



## **STOP – JA Best-ReMaP Conference on Policy Solutions for Childhood Obesity: From science to policy implementation**

17-18 November 2021

As the side event of the Slovenian Presidency of the Council 2021, this online conference was a high-level event on food policy organised between the EU partner projects: research Horizon 2020 project **Science & Technology in childhood Obesity Policy (STOP)** and the member states implementation **Joint Action Best Practices in Nutrition (JA Best-ReMaP)**. The conference's goal was to support the translation of research knowledge to support policy decision-making and leverage both projects' innovative and complementary approaches to curb the rise in child and adolescent obesity.

Key statements of the conference:

### **Food reformulation**

Processed food monitoring is necessary, not only to measure the nutritional quality of the food offer and to follow it over time, but also to assess the impact of nutrition policies, including those on food reformulation. Only a few countries have implemented such tools, and with different methodologies, preventing comparisons among EU Member States. The Oqali tool, deployed in France in 2008, has proven its efficiency to qualify the nutritional quality of food offer and is now extended to 21 European countries.

Food industry actions do not meet recommended best practices of food reformulation and there is a large potential for improvement across policy domains and industries. Stricter Government measures are urgently needed to support food industry efforts and ensure that commitments translate into improved practices. Two food sectors are particularly interesting in the perspective of childhood obesity, soft drinks and breakfast cereals.

### **Reducing marketing of unhealthy food to children and adolescents**

EU Member States need to implement effective measures to reduce marketing of unhealthy food products (food and non-alcoholic beverages) to children. In order to identify foods not to be marketed to children, the use of the WHO nutrition profile within the EU legislative frame is recommended. The current development of the Codes of Practice and protocols to monitor

the extent and nature of marketing exposure of children will serve the same purpose of reducing the pressure of marketing of unhealthy foods to children. This initiative is in line with the recent EU strategic and legal documents that reinforce the need for action to protect children from unhealthy food marketing, namely the Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the revised EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).



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## Public procurement of food in schools

Food systems shape a variety of health determinants, with health protective and disease risk factors, with major repercussions for the sustainability of health systems. Public food procurement allows leveraging public buying power to promote sustainable healthy diets and changes in value chains through positive market incentives. It is a 'controlled experiment' in food system change. Food systems change is therefore a public health urgency.

Public food procurement in schools, kindergartens and other settings where European children gather are of top importance for assuring that they enjoy healthy and high quality menus. EU Member States are determined to achieve this by piloting the most productive, efficient and fair future approaches in the area of public food procurement. Public procurement is also a social justice policy: every child should have access to the best possible food, regardless of socio-economic background.

## Creating Demand for Healthier Behaviors

Public health communicators need to employ the same tactics and science used by high fat, sugar, and salt food manufacturers and marketers – consumer data, proven approaches of marketing, neuroscience, and behavioral psychology – to create demand for healthy foods and behaviors. It is critical to have a counternarrative and work with content creators to embed that narrative in the popular culture.

## Key barriers of facing childhood obesity in health facilities

A significant share of parents do not recognize childhood obesity as a health problem, therefore methodologies and best practices on the engagement of parents are also key to treat childhood obesity. Furthermore, the present organization of health systems might be a barrier to treat and prevent childhood obesity in a number of health care settings for children and adolescents; these systems need to be reshaped in order to face and respond to the rising challenge of childhood obesity, especially in the scope of the societal consequences of the Covid pandemic.

## Read more on the Best-ReMaP and the STOP projects

The videos of the presentations of the conference are available on the website of the event: <https://bestremap.eu/conference-on-policy-solutions-for-childhood-obesity/> and the description and additional information on the scope and activities of the two projects on: [stopchildobesity.eu/](http://stopchildobesity.eu/) and [bestremap.eu](http://bestremap.eu).



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