



**DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH -
A EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ACTION
19 FEBRUARY 2015
10.00 – 17.00**

CHAIR: Mr John F. Ryan

DRAFT MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTION

The meeting was opened by **John F. Ryan** who welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda, which focused on two main topics: the **Working Group on Monitoring and Reporting** and the commitments in the field of **consumer information, including labelling**. The agenda and minutes of the previous Platform meeting were adopted without comments.

2. UPDATE WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING AND REPORTING

Stefan Craenen, DG SANTE, presented the result of the Working Group on Monitoring and Reporting, including an update of the monitoring guidance document and a proposal for the setting up of an Advisory Group for the Monitoring and Reporting of New Commitments. The members discussed on the best way to provide information on the nature and financing sources of their respective organisations. While there was wide agreement on the benefits of being transparent and clear in such reporting, there was some dispute on how to achieve it in practice. The contention was mostly on which typology of organisation to use in the monitoring form.

Following the debate, the Chair proposed to adopt the suggestions of the Working Group, in view of the fact that the information being introduced in the form is already available online, as the members themselves have acknowledged.

The Chair also proposed that the Advisory Group would be established for a test period of 6 months. He requested members to indicate their interest in joining both groups, emphasising that it would be necessary to have a balanced representation.

3. INFORMATION ON CANCER

3.1 COMMISSION POLICY ON CANCER PREVENTION

Isabell Ladiges, DG SANTE, presented the Commission's policy on cancer prevention highlighting the different actions undertaken to address risk factors and the funding opportunities of the Health Programme. Recent Commission initiatives such as the Joint

Action on Cancer 2014-2017 and the Expert Group on Cancer Control, established in 2014, were mentioned.

The Chair emphasised the important role of prevention in relation to nutrition and physical activity. He also highlighted the importance for the Platform to discuss the related topic of active and healthy ageing.

3.2 UPDATED EUROPEAN CODE AGAINST CANCER

Dr Isabelle Romieu, International Agency for Research on Cancer, presented the updated European Code Against Cancer, with a focus on nutrition and physical activity recommendations. The fourth edition of the Code, coordinated by IARC with financial support from the EU Health Programme, was launched on 14 October 2014. Dr Romieu provided data on the cancer prevalence in the EU and the rationale for updating the Code (updated information from scientific evidence, the need of using a clear language for all citizens and encourage active and positive behaviour).

The **Association of European Cancer Leagues** underlined that besides implementing the Code, successful cancer prevention needs to be supported by targeted policy interventions at national level.

Following the concern of **FoodDrinkEurope** with some of the wording on the recommendation (“Avoid processed meat”, which in their opinion should be changed to “limit intake of processed meat”), Dr Romieu explained that there is a large amount of scientific evidence supporting the Code and all of its messages.

Philippe Roux, DG SANTE, added that the High Level Group is stepping up its actions on food reformulation and that at some point consultations will be held with scientists and industry. **The Chair** concluded that the members could send further feedback, recommendations or scientific evidence directly to IARC.

4. INFORMATION ON CONSUMER INFORMATION AND LABELLING

4.1. UPDATE ON FOOD LABELLING REGULATION

An update on the current status of the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers was given by **Stephanie Bodenbach, DG SANTE**. She explained that this legislation began entering into force in December 2014, imposing an increase of the nutritional information present on the packaging. It was highlighted that the full nutritional information package will become mandatory only from December 2016 onwards. This means that (at least) until 2017, there will still be a wide scope of potential actions that the members can develop in the area of information and labelling in order to anticipate or complement the requirements of the legislation.

4.2. INFORMED FOOD CHOICES FOR HEALTHIER CONSUMERS

Ilaria Passarani, European Consumers' Organisation, spoke on informed food choices for healthier consumers saying that the food information regulation was a step in the right direction (although there are elements that could be improved). The key recommendations from BEUC are that labels should be:

- easy to read;
- easy to understand;
- truthful.

McDonald's has a voluntary labelling on nutritional information in place and has been extensively testing on the best alternatives to provide such information to its customers. Their research has pointed out some limitations on how effective can restaurants be in providing information (e.g. consumers make their purchasing decisions even *before* entering the stores). The company further mentioned that the way nutritional information is provided today will not be the same as tomorrow and context changes will play a major part in determining how information can be effectively transmitted. They are interested in further discussing labelling possibilities.

COPA-COGECA mentioned that colour coding brings attention to what should not be eaten, without taking into account eventual positive nutritional contribution or the quantity consumed (as is the case e.g. for olive oil). As a result, they suggest focusing on labels that are easy to read rather than on labels that are (only) simple.

EuroHealthNet added to the discussion that colour codes are especially useful in an increasingly aged society.

Philippe Roux, DG SANTE, indicated that different initiatives for informing consumers could be tested and evidence/research could be gathered. This could be considered in future commitments and work of the Platform. On the issue of new technologies (such as apps) he highlighted their usefulness but warned of possible increases in inequalities among consumers.

