



'How can policies be improved to create healthier food environments in Europe? Application of the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI) in the EU and in Eleven European countries.'



PEN EUPHA Pre Conference Symposium

Janas Harrington



**FOOD
EPI**

INFORMAS

Benchmarking food environments



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Policy Evaluation Network (PEN)
@PEN_EU1

- Nutritional health is a fundamental resource for the social, cultural and economic wellbeing of local, national and global communities
- Need to move away from the individual blame game





Food environments shape what food we buy and eat.

Availability, accessibility, affordability

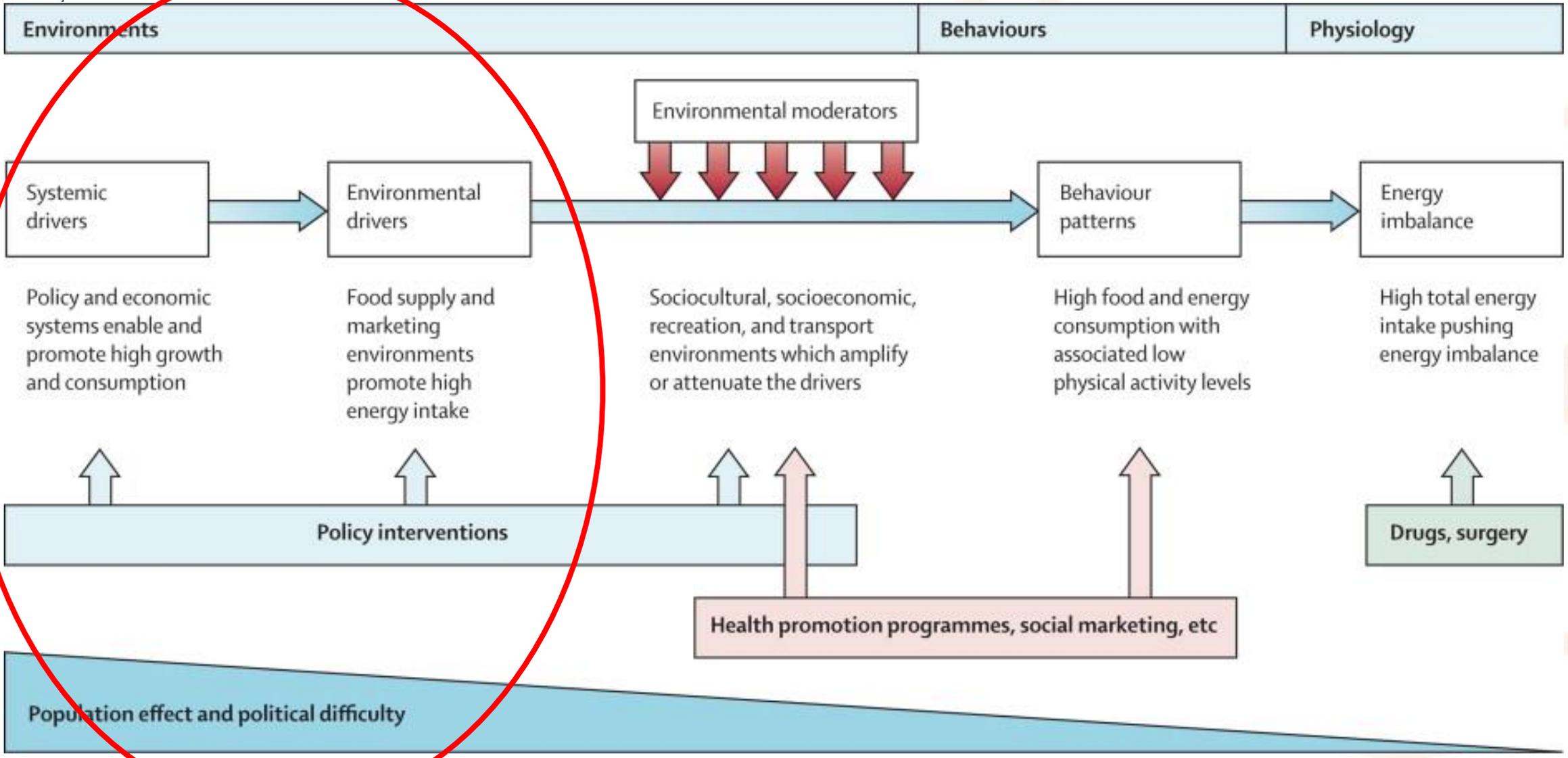


Is the healthier choice the easier choice?



Is the healthier choice the more affordable choice?





Structural government policies

- Structural, government policies can play an important role to create healthy food environments, supporting the entire population to make healthy food choices;
- More effective in improving population diets than interventions which address individual behaviour, such as health education.
- Environmental approaches are not only more effective but also more cost effective
- Such structural policies could also be especially beneficial for the most vulnerable groups and thus contribute to a reduction in socioeconomic inequalities in dietary intake

Food Environment Policy Index (Food EPI)

- **Benchmark** government implementation of food environment policies in European countries and at the European level (Food-EPI Europe) against international best practice
- **Prioritise actions** to be implemented at national and European level





