

# School Fruit Scheme strategy for the 2010–2013 school years Lithuania

## *Title in original language:*

Vaisių vartojimo skatinimo mokyklose programos 2010–2013 mokslo metų strategija

## *Which 'life stage' for CVDs prevention targets the intervention?*

The intervention targets preschoolers and pupils in primary education (years 1 to 4).

## *Short description of the intervention:*

The aim of the School Fruit Scheme Strategy for the 2010–2013 school years was to set up the budget of the programme, target groups, accompanying measures that help the children to recognise the importance of healthy eating habits and distributable products. Fruit and vegetables were distributed, free of charge, to pupils in primary education (years 1 to 4) at Lithuanian general schools wishing to participate in the School Fruit Scheme. The products to be distributed were: carrots, apples, pears, bananas and citrus fruit. Owing to the country's climate, use of chemical fertilisers and plant protection products is lower in Lithuanian agriculture; so much of Lithuania's agricultural produce differs little from organic produce. Priority is therefore given to products grown in Lithuania, except for products that are not grown in Lithuania because of the climate. The quality of the carrots and bananas distributed must meet general commercial standards. Apple, pear and citrus-fruit quality must not be lower than class II. The handling of fruit and vegetables must meet hygiene requirements, and the fruit and vegetables must be washed before they are presented for consumption. The products are distributed to schoolchildren three times per week. Each child receives one portion per day. A portion is made up of one of the following products: an apple, a carrot, a pear, a banana or a portion of citrus fruit. The beneficiaries are required to ensure that schoolchildren receive all of the products indicated in point 18 over the course of the Scheme. At least two thirds of the overall quantity distributed to schoolchildren should be made up of products grown in Lithuania. If products are distributed during the normal school lunch hour, the school must ensure that schoolchildren are informed that the products are being distributed under this Scheme. To make the Scheme more effective, its implementation must be accompanied by awareness-raising and educational measures to help schoolchildren understand the importance of healthy eating habits (accompanying measures). Schools participating in the Scheme are required to organise at least four activities per school year to inform children about healthy eating or the health benefits of fruit and vegetables. At least one additional measure must be taken at least once per school year. Such additional accompanying measures may consist of:

- children's excursions to fruit or vegetable farms to familiarise them with how fruit and vegetables are grown and the product's journey 'from field to table';
- distribution in schools of information material on the benefits of eating fruit and vegetables (booklets, leaflets and other information publications);
- training for teachers on instilling a healthy way of life and healthy eating habits in children; organisation of educational quizzes, drawing competitions and sports events to promote a healthy way of life.

The School Fruit Scheme was implemented in school years 2009–2010, 2010–2011, 2011–2012, 2012–2013. In school year 2009–2010, 171 schools took part in the program, the products were distributed to 21,222 children, in

school year 2012-2013, 1365 schools and nurseries participated in the program, products were distributed to 192,454 children.

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*How is this example of good practice funded?*

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The funds for the implementation of the School Fruit Scheme as provided for in the Strategy are allocated from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund AND the Lithuanian State budget

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*What is/was the level of implementation of your example of good practice?*

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National

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*What are the main aim and the main objectives of your example of good practice?*

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The aim of the Strategy was to instil in children an awareness of the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables. In order to achieve this aim, the objective was to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in children's diets at a stage when their eating habits are developing. The aim of the School Fruit Scheme Strategy for the 2010–2013 school years was to set up the budget of the programme, target groups, accompanying measures that help the children to recognise the importance of healthy eating habits and distributable products.

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*Please give a description of the problem the good practice example want to tackle:*

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In the European Union, including Lithuania, an estimated 22 million children are overweight. More than 5 million of them are obese. Healthy eating may prove to be an important means of reducing obesity and serious health problems that arise in later life, such as vascular diseases and type-2 diabetes. It is therefore important to ensure that people eat enough fruit and vegetables. Research indicates that healthy eating habits develop during childhood. People who eat a lot of fruit and vegetables during childhood continue to eat enough fruit and vegetables. People who do not eat a lot of fruit and vegetables usually do not change their eating habits, and pass them on to their own children. The World Health Organisation recommends a daily intake of 400 g of fruit and vegetables per person. The majority of Europeans, especially the young, disregard this recommendation and are consuming less and less fruit and vegetables.

