



Resolution 1804 (2011)¹

Safeguarding children and young people from obesity and type 2 diabetes

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly stresses the fundamental importance of safeguarding the health and well-being of children and young people and regrets the recent rise, in Europe and elsewhere, in obesity and type 2 diabetes affecting them. Obesity and type 2 diabetes, an acquired metabolic disorder, are preventable, life-shortening conditions which can lead to other illnesses (including cardiovascular diseases and cancer); they negatively affect sufferers' quality of life and place a considerable burden on health-care systems. The Assembly thus considers that member states need to respond urgently to this public health crisis.
2. The Assembly therefore welcomes the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health of the World Health Organization (WHO) as a reference framework for member states' initiatives to decrease risk factors and to promote healthy lifestyles and environments. It calls on member states to implement the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity adopted at the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Counteracting Obesity, held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 15 to 17 November 2006.
3. The Assembly invites member states to consider the prevention of obesity from the perspective of the right of children and young people to health and a healthy environment in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which calls on states parties to recognise the right of children to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health (Article 24).
4. The Assembly calls on member states to take urgent action to protect children and young people from the onset and the consequences of obesity and type 2 diabetes, in particular measures to promote healthy nutritional habits, a healthy lifestyle and a healthy environment. The measures designed should take due account of the principle of respect of the child's best interest.
5. With a view to promoting healthy nutritional habits, the Assembly recommends that member states:
 - 5.1. take measures to improve food content, from the earliest age, through:
 - 5.1.1. the promotion of breastfeeding, from birth to the age of six months, with all due respect for the mother's choice;
 - 5.1.2. healthier food processing and the elimination of synthetic trans-fats, preservation additives and other chemicals in foodstuffs;
 - 5.1.3. the improvement of school meals and the minimisation of the consumption of unhealthy food and drinks;
 - 5.2. ensure access to and availability of healthier food, including fruit and vegetables, to children and young people, as far as possible making healthier food choices affordable;

1. Assembly debate on 13 April 2011 (15th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12559](#), report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Hancock). Text adopted by the Assembly on 13 April 2011 (15th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 1966 \(2011\)](#).



- 5.3. regulate food marketing (including food labelling, nutritional information and advertising) to reduce its pressure on children and young people and to limit advertising, particularly television advertising, aimed at children that promotes high-energy, low-nutrient food or food products with high sugar, salt or fat content;
 - 5.4. inform children and young people, as well as their parents and carers, about the benefits of healthy eating habits, as well as the dangers and the long-term consequences of nutritionally unbalanced fast-food consumption and the risks of poor health due to induced obesity;
 - 5.5. reconsider their fiscal policies related to food and consider introducing taxes on foods that are high in synthetic trans-fats, salt and sugar, using generated revenues to lower the cost of healthy foods, particularly for low-income population groups or investing them in the health system to enable treatment of people who suffer from obesity and type 2 diabetes;
 - 5.6. invite, then encourage and perhaps oblige agri-food manufacturers and distributors to review both the composition of some of their products (quality and health standards) and their activities which encourage and promote the consumption of products considered to be less healthy, or unhealthy.
6. With a view to promoting healthy lifestyles, the Assembly recommends that member states take measures to improve the well-being of children and young people in all areas of life, approaching public health-related issues in a holistic way. In so doing, member states are invited to:
- 6.1. raise awareness among children and young people on their development needs, enabling them to identify food as nutrition, not as a substitute for the satisfaction of other needs or discomforts; educate them about ways and means of managing stress and dealing with negative emotions, such as sadness and anger, as these are well-known triggers for excess food consumption;
 - 6.2. promote a more active lifestyle, educating children and young people accordingly;
 - 6.3. provide children and young people with opportunities for individual accomplishments in both formal educational settings and through their social life, thus developing their personal autonomy and their feeling of self-worth;
 - 6.4. support schools in their efforts to encourage healthy eating habits and physical exercise, and ensure that schools are properly funded to be able to carry out this task successfully; ensure the widest possible dissemination and implementation of Committee of Ministers Resolution ResAP(2005)3 on healthy eating in schools, paying particular attention to the quality of school meals, while making healthier school meals affordable for all children and young people;
 - 6.5. implement Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)6 on improving physical education and sport for children and young people in all European countries, *inter alia* by improving access to sports facilities for children and the young (in socially disadvantaged areas in particular) and by running campaigns promoting a more active lifestyle;
 - 6.6. ensure the full participation in society of children and young people, including those who are suffering from obesity/overweight and type 2 diabetes, and take a firm stand against discriminatory measures affecting persons suffering from obesity.
7. With a view to promoting a healthy environment, the Assembly recommends that member states:
- 7.1. develop specific policies and initiatives to support a health-promoting natural and built environment;
 - 7.2. take specific measures to improve urban mobility, for instance by promoting cycling and walking through better urban design and transport policies. Action in favour of more flexible working hours should also help parents to take more advantage of their travelling time, breaks and rest periods to relax and engage in activities with their children in safety and comfort.
8. The Assembly calls on member states to provide children and young people with appropriate treatment in response to obesity and type 2 diabetes and to make sure that persons at risk of obesity and/or of various complications linked to this condition have genuine access to medical advice and suitable care and treatment. Member states should improve, in particular, the early intervention and management of obesity and type 2 diabetes affecting children and young people.

9. The Assembly recommends taking urgent action in order to strengthen member states' capacity to undertake research and find solutions to these problems, including by substantially improving data collection and analysis (for example with regard to children with type 2 diabetes). The Assembly also calls on the specialised international organisations to provide adequate support to research initiatives aimed at reversing the development of obesity and type 2 diabetes epidemics in children and young people.

10. The Assembly considers participation of children and young people in the design of public health programmes intended for them as an important condition for their successful implementation, and thus recommends ensuring their full participation in all action undertaken in Council of Europe member states.