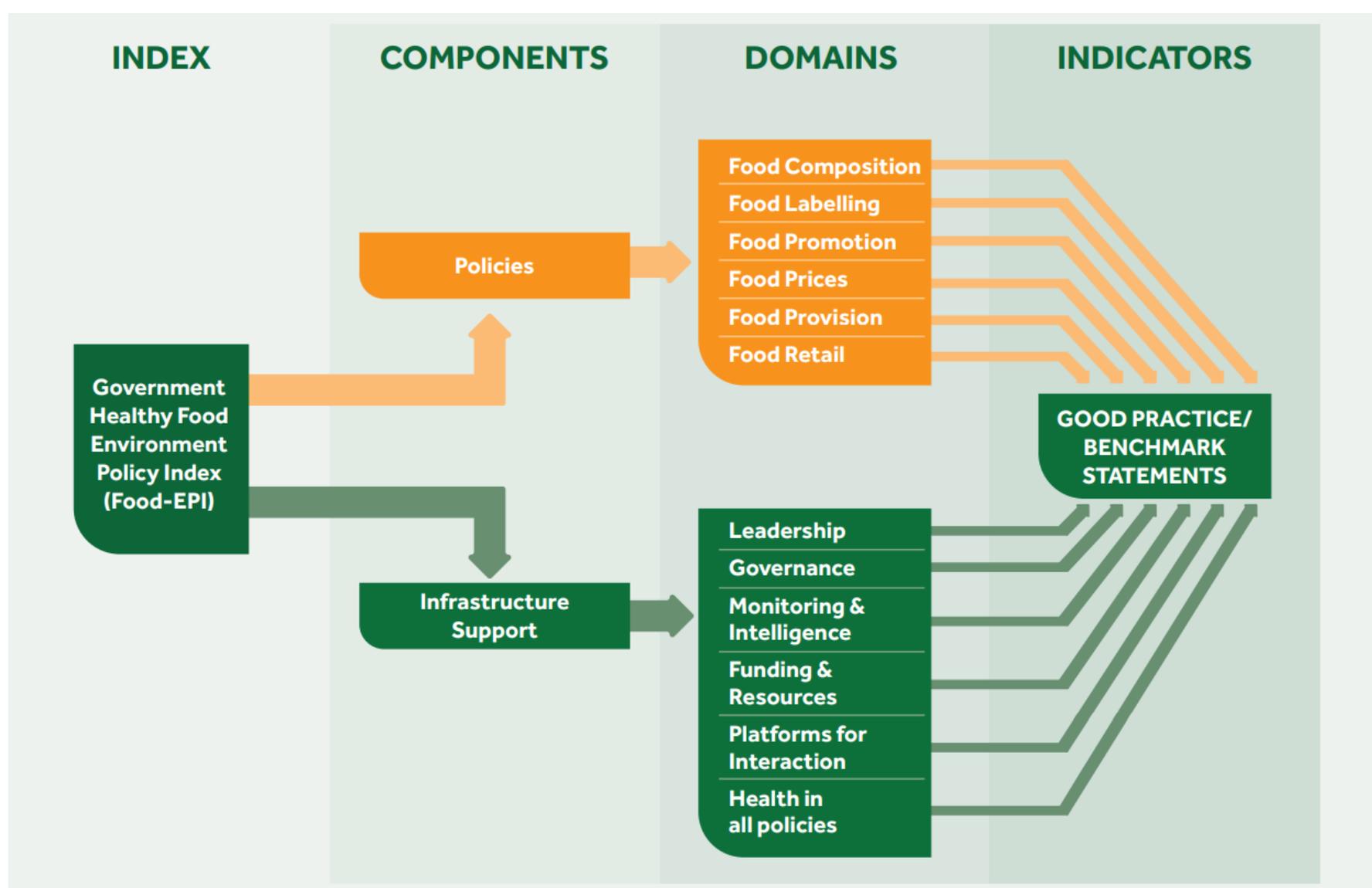
What is Food-EPI ?

- The Food Environment Policy Index has been **developed by INFORMAS, an International Network for Food and Obesity Research, Monitoring and Action Support** and assesses government's level of implementation of policies and infrastructure support related to the food environment .

- It is a useful tool to:
 1. **Compare the extent of implementation of government policies** in one **country with those in other countries.**
 2. **Identify and prioritise actions** needed to **address critical gaps in government policies.**
 3. **Track progress in policy** over time.

- Implemented in over 40 countries globally, including 11 EU countries

Food – EPI tool

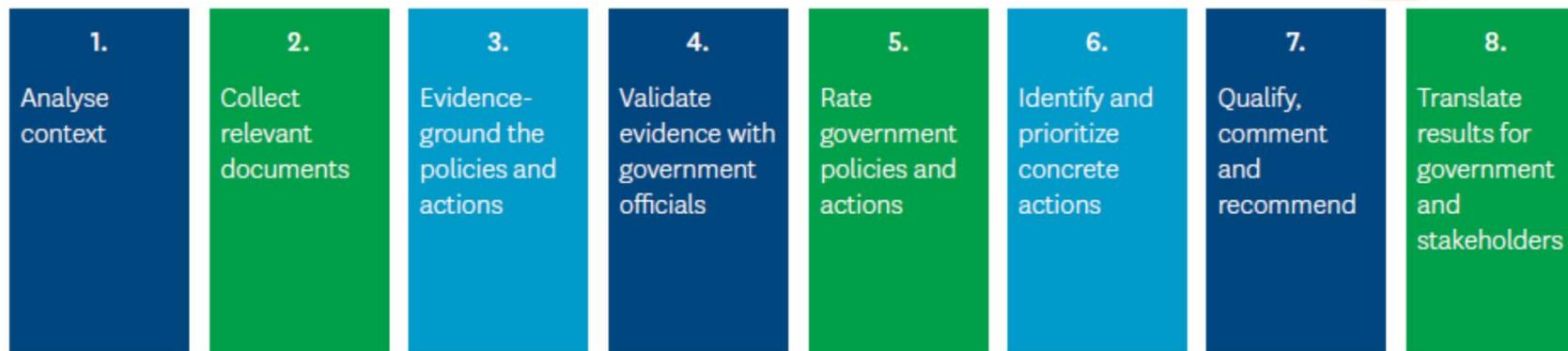


- **Policy (7 domains)** - address key aspects of food environment influenced by government to create accessible, available and affordable healthy food choices.
- **Infrastructure support (6 domains)** – facilitate policy development and implementation to prevent obesity and NCDs.
- Good practice **indicators** are proposed within each domain, that describe the ‘good practices’ (policies and infrastructure support) that governments put in place to contribute towards **creating a healthy** food environment

