



Best-ReMaP

Healthy Food for a Healthy Future

Milestone 4.1
Summary report of the
analysis of the interviews with
EU experts on the integration and
sustainability of Best-ReMaP outcomes

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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
DG	Directorate General (European Commission)
DG SANTE	Directorate General For Health and Food Safety
DG AGRI	Directorate General for Agriculture
DG RTD	Directorate General for Research & Innovation
DG CONNECT	Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology
DG ENVI	Directorate General for Environment
WHO	World Health Organization
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
JRC	Joint Research Centre
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
JA	Joint Action
WP	Work Package
AVSMD	Audiovisual Media Services Directive
HFSS foods	High in Fat, Sugars, Salt foods



Executive summary

This document summarizes systematically and analyzes the outcomes of six semi-structured interviews conducted by Istituto Superiore di Sanità and EuroHealthNet to EU experts on the sustainability and integration of the results of the Joint Action Best-ReMaP. The conclusions of this report, that represents the milestone 4.1 of the JA, will help to draft the roadmap towards the integration of the results of JA into EU nutritional policies

Introduction

The Joint Action Healthy Food for a Healthy Future – Best-ReMaP (2020-2023) is funded by the European Union’s Health Programme and implemented by 36 partners in 24 EU Member States. This Joint Action, delivered via collaborative work of seven pan-European teams, aims to contribute to an improved quality of food supplied to European citizens by facilitating the exchange and testing of good practices. In this regard, the Joint Action identified three main areas in need of intervention, to which it dedicated its three core Work Packages:

- (1) **WP5:** The monitoring and analysis of how the food that people consume changes at the European and national level;
- (2) **WP6:** The regulations on the marketing of food and beverages to children;
- (3) **WP7:** The public procurement of healthy foods in public setting.

This document is part of the deliverables of another essential and mandatory WP of the JA Best-ReMaP, namely WP4. Led by Dr. Marco Silano of the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), WP4 aims to transfer and integrate results of the core WPs into EU policies, thus responding to the call from several EU documents for urgent and coordinated actions for EU citizens, especially concerning food regulation in schools, and food advertisement. In this way, this JA will support EC and the Member States in implementing policies concerning food environment to make the healthy food options more accessible to EU children and citizens.

The main aim of WP4 concerns the EU level policy dialogues, since aims to collect findings from other packages to suggest modifications to the existing policies, and to make participation in policy dialogues events more attractive for EU stakeholders. This WP will thus focus on problems concerning access to healthy food – one of the topics of the EU cancer plan – drawing from EU projects such as the “Healthylifestyle4all” campaign to make healthy food accessible, the 2022 ‘Audiovisual Media Directive Service’, and the EU4health program.¹ To that end, Best-ReMaP WP4 is framed around several deliverables:

Deliverable 4.1: Goal is to develop a roadmap of relevant national and EU policies, including the list of national and European stakeholders. This will be implemented by semi-structured interviews to EU level experts (WHO Europe, DG Sante, JRC, etc.) to understand what actions make an initiative sustainable. EuroHealthNet will take part in this deliverable by helping the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS) conduct interviews with 6 key European stakeholders. These interviews are the ground-laying work to generate an overall picture of the main

¹ More specifically to the 6th part which is dedicated to healthy diets.

challenges Best-ReMaP is likely to face in terms of policy sustainability, and they will be complemented by three further interviews in early 2022. In the latter, some main findings from first interviews will be analyzed in more detail with key experts at the EU level in that specific sector.

Deliverable 4.2: Report on options towards integration into national policies and sustainability to identify EU decision makers and stakeholders linked to core WP. The experts individuated will afterwards participate in the policy dialogues events.

Deliverable 4.3: Report to the High-Level Group and then, together with representatives of member states, a decision on which policies could be implemented as best practices. To inform policy decision makers, and to favor discussion, a 'draft integration and sustainability plan' will be prepared. Outcomes of these dialogues will be discussed to assess the options, and to make recommendations on the modality to transfer the results into a EU 'Final Integration and sustainability plan' that will summarize policies proposed.

