



Lessons learnt from the “My healthy family” pilot project

*A guide to the dos and don'ts when setting up
your own project*

Written by ProPager





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1. About the project

"My healthy family" was an EU-funded project **to encourage children, older people and pregnant women in Hungary and Poland to eat more fruit and vegetables.**

The project put the family at the centre of its activities as food is very much a social activity and the family is often the birth place of healthy habits.

The idea was **to get people to truly enjoy the tastes, textures and colours of fresh fruit and vegetables.** This was done by distributing free fruit and vegetables and, with the help of well-known chefs, by providing recipes and cooking lessons (alongside information on the nutritional value of food).

23 519 people took part, the equivalent of 7 000 households in four regions with primary household income below 50% of the EU27 average: Észak-Alföld and Észak-Magyarország in Hungary, Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podkarpackie in Poland. Particular attention was given to vulnerable population groups in those regions.

Key messages of "My healthy family" were that fruit and vegetables are good for you, tasty, easy to prepare, and not expensive especially if bought in season.

Two websites have been created for the project, as well as **two Facebook pages with over 400 posts** in national languages. **27 Facebook competitions** were held. **12 Stories of the Month** were published.

43 recipes in Polish and 43 in Hungarian were shared throughout the project. 5000 Polish and Hungarian **Recipe Fans** each were distributed.

The **Teaching Resource** was shared with 217 schools in Poland and 285 schools in Hungary.

Over seven months about 20.3 kg of different fruit and vegetables were offered to each household in Poland and about 18.6 kg in Hungary, which is over **136 tons** of fruit and vegetables delivered to participants in total.

21 additional activities were organised during the distributions. **58 distributions points** have been activated for the project, **31 in Hungary and 27 in Poland.**

Over 350 press clippings were found in the 4 regions.

The aim was to identify good practices that can be used to replicate the project in other European cities or regions and to improve future policy action in this area. Therefore this **guide** presents the development, implementation and challenges encountered along with lessons learnt, good practices and conclusions drawn from the evaluation of the "My healthy family" project **to facilitate replication** of the project.



2. Scientific background

a. Literature review

A Scientific Committee was established to prepare a literature review providing an analysis of what determines the fruit and vegetables intake of children, pregnant women and older people and of how it can be improved. It was built on previous reviews of various types of intervention studies and strategies (from 2000 onwards and focusing on the EU, in particular on Hungary and Poland).

The Scientific Committee highlighted that WHO reports suggested in 2002 that up to 2.6 million deaths worldwide and 31% of cardiovascular diseases may be attributed to inadequate consumption of fruit and vegetables. In most Western countries, large population groups, including children and adolescents, eat far less than the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables and several studies have shown that children's intake of fruit and vegetables tracks into adolescence and that those food preferences and eating habits established in childhood and adolescence tend to be maintained into adulthood. Reaching out to youth from lower socioeconomic status groups and specific targets like pregnant women and older people are also crucial challenges in this area.

The literature review concluded that nutrition promotion initiatives may play an important role. Interventions may improve individual preference for and/or access to fruit and vegetables. Worldwide experiences and studies show that most of the time such programmes result in an increase of fruit and vegetables consumption, at least in the short term.

In fact, to date, nutrition education projects have only been moderately successful in promoting a sustained consumption of adequate amounts of fruit and vegetables. This only increases the importance of designing interventions to improve health-related.

There is a need for more comparative, theory-based multi-level studies on an international level in which both personal and environmental factors (family, school, local community, and national factors) are considered within a longitudinal design.

The review also observed a lack of interventions, studies and surveys among older people, and to a lesser extent, among pregnant women. Efforts should be made to study, raise awareness and educate these particularly vulnerable target groups (that often have different characteristics and needs).

The Scientific Committee also checked that the project tools were scientifically sound, wrote the questionnaires for both surveys based on their literature review and generally supported the project along its implementation and dissemination phase, which is crucial for the credibility of any project.