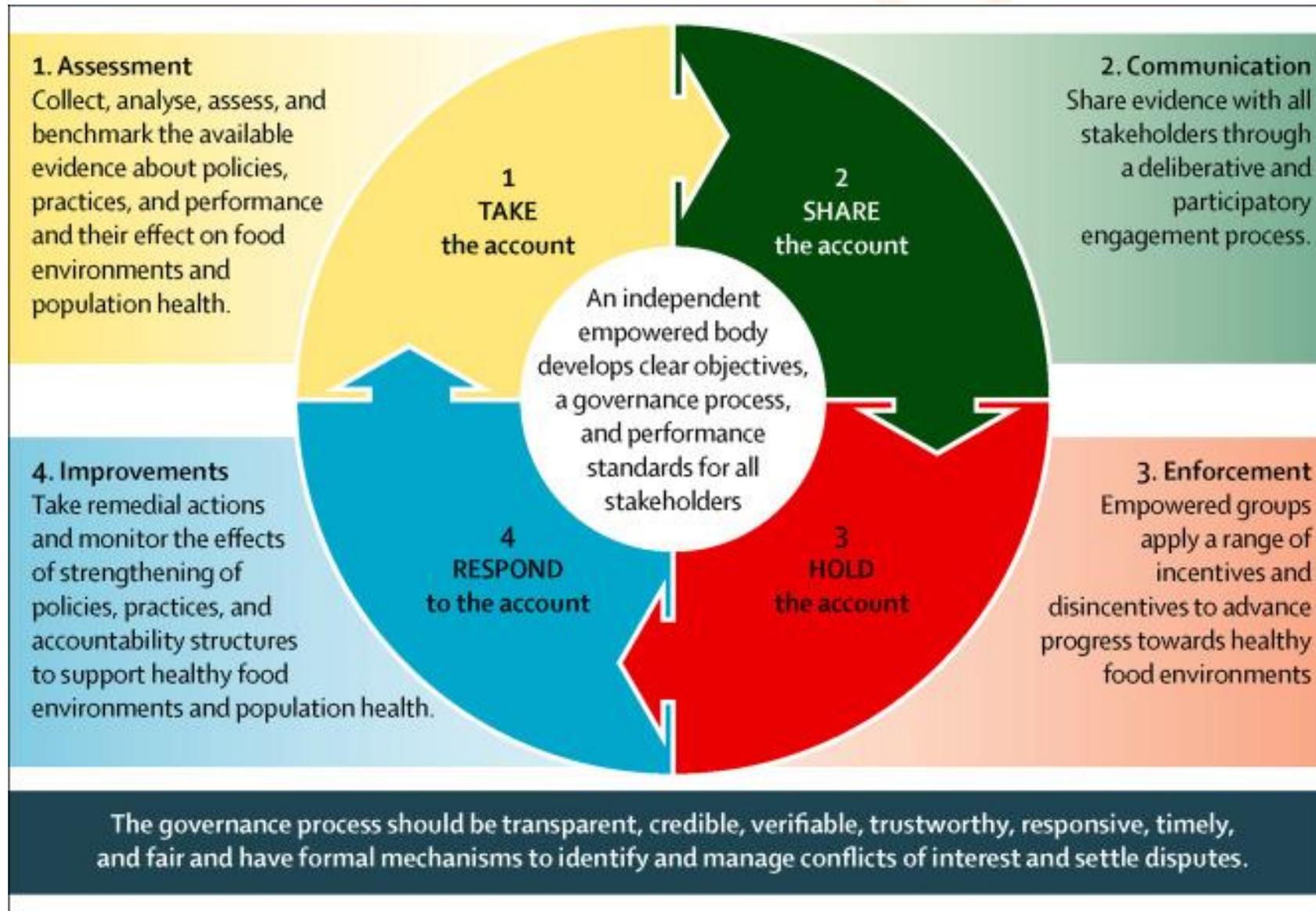
Food-EPI Process

Eight stages are followed to **develop an initial baseline Food EPI**, which **allows the identification of critical gaps and priority actions**. These stages are set out below and can be summarised in three broad steps.

1. The evidence on all relevant policies is compiled in an evidence paper which is reviewed for accuracy and completeness by government officials. This covers stages 1-4.
2. Independent experts are brought together to identify critical gaps and prioritise actions to fill those gaps, equivalent to stages 5-6.
3. The actions are used to advocate to the government for changes to improve the food environment