Deliverable 4.4: Stakeholders meetings to allow policy decision makers to transfer the outcomes of core WPs into national and EU policies, thus assuring the sustainability of the JA results.

Deliverable 4.5: Food information database to include results of previous EUREMO and JANPA projects and those of this JA. This will offer Member States a regular report platform to inform policy makers and favor further research.

Interviews completed for the deliverable 4.1

As a leader of the Best-ReMaP's Work Package 4, the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS) -with support from EuroHealthNet, the European Partnership for improving health, equity and wellbeing - carried out an investigation on the transfer and integration of the results of the Joint Action into EU and national policies in the food and nutrition fields. In short, the aim of this deliverable was to understand what factors make food initiatives sustainable and likely to succeed. In this regard, distinguished European experts were identified and interviewed.

Interviews methodology

The first step to achieve this deliverable involved identifying a list of the relevant experts at the European Union level in the areas covered by this Joint Action core work packages. Over the last decade, food policies have increasingly gained centrality in EU health and environmental

policies, so several agencies were considered relevant for the purpose of our interviews. Among them, we centered our attention on the European Parliament – especially considering recent developments in the ‘Farm to Fork strategy’ - and on the relevant DGs of the European Commission, such as DG AGRI, DG RTD, DG SANTE, DG CONNECT, and DG ENVI. Furthermore, the list included other relevant European bodies/authorities, such as EFSA, academics with relevant experience from European universities, and actors from involved NGOs and consultancies.

Having drafted a list of experts, we then defined the thematic areas relevant to the purpose of WP4, namely the dimensions of food policies where the main challenges in terms of policy sustainability were likely to develop. These main dimensions were pivotal in developing a relevant framework that would have then structured the questions for the interviews.² Overall, we identified six dimensions related to Best-ReMaP WPs.

First, the legislative challenges of the food system. There have been several debates concerning the integration of European policies into national legislation, but also on the relation between public regulation and private industries. These latter have often promised to adopt self-regulations to reduce problems related to unhealthy diets, but the criteria adopted by food industries have been criticized by many as being too lenient. For food policies sustainability, it is thus necessary to understand better how European legislation can be integrated into national policies, and how private industries can be voluntarily involved in efforts, and compelled, where necessary, to create healthier food environments.

Second, food systems are inextricably connected to the aspect of social fairness. For a policy to be sustainable, it has to be socially fair, so any food policy ought to consider how it affects the most vulnerable groups, and what should be done in order to minimize inequalities – in this case especially health inequalities - resulting from political decisions. This has always been the case, but the Covid-19 pandemic has stressed even further the necessity to make sure that our societies are not two-tier systems where lower socio-economic classes struggle to access healthy food environments, so questions were also formulated to investigate if and how the pandemic changed the framework concerning food policy.

Third, reflecting WP6 focus, a relevant topic concerns the impact of food advertisement on the people’s health, especially children. This is a broad topic, so it had to be narrowed down to

² In the Annex A at the end of the document, it is possible to find the complete list of questions. Note that this was used by officers as a general template, so final questions asked were further developed in order to match even closely the specific knowledge and experience of the expert interviewed.

address more specific issues, such as the new challenges posed by advertisement on digital platforms. Moreover, this debate concerns not only *how* advertisement ought to be regulated, but also *who* should be doing so. That is, Ministries of Health are not the ones in charge of media regulation, so there is the risk that health may be neglected in these policies.

Fourth, food policies are tightly connected to environmental ones, as proven by the importance given to food systems by the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. Questions thus had to address challenges concerning how to render food production more environmentally sustainable, how to reduce its carbon footprint, and which steps to undertake to favor the transitions towards organic, green, and short-chain food systems, including in enabling sustainable behaviors and choices.

Fifth, data-based action is essential to structure effective policies, so research and innovation are two fields essential for sustainable food systems. This dimension thus concerned the role of research, the challenges it faces, and how research could be better integrated into the European policy framework, to lead to a better informed and more efficient action on food systems.

