

## **High Level Conference on Nutrition and Physical Activity concludes its works (25-26.02.2014)**

The High Level Conference on “Nutrition and Physical Activity from Childhood to Old Age: challenges and opportunities”, which took place in Athens from 25 to 26 of February 2014 was attended by approximately 180 participants from the EU member states, including Ministers, representatives of the EU Member States, high level officials of the European Commission, WHO and OECD, academics and experts. Health Ministers of Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Portugal were among the Conference’s distinguished delegates.

Participants underlined that nutrition and physical activity are key health determinants affecting the life expectancy and quality of life of citizens as well as the efficiency and sustainability of health systems. Policies and initiatives promoting healthy diet and physical activity throughout the life course particularly for the most vulnerable groups, such as the children and the elderly, are of paramount importance in addressing obesity and diet-related chronic diseases. Sharing best practices between Member States can build more effective responses to common EU health challenges derived from the risk of both obesity and malnutrition. In this respect the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity can be used as guidance for effective action in reducing childhood obesity, while it was stressed the importance of the dietary patterns and the inter-sectoral actions.

The Greek Health Minister Spyridon-Adonis Georgiadis stressed that “in an ageing Europe, this is an issue of interest to all Member States, related to the sustainability of health systems and the improvement of quality of life of the EU citizens” and welcomed the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity.

Deputy Health Minister Zetta Makri pointed out that “Greece is in the process of reorganizing Primary Health Care, which will also assume responsibility for primary and secondary prevention, inexorably linked to the fight against obesity, towards better nutrition and increased physical activity.”

Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport John Andrianos further indicated that “we aim at encouraging children and young people in adopting healthy habits of diet and sport, and in inspiring older people to integrate these habits in everyday life”.

Mr. Martin Seychell (European Commission) referred mainly to the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity, the European Innovation Partnership in Active and Healthy Ageing, the Horizon 2020 program, and the Health Program. Convincing the public to engage will be crucial. In conclusion, Mr. Seychell highlighted the importance of the political management of the process, underlining the common effort, the current economic climate and the importance of the human capital.

Dr. Agis D. Tsouros (World Health Organization, WHO), Dr. João Breda (WHO) and Mr. Philippe Roux (European Commission) in the presentation of the EU / WHO (European Region) Country Profiles on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, pointed out, the gaps

and inconsistencies observed, the under-utilization of available information, and the need to revise definitions and engage in collaborative efforts.

The Conference was concluded by a Ministerial discussion focusing mainly on the fight against chronic diseases, though better nutrition, fighting of obesity and increased physical activity.

The outcome of the Conference will form the basis for the Council Conclusions on Nutrition and Physical Activity that the Hellenic Presidency will submit to the EPSCO Health Council next June.