



National Guidelines for Doctors Addressing Promotion of Healthy Lifestyles in Primary Care

The Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME) is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles. As its 2016-2018 commitment to the [EU Platform for Diet, Physical Activity and Health](#), CPME carried out a survey among its member organisations to map what kind of guidelines they and their national governments have produced on the promotion of healthy lifestyles, particularly in primary care.

The aim of the commitment was to compile an overview of guidelines addressing the promotion of healthy lifestyles in relation to diets and physical activity. The objective was to present results for at least 14 EU Member States and identify, as feasible, the guidelines' source, evidence-base, and target audience. Moreover, the goal was to analyse the guidelines as to the interventions and treatments covered and highlight in particular interventions addressing children, health inequalities, and physical activity.

The results show that most of the CPME members are involved in various ways in promoting healthy lifestyles. Many national medical associations have developed their own policies, guidelines and position papers, including recommendations addressed to different target groups such as doctors, policymakers and citizens. The publications inevitably address the importance of healthy diets and adequate exercise. They also highlight other lifestyle factors such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Besides recommending healthy diets and physical activity, advising on smoking cessation and moderate alcohol intake are important ways in which doctors can and do promote healthy lifestyles. Most governments and many national medical associations have guidelines and policies on those topics.

CPME members addressed childhood obesity in their survey answers. CPME has been underlining the complex nature of action against obesity, including effective protection of vulnerable groups, in particular children. A number of national medical associations have also paid attention to reducing health inequalities, for example in reports setting out evidence and examples of actions that doctors can take to affect the social determinants of health. Healthcare professionals can be advocating for local planning decisions, for example to prioritise opportunities for walking and cycling. Furthermore, some CPME members suggest in their guidelines that healthy lifestyles need to be given more attention in doctors' continuing professional development. However, some national medical associations expressed the opinion that drafting guidelines is beyond the scope of their work.

Many CPME members reported about other actions they have taken to encourage primary care physicians to promote healthy lifestyles. As an example, medical associations have organised courses and conferences and collaborated for example with insurers to encourage their patients to reach their personal health goals.

All the CPME members indicated that their governments have set some kind of strategies to address promotion of healthy lifestyles. It was also pointed out that in many countries municipalities or public health institutes have the legal responsibility to promote their residents' health and welfare. A number of national medical associations indicated that their governments have established strategies specifically for primary care. Many medical associations reported that their national government has created strategies to address promotion of healthy lifestyles. Some CPME members answered that promotion of healthy lifestyles is a part of wider public health strategies in their countries.

There are differences between the CPME member countries how primary care is organised in general. In some countries, the health system is organised around primary care and regulated by the state, whereas in other countries the organisation of primary care is left to the initiative of healthcare professionals. This means that there are countries where primary care is delivered by individual, self-employed doctors rather than primary healthcare organisations or centres. In addition, there are differences between countries about who has the responsibility to promote healthy lifestyles. However, the CPME survey answers show that primary health care professionals are increasingly involved in the health promotion interventions in one way or another.

Please find below an overview of the guidelines and strategies produced by and actions taken by CPME's member associations and their national governments to promote healthy lifestyles in relation to diets and physical activity. Links are provided when available.



AUSTRIA

National policies and actions

- **Health Promotion Strategy in the context of the Bundes-Zielsteuerungsvertrag**
A framework for coordinated action between the federal states, the provinces and social insurance.
- **Austrian Nutrition Action Plan**
Aiming to prevent over, under and malnutrition, to reverse the rising overweight and obesity rates by 2020 and to prevent diet related NCD's.
- **Strategy for Child and Adolescent Health**
- **Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs** (2009)

Actions by the Austrian Medical Chamber (Österreichische Ärztekammer)

- **Selbständig Gesund Programme** (DE)
Joint initiative with SVA, one of the Austrian social insurance carriers. Insured patients who commit to and reach their personal health goals profit from a reduction of their co-payments for medical treatments.
- **Gesundheits-Check Junior Programme** (DE)
A programme intended to fill the gap in preventive medicine. Children and teenagers between 6-18 years insured with SVA can participate in a free yearly medical check-up at GPs and paediatricians.