b. The zero measurement and post evaluation surveys

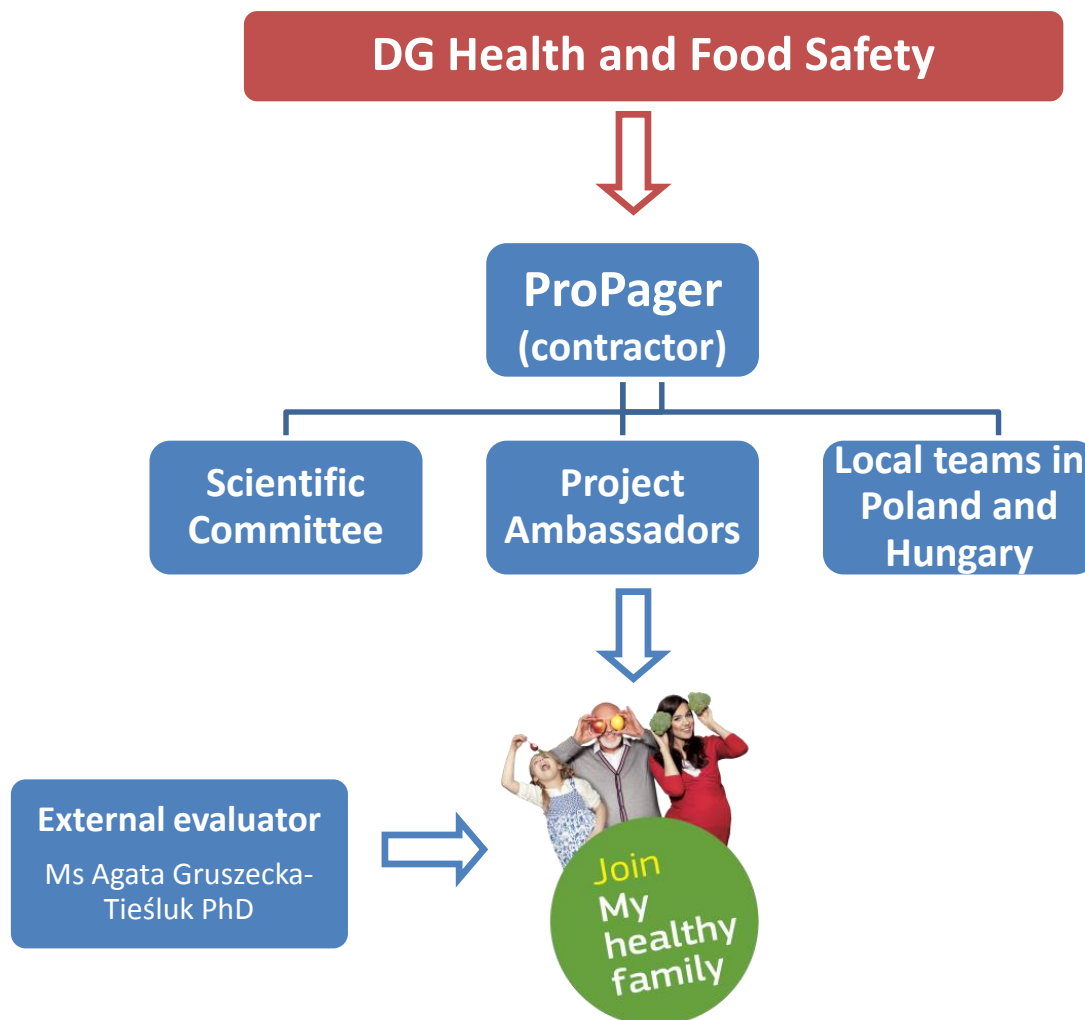
Two surveys examining shopping, cooking and eating habits of the participants as well as the impact of the project on those habits were conducted, one at the beginning of the project and another after the distributions of fruit and vegetables.

More than 3,000 youngsters, older people and pregnant women in Poland and Hungary shared their understanding of the benefits of a healthy diet as well as some of their shopping, cooking and eating habits. The zero measurement survey gathered baseline information while the post evaluation survey gathered comparative data to assess whether the project (and the distribution of fruit and vegetables) had the desired impact.



3. Implementation of the project

a. Organisation



Scientific Committee

- Prof. **Maria Barna** - Hungarian Society of Nutrition
- Prof. **Biró György** - Hungarian Society of Nutrition
- Dr hab. **Aneta Kopeć** - Agriculture University in Krakow, Faculty of Food Technology, Department of Human Nutrition
- **Biró Lajos** PhD - Hungarian Society of Nutrition
- **Anna M. Malinowska** PhD - Poznań University of Life Sciences, Department of Human Nutrition and Hygiene
- **Ewa Piątkowska** PhD - Agriculture University in Krakow, Faculty of Food Technology, Department of Human Nutrition

Members of the Scientific Committee were chosen among the best specialist in nutrition from highly regarded academic research centres in Poland and in Hungary. The three Hungarian scientists belong to the Hungarian Society of Nutrition while Polish specialists work at the Agriculture University in Krakow and Poznań University of Life Science.



Project Ambassadors

- Alexandra Béres – Hungarian fitness coach, athlete and TV cooking presenter
- Magda Gessler – well-known Polish chef and restaurateur

Contractor's team consisting of

- Project manager
- Deputy project manager
- TL Scientific Evaluation & TL Communication Strategy (1 person)
- Implementation and project management team in Poland incl. social media, communication, organisation of distributions, reporting and documentation (5 persons)
- Implementation and project management in Hungary, incl. social media, communication (1 person)
- Local coordinator in Észak-Magyarország region in Hungary
- Local coordinator in Észak-Alföld region in Hungary
- Local coordinator in Kujawsko-Pomorskie voivodeship in Poland
- Local coordinator in Podkarpackie voivodeship in Poland
- Part time support during promotional and launch events

External evaluator - Ms Agata Gruszecka-Tieśluk PhD



b. Project Scope

4 regions in Poland and Hungary with primary household income below 50% of the EU27 average



