



NTNU

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

A sustainable path towards ending childhood obesity?

Webinar 14 October 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines childhood obesity as one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century, now affecting one in three 11-year-olds in Europe, and one in six in Norway. This trend is alarming because obesity tends to track into adulthood where it drives non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including early diabetes, several cancers, and cardiovascular disorders, which are by far the largest cause of death and disease burden in Europe.

Inaction on childhood obesity thus threatens the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 – “ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing at all ages” because an important target of this goal is to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by one third by 2030.

Current obesity interventions and preventative measures focus on the individual's responsibility to make “better choices” when it comes to physical activity and the quantity and quality of food consumed. Approaches have failed as the prevalence of obesity is still increasing among adults and at the best is stable but not declining among children. **A focus on personal habits prevents society from acting to combat the obesity epidemic.** Until we realize that tackling obesity requires both personal and societal action, alarming trends in obesity will continue.

At political level, taxation actions or front of pack nutrition labelling schemes try to create ways to handle the problem of calorie management. However, more can be done to create communities where the easy choice is not only the healthy choice but also the sustainable

one, given that the underlying drivers which foster obesity are partly the same as those driving climate change. Here, the “Farm to Fork” strategy under Europe’s Green Deal aims to pave the way by designing a food system that is “healthy, fair and environmentally-friendly”, where the Commission has pledged to help consumers to choose healthy and sustainable food and to reduce food waste.

The aim of this event is to discuss the effectiveness of current approaches and the possible actions and contributions that each stakeholder could provide to address the childhood obesity epidemic, with a focus on solutions that could also have a positive impact on responsible consumption and sustainable development.

Agenda

Event Moderator: Maryline Fiaschi – Managing Director, Science Business

16.00 Opening addresses:

Alessandra Moretti – MEP

Pål Richard Romundstad, NTNU Vice Dean of Research, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

16.10 Opening Keynote

Sabine Pelsser – EC DG SANTE Deputy HoU. Food Information and composition, food waste

16.30 Ending Childhood Obesity: individual vs societal responsibility

Rønnaug Astri Ødegård – NTNU Associate Professor - Department of Clinical and Molecular Medicine

16.45 “Social, health, educational and scientific impacts of a public-private partnership: the Giocampus project”

Francesca Scazzina, PhD – University of Parma

17.00 “How a structured community intervention can help to address the children obesity issue: the Seinäjoki initiative”

Arja Lassila - District Medical Chief of children and family services CITY of SEINÄJOKI HEALTH CARE CENTER

17.15 From local to global: “Healthy and active lifestyle: the ‘Joy of moving’ methodology as an investment in human capital from physical to life skills”

Caterina Pesce, PhD - Foro Italico University of Rome

17.30 Selected stakeholders contributions: “The good and the bad of the current situation and the way forward”

Participants:

Dirk Jacobs - Deputy Director General, Director Consumer Information, Nutrition and Health, FoodDrink Europe

Monique Goyens – Director General of BEUC, the European Consumer Organisation

Bård Eirik Kulseng – (MD, PhD) Head of Obesity Centre at St. Olavs University Hospital, Trondheim

Sabine Pelsser - EC DG SANTE HoU Food Information and composition, food waste

17.50 Concluding Remarks

Alessandra Moretti – MEP

18.00 End of the meeting

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