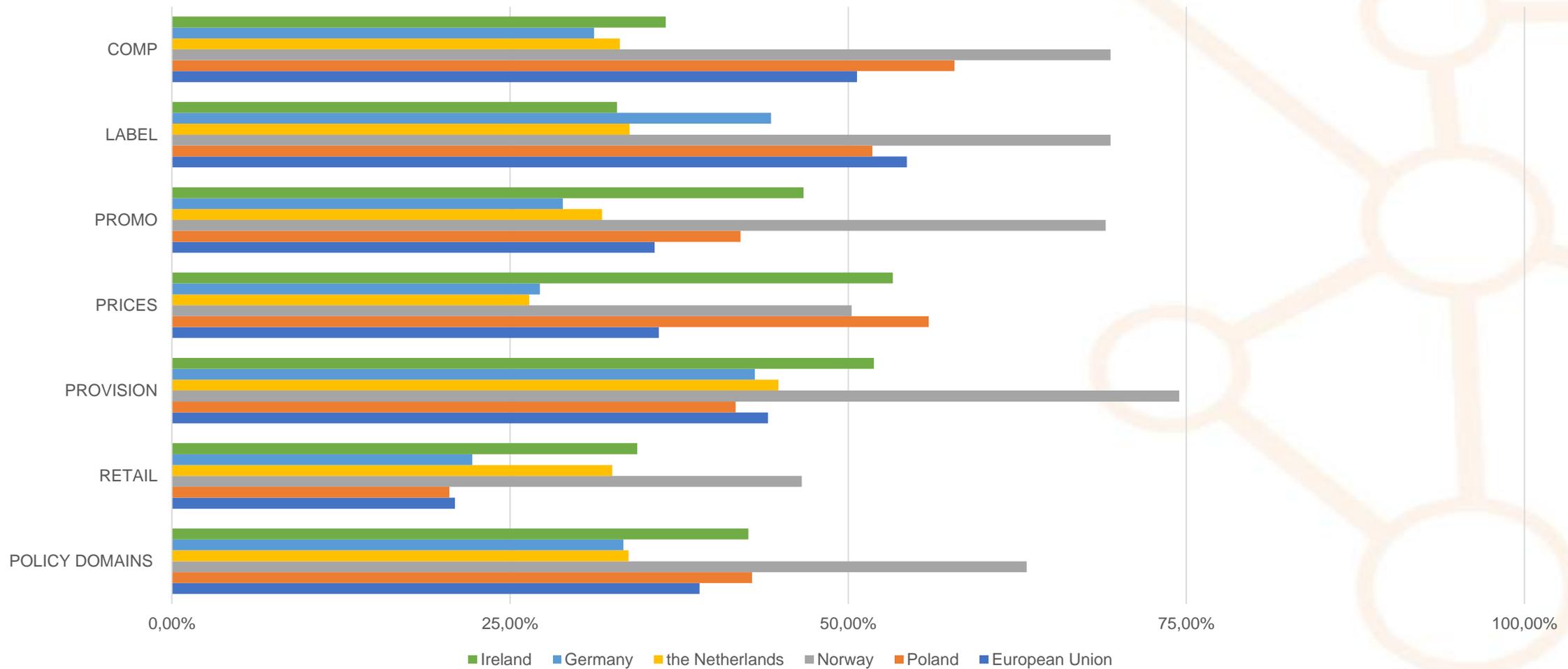
Accountability Framework



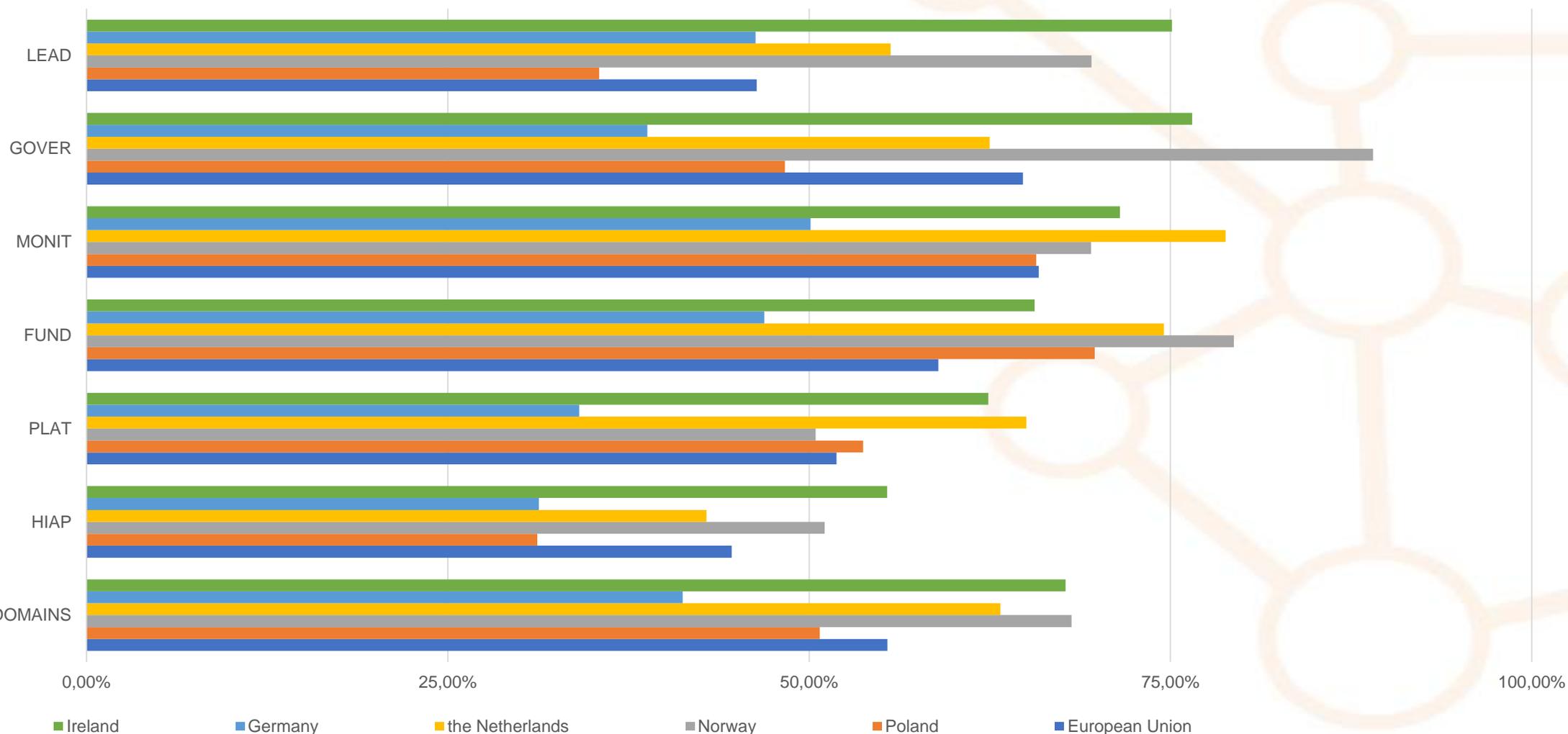
Key Results

- Norway (63%) had the highest rating of implementation on overall policy domain indicators
- Germany (33%) and the Netherlands (34%) had the lowest rating of implementation compared to the other countries.
- All countries scored better on the implementation of infrastructure support than on the implementation of policies to create health-promoting capacity of food environments.
- At the EU level, infrastructure support was evaluated of more strength than its direct policies improving food environments.
- Top 5 actions in all countries included recommendations with respect to food prices (e.g. taxation unhealthy foods) or food-provision (e.g. healthy food supply in public settings).

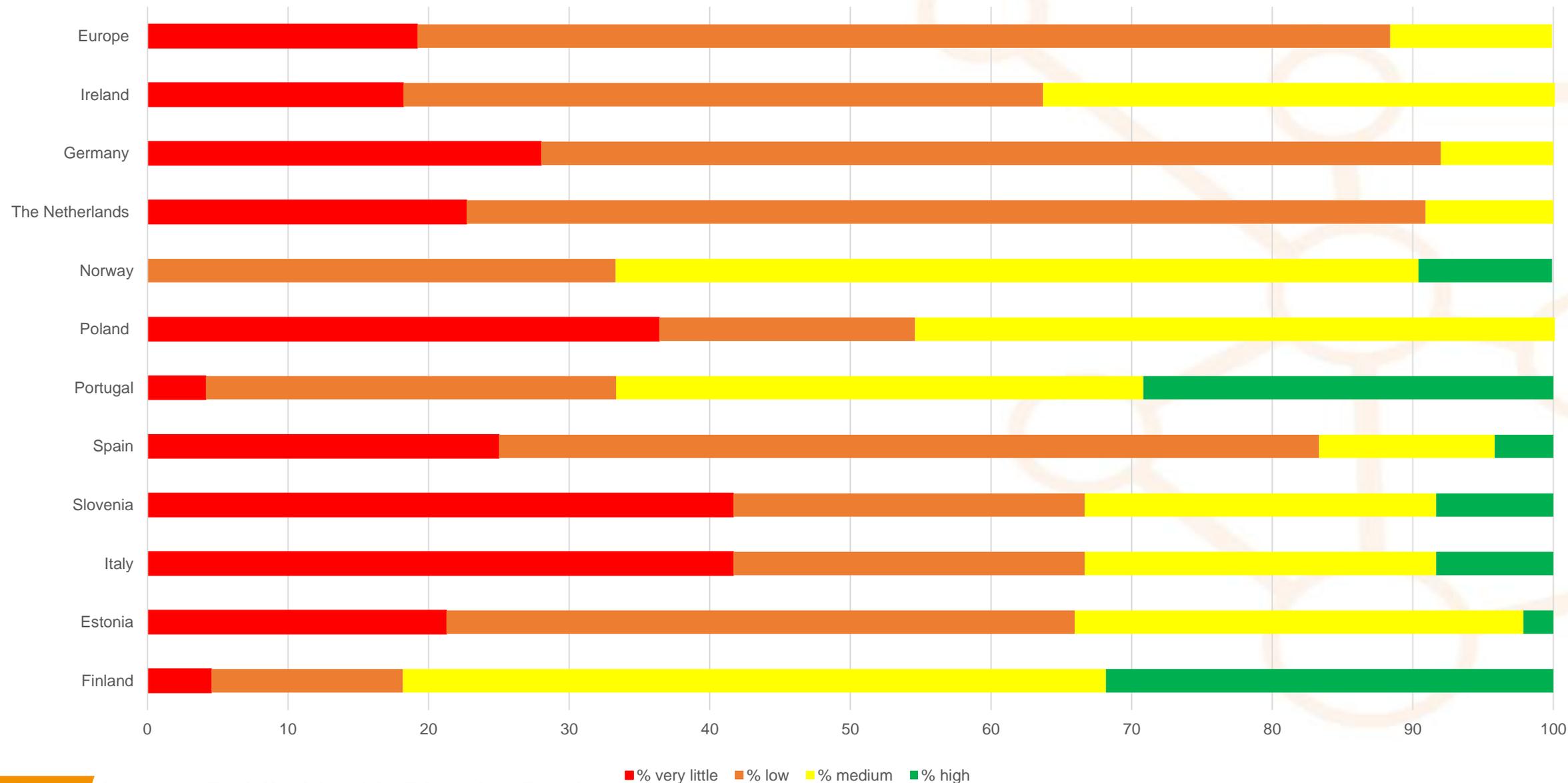
Results: Implementation (and strenght in EU) of food policies



