



DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH – A EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION

07 APRIL 2016

10.00 – 17.00

MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting was opened by **John F. Ryan (Chair)**, who welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda which focused on two activity areas of the Platform: ‘Marketing and advertising’ and ‘Advocacy and information exchange’, and included a discussion on improvements to the Platform working method and dynamics.

The draft agenda of the meeting was approved, as well as the minutes of the previous Plenary meeting (3 December 2015).

Nestlé asked for a summary of the discussion on the Added Sugars Annex held the previous day with the High Level Group and their reformulation experts. **DG SANTE** provided a summary of the discussions, highlighting that an agreement was reached to establish two working groups (one related to monitoring and one related to developing benchmarks per food category) with the aim of producing concrete outputs by 22 November 2016. DG SANTE will develop a plan and calendar and will ask for volunteers to join the working groups.

FoodDrinkEurope asked for a clarification on how this process would work in practice and underlining that they would need time to discuss internally with their members. **DG SANTE** answered that the working groups themselves will decide what process to follow. In addition, the **Chair** invited Platform members to send DG SANTE any questions they might have.

2. INFORMATION SESSION ON ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN

DG CNECT provided an overview of the existing national regulations and statutory rules on audio-visual commercial communications addressed to children of foods High in Fat, Sugars or Salt (HFSS). Concerning the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, DG CNECT informed the Plenary that the legislative proposal and the second application report are expected to be adopted by the Council in June and then they will go to the European Parliament.

EuroHealthNet asked for more information on the consultation process related to the review of the Directive. The **International Diabetes Federation – Europe (IDF Europe)**, asked for more information regarding Italy’s current regulation in the field. The **Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)** asked for a clarification on the Directive or other regulations coverage of streaming media, which is a rising global trend.

DG CNECT provided the following responses:

- Concerning the consultation process, the input from stakeholders has been analysed and, where relevant, will be taken into account in the next steps of the revision;
- Regarding the existing legislation in Italy, there is a very general legislative provision, supported by self-regulation;
- As regards the scope of the Directive, DG CNECT is envisaging to widen it, taking into account new forms of audio-visual media. However no further details could be provided. Related to this, DG CNECT mentioned that six Member States strongly supported the strengthening of article 9.2 of the Directive.

The Chair invited DG CNECT to the next Platform meeting to present the outcome of the current revision process.

3. DISCUSSION SESSION ON MEDIA LITERACY OF CHILDREN

This session was organised because reducing aggressive marketing and advertising of HFFS foods to children is one of the priorities of the Platform. It also allowed for members with an active commitment in the field of media literacy of children to present their findings and for the Plenary to discuss the outcomes.

3.1. Media Smart - teaching children to be media-literate

The **World Federation of Advertisers (WFA)** presented their active 'Media Smart' commitment, which is a media literacy programme for school children providing materials designed by experts free of charge to teachers and parents (funded by brands, agencies and media partners).

Several Platform expressed concern with industry's involvement in education activities. The **International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)** referred to its concerns in the past and repeated that industry should not be involved in education activities. IBFAN also referred a study that shows that teachers are often inadequately prepared to deal with support materials that are provided by industry.

COFACE noted that WFA's commitment could be read as an action to teach children on how to become advertisers whereas it should have rather focused on highlighting the problems and risks of advertising.

The **European Heart Network (EHN)** asked for some clarification on the measuring of the effectiveness of the programme and also on its relevance to the objectives of the Platform.

EuroHealthNet questioned the need for such mitigation measures. If marketing were not harmful to start with, then project such as this would not be necessary.

The **European Cyclists' Federation (ECF)** asked if the 'Media Smart' programme could contribute to "immunise" children against marketing and advertising.

The **Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)** noted how much behaviour can be affected by marketing.

WFA responded that they understood the comments on the role of industry, however pointed out that:

- A critical assessment of advertisement is part of the programme taught in schools in the context of the project. This can be considered as an important social skill as the world is indeed full of advertising. The EU Pledge secretariat is available to go through the various materials and tools produced to show that;

- WFA is not involved in the preparation of materials which are independently produced by national stakeholders.

DG SANTE suggested that it would be useful to see if the different programmes in different Member States lead to a different behaviour changes and asked for a clarification on what WFA considers a successful outcome. **WFA** replied, explaining that a successful outcome would be to make children aware of what advertising is and better prepared to deal with it not in a relaxed but rather in a critical way.

3.2. Media, advertising and nutrition: media literacy educational package

COFACE presented the ‘Nutri-medias’ commitment, a media literacy tool to support trainers (that then work with parents, key role models for children). It develops awareness and includes training activities on the existing links between nutrition and the media. **COFACE** intends to make the tool available in more languages.

The Chair asked whether the impact of the materials on children was evaluated. **COFACE** replied explaining that after each session feedback was collected from participating children; an evaluation of the long term effects of the sessions was not performed due the unavailability of resources. **COFACE** also noted that they would not consider using industry funding to further development of the materials or of the commitment and that they were concerned with the fact that most of the industry's marketing efforts is directed at the least healthy options of their portfolios.