BELGIUM

National policies and actions

- **Federal Health Nutrition Plan (PFNS)** (FR) (NL)
5 strategic points: private sector engagement, breastfeeding and undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, food monitoring and surveys, scientific research in nutrition.
- **National healthy nutrition schemes for infants, children, adolescents and seniors**
- **Sugary drink tax** (2016)

Belgian Medical Association (Association Belge des Syndicats Médicaux / Belgische Vereniging van Artsen Syndicaten)

- None reported.

BULGARIA

National policies and actions

- **Healthy Nutrition for Children**
Priority for Bulgarian Presidency for the Council of the EU.
- **Objectives for Health 2020**
Addresses smoking, alcohol abuse, unhealthy diet and low physical activity.

Actions by the Bulgarian Medical Association (Български Лекарски Съюз)

- None reported.



CROATIA

National policies and actions

- **National Health Care Strategy 2012-2020**
Mentions that the primary focus in prevention must be on the biggest health problems, e.g. risk behaviours, including smoking, misuse of alcohol and drugs, physical inactivity and poor nutritional habits.

Actions by the Croatian Medical Chamber (Hrvatska liječnička komora)

- None reported.

CYPRUS

National policies and actions

- **National Strategic Plan on Smoking** (GR)
- **National Strategic Plan on Diabetes** (GR)
- **National Program on Community Health Promotion** (GR)
- **National Guidelines on Diet and Exercise** (GR)

Actions by the Cyprus Medical Association (ΠΑΓΚΥΠΡΙΟΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ)

- None reported.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

National policies and actions

- **Health 2020 – National Strategy for Health Protection and Promotion and Disease Prevention**
Addresses lifestyle and behavioural factors including insufficient physical activity, smoking, high alcohol consumption, and stress. Moreover, it aims to reduce health inequalities.
- **13 Action Plans under the implementation of the Health 2020**
Includes action plans for Promotion of Physical Activities, and on the Prevention of Obesity, Correct Nutrition and Eating Habits.

Actions by the Czech Medical Chamber (Česká lékařská komora)

- The Chamber has no guidelines or policies, but primary care physicians are regularly emphasising the importance of healthy lifestyles and encouraging patients to undertake healthy lifestyle changes.
- In addition, there are health prevention incentive programmes covered by health insurance companies.



DENMARK

National policies and actions

- **Health promotion packages**
Technical recommendations for health promotion and prevention on municipality level.
- **Physical activity guidelines**
Tailored to different population groups.
- **Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs** (2003)

Actions by the Danish Medical Association (Lægeforeningen)

- **Clinical guidelines for examination and treatment of overweight and obese children and adolescents**
- Municipalities have the responsibility to promote healthy lifestyles. The municipalities are guided to do so by numerous guidelines, project evaluations etc. published by the Danish Medical Board.

ESTONIA

National policies and actions

- **National Health Plan 2009–2020**
Addresses eating habits, alcohol consumption, smoking and physical activity

Actions by the Estonian Medical Association (Eesti Arstide Liit)

- General practitioners' association has lobbied for more resources for promotion of healthy lifestyles. GP practices can now hire more nurses, and part of the workforce can be used for health promotion work.

FINLAND

National policies and actions

- **"On the move"**
National strategy for physical activity promoting health and wellbeing 2020.
- **National Obesity Programme 2012-2018**
Aiming at achieving a downward trend in the obesity in order to improve health and welfare.
- **Well-being through nutrition. A guide for municipal decision-makers**
Aiming to improve the nutrition and general awareness of the effects of a healthy diet.
- **Health 2015 public health programme**
Aiming to reduce health differences between population groups.
- **Sugary drink tax**

Actions by the Finnish Medical Association (Suomen Lääkäriliitto)

- **Policy on reducing alcohol harm**
- **Statement on social determinants of health integral part of physician's work**
- Primary care providers use varying measures in promoting healthy lifestyles, including e.g. targeted health checks to certain groups of people, physical activity prescriptions, mini-intervention as regards alcohol use.



