



World Health Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Europe**



Participatory approaches to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals: LUXEMBOURG

Eat healthily, move more



Key messages

Implementation of the “Gesond iessen, méi beweegen” (“Eat healthily, move more”) (GIMB) programme in Luxembourg between 2006 and 2016 (1,2) resulted in the following key messages.

- **Collect and disseminate evidence to put the issue on the political agenda.**
The strategic dissemination of survey data on Luxembourg's increasing trends in overweight and obesity put the issue in the spotlight and triggered a parliamentary debate and the development and implementation of a 10-year programme to address it.
- **Converge stakeholders around a shared goal.**
Establishing intersectoral collaboration around the shared goal of reducing overweight and obesity and increasing healthy-eating and physical-activity habits created an environment conducive to fruitful stakeholder interaction and sector-specific contributions.
- **Help non-health sectors become advocates of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**
The health sector can take the lead in providing a straightforward and practical explanation of what is required to achieve the SDGs, thus bringing implementation of the 2030 Agenda closer to home.



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Summary

The first National Health Conference – “Vers un plan national santé” [“Towards a national health plan”] – was held in Luxembourg in November 2005. This event resulted in the development of a 10-year interministerial strategy on promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity with a focus on children and adolescents, entitled “Gesond iessen, méi beweegen” (“Eat healthily, move more”) (GIMB) (2006–2016) (1,2). An interdisciplinary body, comprising representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth, and the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region, was established to coordinate implementation of the action plan and evaluate the results. The Ministry of Health coordinated the group.

The aim of GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) was to increase awareness among the general population and provide information about the importance of healthy lifestyles to physical, mental and social health, promote balanced nutrition, and increase the quantity and quality of physical activity in the population, with a focus on children and adolescents.

GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) serves as an example of a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to achieving SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 10 (reduce inequalities) and the goal of the WHO *Roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, building on Health 2020, the European policy for health and well-being* of leaving no one behind (3,4).

In 2018, the strategy was renewed in the form of the GIMB national framework for 2018–2025 (5).

Motivation

In Luxembourg, despite the implementation of many measures to counteract obesity and sedentary lifestyle, these issues still constitute a public health situation that needs attention. In 2014, the rate of adult obesity was 15.6%, ranking Luxembourg 17th among European countries (6). According to data for the 2017–2018 school year, 3.8% of children aged 6–12 years were obese and 9.6% were overweight; among those aged 12–19 years, 5.04% and 7.9% were obese and overweight, respectively (Register of School Medicine 2017–2018, Ministry of Health of Luxembourg, Department for School Medicine and Health of Children and Young People, unpublished data, 2018).

Obesity and overweight can partly be prevented through a balanced diet, rich in fruit and vegetables. In Luxembourg, however, the consumption of fruit and vegetables, among both adults and children, is low. In 2014, 35.8% of adults did not eat fruit or vegetables daily and only 15.2% ate at least five servings of fruit and/or vegetables per day (6). According to the Health behaviour in school-aged children (HBSC) study, the consumption of fruit was also low in children aged 11, 13 and 15 years in 2013–2014 (7).

Regarding physical activity, in 2014, 40.8% of adults practised at least 150 minutes of endurance-related physical activity per week and 37.5% practised non-endurance-related physical activity of sustained intensity (e.g., brisk walking, running, cycling, swimming) (6). According to HBSC data for 2014, the numbers of children aged 11, 13, and 15 years engaging in at least 60 minutes per day of moderate-to-sustained physical activity were also low. These were different for boys and girls and for ages 11, 13 and 15 years, ranging from approximately 10–30% – 10% for girls aged 15 and 30% for boys aged 13. Compared to other countries, the differences in levels of physical activity by gender in Luxembourg are among the highest recorded (7).

The WHO *Global recommendations on physical activity for health* motivated Luxembourg to develop its own national guidelines. These are set out in the national plan on healthy diet and physical activity, which addresses adults, children, adolescents and sedentary groups separately, and provides guidance on the levels and intensity of activity recommended for each category (Register of School Medicine 2017–2018, Ministry of Health of Luxembourg, Department for School Medicine and Health of Children and Young People, unpublished data, 2018). They also served as the basis for developing the national GIMB strategy for 2018–2025.

GIMB 2006–2016


From the beginning, the Ministry of Health realized they could not act on this issue alone. In 2006, they opted for intersectoral action, which triggered a national debate in Parliament on the problem of obesity. The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of Education, Childhood and Youth and the Ministry of Family and Integration engaged the private sector (sports clubs and school catering services), which became active in local communities. This led in turn to the availability of healthier foods in school canteens. The media also played an important role in promoting physical activity and balanced diet among the general public, for example, through annual press conferences with each of the involved ministries.