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*Implementation of your example of good practice is/was:*

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Periodic. The School Fruit Scheme was implemented in school years 2009–2010, 2010–2011, 2011–2012, 2012–2013. Now there is the Strategy for years 2014-2015.

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*Which vulnerable social groups were targeted?*

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The children from poor families had the opportunity to eat fruits and vegetables.

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*Did the evaluation results achieve the stated goals and objectives?*

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Yes, the aim of the Strategy was to instil in children an awareness of the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables. In order to achieve this aim, the objective was to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables in children's diets at a stage when their eating habits are developing. The evaluation showed that aim and objective were achieved.

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*Who did the evaluation?*

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An external party

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*Specifically, what has been measured / evaluated?*

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Process evaluation: For the first implementation of the Scheme and its efficacy evaluation, covering the period 1 August 2010–31 July 2011, there were randomly selected 50 schools, participated in the School Fruit Scheme and 21 schools, which not participated in the Scheme during the academic year 2010 – 2011. In order to evaluate the Scheme's influence on children's health and nutrition habits, the primary classes' pupils were interviewed by questionnaire. There were also interviewed primary classes teachers and public health specialists, working in the mentioned schools, aiming to found out their opinion concerning the possible Scheme's influence on children's health and nutrition habits and to collect their proposals for increasing the efficiency of the Scheme. The questionnaire for pupils included questions about children's nutrition habits, their knowledge about healthy nutrition and proper nutrition habits and the importance of fruits and vegetables for human health, etc. The appropriate questionnaires for teachers and public health specialists, working in the schools were prepared. The questionnaire's instruction and consent form for parents was distributed accordingly. Consent forms were signed by the parents as the permission for children to be interviewed. The questionnaires were distributed among more than 3.700 pupils from schools participated and not participated in the Scheme; approximately 300 questionnaires in total were distributed among the teachers (150) and public health specialists (150). In total 2586 correctly completed questionnaires (pupils – 2402, teachers – 98, public health specialists – 86) were received back and analysed. The data comparison was made between schools participated and not participated in the Scheme, analysing data of teachers' and pupils' surveys.

### *What are the main results/conclusions/recommendations from the evaluation?*

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According to the data of the School Fruit Scheme first stage implementation and efficacy evaluation covering the period 1 August 2010–31 July 2011, it is noted, that the Scheme is successfully implemented in the schools. In the opinion of the majority of teachers and public health specialists, the pupils consumed the fruits and vegetables willingly. Analysis of the respondents answers concerning Scheme usefulness showed, that the majority of teachers and public health specialists evaluate the Scheme as useful and very useful, they also believe, that the continuity of the Scheme and its long-term implementation can help to develop the healthy nutrition habits among pupils, especially since two thirds of teachers and public health specialists stated, that healthy nutrition habits among pupils are not formed yet.

It is established, that pupils from participating schools consume fruits and vegetables at school slightly more often, but still insufficient number of pupils are eating fruits and vegetables at schools every day and this indicates the fact, that healthy nutrition habits and skills among pupils currently are not formed completely. Thus, it can be assumed, that not all pupils are aware enough about the importance of fruits and vegetables. It is great, that most pupils knew how many times per day they should eat and that is necessary to consume fruits and vegetables every day and they would like to get fruits and vegetables at school. But only one third of pupils had breakfast every day and only 60% of them had hot lunch at school.

