

# 11th European Public Health Conference Ljubljana 2018

## Preconference EU School Scheme and its HiAP and health promotion potentials at the national and EU levels

**Organized by:** National Institute of Public Health Slovenia and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia

**Proposed chairs:**

Tanja Polak Benkič, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, [tanja.polak@gov.si](mailto:tanja.polak@gov.si)

Vida Fajdiga Turk, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia, [vida.turk@nijz.si](mailto:vida.turk@nijz.si)

**Tracks chosen:** Food, nutrition and physical activity, Healthy living and health promotion

**Proposed WS objectives:**

Increased intake of fruits and vegetables can improve quality of the diet and seems to have the impact on lowering BMI together with decreased consumption of high fat and high sugar foods. For growing children, a balanced diet with recommended intake of fruit and vegetables ensures optimal growth and development, improves overall well-being and productivity and, in the long term, promotes good health and contributes to active and healthy ageing.

The European Union's School Fruit, Vegetables and Milk Scheme or School Scheme (previously EU School Fruit Scheme and School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme) is the measure under the Common Agricultural Policy with an explicit public health goal, with European funds allocated for the purchase and distribution of fresh fruit and vegetables to schools. School Scheme implementation started in 2009 and Slovenia joined in the first wave, involving more than 90% of Slovene primary schools.

Because it involves access to schools, the sourcing and distribution of fruit and vegetables and public health aims, the EU School Scheme involves three sectors which do not always work closely together: agriculture, education and health. The base for success of School Scheme is the system of providing healthy, nutritionally substantial school meals in Slovenia. All schools in Slovenia are mandatorily enrolled in the School Meals Program, which is regulated by the School Meals Act. School meals are also an integral part of school curriculum. As such, the EU SFS is a new and mainstreamed example of the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, with potential lessons for other HiAP initiatives.

The objectives of the workshop are to increase awareness of public health professionals of the potentials of the implementation of the School Scheme at the national level and of the importance of the development of the multidisciplinary competences and multi-sectoral actions, together with the increased understanding of the HiAP elements, important for

successful implementation of the intersectoral policy. At the same time, workshop will highlight the opportunities and challenges, associated with the equitable implementation of the School Scheme, potentially influencing inequalities in health among children.

Workshop will add to the dissemination of new knowledge on the implementation of the EU School Scheme, with a special focus at the inequalities in health and to the HiAP multi-sectoral collaboration of three sectors, that is agriculture, education and health.

**Proposed WS type:** Regular workshop, 60 minute sessions with 3 presentations (10 minutes) and half an hour debate, engaging participants in interactive relationship with presenters during debate.

**Proposed main message:**

EU School Scheme has a strong public health potential in advancing agriculture, education and health collaboration for better health of children of all SE strata and for investing in rural societies.

EU School Scheme is a new and mainstreamed example of the Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach, with potential lessons for other HiAP initiatives.

**Individual presentations:**

**1. EU School Scheme, a trigger for establishment of substantially improved inter-sectoral collaboration**

**Presenters:**

Tanja Polak Benkič, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food of the Republic of Slovenia, [tanja.polak@gov.si](mailto:tanja.polak@gov.si)

[Alenka Pavlovec, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the R of Slovenia, alenka.pavlovec@gov.si](mailto:alenka.pavlovec@gov.si)

Katja Povhe Jemec, Ministry of Health of the R of Slovenia, [katja.povhe-jemec@gov.si](mailto:katja.povhe-jemec@gov.si),

Mojca Gabrijelčič Blenkuš, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia, [mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si](mailto:mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si)

Vida Fajdiga Turk, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia, [vida.turk@nijz.si](mailto:vida.turk@nijz.si)

A decade ago, intersectoral work among agriculture, education and health sectors was less intensive. EU School fruit Scheme, when adopted in 2008, was a window of opportunity for a start of the improved intersectoral work among the three sectors at the national level in Slovenia.

With the beginning of the School Scheme, entry points for collaboration for all three sectors were identified. Entry point for MAFF is rural development and establishing of sustainable market for local farmers, together with linking schools and farmers in local communities. Entry point for education sector are diverse education activities and options, linked to local environment, which variegate school activities. For health sector, main entry points are action on NCDs and action on social determinants of health. For the future, concerted actions in achieving Sustainable Development Goals should be considered.

