

ADVERTISEMENT OF FOOD AND BEVERAGES TO CHILDREN

(Organised by the Directorate-General of Health - 30 January 2019)

BACKGROUND

In Portugal 30,7% of children are overweight or obese. The eating habits of the Portuguese children and adolescents are concerning: 69% of children eat less than 400g of fruit and vegetables per day, 41% of the adolescents consume soft drinks daily and 43% of them drink more than one soda per day.

Food advertising to children promotes products that are mainly high in sugar and fat. The evidence indicates that unhealthy food and beverage marketing increases dietary intake and preference for energy dense, low-nutrition foods and beverages. Thus, unhealthy foods and beverages marketing increases intake and influences dietary preferences in children during or shortly after exposure to advertisements.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the policy dialogue was to find ways to tackle the issue of advertising of unhealthy food and beverages to children at national level. The specific objectives included understanding the perception of each participating entity regarding the current status of the matter; understanding what each participating entity has done to date to address the matter and how each participating entity could contribute to next steps to tackle the issue; to discuss the effectiveness of regulation versus self-regulation and the main barriers to regulation of food and beverage advertisements to children.

CONCLUSIONS AND MAIN ACTION POINTS

Participants concluded that that self-regulation is not enough, highlighting the need for health literacy improvement among population. "Trendy" advertising of healthy foods and beverages, through young influencers, was considered a smart option.

Main Action Points:

- to create a working group to close the ongoing legislative proposal regarding advertisement of food and beverages to children. This proposed legislation would limit advertising of foods and beverages with a high content of sugar, fat or sodium in preschool, basic and secondary education establishments, in children's playgrounds and within a specific radius of those places, as well as in publications, programmes, or activities for minors.
- To create a working group focused on the promotion of Health and Food Literacy amongst the Portuguese population. The objectives would be to define actions that would have two aims: (1) to improve health and food literacy of the population, enabling them to be more critical towards advertising and marketing of foods and beverages; and (2) to work together with digital influencers in order to raise awareness about this issue.