4. DISCUSSION ON IMPROVING THE DYNAMICS OF THE PLATFORM

Following the exchanges of the previous Platform meetings, **DG SANTE** presented a proposal for improvement of the functioning of the Platform, shared with members before the meeting. It was underlined that it was in everybody's interest to show that the Platform can deliver public health impact.

The proposal suggests that:

- The Platform will support the Member States in reducing the avoidable health and economic burden of unhealthy lifestyle and related chronic diseases by reaching WHO objectives;
- The commitments will be directly related to the members' core missions and aim at being followed by as many stakeholders in as many Member States as possible;
- The WHO, Joint Research Centre and DG SANTE will jointly provide their ex-ante assessment on whether commitments are sufficiently relevant to the objectives above.

The proposal was generally supported and welcomed as a step in the right direction that could give renewed energy to the Platform and a strong linkage with relevant policy goals. Some members raised questions concerning the practical process and the consequences for monitoring and reporting. Some members called for health authorities to consider resorting more to legislation if this new approach would not lead to tangible results.

DG SANTE further explained that the aim of this process is to improve the functioning of the Platform and increase its contribution to public health. Ensuring that there is a clear link between the commitments and the targets agreed to in the WHO context (and contributing to the Action Plan on Childhood Obesity or to the EU Framework for National Initiatives on

Selected Nutrients) is crucial. That can best be achieved if actions relate to the members' core missions and activities.

The proposal would in the first phase only apply to new commitments, but it would be advisable to apply the same process to the existing commitments over time. Concerning the process, it would not be burdensome as both the WHO and the Joint Research Centre have already agreed to be part of the process. Where necessary external experts could be involved in the evaluation (e.g. education authorities, other Commission Directorates, etc.).

Ferrero welcomed the proposal and suggested that all commitments (ongoing as well new) should be checked for relevance. **WFA** welcomed a clear link to WHO objectives and highlighted the advantage of credible reporting on the relevance of commitments. **Nestlé** welcomed the initiative and suggested that the implementation of the added sugars annex be used as a testing ground. **Eurohealthnet, EACA, Freshfel, Copacogeca, IBFAN, ECL, COFACE, ServingEurope** and **EHN** embraced the suggestion, however **IBFAN** expressed some concerns about the text relating to coherence with WHO objectives and specifically its recommendations on breastfeeding duration. **IBFAN** suggested deleting the reference to inequalities which is a political matter, and not appropriate as private sector Platform Commitment, since it opens the door to yet more harmful marketing under cover of philanthropy. **FoodDrinkEurope** recalled the importance of a holistic approach and suggested that WHO targets could be checked against relevance for the EU objectives. They also highlighted that they would like to see more collaboration and coordination with the High Level Group.

The Chair responded that it was not within the remit of the Platform to question or verify the relevance of WHO objectives against those set at EU level. The proposed operation of the Platform was also discussed with the members of the High Level Group at the meeting the day before. There was a broad welcome to an increased support by the Platform members in reaching agreed policy objectives.

The **Chair** summarized that there was broad agreement and no opposition to the suggested approach and that comments would be taken into account. He reminded the Plenary of the Joint Meeting the day before, where the urgency for ambitious action was once again made clear by the **WHO** presentation and strongly supported by **Commissioner Andriukaitis**. For the Platform to have a strong public health impact, its methods have to ensure that actions are always sufficiently ambitious. By accepting the proposal, the members are improving the Platform and increasing its contribution to reducing nutrition related challenges in Europe.

5. COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF 'MARKETING AND ADVERTISING' AND 'ADVOCACY AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE'

5.1 Overview of commitments

Based on the 2014 evaluation exercise, **ICF International** provided an overview of the commitments in the areas of 'Marketing and advertising' and 'Advocacy and information exchange'. The commitments that were evaluated as unsatisfactory did not generally provide fully SMART objectives (in particular, they were found to be non-measurable or not time-bound) and they provided insufficient or inexact information in relation to inputs (financial information, staff employed), outputs and outcomes.

An overview of the ongoing evaluation process (of the 2015 monitoring reports) and the next steps was also provided. The results of the assessment will be presented at the next plenary

meeting (2 June 2016) and shared with the Platform members beforehand. For the first time, a comparison will be made between 2014 and 2015 reporting results on key assessment criteria. All members will be contacted by ICF to discuss the findings based on the individual feedback forms and ICF will report back to the Commission.

The Chair mentioned that the abovementioned lack of SMART objectives prevents the Platform from benefiting more from showcasing its actions to the outside world. SMART objectives, inputs and outputs should be more included when designing new actions.

WFA mentioned that it is very difficult to exactly measure the number of hours dedicated to a commitment. **The Chair** replied that a fair estimation of hours would be a good proxy.

5.2 Active Platform commitments on marketing and advertising

5.2.1 EU Pledge – next steps (update)

WFA presented an update on the EU Pledge. **WFA** will work to extend the scope of the Pledge to cover radio, cinema, online including social media, mobile and text messages, interactive games, DVD, direct marketing, licensed characters, movie tie-ins and celebrities (by the end of 2016).