Sixth, public procurement is a focus of JA Best-ReMaP, so partners indicated that we needed more information concerning its implementation in different member states, on the criteria used to select public contract, and on how this instrument could be used to tackle health inequalities, especially for schools' canteens.

These two aspects, namely identifying the institutions where experts worked, and the main questions to be asked on the debate concerning food policies, framed the background work for the interview process. Having completed this first step, we proceeded to invite the experts identified,³ and to conduct 30-minutes online interviews via 'Microsoft Teams' communication tool. All interviewees signed a consent form meant to clarify that the interviewee's privacy rights were protected (in line with the EU GDPR), and to ask them the consent to use their names in the report. Overall, six interviews were completed between September and October 2021.

The interviews were performed by two officers from EuroHealthNet staff with the support of WP4 leader Dr. Marco Silano. The team decided that a semi-structured interview was the best suited methodology for the purpose of this deliverable. This methodology offers a guideline to

³ A template of the invitation letter is available at the end of the document in the Annex B. After this first invitation, the team also sent reminders to the experts from which we had not received a reply, and these reminders have proved to be beneficial, since we arranged to schedule some of the interviews only following this reminder.

the interviewer, offering her at the same time a certain degree of liberty to ask follow-up questions, or to ask completely new questions according to what emerges from the experts' answers. At the same time this format provided the interviewees the ability to express themselves and to raise issues that they considered important.

As aforementioned, a general list of questions was drafted on the five identified dimensions of the debate, and from this list, interviewers chose the most pertinent questions to the specific expertise of the interviewed, adapting the text accordingly. Due to the relatively short time – 30 minutes – we decided to select three main questions. An introductory and general one centered on the work currently done by the interviewed, followed by two more specific questions that investigated the connection between the experts' work, and the goal of the WP4.

Outcomes of the interviews

Even though experts had diverse backgrounds and worked on different areas, common topics emerged in most of the interviews, thus underlining the similarities of the challenges faced at the EU level in terms of policy integration and sustainability. Among the inputs received in the interviews, we found six key points that well summaries the main challenges Best-ReMaP Joint Action ought to address to grant the sustainability of its outcomes.

Differences across EU countries

Experts pointed out that there is tension between Union level policies and Member states. Final policy decisions are often to be taken by Member states, so the EU can only act as a controller, consultant, or supervisor, which makes it difficult to implement a comprehensive approach throughout the European Union. For example, talking about the "EU school fruit, vegetables, and milk scheme", an expert mentioned that adopting a comprehensive approach regarding vending machines and school meals would help render healthier environments across schools in the EU. However, this programme does not have competences in that regard, so it cannot intervene on what vending machines can sell. They can only offer a list of the eligible products, but it is up to the national or regional level to take decisions or to regulate this framework.

DG Research & Innovation stressed also that a lack of integration between Union and national policies limits not only the regulation process, but also the learning from the so called 'best practices'. Projects occurring at the local level are often one step ahead of those at national



and supranational level, so we could achieve several positive results if these local actions could be better supported by EU institutions. An increased focus on integration has yet to be balanced with the fact that Member States start from vastly different economic, social, and cultural backgrounds, and they thus may have quite different means and needs. For example, DG Agriculture stressed that in terms of organic production, their programme must deal with significant differences at national level, as proven by the fact that while only 0,5% of food production is organic in Malta, this is already above 25% in Austria.

This is a significant issue from a policy perspective, since it entails that actions that could be implemented in one country are not necessarily feasible in neighbouring ones. On the contrary, each state has its unique situation, so it is not always possible – and above all preferable - to implement a “one size fits all” policy across all European countries. This was described by Davide Arcella – team leader of the data unit at the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) – regarding the collection of food consumption data in EU member states. He mentioned the difficulty of harmonizing this data, since countries were using diverse methodologies that were difficult to compare, and EFSA did not have the funding necessary to develop a unique dietary survey.

