

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS

Principal Investigator: Dr Saoirse Nic Gabhainn with international collaborators
Researchers: Dr Colette Kelly and Dr Amanda Fitzgerald
Funder: European Commission



Background

Currently one in four children are overweight or obese. A multilevel approach is needed to both treat and prevent obesity. Schools reach a majority of children and can contribute to the protection and promotion of children's health. Across EU member states there are many initiatives aimed at reducing the number of children who are overweight. However, currently no EU member state has an effective national school policy in operation. The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPS) project aims to bridge this gap by helping EU countries initiate and support the development of national school policies on healthy eating and physical activity in their countries. The HEPS Project is connected with the Schools for Health in Europe Network (www.she.eu) and supports the SHE National Coordinators in policy and programme development for healthy eating and physical activity. The HEPS project is coordinated by NIGZ in the Netherlands.

Research Aims

To develop, implement and evaluate effective policy and sustainable practices on healthy eating and physical activity in schools; and to support the development and implementation of comprehensive, sustainable and evidence-based school programmes in EU member states for promoting healthy eating and physical activity based on the health promoting school approach.

Methods

This is a piece of co-ordinated action research which involves the development of the HEPS Schoolkit. The Schoolkit consists of 1) HEPS Guidelines: a set of principles on promoting healthy eating and physical activity in schools, 2) HEPS Advocacy Guide: a tool assisting those advocating for the development of national school policy towards promoting healthy eating and physical activity, 3) HEPS Inventory Tool: a set of qualitative criteria for school programmes for the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity, 4) HEPS Tool for Schools: a manual that will help schools to introduce and implement a school programme promoting healthy eating and physical activity and 5) HEPS Training Resource: with information for delivering training and training activities drawn from practice across Europe that aim to increase awareness of the health promoting school approach and developing a whole school policy on healthy eating and physical activity. The HEPS Schoolkit has been developed together with the SHE National Coordinators and professionals from the education sector.

Progress to Date

The HEPS guidelines, advocacy tool, inventory tool and tool for schools have all been developed and are available for download at (www.hepseurope.eu). The HEPS training resource has also been developed and was used at teacher training events in Poland and Greece in November 2010.

Key publications and reports

Dadaczynski, K., Paulus, P., de Vries, N., de Ruiter, S. & Buijs, G. (2010). HEPS Inventory Tool: An inventory tool including quality assessment of school interventions on healthy eating and physical activity.

<http://ws10.e-vision.nl/hepseurope/upload/HEPS%20Tool%20for%20schools%20HRes.pdf>

Simovska, V., Dadaczynski, K., Viig, N.G., Tjomsland, H.E., Bowker, S., Woynarowska, B., de Ruiter, S. & Buijs, G.(2010). HEPS Tool for Schools: A guide for school policy development on healthy eating and physical activity.

http://ws10.e-vision.nl/hepseurope/upload/inventorytoolHRes_def.pdf