Hungary

Regions: Észak-Alföld and Észak-Magyarország



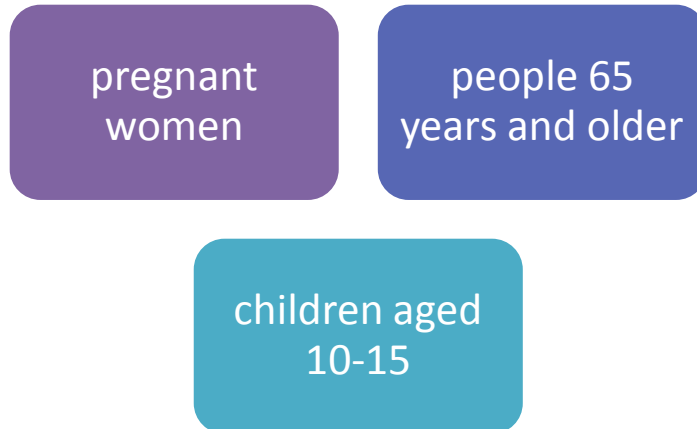
Poland

Regions: Kujawsko-Pomorskie and Podkarpackie voivodeships





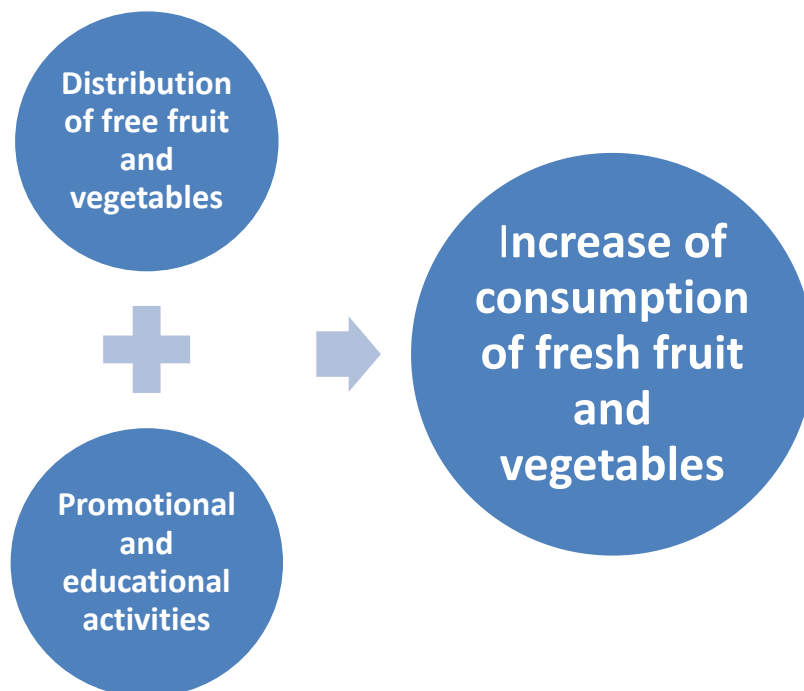
c. Target groups



d. Message

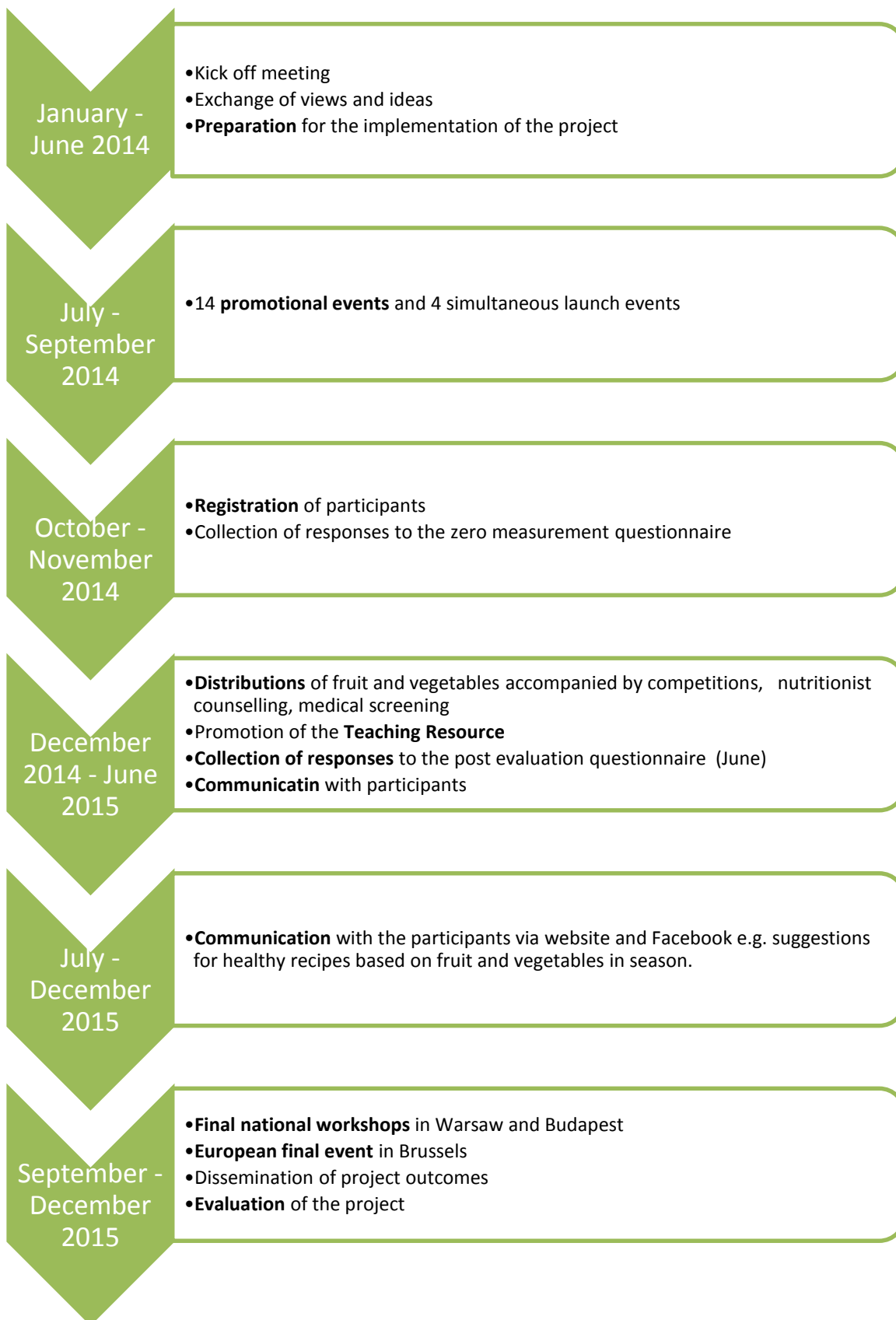
Fruit and vegetables are healthy, tasty, easy to prepare and inexpensive – especially if bought in season