Inadequate funding is often mentioned as the main barrier to the implementation of EU projects encouraging member states to adopt common, comparable, tools and approaches, but experts stressed that it is also necessary to consider differences in competencies and traditions at member state level. An important detail added by EFSA was that harmonizing methodologies at the EU level is complex not only because some countries need more support than others, but also due to the resistance to change from those countries that feel they have well developed and functioning systems in play since they do not want to replace a methodology that has proven to be successful. Hence, when trying to harmonize tools and methodologies across Member states, policymakers should be aware that national institutions may be resistant to external impositions, since they see maintaining their own programmes to preserve their own approaches, and to stay in charge in their own country.

In sum, the policy challenge concerns finding a harmonized balance between the need to develop holistic policies at the Union level and the need to respect (sub-) national methodologies, expertise and sovereignty. Otherwise, if EU policies were to be imposed on Member states in a top-down manner, they would face significant resistance because it would seem that EU institutions are trying to impose on Member States in areas in which they do not have the competence to do so. Therefore, the interviewees indicated that the most efficient

policy strategies point towards a development of national plans according to Union directives, where Member states develop their own plans that set out how they plan to achieve a common set of objectives set out at EU level, in order to access EU support or funding. In this way, for each target of a selected European strategy, Member states would set out their national ambitions, and specify how they plan to reach them, as in the Green Deal.

Food systems and individual behavior

Experts also underlined the importance of enhancing a multi-sectoral approach to avoid implementing fragmented actions. The problem is that ministries at national level are not cooperating effectively, especially regarding advertising and public procurement policies, and health authorities are not yet sufficiently involved in the regulation of these sectors. In this way, health consequences of certain policies may be neglected since ministries other than health may not prioritize citizens' health in their policy actions. According to DG Research & Innovation, all actors in the food chain have to work well together if we are to deliver co-benefits to the whole community. To do so, we also ought to frame these interventions on upstream actions rather than top-down policies, since the former adapt better to the people's needs, while it is difficult to retrofit or to change the latter once policymakers have decided how to implement them.

In the policy fields covered by Best-ReMaP WP4, focusing on a multidisciplinary approach implies working on food environments, namely at the point of contact where citizens make their decisions on what they consume. Understanding the context in which citizens make decisions about food is essential to understanding the choices they make, so a multi-sectoral and multi-actor approach is necessary to grasp all the factors that influence individual behavior. According to DG SANTE, this is an aspect on which literature has improved over the last few years, proving that the narrative of freedom of choice is deeply flawed. Evidence is now clear on the fact that individual decisions are highly influenced by our social environment, and the fact that companies invest lots of resources in marketing is an example of this.

However, Herbert Dorfmann – Member of the European Parliament for the European People's Party from Italy - stressed that we cannot focus only on external factors, since we must also acknowledge that consumers' decisions play a significant part in determining the food system framework. Consumers take daily decisions when they purchase food in the supermarket, so they are not 'responsibility free', but it is also up to them to take the healthy choices over the

unhealthy ones, thus influencing the food chain towards healthier and more sustainable actions. Policies such as the 'Farm to Fork strategy' thus must be improved in this regard, since they are too narrowly focused on farming, while they neglect the consumer side of the food chain.

Focusing on the latter entails giving priority to information and consumer education rather than regulating the food environment, since this view holds that a lot of the information that is currently available about what is 'healthy' and sustainable is misleading or wrong. For example, Dorfmann stressed in his interview that certain food groups such as fats or sugars are not unhealthy *per se*, but they become so if assumed in excessive quantity. For this reason, rather than 'demonizing' certain food groups, he argued that it is more important that consumers are both educated about the right balance necessary for a healthy diet, and are not swayed by misleading information, as it is too often the case in current food labelling systems, as in some countries' 'Nutriscore'. That is, in his opinion 'Nutriscore label' is still too influenced by the food industry, and thus needs to be reviewed to focus more on citizens' health.