Most of the pupils (more from participating schools) knew that healthy and sufficient nutrition is necessary to keep the health and this could be partly explained because of possible positive influence of the special events, provided within the Scheme. It is noticeable, that irrespective of school participation in the Scheme, every seventh pupil indicated, that parents are sharing with their knowledge about fruits and vegetables daily consumption importance and every third pupil specified teachers as an information source. As the pupils stated, another sources of information were TV and radio, books and textbooks, booklets about fruits and vegetables, etc. Pupils also highlighted their parents and teachers as the main persons, who provides pupils information concerning healthy nutrition. Although most of pupils believed, that their nutrition is good and sufficient enough to keep health, but there were slightly more such pupils from participating schools quite big part of them would like to learn more about healthy nutrition. Most of the teachers and public health specialists emphasized, that parental education and family influence are the most important factors for pupils' healthy nutrition habits development; and certainly, after the family impact, teachers should be the most important providers of educational activity at schools. Almost every tenth respondent mentioned, that radio and TV could affect pupils' healthy nutrition habits development , so the importance of information dissemination using mass media was emphasized among the most popular

mentioned suggestions how to increase Scheme's efficacy and healthy nutrition development among pupils. Aiming to improve the efficacy of the Scheme, it was suggested to provide more information in order to educate pupils as well as parents; to ensure wider schools involvement into the Scheme, to implement teamwork principles', to create the same Scheme for high classes' pupils, to motivate schools' staff directly related to this Scheme, etc. Thus, it can be concluded, that after parents' and teachers' influence to pupils' healthy nutrition habits development, the School Fruit Scheme is and should be one of the most important factor, which could change pupils' nutrition habits in a positive direction.

*Is the evaluation report available, preferably in English or at least an English summary?*

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/documents/lt\\_summary\\_evaluation\\_report\\_-\\_2010-2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/documents/lt_summary_evaluation_report_-_2010-2011_en.pdf)

*Who implemented the intervention?*

The intervention was implemented by network of organisations. The implementation of Strategy was coordinated by the Lithuanian Ministry of Agriculture. The Agricultural and Food Products Market Regulation Agency, a state enterprise, was responsible for the implementation of this Strategy. The National Paying Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture was responsible for the disbursement of support funds, in accordance with the data provided by the Agricultural and Food Products Market Regulation Agency, and for keeping correct accounts of the funds disbursed. The Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science made recommendations on the accompanying measures to the schools participating in the Scheme, which are responsible for implementing them. The Lithuanian Ministry of Health made recommendations on the range of products to be distributed to schoolchildren and, together with the Ministry of Education and Science, actively engaged in informing schoolchildren of the health benefits of eating fruit and vegetables.

*What core activities are/have been implemented?*

Fruit and vegetables were distributed, free of charge, to pupils in primary education (years 1 to 4) at Lithuanian general schools wishing to participate in the School Fruit Scheme. The products to be distributed were: carrots, apples, pears, bananas and citrus fruit.

To make the Scheme more effective, its implementation was accompanied by awareness-raising and educational measures to help schoolchildren understand the importance of healthy eating habits (accompanying measures). Schools participating in the Scheme were required to organise at least four activities per school year to inform children about healthy eating or the health benefits of fruit and vegetables. At least one additional measure was taken at least once per school year. Such additional accompanying measures consisted of:

- children's excursions to fruit or vegetable farms to familiarise them with how fruit and vegetables are grown and the product's journey 'from field to table';
- distribution in schools of information material on the benefits of eating fruit and vegetables (booklets, leaflets and other information publications);
- training for teachers on instilling a healthy way of life and healthy eating habits in children; organisation of educational quizzes, drawing competitions and sports events to promote a healthy way of life.

*Did the intervention achieve meaningful participation among the intended target population?*

Yes, in school year 2012-2013, 1365 schools and nurseries participated in the program, products were distributed to 192,454 children and it amounts to 87 percent of the children eligible for the aid.

*Web page related to the intervention*

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/eu-countries/lithuania/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sfs/eu-countries/lithuania/index_en.htm)

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