e. Idea





f. Calendar



g. Promotional events

During the summer months prior to the launch events, the project team organised **14 promotional events** in the four participating regions to raise awareness of the project among its target groups and collect registrations. In most cases local outdoor events or events related to healthy eating and lifestyle taking place in main towns and cities were chosen to build up a stand with an information desk and kid's corner. The staff in project T-shirts actively encouraged passers-by to sign up to the project. Everyone who visited the stand received a piece of fresh fruit. At the kid's corner art contests, quizzes and other games related to fruit and vegetables were organised. At some events there was a possibility of benefiting from nutritionist counselling.



© EU 2014/Marta Sitkiewicz
Event in Inowrocław, Poland. 31 August 2014.

The **joint launch events** on 23 September 2014 in Rzeszów and Toruń in Poland and Debrecen and Miskolc in Hungary had two distinct parts: an **"official" opening session** attended by officials, stakeholders and the media in the morning and a **public event** in the afternoon with a "My healthy family" stand. People who visited the tent could taste local and seasonal fruit and sign up to the project. Among others the "official" session was attended by local officials, e.g. the deputy mayor and representatives of the health department of the City of Toruń, the mayor of Rzeszów and Ms Elżbieta Łukacijewska, MEP. In Miskolc and in Debrecen Ms Alexandra Béres, project ambassador was present. During the session a presentation of the project and a discussion accompanied by catering took place.



© EU 2014/Kinga Varga
Launching event in Miskolc, Hungary. 23 September 2014.

The popular events sparked the interest of the local media. During each event several dozen registrations were acquired on the spot. However, the real impact of the promotional events is hard to quantify as there is no way of linking online registration to the events (e.g. by people encouraged to sign up to the project by acquaintances or family who attended the events).

h. Registration and selection of participants

The eligibility of the household depended on the presence of at least one member of the three target groups e.g. a pregnant women or mother of a newborn, a 10-15 years old child or an older person of 65 years+ as well as the geographic spread.

At the end 6281 Polish and 4818 Hungarian households applied but at least 20% of the registrations were incomplete, illegible or from a person outside the target groups.

Not all of the admitted participants collected their first two parcels, probably due to dissatisfaction with the quantity of fruit and vegetables. Ultimately those were replaced by applicants from the waiting list, who though belonging to the target group, were not accepted before. Those also filled in the zero measurement questionnaires and were added to the database, bringing the number of benefitting households to 7,000 representing 23,519 persons.



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This experience strongly highlighted the necessity to better explain to the interested families what to expect from the project (see "Lessons learnt").

Make sure that on all registration forms, you inform people of their data protection rights e.g. to observe, update, correct data stored on them and get their permission for the processing of their data, based on Regulation (EC) N° 45/2001 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:008:0001:0022:EN:PDF>

i. Distributions

It was imperative to choose distributors

- capable of delivering to all distribution points,
- guaranteeing the quality of fruit and vegetables and
- offering a compatible price.

Distribution points were located in e.g. schools, charity organisations and social centres where most of the staff agreed to give away the parcels for free. In most cases the distribution points, located in main towns and cities in each region, were open



© EU 2015/Magdalena Geraga
Distribution of fruit and vegetables in Inowrocław. Poland.



between 5 and 7 hours during each chosen day. In Hungary there were 31 points (average of 110 participants attributed to each), in Poland 27 points (average of 130 participants). 2-3 distribution points were set up in the biggest cities.