According to DG SANTE, a good monitoring reformulation system is an example of how these different views could be balanced. If we find a way to clearly describe to every consumer the content of the food they buy, this would give them the information they need to make the healthier choice. There is nowadays more awareness among the consumers compared to the past, but many would still be surprised if they had a clearer understanding of the composition of some of the products they buy, as for example the percentage of sugar contained in several breakfast cereals. Hence, the debate should then be about how we can then enable consumers to make the 'easy choice', and food labels are often at the center of this debate.

Citizens may find it confusing to deal with various kinds of labels, so these ought to be compatible and coherent one with another, in order to frame a system that is clear, common (European), easy to understand, public, and that is not misleading. Therefore, to foster the sustainability of its results, Best-ReMaP has to focus on cooperating with NGOs, academia, and EU bodies to increase awareness and control on food environments. In this way, this JA can enhance a healthier framework where consumers will still have the choice options, but it will be much easier than it currently is to take the healthy decision.



The need for a flexible legislation

Legislation on food policies is facing a “developing battle”, since it occurs in a framework where new information constantly changes the context policymakers are trying to regulate. It is necessary to find a balance between having legislation in as well as the flexibility to adapt this to new research, developments in different national contexts, and to the fast-changing markets. This concerns not only the ‘items’ to regulate, but also regulators themselves, since individuals working in the various DGs are often changing, with new people may not have the connections that their predecessors had. A better coordination among DGs and between DGs and external bodies would render policy implementation much more effective.

According to the interviewed, the capability to adapt and to replicate previous projects in new contexts is crucial to the success of the Best-ReMaP. Ideally, the main objective of this JA should thus be to contribute to the implementation of at least one new policy in at least one of the Member states involved in the JA for each of the three main work packages. Instead, if at the end of the project Best-ReMaP produces only a set of recommendations, it cannot be considered a success. This is important because if countries see that initiatives were successful in some other constituencies, then they are more willing to start a similar programme on their own. On top of that, if countries are provided both the connections to learn from the experiences of those who implemented the project beforehand, and the resources and support from the EU resources – such as Best-ReMaP offers - then they are more likely to succeed.

As stressed by DG Research & Innovation, rather than focus only on ‘best practices’ here should also be a focus on how to avoid bad practices. That is, in order to avoid spending money on something not useful, it is necessary to understand in more detail how bad policies have worsened food system, especially concerning advertising. However, to do so we need to discern more precisely ‘for whom’ certain policies may be damaging, since different values and political views create divergences in what is deemed ‘bad advertisement’ and who suffers more the consequences of certain political decisions.

This contrast was evident in Dorfmann’s interview, where he specified that a regulation on advertisement is necessary for children, but not for adults. That is, while other interviewed preferred a holistic view on food systems with a specific control on the inputs *all* consumers receive, according to Dorfmann this should be the case for children, especially in light of the high amount of time they spend on digital platforms, but adults should be able to decide for themselves. Hence, the fact that Dorfmann believes that it makes no sense to control

advertising targeting adults reflects that policymakers have different views not only about what we ought to regulate, but also about which social groups to target.

Research support to policymaking

Investment in research is essential to enable data-driven policies, but at the same time experts stressed that there is a long-term issue to resolve for research to integrate at best policy making. As stressed by DG Research & Innovation, research does a lot while funding is in place, but it stops being efficient when funding ends. There is thus the need to develop better investments plans for research, making sure that projects focus more on what occurs after they end. All research initiatives should take this into account as of their inception, and this emphasizes that Best-ReMaP too should consider from the outset its long-term goals and financial sustainability.

Research is often needed to clarify policy problems. A lack of consensus around theoretical or conceptual issues can thwart efforts to develop policies to regulate food systems, like those that are the focus of Best-ReMaP. This problem is well represented by the conundrum concerning what “healthy” means. This is a complicated matter of debate because there is not a single answer, but there are differences in diet both at national and at individual level. Moreover, citizens have different lifestyles and different caloric consumption, so there could be objections to limitations on certain foods - such as HFSS (high fat, sugar, salt) foods – on the basis that elevated levels of physical activity and an active lifestyle could counteract the negative effects of these food groups.