FRANCE

National policies and actions

- **National Health Nutrition programme (Programme national nutrition santé - PNNS) (FR)**
Encompasses guides on nutrition and physical activity. In 2017 Nutri-Score front of package nutrition labelling was introduced.
- **Eat and Move (Manger Bouger) (FR)**
National programme aiming to encourage citizens to eat balanced meals and exercise a certain amount each day.
- **Sugary drink tax (2012)**

Actions by the French National Medical Council (Conseil National de l'Ordre des Médecins)

- None reported.

GERMANY

National policies and actions

- **IN FORM - German national initiative to promote healthy diets and physical activity**
The National Action Plan for the prevention of poor dietary habits, lack of physical activity, overweight and related diseases.
- **Preventive Health Care Act (DE)**
Adopted in 2015, addresses promotion of healthy lifestyles in primary care, among other things it introduced increased financial support for self-help and prevention recommendations that can be issued by physicians.

Actions by the German Medical Association (Bundesärztekammer)

- 24h curricula to train doctors to address the promotion of healthy lifestyles and tobacco cessation.
- Week on prevention and health promotion organised together with other medical organisations.
- "Prescription for physical activity" together with the State Medical Associations and sports organisations.
- Developing materials for counselling patients on their alcohol consumption together with the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA).

GREECE

National policies and actions

- **National Action Plan on Public Health (GR)**
- **National Action Plan on Nutrition and Eating Disorders (GR)**
- **National Action Plan on Smoking (GR)**

Actions by the Panhellenic Medical Association (ΠΑΝΕΛΛΗΝΙΟΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΣ)

- None reported.



HUNGARY

National policies and actions

- [Healthy Hungary 2014-2020](#) (HU)
- [Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs](#) (2013)
- [The Public Health Product Tax](#) (2011)
Legislation imposing taxes applied on the salt, sugar and stimulant content of various categories of foods and beverages including sugar-sweetened drinks, energy drinks and prepackaged sugar-sweetened products.

Actions by the Hungarian Medical Chamber (Magyar Orvosi Kamara)

- None reported, but presentations on healthy lifestyles given in county level on a monthly basis.

ICELAND

National policies and actions

- [Strategy for promotion of physical activity](#) (IS)
- [Occupational Rehabilitation Fund](#)
Government in partnership with unions and private employers run services that aim to help people return to work following injuries or illnesses.
- [Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs](#) (2011)

Actions by the Icelandic Medical Association (Læknafélag Íslands)

- Physicians refer to the [website for primary care in Reykjavik](#) and [website for Directorate of Health](#).
- The Icelandic College of Primary Care Doctors is a small organisation with 200 members, promoting healthy lifestyle through retraining and education of primary care doctors.

IRELAND

National policies and actions

- [Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Well-Being 2013–2025](#)
- [A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan](#)
- [Sugary drink tax](#)

Actions by the Irish Medical Organisation

- [Position paper on Health Inequalities](#)
- [Position paper on Child Health](#)
- [Position paper on Lifestyle and Chronic Diseases](#)
These position papers highlight lifestyle factors or social conditions which are related to ill-health or chronic disease and set out recommendations for policy makers to combat the negative effects of these factors and conditions.



LATVIA

National policies and actions

- **Public Health Policy Guidelines 2014-2020**
Strategy to address the health promotion in primary care setting.
- **“Prescribing physical activity at the family doctor’s practice”**
Guidance by the State Sports Medicine Centre emphasising the role of medical staff in promoting physical activity.
- **Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs (2015)**

Actions by the Latvian Medical Association (Latvijas Ārstu biedrība)

- Twelve recommendations for health: For healthy and quality assured life. Working on the development of national recommendations for the implementation of evidence-based health promotion interventions.

LITHUANIA

National policies and actions

- **Lithuanian Health Strategy 2014-2025**
Among other objectives it advocates for healthy lifestyles by promoting health literacy and healthy diet, encouraging food producers to focus on healthier production, especially for children and adolescents, and ensuring clearly legible food labelling.
- **National public health care 2016-2023 development program (LT)**
Focuses on the implementation of Lithuanian Health Strategy. Aims to improve access to healthy food for all population groups. Is intended to create healthy diet environments.
- **Interinstitutional Action Plan “Health for All”**

Actions by the Lithuanian Medical Association (Lietuvos gydytojų sąjunga)

- None reported.