Each family was informed about the distributions and the accompanying activities a couple of days in advance, requiring sufficient human resources to answer an increased volume of phone, email and face book inquiries.

Regular monitoring and evaluation was carried out in co-operation with the distribution points e.g. through visits of the regional coordinators at distribution points who also met the participants personally.

How to ensure the quality of fruit and vegetables:

- Choosing long lasting fruit and vegetables which were easy to store and transport.
- Proper packing and shipping of the parcels just before distributions.
- Constant quality control by collecting opinions about fruit and vegetables from participants, distribution points and the local coordinators.
- Offering another parcel if someone reported that in a parcel not all fruit and vegetables were first class (such situations were incidental).

How to arrange each distribution:

- Setting dates and opening hours with distribution points and fruit and vegetables suppliers.
- Composition of the parcel depending on the season and the situation on the fruit and vegetables market.
- Updating the participant list.
- Inviting the participants.
- Providing guidelines for distribution points and suppliers.
- Organisation of accompanying activities.
- On-site quality control with the regional coordinators.
- Collecting feedback from suppliers, distribution points, regional coordinators and participants.
- Reporting to DG Health and Food Safety of the European Commission.

How to underline the project's educational value and make the distributions more attractive:

- Medical screenings
- Nutritionist counselling
- Presentations about healthy diet during pregnancy and infant first aid
- Competitions or short survey questions such as:
 - Is there more vitamin C in an apple or a potato?
 - Is there more vitamin A in an orange, a carrot or a celery?
 - What would encourage you to eat more fruit and vegetables?
 - In what form do you normally eat fruit?
- Offering attractive prizes e.g. blenders
- Handing out the Recipe Fan
- Giving away project gadgets: bags, leaflets, pins, notepads

The project gadgets can be shipped to the distribution points or regional distributors of fruit and vegetables and handed over to participants during distributions.



Distributions date, fruit and vegetables variety, weight of parcels and percentage of collected parcels in both countries are presented below:

	Poland				Hungary			
	Date	Fruit and vegetables	Weight	percentage of collected parcels	Date	Fruit and vegetables	Weight	Percentage of collected parcels
December	9-15 Dec	mandarins, carrots	1.5 kg	70%	9-19 Dec	mandarins pumpkin	1.5 kg	75%
January	20-27 Jan	apples, potatoes	2 kg	50%	13-15 Jan	oranges, potatoes	2 kg	70%
February	9-13 Feb, 23-27 Feb	apples, kiwis, onions and beetroots	3 kg	55%	10-12 Feb, 17-19 Feb	apples, beetroots	3 kg	80%
March	16-20, 23-27 March	oranges, carrots and celeries	2.3 kg	66%	10-12, 17-19 March	apples and spring onions	1.5 kg	77%
April	21-30 April	radishes, chives, apples and bananas	3.2 kg	84%	14-16, 21-23 April	pears and carrots	3 kg	90%
May	25-29 May	red cabbage, beetroots, radishes, leeks and lemons	4.3 kg	74%	12-14, 19-21 May	green apples and radishes	3.8 kg	84%
June	22-26 June	cauliflower, cabbage, potatoes, cucumbers, pears	4 kg	72%	8-12 June	green peas and cherries	3.8 kg	81%
	Total weight per person		20.3 kg		Total weight per person		18.6 kg	
	Average weight of one parcel in 7 distributions		2.9 kg		Average weight of one parcel in 7 distributions		2.66 kg	

Initially some participants were not satisfied with the amount of fruit and vegetables they received and stopped collecting their parcels. Therefore, the total amount of fruit and vegetables was packed into 7 instead of 12 parcels, thus reducing the number of times participants had to come to the distribution points.

The overall average percentage of collected parcels could be increased to 69% in Poland and 81% in Hungary by

- organising events or educational activities alongside distributions,
- offering two parcels to participants coming at the end of the opening hours which reduced the leftovers and was greatly appreciated by those participants
- offering fewer but larger parcels.



Project tools

The promotional materials such as roll-ups, nomadic stands, posters, brochures and leaflets were used by partners and stakeholders on promotional events. The leaflets included a paper registration form. Bags, buttons and the brochure were added to the first fruit and vegetables parcels.

To keep participants, stakeholders and media's attention and interest over a long period of time **enough high quality tools** for the project's promotion need to be included in the concept.

It is better to distribute the promotional tools throughout the entire duration of the project instead of providing all tools at the same time.

Teaching Resource

To encourage secondary school students to discuss healthy lifestyles, four specific **lesson or project plans** have been developed. Teachers might use these ready-to-use guides to introduce **nutrition and physical activity** onto the learning schedules of 10 to 15 year olds. By navigating them, the students might also develop **interpersonal skills** and learn how to cooperate.

The **Teaching Resource** was published on the project's websites and Facebook pages. Secondary schools in all participating regions were also encouraged to use the Teaching Resource by email and phone.