The difficulty in precisely defining the thresholds above which certain foods are “unhealthy”, and the situations in which they can be considered as such are thus slowing down food regulation. This entails that we need more research not only to develop clear guidelines according to the different national and local level, but also to have a clearer framework of the food environments we ought to regulate. For example, a clear and precise definition is one of the strength points of the organic label. Not only is this label clear to the consumer, but the fact that there are precise criteria to define what organic is, permits the development of a precise set of rules, legislation, and control.



Connection between public and private sector

One of the problems Best-ReMaP must consider is also that there are many legitimate interests involved in food systems - from public health, to industries, NGOs, etc. – that are difficult to harmonize, since when people from vastly diverse backgrounds are involved in the same project, they may just focus on finding a minimum common denominator. In this way, responsibilities may become diluted and actors may not focus on finding the most ambitious approach for the project. This is true for all sectors, but it is particularly evident when we discuss the best way to balance public goals and private sector interests.

On this issue, participants to the interviews had different opinions. On the one hand, some stressed the importance of sitting together with the private sector to obtain concrete commitments from industries in terms of increasing production, accessibility, and affordability of 'sustainable' products. Overall, this view is based on the idea that the private sector will be more likely to adapt to the sustainability standards if this is likely to benefit them as well. On the other hand, other experts were more concerned about the risks that would result from even greater involvement of the private sector in food system regulation.

For example, EFSA does not involve the private sector in the collection of data, since this could bias the outcomes and in data survey, there is also a problematic connection between money invested in a certain project and the availability of outcomes. Survey research is expensive, so if one organization spends a lot of money on data collection, then it might not be willing to make data available to everyone for free before fully exploiting such data. As mentioned by Davide Arcella: "The idea itself that someone spends a lot of money to then make it available to everyone, is perfect in the ideal, but then in the real world, if everyone acted as a free rider, then we would have no one collecting data". Therefore, public investment is to be preferred because the more data comes from public money, the easier it is to render it available to everyone afterward, and public money can be more easily steered towards public goals such as healthy diets.

Finally, some interviewees also expressed scepticism at the private sector's ability to voluntarily self-regulate. For example, Dorfmann maintained that since industries' primary goal is to sell their products to make profits, and not to promote citizens' health. If we left too much power in the hands of food producers, as it is currently happening with the 'Nutriscore' labelling, it would then be difficult to obtain proper regulations. To be successful in the regulation of food systems, a code of conduct as the one mentioned in the 'Farm to Fork strategy' may thus not be

sufficient. On the contrary, legal actions, clear regulations, and public investment may favour the creation of a healthier food environment.

Health inequalities

Finally, interviewees believed both EU institutions and Member states will have to continue working on the area of ‘non communicable diseases’, since these represent almost 80% of the burden in terms of illnesses and money spent, and most of them can be prevented if we improved the people’s lifestyles and nutrition. Best-ReMaP thus ought to focus on integrating its results into the national action against NCD. To do so, experts stressed that social equity should be at the centre of this JA, since food environments must not become two-tier systems where vulnerable groups are left behind.

Food systems must then focus not only on health and sustainability, but also on *inclusiveness*, namely on making sure that ‘healthy food environments’ are accessible and available to all citizens in society. In this regard, public procurement policies have the potential to lead to highly beneficial outcomes, since meals in public institutions – especially for children in school – are the only opportunity to access healthy food for certain disadvantaged categories. This is not only a question about access to healthy nutrition, but also of education, since public procurement offers also a powerful means to educate citizens about the importance of healthy diets.

