

Press release

EU must legislate to end children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing, say health, consumer, child, and family NGOs

Brussels, 9 November 2021 – The European Union (EU) must adopt legislation to effectively protect children from the harmful impacts of the widespread, ubiquitous and insidious marketing of nutritionally poor food, [says a coalition](#) of 20 European health, medical, consumer, child and family organisations.

To substantiate this call, a [blueprint Food Marketing Directive](#) is presented showing how the EU can use its powers to effectively regulate cross-border marketing.

Core provisions of the Directive include:

- Define as a 'child' any person below the age of 18;
- End the marketing of nutritionally poor food between 6am and 11pm on broadcast media, including television and radio;
- End the marketing of nutritionally poor food on digital media, including social media and video sharing platforms;
- End the sponsorship of events, such as sports events or festivals, with cross-border effects unless brands can prove that such sponsorship is not associated with nutritionally poor food;
- End the use of marketing techniques appealing to children for the promotion of nutritionally poor food, including on food packages. It also cover the use of influencers;
- Use the World Health Organization Europe [nutrient profile model](#) to define what is 'nutritionally poor food'.

While childhood overweight and obesity [are rampant](#), young people across Europe [see more than](#) four ads for sugary, fatty and salty food on television each day. Digital marketing is [enabling](#) ever more tailored and persuasive approaches, but remains largely unchallenged.

Despite several promising recent national initiatives, such as in the [United Kingdom](#) and [Spain](#), European countries and the EU have so far [failed](#) to effectively regulate cross-border marketing.

Reliance on industry self-regulation is a false promise, as recently [once more attested](#) in the case of the EU Pledge.

This initiative comes in right time to respond to the recently adopted European Parliament [Own Initiative Report](#) on the EU Farm to Fork Strategy which call for an *"an effective and EU-wide regulatory approach to tackle the exposure of children and adolescents to advertising and marketing of processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt on broadcast and digital media"*.

The Call to Action and blueprint Directive are launched and debated during the [event](#) "Towards a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing: Exploring the next frontier for European" held on 9 November 15.00-16.30 CET, gathering European experts, policy-makers and supporting organisations.

QUOTES (next page):

- **Prof. Amandine Garde, University of Liverpool (lead drafter of the blueprint Directive):**

“Legislative reforms must be driven by evidence, not by a dogmatic, misplaced belief in the virtues of self-regulation. It is high time the EU adopted legally binding rules protecting children from exposure to all forms of cross-border unhealthy food marketing.”

- **Nikolai Pushkarev, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA):**

“We have fiddled around the edges for too long. Europe’s youth is still massively exposed to health-harmful food marketing. This initiative is a call for action and a show of what the EU can actually do to support a healthy generation.”

- **Annemie Driessens, Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)**

“We are deeply concerned by the heavy marketing of unhealthy food at the root of unhealthy eating habits and lifestyles. This goes against the interests of children. We are committed to join efforts to protect children from aggressive marketing and advertising, along with promoting a healthy lifestyle.”

- **Suzy Summer, foodwatch**

“The health of children is more important than profits of the junk food industry. We need regulation to protect our kids from aggressive marketing. Voluntary measures are just not enough.”

- **Sibylle Reichert, International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)**

“Unhealthy food marketing has a negative impact on the health of children and teenagers. It affects the health not only of present young generations but also of current and future older ones. It harms public health and by doing so the very sustainability of our healthcare systems, already under pressure. Acting to restrict unhealthy food marketing to children is not an option, it is a necessity.”

- **Prof. Em. Raymond Vanholder, European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA)**

“Children have the right to grow-up in environments that are conducive to good health. They are at a crucial age of development where quality nutrition plays a great role in health and many risks associated with unhealthy diets begin in childhood. A significant share of the mortality and disease burden attributable to chronic diseases is caused by dietary risk factors, we need to protect our younger generations from exposure to the marketing of food and beverage high in fat, salt, or sugar specifically targeting children and adolescents, notably online and on social media”.

- **Nelleke Polderman, The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)**

“Food companies’ commitment to market their products responsibly fails to protect European children from ads praising unhealthy foods. Since industry self-regulation is not working, binding EU rules are necessary.”

- **Dr. Patrick O’Sullivan, Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)**

“Promoting healthy living cannot just be the responsibility of the health sector. A multi-sectoral approach is needed. Action in primary prevention is essential to ensure that people are able to live as healthy lives as possible, which will in turn reduce the incidence of NCDs and the resulting premature deaths in the populations.”

Publication details:

- [Key demands for EU action](#) (joint statement)
- [Blueprint Food Marketing Directive](#)
- Initiative website: <https://epha.org/regulate-food-marketing/>

Event:

Towards a childhood free from unhealthy food marketing: Exploring the next frontier for European action

- Date & time: 9 November, 15h-16h30 CET
- [Programme](#)
- [Registration](#)
- [Website](#)

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Organisations supporting the call to action:

Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL)

Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)

Eurochild

EuroHealthNet

European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)

European Chronic Disease Alliance (ECDA)

European Childhood Obesity Group (ECOG)

European Heart Network (EHN)

European Oncology Nursing Society (EONS)

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

European Public Health Association (EUPHA)

foodwatch

International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM)

International Diabetes Federation Europe (IDF Europe)

Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE)

Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME)

The European Consumer Organisation (BEUC)

The Good Lobby

United European Gastroenterology (UEG)

World Cancer Research Fund International (WCRFI)