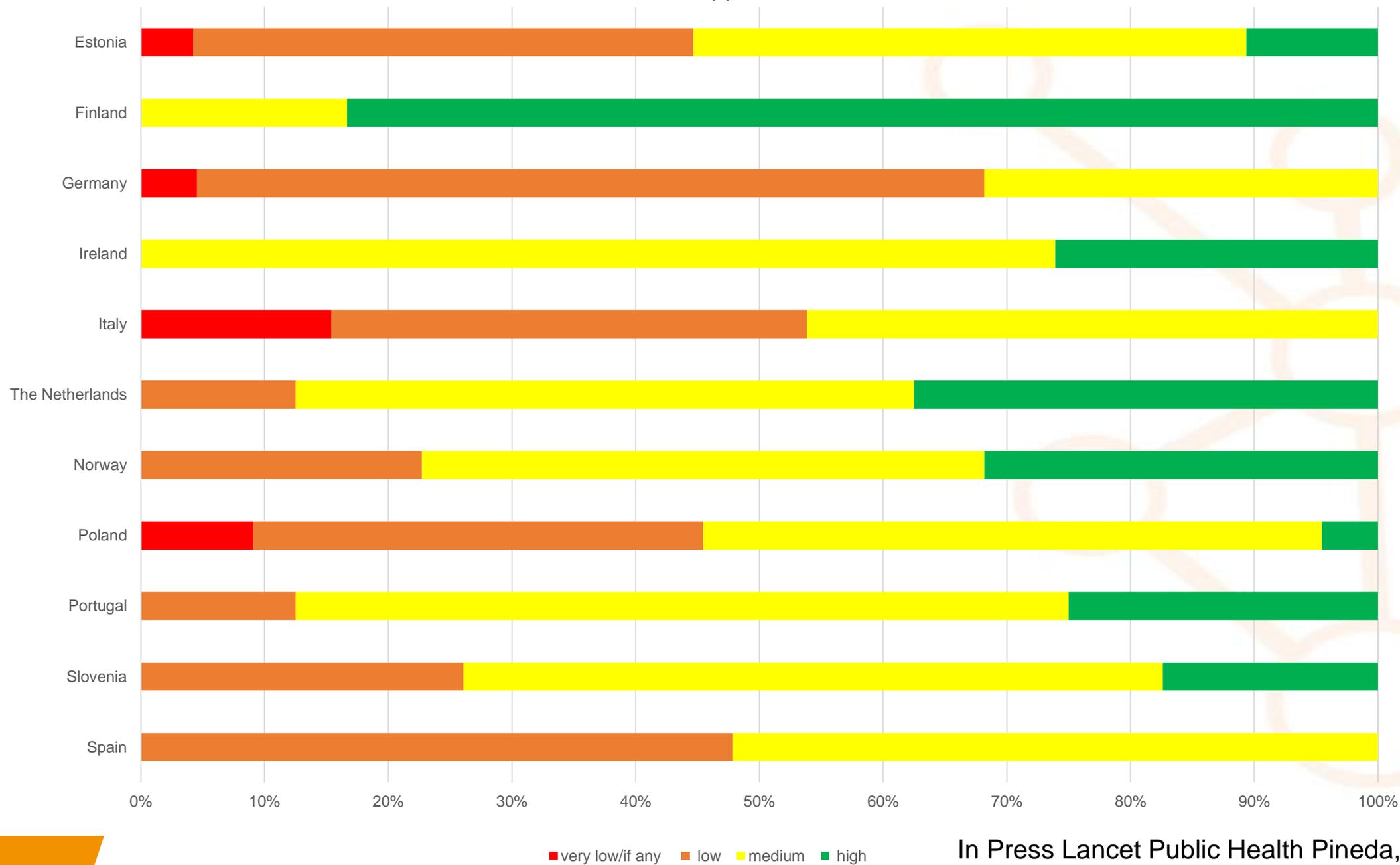
Results: Implementation (and strenght in EU) of infra structure support