Students making use of the Teaching resource had a chance to take part in a competition. 69 Polish students submitted posters, photos, videos, articles, logos etc. on healthy diet. The authors of the best artwork as well as the teacher who involved the highest number of students won project's gadgets, kitchen tools and a chosen cookbook. In Hungary 270 pupils, 10-15 years old, from 31 schools met the challenge to answer the quiz included in the Teaching Resource. Among the correct answers 5 vouchers for sport equipment were raffled off.

Recipe Fan "Monthly delights"

Recipes for 12 main courses plus starters and desserts, were put together in a fanlike format to inspire "My healthy family" participants to **try out new ways to a healthier diet**.

Project ambassadors Magda Gessler and Alexandra Béres adapted some of their popular Polish and Hungarian recipes, introducing more fruit and vegetables to their countries' traditional cuisine. They took an innovative approach to show that fruit and vegetables are an essential part of many tasty, nutritious, balanced and affordable meals.

"My healthy family" ambassadors were of key importance because of their local celebrity and resulting influence on how people eat in general. They are considered well-known persons in the field of cooking and healthy, high-quality eating.

WHILE SHOPPING, DON'T FORGET YOUR SHOPPING LIST!
It will help you to choose seasonal and cheaper fruit and vegetables.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

JANUARY MONTHLY DELIGHTS

POTATO & APPLE

APPETIZER **MAIN COURSE** **DESSERT**

MILLED FRUIT PUNCH

BAKED POTATOES WITH GARLIC AND ROSEMARY

CHERILLETTE

SHOPPING LIST

- Apple
- Banana
- Grapefruit
- Kiwi
- Lemon
- Mandarin
- Orange
- Pear
- Pineapple
- Walnut
- Avocado
- Broccoli
- Broccoli sprouts
- Carrot
- Cauliflower
- Chinese cabbage
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Horseradish
- Isenberg lettuce
- Leek
- Onion
- Paprika
- Potato
- Red cabbage
- Savoy cabbage
- Tump
- White cabbage
- Zucchini

www.mojazdrowiedzina.pl

It is essential to make it clear to participating chefs that some of their original recipes need to be adapted before being included in any promotional tools of a pilot project promoting healthy diets. Recipes may e.g. not contain any alcohol and ingredients such as cream should be replaced by less fatty dairy products. Excess sugar in the desserts also needs to be avoided, ask for less cake and more fruit.

The final version needs to be verified by the Scientific Committee to ascertain the suitability of the recipes and to avoid health claims¹ in the nutritional information². Enough time needs to be allowed for this process and the resulting revisions as the recipes **should be printed and handed to the participants during the first distribution**. The Shopping List should be published online at the same time.

The Shopping list

A monthly list of fruit and vegetables was prepared to facilitate buying seasonal and inexpensive products. The shopping list also includes the corresponding recipes from the fan.



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j. Online tools

Websites

Two websites, in Polish and in Hungarian, with information about the monthly distributions, events and competitions were created. The partners of the project (NGOs and public institutions supporting the project) have their own bookmark on the website. Each website consisted of

- Home – welcome page
- About us – description of the project

¹http://ec.europa.eu/food/food/labellingnutrition/claims/health_claims_en.htm

²<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1424334654730&uri=URISERV:I21306>



- Activities – information about current events and competitions, stories of the month
- Project Ambassadors recipes for every month
- Project tools to be downloaded e.g. Teaching resource
- Links to the project partners
- Contact information

Facebook pages

The project's Facebook pages gave "My healthy family" a social, community based and participative dimension. The pages were essential to the communication with the participants about events, distributions and competitions and to respond to their comments and questions. Interesting facts about fruit and vegetables, links to educational materials and invitations to online discussion were posted as well.

Over 400 posts were published incl. 27 competitions to educate participants or start a discussion about their eating habits.

Often competitions consisted of a simple question (e.g. 'Which of the following vegetables should not be stored in the fridge – tomatoes, carrots or cauliflower?', 'What is your favourite dish made of one of the monthly delights?') or calls to complete a sentence (e.g. 'If I were a fruit I would be...', 'I eat fruit and vegetables because...'). There were also competitions prepared specially for children, such as drawing a picture of their favourite fruit or vegetable or making a fruit and vegetables composition. The winners of the competitions were given project gadgets, such as bags, notepads and badges or some useful kitchen devices (e.g. a lemon squeezer and a vegetables sharpener and peeler).

Each month a story about the project was published to sustain interest of participants, partners and stakeholders in the project.

Deliverables

N°	Deliverable
1	A2 posters for display in schools, health centres, clubs, parishes (500 PL & 500 HU+ EN version in electronic form)
2	A4 folded brochure (5000 PL & 5000 HU+ EN version in electronic form)
3	Leaflet with registration forms (5000 PL & 5000 HU+ EN version in electronic form)
4	Roll-ups (PL & HU)- 5 promotional + 5 generic for each country
5	Nomadic stands (2PL & 2HU)
6	Linen bags (5000 PL & 5000 HU)
7	Website (PL & HU)
8	Ambassadors' foreword
9	Teaching Resource (EN, HU, PL) + its promotion to schools
10	Recipes Fan - (5000 PL & 5000 HU+ EN version in electronic form)
11	Shopping List (HU, PL, EN)
12	Literature review
13	Zero measurement results
14	Communication + Dissemination Plan
15	Post evaluation results, comparison with zero measurement
16	Regular reports and meeting notes
17	Project implementation evaluation (external)
18	Replication guide



k. Organisation of zero measurement and post evaluation surveys

In connection with their registration the participants completed a questionnaire on their eating, shopping, cooking habits to establish a zero measurement.

