Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Dietary-related ill health

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Kerry McCARTHY 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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Across the Council of Europe area, we are seeing a growing public health crisis linked to diets. Heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers are associated with obesity and unhealthy consumption habits, and, from the United Kingdom to Azerbaijan, we are also seeing a reported rise in malnutrition.

For the first time in history, more people will die from lifestyle-related health problems – including obesity, alcohol and substance abuse, and smoking – than from communicable diseases.

The trend is particularly worrying when it comes to children's health. In the United Kingdom, for example, more children are now classed as obese at the age of 11 than in the United States, and the number of children with type 2 diabetes – normally seen in people over the age of 40 – has risen by 14% in the past year.

This all comes at a financial cost to public services. An average 7% of European Union national health budgets is spent on treating obesity-related illness and this is forecast to increase, along with wider societal costs. Governments have assumed an interventionist role in relation to other lifestyle choices, such as smoking and alcohol, but have often been reluctant to do so when it comes to food.

Freedom of choice is important; however, the State has a responsibility to empower and enable its citizens to make informed, healthy and sustainable choices. This would ensure that the positive freedom – for citizens to be able to pursue individual happiness and fulfilment – can flourish alongside the negative freedom from undue restraint, and would promote society's collective wellbeing.

The Parliamentary Assembly should give urgent consideration as to what further action is needed. This could range from simply providing better information to consumers, to regulation, legislation or introducing fiscal incentives and disincentives where appropriate and effective.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EC: European Conservatives Group
SOC: Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group
NR: Representatives not belonging to a Political Group