LUXEMBOURG

National policies and actions

- **National action plan “Gesond iessen, Méi bewegen” (FR)**
Encourages people to eat healthy and move more.

Actions by the Luxembourg Medical and Dentist Association (AMMD)

- None reported.



MALTA

National policies and actions

- [Food and Nutrition Policy and Action Plan for Malta \(2015-2020\)](#)
- [A Healthy Weight for Life: A National Strategy for Malta \(2012-2020\)](#)

Actions by the Medical Association of Malta

- MAM has no guidelines or policies but the Primary Health Care Department runs a healthy [Lifestyle Clinic](#) in various towns and villages.

THE NETHERLANDS

National policies and actions

- [National Prevention Agreement](#) (NL)
Agreement aiming the citizens to become healthier by changing their lifestyle by diminishing smoking, overweight and excessive use of alcohol.
- [JOGG](#)
Programme for municipalities to reduce overweight and obesity by children
- [National Prevention Program "All about Health"](#) (NL)
A joint effort by six ministries, municipalities, businesses and civil society organisations. Aiming to reduce the growing number of people with chronic illness and the large health differences between high and low skilled people.

Actions by the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG)

- [Standard prevention consultation](#) (PreventieConsult)
The Dutch College of General Practitioners developed this standard for disease prevention by actively offering a risk estimate linked to matching advice or therapy embedded in the regular primary care system.

NORWAY

National policies and actions

- [Norwegian National Action Plan for a Healthier Diet](#)
The government has also issued several guidelines regarding the treatment and prevention of non-communicable diseases, including lifestyle advice to the general population.
- [Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs](#) (2014)
- [Sugary drink tax](#)

Actions by the Norwegian Medical Association (Legeforeningen)

- [Policy document on preventive health](#)
Issued by the Norwegian College of General Practice which is part of the Norwegian Medical Association.



POLAND

National policies and actions

- **The National Health Programme (Narodowy Program Zdrowia 2016–2020)** (PL)
Includes a section on improving the way of nutrition, nutritional status and physical activity of the society.

Actions by the Polish Chamber of Physicians and Dentists (Naczelna Izba Lekarska)

- None reported.

PORTUGAL

National policies and actions

- **The National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating**
Aims to improve the nutritional status of the population and to promote their health.

Actions by the Portuguese Medical Association (Ordem dos Médicos)

- None reported.

ROMANIA

National policies and actions

- **Strategy for the development of primary health care (2012-2020)**
Defining the key principles, goals and objectives of the primary health care policy. Developed by the Ministry of Health, with specialised advice from the Oxford Policy Management.
- **Healthy Lifestyle and Other Preventive Prevention Actions for Non-Transmissible Diseases in Primary Care**
Prevention guide published by the Romanian Government through the Ministry of Health recommending preventive lifestyle interventions on nutrition, physical activity, alcohol consumption and smoking.
- The National Public Health Institute through the National Center for Health Evaluation and Promotion develops national campaigns to promote health in the areas of nutrition, alcohol, water, smoking, hand hygiene etc.

Actions by the College of Doctors in Romania (Colegiul Medicilor din România)

- **“Healthy lifestyle and other priority preventive interventions for non-communicable diseases in primary care”**
Prevention guide published by a partner organisation of the College, the Romania Medical Association of Generalist Physicians, and the National Institute of Statistics
- Campaigns dealing with health promotion through specific actions in association with the Romanian National Society of Family Medicine
- Promoting healthy lifestyles is also being done within specialised medical associations - such as the Multidisciplinary Rehabilitation Medical Association of Sf. Luca Hospital. The annual campaigns have e.g. following themes: "Physical activity - health promoter", "Combating obesity among the elderly" and "The Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet".



SERBIA

National policies and actions

- **Strategy to improve public health**
Developed by the Ministry of health.

Actions by the Serbian Medical Chamber (Лекарска комора Србије)

- None reported

SLOVAKIA

National policies and actions

- **National Action Plan for the prevention of obesity for years 2015-2020**
- **National Programme for Children and Adolescents**
- **Health Promotion Programme for Disadvantaged Communities**
- **Expert Recommendations by the Ministry of Health**
Professional guidances on promoting the nutrition of infants and toddlers breast feeding and on the organisation of the clinical nutrition.

