselbaum, H. Gibson-Moore, R. Ballam and J. L. Buttriss, on behalf of the Network of European Nutrition Foundations*

British Nutrition Foundation, London, UK

European Nutrition Foundations (ENFs)

Introduction

To open up communication channels and to facilitate the sharing of nutrition-related information and best practice across Europe, the Network of European Nutrition Foundations (ENFs) was established in 2008. This initiative built on existing relationships between the foundations, which track back to the 1970s and which took place at a meeting in Milan in November

April 2010 and was marked by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the constituent ENFs. The preparative work that led to the establishment of the network had picked up pace 18 months previously after a meeting initiated and hosted by the Italian Nutrition Foundation in Milan in November 2008, attended by foundations based in Austria, Switzerland, and the UK. This exploration was followed by a meeting in June 2009 in London, hosted by the British Nutrition Foundation, and a meeting in Madrid in April 2010. Interest has continued to grow

already has been established in Austria, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK; more are expected to join.

The remits of the individual foundations vary as sum-

Members: Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, Turkey

to obtain funding for pan European initiatives. A first grant has been secured by the British Nutrition Foundation for a project known as the European Food Framework (<http://www.europeanfoodframework.eu>), in which experts in nutrition and education from a number of European countries are collaborating to

**(1) nutrition in the school curriculum and
(2) (2) regulations on foods and drinks provided in schools.**

and (2) regulations on foods and drinks provided in schools. Part of the Spanish contribution was delivered by Juan Ballasteros from the Spanish government's Food Safety and Nutrition Agency. This article provides a summary of the remit and work of each foundation and includes the proceedings from the meeting in Madrid.

France

Institut Français pour la Nutrition (IFN)

Created in 1974, the IFN is a platform for exchange and communication in nutrition science, a space where people from industry and scientists from the nutrition profession debate in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

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Nutrition education is implemented in schools across Europe to varying degrees.

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The remit of the individual foundations vary as summarised later in this article, but communication of nutri-

Nutrition is incorporated into the official school curriculum in Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, although in most of these countries, nutrition is not taught as a separate subject but is integrated into other subjects or activities (usually under the discretion of the individual school).

2008, attended by foundations based in Italy, France, Switzerland, and the UK. This exploratory meeting was followed by a meeting in June 2009 in London, hosted by the British Nutrition Foundation, attended by eight ENFs. Interest has continued to grow, and the network

establish a framework covering various competences for young people at different age/progression levels.

The theme of the Madrid meeting was *Nutrition in Schools across Europe*, with each of the members presenting the current situation in their countries, focusing on two aspects: (1) nutrition in the school curriculum

France, Germany, Spain and Italy, nutrition education is not obligatory. However, nutrition is included in school education by means of resources provided via projects carried out by local authorities or private initiatives

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British Nutrition Foundation, London, UK

Arrangements regarding food and drink provision in schools also differ between European countries in the ENF

UK and Portugal are the only countries to have compulsory regulations on the provision of school lunches.

Other European countries have guidelines regarding meals provided at schools, but they are not mandatory and only serve as useful tools for planning school meals.

In many countries some form of regulation exists prohibiting the sale of certain foods and drinks via vending machines or at canteens/kiosks (e.g. food and drink high in sugar/fat). Also in place are school programmes or initiatives to encourage young people to eat or drink healthy foods and drinks (e.g. fruits and dairy products).