According to DG AGRI, the importance of considering health inequalities is well represented on two sides by the challenges faced by organic products. On the one hand, there is the need to make sure that organic products become more and more the mainstreamed, as is the case in the Scandinavian model, rather than a niche product that only higher classes can afford. On the other hand, this control on prices has to be balanced with the need to make sure that there is sufficient income for farmers. In this regard, organic farming enables rural areas to create wider local benefits, thus proving that there is a way to create a coherent package of policies that are simultaneously socially responsible and provides wider benefits to all social groups.

Finally, DG SANTE stressed that to ensure the sustainability of Best-ReMaP outcomes, there is the need to promote the importance of the connection between the social gradient and NCDs also amongst those that have so far neglected this aspect. That is, while agencies promoting environmental awareness have been effective in increasing the awareness of the risks of



climate change, those involved in food systems have not managed to be as successful. For this reason, Best-ReMaP should also try to exit the ‘bubble’ of those supporting and promoting healthy food systems to engage in a dialogue with those MPs, industries and people that have neglected or opposed measures aimed at tackling health inequalities in this framework. In other words, results of this JA should reach not only those actors already convinced about the importance of Best-ReMaP motto “Healthy food for a healthy future”, but they should also try to engage with those industries and politicians who have so far neglected the importance

ANNEX A: List of Questions for the Best-ReMaP Interviews

1. LEGISLATIVE CHALLENGES

- a. **Past Vs Future:** Over the last decade, the EU has implemented several regulations in the food chain framework, yet without achieving the results expected.
 - I. Question: “Which, in your opinion, is the main problem/obstacle EU policies have faced over the last decade concerning the regulation of food systems?”
 - II. Follow-up: how can we overcome past hindrances in order to better regulate EU food system?”.
- b. **Self-regulatory debate:** industries have promoted their self-regulation over the last few years, while WHO stressed that this has created several problems, since it includes less ambitious thresholds than what’s recommended by science and it leads to little or no punitive actions.
 - I. **Question:** “How can EU institutions work to balance control/incentives for industries at the national level in order to have them on board rather than against healthier food policies?”
- c. **Centrality of the EU**
 - I. **Question:** “What’s the interplay between EU and MS policy/funds/legal level? Are national frameworks supportive or counterproductive to the implementation of EU policies?”
- d. **EU tools and instruments:** there are several EU processes that can be useful to advance the sustainability of Best-ReMaP findings at strategic as well as practice levels such as the European Semester, EU cancer plan, Farm to Fork, the Technical Support Instrument, the EU Child Guarantee and national action plans, the Recovery and Resilience Funds and plans per country etc.
 - I. **Question:** “Which tools and instruments holds most potential for sustainable Best-ReMaP outcomes at strategic and practice levels, and why?”

2. SOCIAL FAIRNESS AND HI

- a. **Social fairness and HI:** one of the experts mentioned that JA can be sustainable only as long as it is socially fair.
 - I. **Question:** How do you think concerns related to health equity impact on how sustainable a given food policy option will be?

b. **Covid-19 pandemic:** the pandemic has affected HI in several ways throughout Europe. In many countries we have seen an increase of unhealthy behaviours (related to food, tobacco, alcohol, etc.) in vulnerable subgroups.

- I. **Question:** “Which problems do you think this pandemic has highlighted that must be considered to improve our societies’ preparedness for future crises?”
- II. **Follow-up:** What role do you envisage for EU institutions in this regard?

3. FOOD AND ADVERTISEMENT

a. **AVSMD and Health:** the former may be difficult to connect with the latter in Member States, since health ministries are not in charge of AVSMD.

- I. **Question:** “How do you think we could better connect AVSMD and health to make sure that the latter is included in MSs advertisement policies?”
- II. **Follow-up:** What role could the EU have to enhance cross-border control?

b. **Digital platform:** policies are still focusing too narrowly on television, whereas citizens – children in particular - are consuming various platforms. In terms of sustainability, it is thus necessary to understand which platforms we ought to target specifically.

