



Press release

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Key stakeholders support food marketing and advertising regulations

Key Cypriot stakeholders appear to support statutory regulations over advertising food and beverages to children.

A research performed in Cyprus as part of a pan-European research project on controls on advertising to children has been published today. This research reveals a remarkable agreement among key stakeholders that advertising and marketing of food and beverages to children should be regulated.

Child obesity rates in Europe have risen steeply in the last twenty years and evidence exist that child obesity rates in Cyprus are among the highest in Europe. The marketing of unhealthy food is a factor shown by research to have an effect on children's food consumption patterns. The introduction of controls on TV advertising in some countries for sweet and fatty foods led food companies to other ways of persuading children to buy sweet and fatty foods, using the internet, SMS texting, and embedded adverts in computer games.

Interviews with senior members of national organizations in Cyprus showed that there is a substantial agreement of opinion over the strength of the evidence, the likely impact of advertising on children and the need for government regulation. On the other hand the value of voluntary measures by the food industry was not perceived as an effective option.

Researchers at the Research and Education Institute of Child Health in Cyprus, questioned fifteen key players in industry, public health, government and media organisations, and representatives of consumers, families and children. Views were in favor of government regulation. This consensus was in contrast with findings in other EU countries that the project was applied, such as the UK, where views were deeply split.

Notes:

The research report *PolMark project: Assessment of Policy Options for Marketing Food and Beverages to Children*, is available to download at <http://www.childhealth.ac.cy>.

PolMark is the acronym for Policies on Marketing of Food and Beverages to Children.

Dr Tim Lobstein at the International Association for the Study of Obesity is the coordinator of PolMark project.

The PolMark project is part of a pan-European examination of controls on advertising to children being conducted in 11 EU member states (UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Cyprus).

Details can be found at the project's website <http://www.polmarkproject.net>

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