“Eat healthily, move more” has led to the birth of numerous projects in schools, municipalities and even the private sector all over the country.

GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) also engaged municipalities, which developed a quality label to support local projects and identify them as being part of implementation. The municipalities also involved civil society in settings, such as schools, preschools, youth associations, the workplace and homes for older people. Workshops on the benefits of a balanced diet and regular physical activity were conducted in schools for children and adolescents in collaboration with the Department for School Medicine and Health of Children and Young People of the Ministry of Health. GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) was implemented at the individual level through the dissemination of booklets on the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise.

To ensure achievement of SDG 10 on reducing inequalities (3), opportunities for engaging in physical activity at low cost were negotiated at the community level. Currently, reduced-cost options are available throughout the country, making it possible for people with low incomes to access physical-activity facilities. In Luxembourg city, sports activities take place in public facilities, such as schools that are not in use during the afternoons. With available, free-of-charge facilities, the only cost involved is that for a trainer or coach.



Interministerial collaboration helps to promote, simultaneously, the importance of balanced nutrition and regular, adapted physical activity in tackling the problems caused by obesity and sedentary lifestyle so that no one is left behind.

Impact

The general public's awareness that balanced nutrition and physical activity result in better quality of life increased and obesity trends stabilized during the 10-year implementation period of the initial GIMB (2006–2016) (1,2).

More than a decade has passed, and this nationwide initiative has been adopted by approximately 1000 communities that now offer sports opportunities for all ages and preferences. An evaluation of the strategy in 2016 showed that the intersectoral approach had made it possible to create a network of stakeholders that implemented it at the local level. Many partnerships and a solid base for further action, with national recommendations on healthy diet and physical activity for every population group, were created. The results of the evaluation suggested that more focus should be put on disseminating information about the activities involved to the general population. GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) also led to a shift in the perception of sports as not only competitive activities but also non-competitive

pursuits, in accordance with the objectives of European network for the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA Europe) (8), thus ensuring equal opportunities to reducing overweight and obesity in the population (HEPA Europe, unpublished data, 2016).

GIMB 2018–2025

In July 2018, the Council of Government agreed to the renewal of GIMB 2006–2016 in the form of the national GIMB strategy for 2018–2025 (1,2,5), enabling the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Sports, the Ministry of National Education, Childhood and Youth, and the Ministry of Family, Integration and the Greater Region to continue their collaboration in this important area.

The aim of GIMB 2018–2025 (5) is to encourage people of all ages to eat a balanced diet and practise regular physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle. In endeavouring to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities to achieve this lifestyle, the new strategy has an important inequity-reduction component. It also emphasizes the importance of interpartner collaboration and networking, as well as the use of the interdisciplinary approach. While the focus of the initial GIMB strategy (2006–2016) (1,2) was on primary school children and adolescents, GIMB 2018–2025 (5) targets the entire population at all socioeconomic levels. It truly puts into motion the requirement of working across sectors to achieve the SDGs (3).

Lessons learnt

Coordination and planning across ministries towards agreement on a common goal contributed to the success of GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2). Once the decision had been made by the Prime Minister to support this strategy, the ease with which it was possible to engage the different sectors allowed work to progress smoothly. The small size of the country was also a great advantage in efforts to reach everyone equitably. At the local level, many small, short-term projects developed into larger, long-term projects with counselling and support from the Government. Some of these projects arose from the initiative of dedicated individuals who wished to contribute to promoting a balanced diet and physical activity without financial assistance from the Government.

A mark of the success of GIMB 2006–2016 (1,2) was an increase in the demand for opportunities to engage in physical activity, which could not always be met due to shortages of teachers and coaches. This is something that Luxembourg will address in the coming years.

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¹ All URLs accessed 3 March 2019.

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Coordinated and reviewed by: Bettina Menne (Coordinator, Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being, WHO Regional Office for Europe) and Francesco Zambon (Coordinator, Investment for Health and Development in Healthy Settings, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being).

Authors and contributors: Anne Marx (Coordinator of the National GIMP Plan, Luxembourg); Robert Goeren (WHO National Counterpart, Luxembourg), Guillaume Campagné (Department of Epidemiology and Statistics) and Leda E Nemer (Consultant, WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development, Division of Policy and Governance for Health and Well-being).

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World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

UN City, Marmorvej 51, DK-2100 Copenhagen Ø, Denmark

Tel.: +45 45 33 70 00 Fax: +45 45 33 70 01

Email: eucontact@who.int