The Chair inquired whether sponsorship is covered; **WFA** clarified that only a restricted number of sponsorship activities were covered by the Pledge.

COFACE asked how social media is handled and in particular how advertising not targeted at children in social media/online is treated. **WFA** answered that they are trying to focus on social media and to be as up-to-date as possible, in order to achieve their target.

The **European Consumers' Organisation (BEUC)** mentioned that EU Pledge signataires should in the medium term move towards applying the WHO Nutrient Profile to their marketing activities. **IBFAN** noted that the Pledge should not be considered as an alternative to regulation. **IBFAN** also suggested that since the Commission has decided not to regulate the marketing of formulas for older babies, Platform members could voluntarily agree to stop adding flavourings and sweeteners to such products,

The Chair informed that a legislative proposal to ban any advertising for children under 12 is being discussed in France. The Chair also asked if the commitment could in the future be aligned with the WHO Nutrient Profile. **WFA** answered that the WHO excludes entire categories of food from advertising, while the EU Pledge aims at fostering product improvement (which they claim cannot be done if advertising is not allowed at all in the category).

DG SANTE reminded the High Level Group's request to the Commission to use the WHO Nutrient Profile as a basis for dialogue with industry on the issue of food marketing to children.

In addition, at yesterday's High Level Group meeting, Switzerland reported on the refusal of a part of the Swiss food industry to move gradually towards the application of WHO Nutrient Profile (as requested by the public health authorities). Apparently, the Swiss industry claims that such a decision from their part would be dependent on progress being reached at EU level, in particular on the result of discussions between **WFA** and the Commission. **DG SANTE** clarified that no such dependency exists and that progress at national level should not be blocked. **WFA** promised to clarify this point at the earliest opportunity.

5.2.2. Media Literacy and Responsible Advertising to Children

Ferrero presented their commitment on supporting the implementation of the EU Pledge as well as 'Media Smart'. A video was shown with two TV ads, a recent and an old one, with the aim to show how Ferrero's TV advertising has evolved towards no targeting of children.

Several Platform including **IBFAN**, **EHN**, **COFACE** and **BEUC** expressed their view that there was hardly any progress between the TV ads from 1992 and 2013. It was therefore not clear to what extent Ferrero has stopped direct marketing and advertising to children under the age of 12.

COFACE highlighted the lack of similar clarity when accessing the website and social media page of Ferrero. **COFACE** highlighted the high level of responsibility of Ferrero as one of the founding members of the EU Pledge.

BEUC added that authorities do not always have the resources to check infringements of commitments. **WFA** commented that it is a challenge for industry to deal with rapid changing advertisement environment.

The Chair welcomed the debate on such important topic and proposed to facilitate a discussion outside the Platform on this particular commitment.

5.3 Active commitments on advocacy and information exchange

4.3.1 World Diabetes Day and Youth Leadership Camp

IDF Europe presented the objectives of the activities carried out and the results achieved by both commitments.

The Chair asked about the funding sources and about the level of ambition (the project involves 24 persons each year). **IDF Europe** explained that part of the action was funded by a pharmaceutical company but mentioned that activities carried out in these camps are never related to selling or promoting pharmaceutical products and are totally independent from industry influence.

IBFAN added that involvement of the pharma industry always risks to influence the projects and the organisations, and noted that the commitment should focus on prevention and not on treatment.

4.3.2 Helping consumers to make healthier and more-informed food choices

In its presentation, **BEUC** highlighted the purpose of their commitment: what was being done, how to inform policy-makers and how to monitor health claims. They also presented the different features of the new website whatsinyourkitchen.eu

FoodDrinkEurope inquired about the funding received to develop this website. **BEUC** replied that their actions were co-financed by the Commission and have a target audience of policy makers.

A few clarifications were also asked by some members of the Platform (**IBFAN**, **COPA-COGECA**), regarding the simplified food labelling system suggested in the presentation and the way it would be used. **BEUC** answered that the simplified food labelling system proposed would apply only to highly processed food.

6. STATE OF PLAY ON COMMITMENTS

DG SANTE mentioned that there are currently 297 actions in the Platform database, of which 105 are active. So far, six new commitments have been submitted in 2016 (European Society of Preventative Medicine (2 actions), IDF-Europe, European Vending Association, European Association for the Study of Obesity and the European Public Health Alliance).

7. CONCLUSIONS

The Chair:

- concluded that reducing aggressive marketing and advertising, especially towards children, remains a priority for the Platform and urged members to develop ambitious actions in this area;
- highlighted that the exchange on the Audiovisual Media Services Directive will be continued in upcoming meetings;
- expressed his satisfaction with the positive reception of the proposal for improving the functioning of the Platform, especially with regards to strongly linking with WHO objectives (and contributing to the guidance texts and priorities set by the High Level Group and relating to the members' core missions) and to inviting the WHO, the Joint Research Centre and DG SANTE to transparently provide their assessment on whether commitments are sufficiently relevant to the objectives;
- The next meeting of the Platform will take place on **2 June 2016 in Luxembourg** and the members will discuss **food reformulation and portion sizes**.