Towards the end of the project they completed the post evaluation questionnaire to raise comparable data. The relevant link was sent to all participants with an e-mail address. Paper versions of the questionnaire were provided at distribution points to those who did not have the skills or internet access to fill them in online. Participants were not eager to assist in the post evaluation, hence detailed guidelines how to proceed were provided to staff at distribution points where the contractor's personnel could not be present. Several prizes were raffled off among those participants who submitted the form which provided further incentive.

Bear I mind that paper questionnaire are onerous as data from each questionnaire, in case of "My healthy family" several hundred forms containing 55 questions each, have to be physically collected and manually entered into the database.

In the "My healthy family" project only 68% of responses could be used for comparative studies, due to problems matching the particular household's post evaluation questionnaire with the zero measurement questionnaire.

Make sure to organise the two surveys in a way that increases the likelihood that

- the same participants fill in both questionnaires,
- the completed zero measurement can be matched to the post evaluation questionnaire.

Give an unique ID number to each respondent, but also gather additional data (such as place of living, number of household members, years of birth of household members etc.) to identify a particular household.

l. Dissemination of project outcomes

A dissemination plan needs to be drafted at the beginning of the second half of the project to identify and organise the actions and activities to share the results of the project, its deliverables and methods, with as many stakeholders as possible, at national and European level.

Project results are disseminated via the project's websites and face book pages as well as published on the website of DG Health and Food Safety http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/projects/ep_funded_projects_en.htm#fragment1.

Final workshops in Warsaw and Budapest

National workshops in both capitals have been organised to inform relevant regional and national key stakeholders, such as policy-makers and representatives of other regions about these findings and increase the likelihood of their impact on national programmes.

Both final national workshops were hosted by the respective ministry of health on their premises which is a location to be favoured. 47 people participated in Budapest on 20 October 2015, 38 peoples attended in Warsaw on 27 October 2015.

Among the participants were representatives of universities and scientific institutes, municipality, local government, NGO's, social assistance centres, universities of the third age and bloggers.

The project team presented the project idea, goals, development and lessons learnt from implementing the project, then members of the Scientific Committee talked about the results of their research related to the project.



Anticipate time in your programme for discussions with the participants about the project's findings.

To those interested in the project who could not attend, the project results were sent by email. A press release (in Hungarian and in Polish) was also disseminated.

Final Workshop in Brussels

EU policy-makers, European associations, Brussels-based journalists and others stakeholders representing the educational, health and social sector were invited to an European dissemination workshop in Brussels on 16 December 2015 shared with "We love eating", a similar pilot project.

After creating a list of invitees of organisations and journalists working in the field of nutrition and physical activity a "safe the date" email with invitation and draft agenda was sent (a month before the event), followed by a reminder and phone calls.

Both projects shared their experiences and lessons learnt. Additionally, experts from Brussels-based organisations and institutes shared their experience in the field of nutrition and interventions to improve eating behaviours. At the end a discussion on the conclusions and recommendations ensued. The event was held in English, without interpretation. Welcome coffee and finger food lunch were offered, project tools were displayed at reception.

The timing of the event must respect the needs of participants travelling to Brussels from abroad to allow them to catch the evening planes without the need to stay overnight.

Conferences

Participation in conferences related to nutrition needs to be planned well in advance. Subject and description of the presentation need to be submitted already when the programmes are drafted. In Hungary the outcomes of "My healthy family" were presented by Mr. Dr Lajos Biró on the Conference of the Hungarian Dieticians Association (HDA) on 26 September 2015 and on the Conference of the Association of Hungarian Nutritionists on 8-10 October 2015. In Poland, the outcomes of the project will be presented on conferences taking place in 2016.

m. Sustainability and transferability

Project tools

All project tools were prepared in Hungarian, Polish and English and are therefore of use not only to Hungarian and Polish people but English speaking audiences and, after translation, to people from all over Europe.

All efforts were made to either obtain intellectual property rights for the European Union or mark those contents where permissions need to be obtained from right holders prior to reuse, e.g. the chefs. Meticulous copyright notices are included in each of the tools.

Similar initiatives

Similar initiatives were identified and contacted to promote the project outcomes and tools. Brief information about the project, the contact details and the project educational tools were sent to selected initiatives to encourage them to publish those. However, only a few initiatives were interested in publishing the tools. Some of them ignored the encouragement, some asked for money in return.



n. Lessons learnt

Disappointment with the size of the parcel

Many participants were disappointed with the amount of free fruit and vegetables they were given and stopped collecting their parcels. Despite prioritising admission of participants living within a short distance from the distribution points, for some the cost of getting there was higher than the value of the fruit and vegetables they received. Some understood the project as financial aid to their family, like a food bank.