From the very beginning, the formation of the intersectoral working group, nominated by Ministry of agriculture, was very important. The group consists of representatives of all three sectors, as well as the representatives of supporting/implementing bodies and also some school representatives. Agreement is set upon the allocation of roles and work.

Implementation strategies are adopted regularly and harmonized implementation is defined by representatives of all three sectors.

Intersectoral group realized the potential of common work and inspired by good results of the Scheme proposed a new project “Slovene traditional breakfast” in 2010. In 2013, intersectoral working group extended the idea to whole population approach by establishing the “Slovene food day”. All those initiatives became a part of the new national Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy 2015 – 2025.

## **2. HiAP dimension of the multisectoral cooperation in the implementation of the EU School Scheme**

### **Presenters:**

Mojca Gabrijelčič Blenkuš, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia - NIJZ,

[mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si](mailto:mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si)

[Linden Farrer, EuroHealthNet](#)

[Yoline Kuipers, EuroHealthNet](#)

Tina Lesnik, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia – NIJZ, [tina.lesnik@nijz.si](mailto:tina.lesnik@nijz.si)

Presentation concentrates at different dimensions of inter-sectoral co-operation in the implementation of EU School Scheme, explores how Health in All Policies principles are implemented in that process, attempts to understand how School Scheme influence the collaboration of partners in different sectors, and indicates what lessons can be learnt for the future.

A survey was carried out by EuroHealthNet and the National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia, involving civil servants, engaged in the implementation of the EU School Scheme at agriculture, education and health ministries across the European Union.

Specific characteristics of the multi-stakeholder relationships were explored, such as: understanding of the necessity of the joint multi-stakeholders approach in acting to decrease childhood obesity; readiness to collaborate with other of stakeholders categories; capacity and resources which stakeholders have available to cooperate with other stakeholders categories; necessary skills and knowledge stakeholders possess to develop better/or to improve existing multi-stakeholders cooperation; capacity and resources which stakeholders have available to cooperate with other stakeholders categories; stakeholders' willingness to work on a multi-sectoral initiatives with other stakeholders categories; exploring the level of trust (existing or needed) for a multi-stakeholders work among stakeholders categories.

When comparing the period before and the period after the School Scheme implementation, all the above mentioned characteristics of the multi-stakeholder relationships have shown positive, some of them statistically significant developments and improvement after the implementation of the Scheme. Recommendations for improvement of the multi-sectoral collaboration were developed based on the newly gathered insights, highlighting the

importance of recognising and using the School Scheme as an important window of opportunity for improving inter-sectoral cooperation.

### **3. EU School Scheme, lowering inequalities gap among school children from different SE strata**

**Presenter:**

Mojca Gabrijelčič Blenkuš, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia - NIJZ,

[mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si](mailto:mojca.gabrijelcic@nijz.si)

Marcel Kralj, National Institute of Public Health Slovenia - NIJZ, [marcel.kralj@nijz.si](mailto:marcel.kralj@nijz.si)

The consumption of fruits and vegetables at school in Slovenia is decreasing in spite of the implementation of the Scheme over the past five years. Explanation could be the so strong pressure of the obesitogenic environment that the individual measures such as the School Scheme cannot achieve positive effects. Only within the framework of comprehensive measures, the School Scheme could contribute to alleviating the trend of decreasing consumption of fruit and vegetables among children.

Saying that, we could notice that School Scheme in Slovenia has increased the knowledge about the importance of the consumption of fruit and vegetables, both for boys and, even more, for girls. With the implementation of the Scheme, schools helped to increase the understanding of the importance of the consumption of fruit and vegetables most to children from socio-economic less favorable environments.

The decline in the reported frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption at school in the last five years is perceived primarily in children with lower and middle socio-economic status, while in children with a higher socio-economic status this trend of decline is not observed. At the same time, children from higher socioeconomic status consume significantly less fruit and vegetables at school than children from lower or middle socio-economic status, which might mean that those compensate for the lower fruit and vegetables consumption at home.

Many adverse effects of a complex obesitogenic environment (aggressive marketing and high affordability and accessibility of the HFSS foods, others) are dominant in terms of power and influence, therefore positive complex systemic measures such as School Scheme are also needed to improve the nutritional status of children and adolescents. The School Scheme as universal measure with proportional components is one of a number of cross-sectoral measures in the framework of the National Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs 2015-2025 in Slovenia.