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## **Europe missing big opportunities in nutrition and physical activity, policy indexes reveal**



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**Policy indexes published by World Cancer Research Fund International show the status of nutrition and physical activity policy in Europe and enable young people to advocate for better policies to tackle obesity.**

The NOURISHING and MOVING policy indexes, developed as part of the [CO-CREATE](#) [1] project on adolescent obesity in Europe, look at what 30 governments across Europe are doing to enable healthy diets and physical activity. This focus recognises the importance of these two key health factors, which affect people's likelihood of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), [including cancer](#) [2].

Overweight and obesity affect one in five adolescents in Europe, and excess weight in adolescence poses health consequences that can continue into adulthood. To tackle the urgent and growing crisis of obesity in children and young people, countries must have the correct, well-designed policies in place.

[3]

## Governments missing opportunities

The CO-CREATE policy indexes show that unfortunately many European governments are missing opportunities to create environments that make it easier for young people to eat healthily and stay active.

The policy indexes give an at-a-glance assessment of how well countries in Europe are doing to create environments that enable people to eat a healthy diet and be physically active. They highlight strengths, weaknesses and gaps in nutrition and physical activity policy, along with providing recommendations on where greater action is needed.

Key findings include:

- Very few countries have policies to:
  1. to address food affordability, e.g. healthy food subsidies;
  2. ensure coherence between food supply chains and health, such as procurement standards for public bodies;
  3. set incentives and rules to create a healthy retail and food service environment, such as planning restrictions on food service outlets;
- Most countries have weak policies on advertising unhealthy food to young people;
- Nutrition labelling, national nutrition guidelines and promoting healthy eating are common;
- Almost all countries promote physical activity in schools and to the general public;
- Countries have gaps and poorly designed policies on public and active transport and other infrastructure that promote physical activity;
- There is least government action on physical activity training, assessment and counselling in healthcare settings.

## Policy advocacy tools

A key part of the CO-CREATE project is enabling young people to be involved in tackling obesity. A set of advocacy tools accompanying the indexes can support an array of actors – in particular civil society, including youth groups – to push for better policies and hold their governments to account.

These tools include two policy briefs and country snapshots on [nutrition](#) [4] and [physical activity](#) [5] policy respectively. The tools investigate how policy changes create environments that help prevent adolescent obesity, support advocacy for policy change, and most importantly, hold governments accountable for action on NCD prevention through tackling unhealthy diets and promoting physical activity.

In each country, civil society and other key actors can use the indexes findings to:

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- Learn how well your country is doing in nutrition and physical activity policy;
- Find out more about policy in Europe and compare your country with others;
- Identify weaknesses that can inform advocacy efforts to improve policy environments, in your country and/or across Europe;
- Call for policymakers to implement actions to ensure better health for future generations.

The indexes are part of a package of tools that can be used to examine nutrition and physical activity policy in Europe. These tools establish the foundations of a research infrastructure to explore changes in the number of people living with overweight, obesity and related behaviours, and see whether implemented policies are working.

### Key resources

As part of the EU-funded CO-CREATE project, the following were developed:

- [Nutrition policy index](#) [6]
- [Physical activity policy index](#) [7]
- [Nutrition policy country snapshots](#) [8]
- [Physical activity policy country snapshots](#) [9]

Webinars presenting CO-CREATE findings are also available:

- [NOURISHING webinar](#) [3]
- [MOVING webinar](#) [10]

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[nutrition](#) [12]

[physical activity](#) [13]

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### Links

- [1] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/co-create/>
- [2] <https://www.wcrf.org/diet-activity-and-cancer/risk-factors/obesity-weight-gain-and-cancer/>
- [3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcVPu0BM48E>
- [4] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/nutrition-policy/>
- [5] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/physical-activity-policy/>
- [6] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/nutrition-policy-index/>
- [7] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/physical-activity-policy-index/>
- [8] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/nutrition-policy-snapshots/>
- [9] <https://www.wcrf.org/policy/physical-activity-policy-snapshots/>
- [10] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI3wugSlg6I>
- [11] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/1017>
- [12] <https://ncdalliance.org/category/tags/nutrition>
- [13] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/242>