



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2231(INI)	Procedure completed
Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases		
Subject 3.10.10 Foodstuffs, foodstuffs legislation 4.20 Public health		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		29/11/2005
		ALDE RIES Frédérique	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		12/09/2006
	PSE HEDH Anna		
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Agriculture and Fisheries	2790	19/03/2007
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Health and Food Safety	KYPRIANOU Markos	

Key events			
07/12/2005	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2005)0637	Summary
28/09/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
27/11/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
06/12/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0450/2006	
31/01/2007	Debate in Parliament		
01/02/2007	Results of vote in Parliament		
01/02/2007	Decision by Parliament	T6-0019/2007	Summary
01/02/2007	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2006/2231(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Strategic initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ENVI/6/33971

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2005)0637	08/12/2005	EC	Summary
Committee draft report		PE378.465	19/09/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE378.845	16/10/2006	EP	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE380.581	10/11/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A6-0450/2006	06/12/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T6-0019/2007	01/02/2007	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)1016-2	27/02/2007	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2007)1426	10/04/2007	EC	

Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases

PURPOSE: a Green Paper on ?promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases.?

CONTENT: the Council has invited the Commission to contribute towards promoting healthier life styles across the EU. It has also invited the Commission to study ways of promoting better nutrition within the European Union and, if necessary, present appropriate proposals.

Article 152 of the Treaty on European Union (a high level of human health) gives the Community the right of initiative to act on nutritional matters. A number of Community areas relate to nutrition and physical activity and the Council has confirmed the need to mainstream nutrition and physical activity into related policy areas.

The purpose of this Green Paper, therefore, is to launch an extensive public consultation on how to reduce obesity levels and the prevalence of associated chronic diseases in the EU. It is seeking contributions from a broad range of interested parties. The ultimate aim being to develop a European strategy on reducing obesity levels, which complement and support existing national measures. The Green Paper calls for concrete suggestions and invites ideas on action that can help address the serious problem of obesity as well as encouraging European citizens to engage in healthier lifestyles.

A number of recent studies indicate that obesity levels are increasing at an alarming rate. Up to 27% of men and 38% of women are obese in some parts of the EU. The number of overweight children is also growing rapidly, currently rising by 400 000 a year. Obesity contributes to a number of serious illnesses most notably heart disease, type-2 diabetes, hypertension, stroke and certain types of cancer. Poor nutrition and insufficient exercise are among the leading causes of avoidable death in Europe. It is estimated that as much as 7% of total healthcare costs in the EU can be linked to obesity related illnesses.

The Green Paper, therefore, focuses on the key question of: How to promote healthier lifestyles across the EU? It examines the role for self-regulation in the both the food and advertising industries. Respondents are asked to exchange ideas on how information, communication and education can be improved upon and what action could be taken to encourage better diets in various demographic groups. Also discussed are the roles of health services in promoting nutritional diets and encouraging regular physical activity. Other questions asked are:

- What measures can the Community or national governments do towards improving the availability, accessibility and affordability of fruits and vegetables.

- How can the Community contribute towards encouraging consumers to opt for low fat, sugar and salt diets?
- Is self-regulation and voluntary controls enough to limit marketing and advertising campaigns which promote energy-dense and nutritionally poor foods?
- If self-regulation fails what should the alternatives be?
- What key message should consumers be receiving? Who should deliver that message and how?
- How can school meals be improved upon?
- How can public policy initiatives ensure that physical activity is built into daily routines?
- What is the best way to inform consumers about 'dietary guidelines'? Could nutrient profile scoring systems contribute to such developments?

The public consultation will last until 15 March 2006. A report summarising the contributions will be published on the Commission website by June 2006. Based on the answers received the Commission may consider further action.

Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Frédérique RIES (ALDE, BE) in response to the Commission's Green Paper on 'Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases'. MEPs welcomed the Commission's commitment to healthy eating (in quantitative and qualitative terms) and physical activity, and the fight against obesity and major diet-related diseases, and called for this to be regarded henceforth as a political priority of the European Union and its Member States.

The committee advised all the Member States to recognise obesity officially as a chronic disease in order to prevent obese people from being stigmatised and discriminated in any way, and to ensure that they have access to appropriate treatment under their national health systems. It also pointed out that school is the place where children spend most of their time and that the school environment must therefore encourage young children to develop their tastes and promote regular physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, particularly in order to counter the decreasing time allocated to physical education in schools in the EU. The report therefore urged the Commission to develop mechanisms to promote best practice in schools which take account of the most effective initiatives educating children about healthy eating and providing food based on high nutritional standards. And it called on the Member States to provide sufficient funds for school catering in order to allow schools to serve freshly produced meals, preferably from organic or regional agriculture, and to encourage healthy dietary habits from an early age.

The committee expressed its "strong interest" in the food signposting systems put in place in several Member States by food companies, retailers or public bodies in order to simplify nutrition messages, and recognised the value of such signposting systems as well as healthy-choice logos when they are favoured by consumers and easy to use. The report noted that research has confirmed that schemes which indicate levels of nutrients via an interpretative element are the most helpful to consumers in choosing healthier options. It called on the Commission to draw on this experience and research to develop and introduce an EU-wide "front-of-pack nutrition labelling scheme", and pointed out that a consistent message to consumers demands a certain degree of harmonisation in this area and that such messages must be scientifically based.

The committee was concerned about reports that the nutritional content of fruit and vegetables produced in Europe had fallen over the last decades and called on Commission and Council to take the necessary steps in the 2008 Common Agricultural Policy review in order to consider food nutritive value an important criterion and to enhance quality food production and healthy nutrition incentives in the framework of rural development policies.

Lastly, MEPs said that product reformulation is a powerful tool for reducing the intake of fat, sugar and salt in our diets, and welcomed the steps taken by a few manufacturers and retailers to move in this direction. The Commission, Member States, manufacturers, retailers and caterers were urged to step up efforts to ensure reduced fat, sugar and salt levels in foods. Manufacturers should use product reformulation not just to launch new, sometimes more expensive brands, but to prioritise cutting fat, sugar and salt in existing everyday brands.

Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drawn up by Frédérique RIES (ALDE, BE) in response to the Commission's Green Paper on 'Promoting healthy diets and physical activity: a European dimension for the prevention of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases'. (Please see the summary of 27/11/2006.) The resolution was adopted by 620 votes in favour, 24 against and 14 abstentions.