- I. **Question:** “Which platforms do you think should be included in advertisement policies (Out-of-home (OOH) foods, social media, digital marketing (influencers, etc.)?”

c. **Nutritional Profile Model:** JA focuses on finding precise EU Nutritional Profile Models (NPM), since this would help giving clear indications to MSs (especially in WP6) => the clearer, the easier to follow.

- I. **Question:** “how can we obtain a clear and uniform ‘Nutritional Profile Model Across Europe?’”.
- II. **Follow-up 1:** “Do you think it is mostly a matter of adopting the WHO NPM model or are there further challenges that ought to be addressed?”
- III. **Follow-up 2:** “Do you think the nutritional label on products (A, B, C, D, E) is a positive step forward? Can it also be applied to regulate marketing products?”

4. **SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN:** the climate challenge is a crucial political challenge, and food production/consumption has a significant carbon footprint.



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- a. **Question:** "Which steps forward could be made at EU levels related to HFSS food in order to better address the environmental challenge?"
 - I. **Follow up:** "is there potential for an EU harmonized framework for action on green and healthy food procurements in public setting?"
 - b. **Sustainability question:** "Do you think there is a tendency for companies to be willing to sacrifice some profit to help address these issues (by e.g., curbing advertising to children or reformulating foods), or will they only take those actions if this enables them to maintain or exceed current profit margins (and/or if coerced by legislation)?"
5. **RESEARCH AND LITERATURE:** data-based action is essential to structure policies.
- a. **Question:** "Is the state of evidence sufficiently clear to frame precise policies?"
 - I. **Follow-up:** "Which gaps are there, and where should we invest to fill these gaps?"
6. **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**
- a. **Exemption implementation:** "To support local food production in Slovenia an exemption for public food procurement was applied (an exemption means that 20 % of purchased food is excluded from the public food procurement). In which way do you think the exemption could be introduced/used in other countries?"
 - b. **Criteria for selection of public contract:** "How to encourage the use of environmentally focused sustainability criteria as the main factor for the selection of public contract?"
 - c. **Tackling inequalities:** "What policy solutions in the field of public food procurement could further increase equity by reaching vulnerable groups with healthy food?"



ANNEX B: Template Invitation email letter to Best-ReMaP experts

Dear [name of Expert],

I hope my e-mail finds you well.

I am contacting you on behalf of the Joint Action Healthy Food for a Healthy Future – Best-ReMaP (2020-2023), funded by the European Union’s Health Programme, and implemented by 36 partners in 24 EU Member States.

This Joint Action, delivered via collaborative work of seven pan-European teams, aims to contribute to an improved quality of food supplied to European citizens by facilitating the exchange and testing of good practices concerning: (1) the monitoring and analysis of how the food that people consume changes at the European and national level; (2) the regulations on the marketing of food and beverages to children; and finally (3) the procurement of food by public bodies for educational institutions, social care facilities, etc.

As a leader of the Best-ReMaP’s Work Package 4, the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), with support from EuroHealthNet – the European Partnership for improving health, equity and wellbeing, are responsible for transfer and integration of the results of the Joint Action into EU and national policies in the food and nutrition fields. In contribution to this effort, we still need to carry out an investigation into what actions and factors make initiatives sustainable and likely to succeed. We have identified a number of key EU policies and distinguished European experts – such as yourself – who we would like to carry this investigation with. We strongly believe your expertise and knowledge in the field will offer pivotal insights into furthering the work of this Joint Action.

Therefore, we would be very pleased if you accepted to participate in a 30-minute-online interview. In the interview, we would like to focus on X (policy area of the question), with a couple of more specific question centered on Y (what the specific questions are about, but without being too detailed so as to leave some range of action to the interviewer). After – hopefully - hearing back on your willingness to participate, we will follow up in proposing and selecting the most suitable day and time. The interviews will be conducted *date indication* (during the month of October 2021).

Should you need any further details, please do let us know. We look forward to your affirmative response.

Yours sincerely,



On behalf of the Joint Action Best-ReMaP, the Work Package 4 and Marco Silano (ISS),

Signature of the Policy Officer.