

EUPHA Food and Nutrition Section

Report of the Proceedings of the Section in 2013

A healthy nutrition policy for Europe?

At the meeting of the Section in November 2012 in Malta, it was agreed that the Section would seek to arrange a workshop at the November 2013 Conference in Brussels on what might be the characteristics of a healthy nutrition policy for Europe. João Breda, the Programme Manager for Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, at the WHO Regional Office for Europe, was very supportive to this idea, and he agreed that WHO would provide finance to support such an endeavour. This workshop, eventually titled “**Supporting a Healthy Nutrition Policy for Europe**” was held as a pre-conference workshop on 13th November. Speakers included: Philip James, who discussed past mistakes made by the “healthy nutrition community”, and future prospects; Joao Breda, who introduced the new WHO European Region Nutrition Action Plan; Simon Capewell, who discussed the policy implications of healthy and unhealthy fats; Ted Tulchinsky, who outlined some deficiencies of vitamins and trace minerals in our diet; Tim Lobstein, who outlined problems confronting healthy nutrition from retailing and marketing of food; this was followed by Ruth Veale, who discussed the related topic of the food industry and its advertising policies; Sue Dibb then went on to discuss sustainable diets, and how integrating environmental and ethical concerns into nutrition policies should be possible; Oliver Mytton then outlined possibilities in the areas of legislation, taxation, and subsidy policies to support healthy nutrition; finally, Monika Kosinska discussed the political realities of the environment within which public health advocacy for healthy nutrition has to be conducted. This was followed by a lively discussion. Twenty-five people attended this event.

Back at the 2012 meeting, it had also been agreed that the Section would produce a pre-workshop statement on the same subject. This was titled “**Is an Integrated Food Policy for Europe a Real Possibility? Some Relevant Issues**”. The document produced was divided into scientific and policy sections. The scientific section included contributions on obesity and calories, dietary fats, deficiencies of vitamins and trace minerals, food production and climate change, organic foods, and a suggested research agenda for public health nutrition. The policy section included contributions on agricultural

policy, fish production, reconciliation of food production and the environmental agenda, retailing and marketing of food, use of regulatory approaches including use of taxation of unhealthy foods and subsidies for healthy products to promote healthy nutrition, educational strategies for better food, nutrition & cooking literacy, and finally on food governance and the political economy.

Contributors to this publication included Chris Birt, Philip James, Modi Mwatsama, Ted Tulchinsky, Sue Dibb, Machteld Huber, Simon Capewell, Tim Lobstein, Oliver Mytton, Enni Mertanen, Carl Lachat, Bent Mikkelsen, and Monika Kosinska. The paper was published by EUPHA, as a EUPHA publication, in advance of the workshop held on 13th November, at which copies of this new publication were available.

European school meal culture

The Food and Nutrition Section organised a fully booked workshop at the 2013 European Public Health Conference in Brussels; this was titled **“The changing face of European school meal culture – implications for public health”**, and was chaired by Bent Egberg Mikkelsen and Enni Mertanen. School food is becoming a global public health issue; interest in school meal research and programmes has risen, and various strategies and policies designed to offer better food in schools are being adopted in various European countries. An overview of school meal programmes (SMPs) was given by Bent Egberg Mikkelsen; he presented a new framework for the overall environment of food and eating, which he referred to as FoodScape Studies (FSSs). As pointed out by Arja Lyytikäinen, the whole school environment is vital and should be studied as a component of all nutrition interventions, within which pupils should be considered as responsible counterparts in the development process of school catering. The school meal project ProMeal, and the organisation of school meals in Nordic countries, were presented by Cecilia Olsson, who discussed in detail the Swedish regulations; she showed pictures of children's plates, in comparison with the meals as planned, which were a part of a validation study. Jose A. (Tony) Torralba gave a southern perspective which included a conceptual framework enabling examination and understanding of the eating practices of children in and out of school. Annemie Haveman-Nies, discussing school food in a broader school environmental context, presented the Dutch school-based nutrition programme ‘Taste Lessons’. A short but lively discussion focused on identifying necessary further European level actions, and

the potential role of the Food and Nutrition Section in collating results of work demonstrating how public health can be improved by nutritious school food cultures.

Representation of EUPHA at WHO Conferences

Chris Birt, as Section President, represented EUPHA at two conferences, both organised by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, on nutrition. The second, held in Vienna in early July, was to agree a European Ministerial Statement on healthy nutrition, in support of the WHO programme on prevention of NCDs; the first, held in Tel Aviv in March (this was a joint WHO and FAO event), was held mainly to prepare for the later meeting in July.

Annual General Meeting of the Section

At the Annual Meeting of the Section, held in Brussels on 15th November 2013, Section officers and a committee were elected for 2013/14:

President: Christopher Birt;

Vice-Presidents: Enni Mertanen and Bent Mikkelsen;

Secretary: Tatjana Buzeti;

Other committee members: Natalie Rangelov and Helen Bromley.

Following on from the pre-conference workshop held two days previously, it was agreed that the possibility of a future WHO Convention on Healthy Nutrition (similar to that for tobacco) should be discussed, and it was agreed that this should be a main topic for discussion within the Section this year; Chris Birt agreed to investigate the possibility of WHO Europe interest in this; it was agreed that this might be the subject of another pre-conference workshop in 2014.

It was also agreed that the Section would submit abstracts for a workshop in the 2014 European Public Health Conference in Glasgow which would describe and propose an event planned to look into community-level activities, including community-based nutrition programmes, community gardens, etc.

Finally it was agreed that the Section should set up a register of the interests of all Section members.