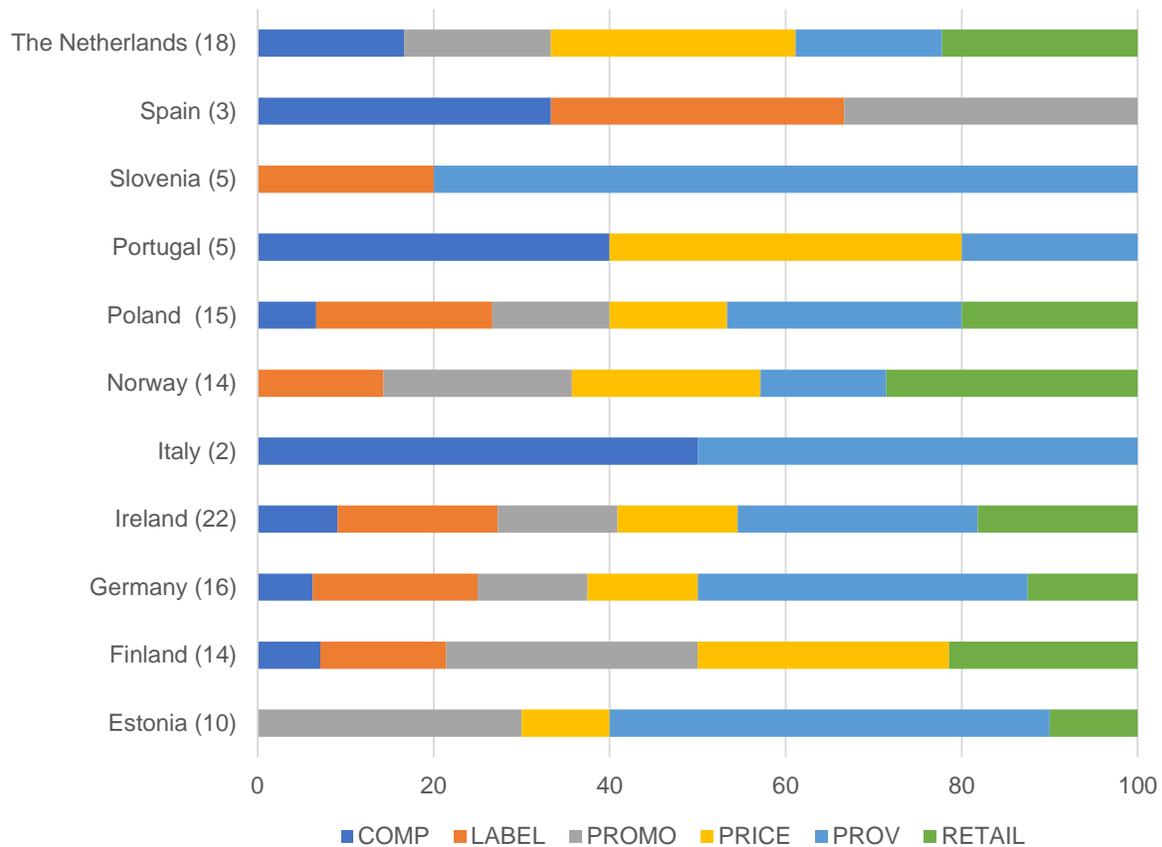
% of food environment policies at very little if any, low, medium and high implementation compared to best practice



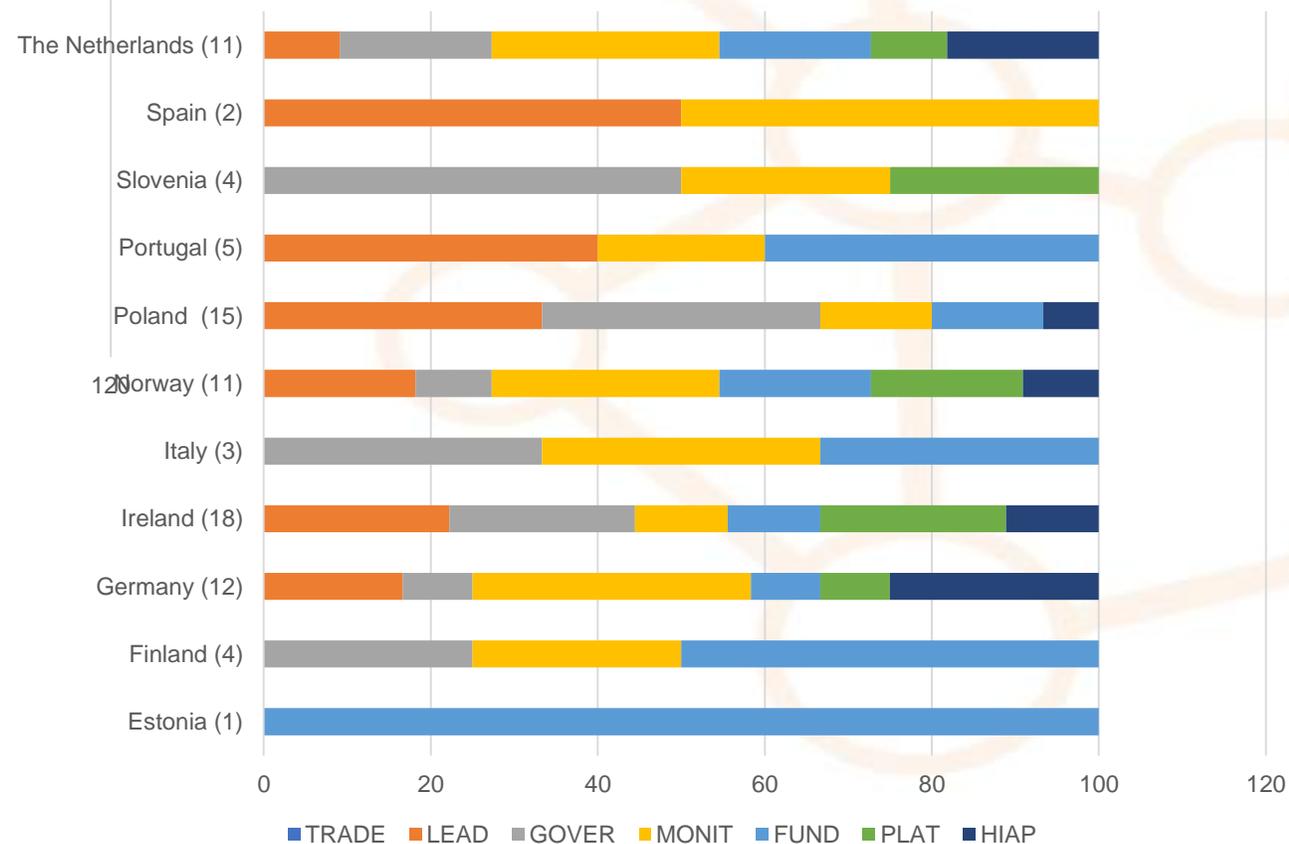
Infrastructure Support indicators



a) Priority actions for policy domains



b) Priority actions for infrastructure domains



Science and Technology in childhood Obesity Policy

What can we do with these results?



