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## Framing a proactive policy for public authorities in Europe aimed at preventing overweight and achieving regulation

### Motion for a recommendation

tabled by Ms Marietta KARAMANLI and other members of the Assembly

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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According to the World Health Organisation (OMS), obesity is one of the most serious public health challenges of the 21st century. Its prevalence has tripled in many of the countries in the WHO's European region since the 1980s and the numbers of those affected continue to rise at an alarming rate, particularly among children.

In recent years our Assembly adopted a resolution encouraging responsible food consumption (February 2005) which resulted in a recommendation (October 2007) emphasising *inter alia* that the first step towards responsible consumption was healthy eating; the Assembly has also received a motion for a resolution aimed at preventing obesity and promoting healthy eating habits among children and teenagers; as long ago as 1994 our Assembly adopted a report on food and health calling for improvements in consumer eating habits. Generally speaking, these parliamentary efforts have highlighted the need to improve information and education on nutrition, the merits of defining references for healthy eating and the wisdom of focusing on consumer awareness so that people make civic-minded choices.

Despite our Assembly's commitment, the measures mentioned or recommended have not been widely implemented while obesity constitutes the most widespread non-transmissible illness in the world, and political authorities and citizens must now take action as a matter of urgency.

A global policy for combating overweight and obesity and assisting those who suffer from such problems should already have been framed.

Independent public bodies have already highlighted the risk of Europe's children becoming overweight and obese and issued calls for a complete overhaul of the way in which the food they eat is advertised, particularly on television.

At the same time, studies have shown that the big corporations in the food production, distribution and catering sector do not follow World Health Organisation recommendations to limit the use of salt, sugar and fat in their products, to reduce the size of individual portions, to promote consumer advice and to encourage or aid physical activity.

For these reasons, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe asks the Committee of Ministers to:

- make prevention and information measures to combat the epidemic of obesity, particularly among children, a public action priority: this requires preventive efforts from school age onwards, effective screening, the provision of a wide range of tailored nutritional advice, free of any guilt factor. All our collective intelligence must be mobilised, particularly where the youngest members of society are concerned;



- invite and then urge and possibly force food industry manufacturers and distributors to revise both the composition of some of their products (quality and health standards) as well as their efforts to encourage and promote the consumption of products considered somewhat or completely damaging to health;
- call on the member States to restrict advertising aimed at children, especially on television, for excessively sugary, salty, fatty or nutritionally unbalanced foods;
- propose that the member States take steps to guarantee proper access to medical advice and suitable care for persons at risk of obesity and/or various complications linked to this pathology;
- urge the States to take a firm stand against measures discriminating against persons suffering from obesity of the kind that may adversely affect their access to transport, work organisation, ease of performing their work etc;
- encourage joint thinking on how our collective day-to-day life can promote the practice of "gentle" and less stressful physical activities. Transport, the layout of urban routes and the organisation of work-time must enable citizens and workers to benefit from their movements, breaks and rest periods to relax at their ease and expend energy safely and comfortably.

*Signed (see overleaf)*

*Signed*<sup>1</sup>:

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1. EDG: European Democrat Group  
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party  
SOC: Socialist Group