Actions by the Slovak Medical Chamber (Slovenská lekárska komora)

- Regular conferences and public forums, e.g. "Preventive medicine in the context of the present", "Nutrition and health" and "Chronic non-communicable diseases and healthy lifestyles".
- Professional societies have their own prevention programmes for individual groups of diseases. However, there is a substantial effort to create a common system of preventive recommendations for the *normal* population.
- The Slovak Society of General Practice has produced [guidelines](#) e.g. on smoking and cardiovascular prevention.

SLOVENIA

National policies and actions

- **National Programme on Nutrition and Health Enhancing Physical Activity 2015-2025**
Aims to provide equal access to healthy diet and regular physical activity regardless of social and economic status, or gender and age.
- **Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs (2018)**

Actions by the Medical Chamber of Slovenia (Zdravniška zbornica Slovenije)

- None reported



SWEDEN

National policies and actions

- **National Guidelines for Methods of Preventing Disease**
The National Board of Health and Welfare produces national guidelines. The basis for all methods is some form of advice or counselling. The methods have been assigned to three possible levels – brief advice, counselling and advanced counselling.
- **The Commission for Equity in Health**
A group appointed by the government, submits proposals that can help to reduce health inequalities in society. It does not directly address primary care, but it is looking how to address health inequalities which in the long run might affect how primary care doctors address these issues.

Actions by the Swedish Medical Association (Sveriges Läkarförbund)

- **“The healthy choice should be the easy choice”** (SE)
Policy for Promotion Health and preventing Disease. It states that “The importance of lifestyle habits for health and the causes of ill health need to be given much more attention in doctors’ continuing professional development.”
- [YFA, the Society of Physical Activity](#), has published a book called 'FYSS' with financial support from the state. This book acts as a guideline and consultation tool for doctors who prescribe physical activity.

SWITZERLAND

National policies and actions

- **National Strategy for the Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases**
One of the main topics within this strategy is the elaboration of a programme "prevention in health care".
- **Legislation limiting the content of trans fats in foodstuffs** (2009)

Actions by the Swiss Medical Association (FMH)

- Member organisations of the FMH (i.e. College of primary care - Kollegium für Hausarztmedizin - and others) elaborated programs for “[health coaching](#)” in primary care, for physical health in primary care “[Paprica](#)” as well as for evidence based prevention in primary care “[EviPrev](#)”.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

National policies and actions

ENGLAND

- **Childhood obesity: a plan for action**
- **Eatwell Guide**
- **Physical activity guidelines**
- **Physical activity: brief advice for adults in primary care**
- **Physical activity: exercise referral schemes**
- **Preventing excess weight gain**
- **Behaviour change: individual approaches**



- **Health inequalities and population health**
- **'Making every contact count'**
An approach to behaviour change that utilises many interactions healthcare professionals have with patients to encourage changes in behaviour that have a positive effect on their health.
- **Change 4 life**
Tips and information to make healthier choices
- **Sugary drink tax (2016)**

SCOTLAND

- **Health Promotion and Nutrition in Schools**
- **SIGN in Scotland**
Obesity management guidelines
- **Sugary drink tax (2016)**

NORTHERN IRELAND

- **Making Life Better – A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023**
- **Sugary drink tax (2016)**

WALES

- **National Exercise Referral Scheme (NERS)**
- **Motivate2Move**
Brief information to assist all health professionals to incorporate exercise advice routinely within a consultation.
- **Sugary drink tax (2016)**

Actions by the British Medical Association

- **'Food for thought – promoting healthy diets among children and young people'**
Discusses the role of healthcare professionals in providing advice on healthy dietary behaviour
- **'Healthy transport – Healthy lives'**
Highlights the role of healthcare professionals in advocating for local planning decisions to prioritise opportunities for walking and cycling
- **'Social determinants of health - what doctors can do'**
Sets out some of the evidence and examples of actions that doctors can take to affect the social determinants of health.
- A number of Clinical Commissioning Groups and local authorities commission local enhanced services so that GPs are supported to promote healthy lifestyles, such as smoking cessation services, healthy living services, advising about alcohol and diet. Some Clinical Commissioning Groups have also permitted the commissioning of exercise via a prescription.