CHALLENGES

- Lack of political prioritization and will, but also the communication of evidence of the academic community;
- Lack of evaluation of policies (e.g. societal costs, **cost-effectiveness**, human rights)
- Absence of health in all policies
- Lack of knowledge of tendency makers
- Strong force and lobby of the food industry (the commercial interest in health policies)

WHAT IS NEEDED TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES

SCIENCE

- Monitoring
- Activist approach
- Communication

STAKEHOLDERS

- Join forces
- **capacity building platforms**
- **Lobby** for clear national/EU targets
- the urge for **systems change**
- Create a **demand** for healthy environments of civil society
- **Move away from victim blaming**

TOOLS

- clear national/EU **targets**
- Activist approach
- Monitoring tools
- Monitoring tools
- **Public procurement**
- Simple internalized **knowledge packages**
- **set of counterarguments**
- **1-page policy briefs**

Food-EPI – Benefits

- Getting civil society and experts participating and on the same page
- Supporting bureaucrats in the specifics of policies and actions
- Setting the agenda with politicians
 - Translation of WHO NCD action plan to national plan
- Process as important as the outcome!!
- Engagement with policymakers & dissemination of results different in different countries – valuable learning process

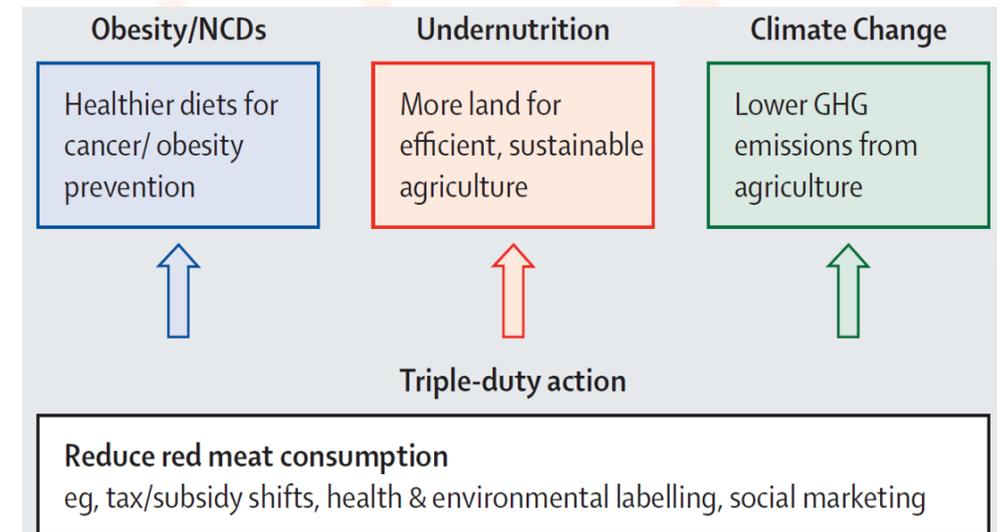
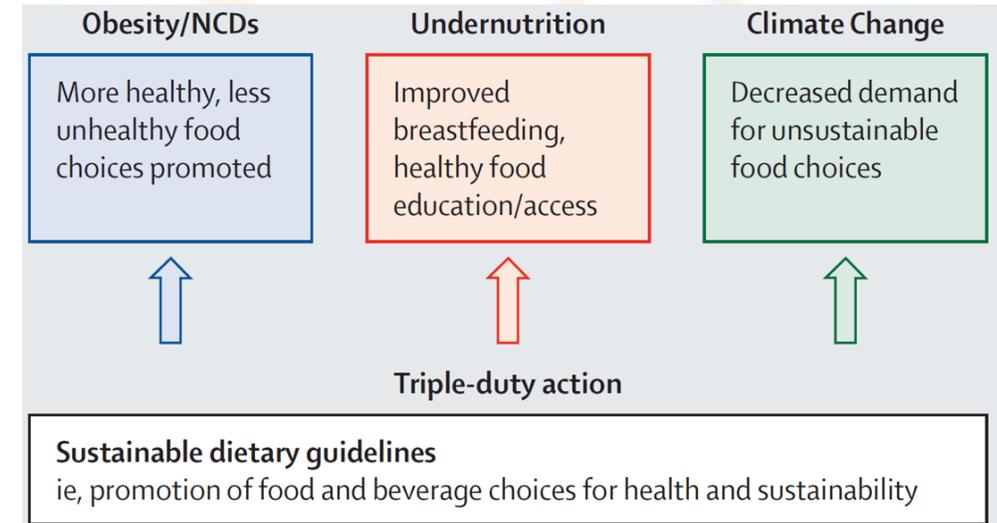
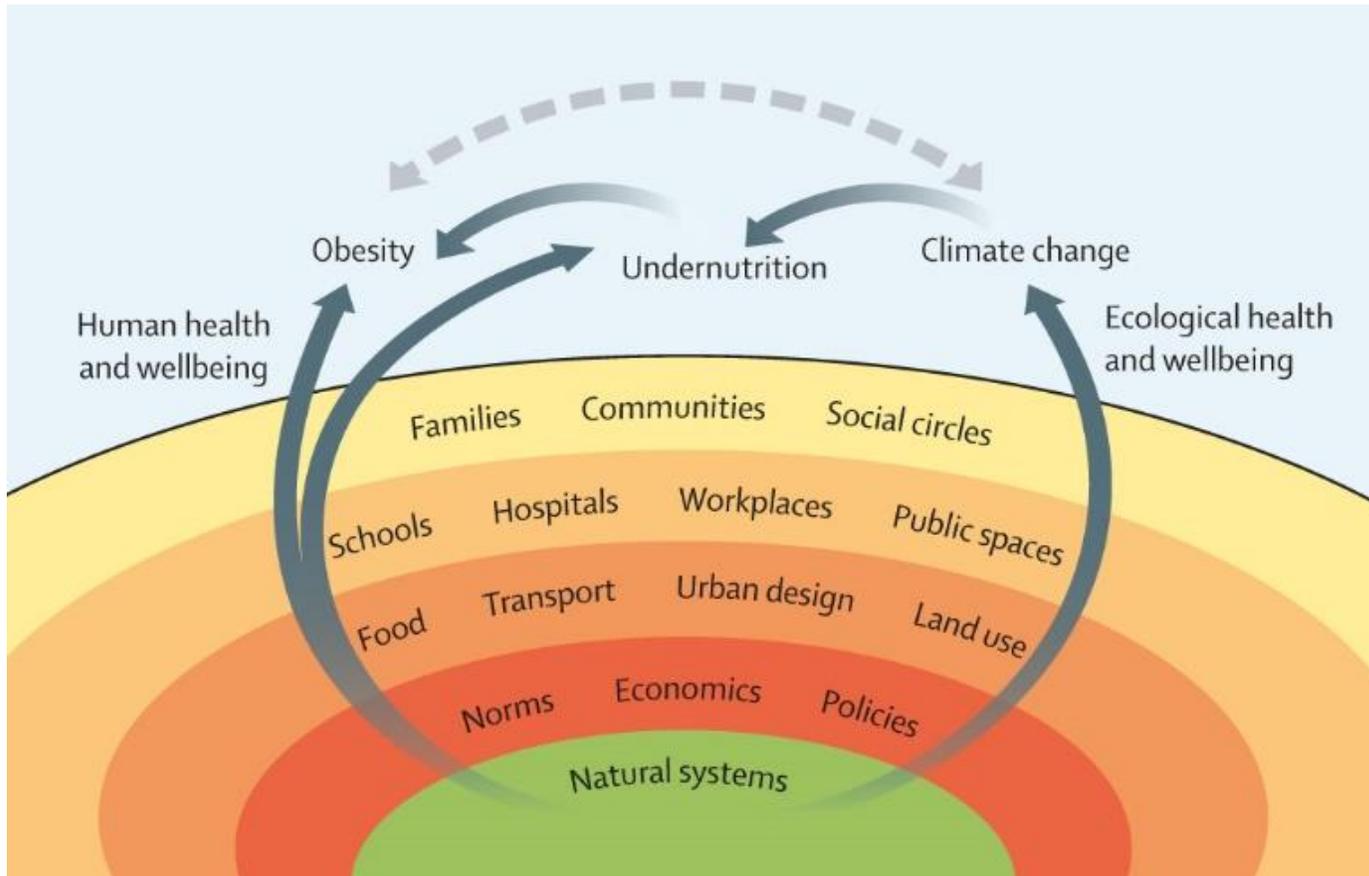
Systems approach needed to create healthy food environment