Competitions and events accompanying the monthly distributions not only emphasised the educational value of the project but worked as additional incentives to show up and collect the parcels. Reducing the number of distributions from 12 to 7 larger parcels led to more satisfied beneficiaries, nevertheless a number of dropouts needed to be replaced.

Make sure the amount of fruit and vegetables planned for distribution is not too symbolic to make a real difference to a family's diet for the duration of the project and inform beneficiaries about the size of the parcel to be expected. Combine the distribution with free nutritionist counselling, presentations on healthy lifestyles or similar services.

At the promotion stage when the participants are registered make clear that the objectives of the project is to educate the participants, change their behaviour and raise data. The "tit for tat" aspect needs to be understood, though later on tangible incentives like raffles clearly help.

Organisation of distributions

In Poland the majority of participants were recruited from the general public causing many challenges concerning the management of distribution and communication. The percentage of collected parcels in Hungary was comparatively higher because the participants were in contact with the organisation where the distributions took place, anyway. From a pragmatic point of view it is recommended to use the Hungarian approach, in this way many logistical problems related to distribution can be avoided. However, schools, universities of third age and other institutions associated with education would be more appropriate to become distribution points than charity organisations and social centres which are associated too much with financial aid and not enough with educational activities.

Special attention to the guidelines for the local suppliers and distributors should be paid. Timing, products quality and assistance in unloading packages are crucial from a logistic point of view.

It is better not to distribute fruit and vegetables during summer when high temperatures can be expected, due to the risk of spoilage, especially if distribution points do not have any facilities to store fruit and vegetables. Companies which delivered fruit and vegetables for "My healthy family" turned out to be mostly reliable, distributions were on time and the quality of fruit and vegetables was usually first class. However, some green peas spoiled in Hungary during the last distribution in June and had to be replaced.



Communication with participants

In Hungary only about 36% of participants provided their email addresses which made informing them about distributions and getting responses to the questionnaires challenging. Partner organisations had to help make contact and a lot of phoning and texting was required. In Poland those participants were contacted via phone and asked for an email address. Registration of participants via partner organisations turned out to be more effective than recruiting them from the general public. Creating groups of participants, which are centred around one partner organisation is the most efficient way for proper communication and successful distribution.

Given the above problems contacting registered participants, no registrations without email addresses should be accepted. However, this would exclude a considerable part of the participants with low SES while getting them into the project is a great challenge in itself.

Human and financial resources

Make sure to have sufficient human resources bearing in mind the workload caused by

- organising each distribution incl. agreements with supplier and distribution points each time
- completing the list of participants and keeping in touch with them
- answering questions per phone or social media
- manually entering data from paper questionnaires into the database. Depending on the literacy and computer skills of your target group(s) there might be more than expected.

When calculating the cost of handing out free fruit and vegetables, do not forget that distribution costs e.g. sorting, packing, storing and delivering need to be considered on top of the actual price of the produce. Events and competitions turned out to be well appreciated and crucial to keep participants interested, but also need to be budgeted for e.g. prizes for the competitions such as blenders.

Scientific article on outcomes

The Scientific Committee should have published articles on the project outcomes in suitable scientific magazines, but those requested payment. Unpaid articles might be published if at all with great delay, up to one year after their submission. The Scientific Committee therefore submitted the article in several magazines to increase chances of publication.

Communication with partners, stakeholders and the media

One of the important lessons learnt is the **value of events to communicate and network**. All of the promotional events at the beginning of the project were well attended not only by potential beneficiaries but also by the media and a whole range of civil society organisations who became valuable partners for the further implementation of the project. Some of these organisations became instrumental in the registration of participants; others participated in the distribution of fruit and vegetables.

Distribution points not only play a crucial role in keeping in touch with the participants but also in the collecting of their feedback, supporting additional activities and checking the quality and quantity of delivered goods.



The local **media**, mainly newspapers, proved to be a great source of information about the project, especially in small towns. National media were not interested in publishing project news.

Promoting the project among local newspapers, websites and blogs related to healthy lifestyle resulted in over 350 press clippings in the 4 regions during the duration of the project.

Media should be monitored regularly to watch out also for articles presenting the project in a bad light. As long as it is only one article the best action is no action, as long as other media do not run with it.

Management

Due to the experimental nature of pilot projects and "testing" tools a high degree of **flexibility, high reactivity and smooth communication** between the **project staff**, participants and subcontractors is imperative. Implementing strictly the same structure in different countries may not be the best solution as national specificities and local context should be taken into account.

As it turned out, **the local context was essential** to the project. **Local coordinators** were crucial due to their presence and personal contacts in their regions. They could have been given more responsibilities, especially at the later stages of the project. The on-line registration tool and the project websites should be administered locally.

Make sure to collaborate with experts from the particular country e.g. scientific community, local organisations, local coordinators from the very beginning because they know best the social context of the region and how to best reach the target groups.

Want to know more?

Find the project's tools and results:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/projects/ep_funded_projects_en.htm#fragment1

Read more on other pilot projects:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/nutrition_physical_activity/projects/ep_funded_projects_en.htm