4.3. HOW DO CONSUMERS RESPOND TO LABELLING

The presentation by **Eva Woelbert, Joint Research Centre**, showed that in the case of restaurant purchases, calorie information does not change behaviour. However, providing interpretive information does reduce the number of calories purchased and consumed.

On the other hand, in relation to store purchases, recent scientific reviews did not show conclusive evidence as to whether purchase information has an influence in buying behaviour. Furthermore, there is a lack of large-scale control studies of the kind that would be needed to understand the effect of labels on purchasing behaviour. Nevertheless, it seems that placement strategies may be a good way to complement labels.

The **World Obesity Federation** enquired whether the JRC would consider future research into how producers respond to labelling (for instance, could the classification by colour lead some companies to reformulate their products?).

The **International Baby Food Action Network** asked whether the JRC plans to produce research in the area of idealisation of certain products (e.g.: breastfeeding substitutes). Ms Woelbert mentioned that there is currently not much research in this area.

The Chair suggested more discussions in future meetings on these topics.

Lastly, the **European Food Information Council** mentioned that the first results of CLYMBOL (a Commission-funded research project that aims to better understand the effects of health claims and symbols on food labels, purchase and consumption) are now available:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nbu.12128/abstract>

5. COMMITMENTS IN THE FIELD OF CONSUMER INFORMATION AND LABELLING

5.1 OVERVIEW OF COMMITMENTS

Christina Dziejanska-Stringer, from the Platform contractor **ICF**, provided an overview of the commitments in this field. Consumer information and labelling commitments constitute 12% of the total number of active commitments (and 11% of all commitments). There are

currently 31 commitments in this field, of which 14 are active commitments, and 1 is a new commitment. All active commitments are being implemented by industry and there are currently no joint commitments within this activity type. The commitments have a large geographical spread and the vast majority target the ‘general public’.

The qualitative assessment of the commitments provided in the 2014 Annual Monitoring Report showed that although reporting on this area is overall satisfactory, improvements in outcome reporting are needed. In addition, the reporting on the financial and in-kind contributions to commitments should also be improved.

5.2 ACTIVE PLATFORM COMMITMENTS

5.2.1 CONSUMER INFORMATION and EVOLUTION OF THE NUTRITION LABELLING

Eamonn Bates, European Modern Restaurants Association, presented their commitment ‘Consumer information’, which aims to inform customers about how products compare to Guideline Daily Amounts or other science-based nutrition references. Since 2006, the number of EMRA companies providing nutritional information increased to 7 and the number of customers informed on a daily basis from 10 to 20 million. Furthermore, additional information channels are now being used: smartphone applications, QR (Quick Response) codes and in some cases, menu boards.

David Coleman, McDonald's Europe, presented the evolution of the company on the issue of nutrition labelling and provided an overview of the company's recent research on nutrition information for customers and the decisions leading to their new nutrition information system.

Artur Furtado, DG SANTE, inquired if the research indicates any difference in the “guilt element” conditions consumers when entering restaurants. Both speakers mentioned that even when people have access to the relevant information, they do not necessarily change their behaviour: the guilt element does not seem relevant for their decision-making processes in this context.

5.2.2 NUBEL

Carine Seeuws, NUBEL, and **Nick Deschuyffeleer, Belgian Food and Drink Federation (FEVIA)**, presented the Belgian food composition database and how it supports consumers and patients in establishing a healthy lifestyle by offering tools such as a food composition table and a food planner. The database details the composition of various types of food products that are on the Belgian market. In 2010, there were 617 products in the database and in 2014 that figure rose to 7,771. NUBEL will celebrate its 25th anniversary this year.

5.3 OTHER INITIATIVES IN THE FIELD OF CONSUMER INFORMATION AND LABELLING

5.3.1 CONSUMER VIDEO REGARDING THE NUTRITION DECLARATION

Amaury Bessard, Association Nationale des Industries Alimentaires-France (ANIA), presented their work on supporting the implementation of the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers in France in order to clarify nutritional labelling for consumers. In 2014, ANIA produced a video, shown at the meeting, which explained this legislation to the employees of its member companies, in order for them to better help their clients. In 2015, a toolbox of basic facts and practical guidelines for French NGOs working with local vulnerable groups

will be designed. In addition, ANIA will provide training to all public/private actors interested in the initiative. A mobile application will also be developed with daily nutritional tips and a cooking TV tutorial for young people. Preliminary results of the project showed a good collaboration with NGOs and a large mobilisation of professional organisations.

Mr Bessard mentioned that their first aim is to reach employees and the second step of this initiative will be to focus on the lower income population.

The **International Baby Food Action Network** suggested that inequalities should not be used by the companies as a CSR tool. **EuroHealthNet** indicated that it would be important to have the validation of the toolbox by nutrition experts.

Mr Bessard indicated that although they did not have a formal evaluation process in place, they wish to work with the Ministry of Education in France to evaluate the action. **The Chair** suggested to ANIA to coordinate their work with the French representative at the High Level Group.

