

Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab
Regional Director
World Health Organisation
Regional Office for Europe
UN City
Marmorvej 51
DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø
DENMARK

Brussels, 14 April 2015

RE: WHO Regional Office for Europe – nutrient profile model

Dear Dr Jakab,

As representatives of a large number of European-based health organisations, we are writing to you to congratulate the WHO Regional Office for Europe (WHO Euro) on developing a nutrient profile model for the purpose of restricting food marketing to children.

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly support and endorse the WHO nutrient profile model as a scientifically sound basis for policy action.

There is unequivocal evidence that unhealthy food and non-alcoholic beverage marketing is related to childhood obesity. This evidence has led to action across Europe, including in the European Union (EU), to reduce the ubiquitous marketing which target children, whether directly or indirectly. In the EU, marketing to children of unhealthy food or food that is high in fat salt and sugar (HFSS), is addressed specifically by the European Platform for Action of Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive. Both instruments call for restrictions in marketing to children, albeit on a voluntary basis.

To reduce the marketing of HFSS foods to children, it is crucial to be able to define such foods. Like you, we have taken note that only very few countries in Europe use nutrient profiling to exclude HFSS foods from being marketed to children even when they have adopted specific actions aimed at reducing the marketing of unhealthy foods. The WHO Euro initiative provides a precious tool for governments in Europe that recognise the need to reduce marketing of HFSS foods to children but have not yet been able to develop it for themselves.

The development of the WHO Euro nutrient profile model complements the *Set of recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children* which was adopted in 2010. It also responds to request by WHO Euro's member states made in the Vienna Declaration and in the European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015-2020.

We welcome the WHO Euro nutrient profile model as an authoritative contribution to curbing marketing of unhealthy food to children and ultimately to curbing the childhood obesity in Europe. Whilst recognising that many food and drink companies in the EU have also made a contribution by signing up to the EU Pledge, which as of the end of 2014 includes nutrition criteria, we note that the evidence favours a regulatory approach to marketing of HFSS to children. In this respect, we agree with the argument made in the recently published *Interim*

Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity that voluntary initiatives are insufficient due to the wide variation in attitudes and behaviour within the food and non-alcoholic beverage and marketing industries, which not only makes their efforts less effective but also puts the compliant companies at a disadvantage compared to non-compliant companies.

In conclusion, with this letter, we wish to express our backing of WHO Euro's vital work on tackling childhood obesity in Europe and to let you know that we will lend support to it to the best of our ability.

Yours faithfully,



Stephanie Saenger

Ms Stephanie Saenger - President



Markus Peck

Prof Markus Peck - Secretary General



Wendy Yared

Dr Wendy Yared - Director



United to reverse the rise in chronic disease



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