- Whole systems approach to support healthy food environments in EU Member States and the EU
- Most action required on policies with direct impact on Food Environments
- Actions on different level required.



Future directions

- Healthy food environments → Sustainable food systems (double & triple duty actions)



Future directions

- Consideration of the wider food system, the double burden of malnutrition and links with climate change → sustainability indicators (current IDRC project INFORMAS2.0 with Food Sustainability Advisory Team)
- Increase uptake and repetition of Food-EPI
- Measuring impact of the Food-EPI
- Better knowledge exchange: couple monitoring research with substantial investments in communications & advocacy strategies
- Guarantee sustainability: embed Food-EPI within other existing monitoring initiatives; use less burdensome data collection methods



PEN WP 1.1 Partners

- Maartje Poelman*†, PhD, Chair group Consumption and Healthy lifestyles, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands (PEN WP1 Co-Chair)
- Janas Harrington, PhD, HRB Centre for Health and Diet Research, School of Public Health, University College Cork, (PEN WP1 Co-Chair)
- Djojosoeparto, Sanne K, PhD, Department of Human Geography and Spatial Planning, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands,
- Karin Geffert, PhD, Chair of Public Health and Health Services Research, Pettenkofer School of Public Health, LMU Munich, Munich, Germany,
- Kamphuis, Carlijn B.M., Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Løvhaug, Anne Lene, PhD, Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway
- Leydon, Clarissa L, PhD, HRB Centre for Health and Diet Research, School of Public Health, University College Cork, Ireland
- Romaniuk, Piotr, PhD, Department of Health Policy, School of Health Sciences in Bytom, Medical University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.
- Torheim, Liv Elin, Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University,
- von Philipsborn, Peter, PhD, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich), Pettenkofer School of Public Health, Munich, Germany,
- Dr Stefanie Vandevijvere, PhD, Sciensano, Department of epidemiology and public health, Brussel, Belgium

- Elisa Pineda*, PhD, Centre for Health Economics & Policy Innovation (CHEPI) Imperial College Business School. ² School of Public Health, Imperial College London, London UK,
- Aaspõllu, Anu, PhD, National Institute for Health Development, Tallinn, Estonia
- Bica, Margarida, PhD, National Healthy Eating Promotion Program, Directorate-General of Health, Lisbon, Portugal,
- Bouzas Cristina, PhD, CIBER Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN), Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII), 28029 Madrid, Spain, Research Group on Community Nutrition & Oxidative Stress, University of Balearic Islands-IUNICS & IDISBA, 07122 Palma de Mallorca, Spain,
- Carrano, Elena, PhD, School of Food Sciences – University of Roma Tor Vergata Roma, Italy, Carrano Elena (esterno),
- De Miguel-Etayo, Pilar, PhD, GENUD Research Group, Spain, pilardm@unizar.es
- Gabrijelčič Blenkuš, Mojca, PhD, National institute of public health (NIJZ), Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- Graça, Pedro, PhD, National Healthy Eating Promotion Program, Directorate-General of Health, Lisbon, Portugal,
- Helldan, Anni, PhD, Development manager, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland,
- Henjum, Sigrun, PhD, Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway.
- Hoxhaj, Ilda, PhD, Section of Hygiene, University Department of Life Sciences and Public Health, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Roma, Italy,
- Huseby, Camilla Sanne, PhD, Department of Nursing and Health Promotion, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, Oslo, Norway,
- Gregório, Maria João, PhD, National Healthy Eating Promotion Program, Directorate-General of Health, Lisbon, Portugal,
- Laatikainen, Tiina, Professor, PhD, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland,
- Mäki, Päivi, Development manager, PhD, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland,
- Martínez, J. Alfredo., PhD, CIBER Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN), Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII), 28029 Madrid, Spain, Cardiometabolics Precision Nutrition Program, IMDEA Food, CEI UAM + CSIC, 28049 Madrid, Spain,
- Raulio, Susanna, PhD, Senior researcher, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland, w
- Salvador, Clara, PhD, National Healthy Eating Promotion Program, Directorate-General of Health, Lisbon, Portugal,
- Sassi, Franco, PhD, Centre for Health Economics & Policy Innovation (CHEPI) Imperial College Business School, f.sassi@imperial.ac.uk
- Silano, Marco, PhD, Department of Food Safety, Nutrition and Veterinary Public Health - Istituto Superiore di Sanità – Roma, Italy,
- Sotlar, Ingrid, PhD, National institute of public health (NIJZ), Ljubljana, Slovenia,
- Specchia, Maria Lucia, PhD, Section of Hygiene, University Department of Life Sciences and Public Health, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Rome, Italy; Clinical Governance Unit, Fondazione Policlinico Universitario A. Gemelli IRCCS, Roma, Italy,
- Telo de Arriaga, Miguel, PhD, Division of Literacy, Health and Well-being, Directorate-General of Health, Lisbon, Portugal,
- Tur, Josep A., PhD, CIBER Fisiopatología de la Obesidad y Nutrición (CIBEROBN), Instituto de Salud Carlos III (ISCIII), 28029 Madrid, Spain, Research Group on Community Nutrition & Oxidative Stress, University of Balearic Islands-IUNICS & IDISBA, 07122 Palma de Mallorca, Spain,

‘No force of nature can stop an idea whose time has come’



Thank You