5.3.2 THE HEALTHYLIVING AWARD

The healthy living award, a national award for the foodservice sector, was presented by **Anne Lee, National Health Service of Scotland**. It rewards catering establishments which make it easier for people to eat more healthy when eating out. Currently there are over 1,000 award holders and more than 250 businesses are working towards accreditation. Requirements to be eligible include: reduction of the amount of fat, salt and sugar in the food they serve; increase in the amount of fruit, vegetables and starchy carbohydrates served; guarantee that least 50% of the food prepared is "healthy".

The Chair mentioned the existence of a similar award in Scotland, the 'Eat Safe' award. Ms Lee noted that the 'healthy living' award is the only award focusing on diet and healthy eating; the 'Eat Safe' is about food hygiene and food safety.

6. STAKEHOLDERS' INITIATIVES IN ALL AREAS

6.1 Bike2Work – THE SMART CHOICE FOR COMMUTERS & EMPLOYERS

Randy Rzewnicki, European Cyclists' Federation, presented the project "Bike2work", co-funded by the Commission's Intelligent Energy Programme. Its aim is to achieve a significant shift from motorised transport to cycling by encouraging behaviour change and removing barriers within the workplace. They work on 12 different countries and they aim to add 86,000 new cyclists to the current baseline.

To achieve this aim, Bike2work undertakes promotional campaigns and consultancy and certification of employers. This approach has been successful in some countries. In Denmark and Germany they were able to gain +10% of new *permanent* cyclists.

Mr. Rzewnicki also presented the 'Health Economic Assessment Tool' (HEAT), financed by the Health Programme, an economic assessment tool of the health benefits of cycling to work.

FoodDrinkEurope welcomed the new project and offered to cooperate on this.

Artur Furtado, DG SANTE, inquired if there was a focus on specific socio-economic groups, to which Mr. Rzewnicki indicated that this was not the case and that the project aimed to change behaviour patterns of the public at large.

6.2 ANALYSIS OF THE INDUSTRY'S COMMITMENTS AGAINST PUBLIC HEALTH OBJECTIVES

Nina Renshaw, European Public Health Alliance, gave a first introduction to their project to assess the public health relevance of the commitments by industry members of the Platform.

She mentioned that the current practices of reporting and monitoring of commitments do not provide sufficient data for a conclusive evaluation. For many of the commitments, it is very difficult to draw strong conclusions on the impact on public health objectives. Even granting that some of those commitments may have identifiable, significant positive impacts on public health (although that may not always be the case), it would not be possible to quantify them at the moment.

Given the lack of background material for discussion on this topic, **the Chair** suggested to continue the debate at a later meeting, once a report on the commitment is made available to all members.

6.3 SALUX PROJECT

Dario Vallauri, Tecnogrande (Project Coordinator), provided an overview of the final outcomes of the Salux project (2011-2014), co-funded by the EU Health Programme. It is a European network supporting the reformulation of processed foods. The project aimed at providing support to SMEs and developed a user friendly cost model and a handbook with the main steps for reformulation. It identified and exchanged good practices on the technical and economic aspects of reformulation in SMEs.

The project's key findings:

- Reformulation is not directly addressed in the food legislation of most countries. Voluntary agreements exist between authorities and food business operators;
- The above notwithstanding, each participant country had at least a Plan or a Programme relevant for food and health;
- The most relevant food reformulation actions were found in the bakery industry;
- Most countries focus reformulation efforts on salt, whilst trans-fats and sugar are tackled by some.

Following the presentation, **the Chair** underlined the importance of food reformulation. Both the Platform and the DG RTD funding possibilities can play important roles in this area.

Following a question by **the Chair** on whether reformulation efforts eroded the companies' customer base, Mr Vallauri noted that this rationale also worked in reverse: one the main reasons for companies to reformulate is that their direct competitors are doing so (and are thus feared to be capturing market share).

FoodDrinkEurope indicated that they are trying to stimulate companies to do food reformulation and that it was very positive that there toolboxes such as the one presented exist to help companies.

7. STATE OF PLAY ON COMMITMENTS

Liam Durack, DG SANTE, provided an overview of the state of play on commitments in 2015. Currently there are 287 commitments in the Platform database, out of which 113 are active (39%) and 174 (61%) are non-active. 16 new commitments have been developed 2014 and 3 new ones have been received so far in 2015. New commitments can be submitted until 30 November 2015 and Mr Durack reminded that all Platform members must have an active commitment in order to remain members.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Platform members were provided information on the agenda and logistical elements regarding the Expo2015 in Milan.

9. CONCLUSION

The Chair thanked the participants and:

- confirmed the setting up of an Advisory Group for the Monitoring and Reporting of New Commitments;
- noted the importance of the continued action by the Platform on consumer information, including labelling;
- noted the importance of discussing the overall Platform ambition and objectives.

The next meeting of the Platform will take place on **5 May 2015 in Ispra** and the members will discuss **education, including lifestyle modification**.