



# WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER EUROPE

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The 'European Public Health Nutrition Alliance' (EPHNA) is a collaboration between European national and regional centres that are responsible for communicating about a healthy, sustainable and safe diet in their country or region. **The EPHNA strives for closer cooperation for a healthier Europe and it can already present its first results.**

### THE EPHNA

At the initiative of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre, organisations from Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands came together for the first time in 2014 to exchange information and experiences. In 2015 organisations from Flanders, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal also joined. These pioneers recognised the importance of closer cooperation for a healthier Europe.

At present, the EPHNA has members from 17 countries (Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Bulgaria, Poland, Malta, Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Latvia,



the Netherlands, Italy and the Czech Republic). Other European countries have also indicated their interest in joining.

### WITH SUPPORT FROM THE WHO

The EPHNA has the complete support of the World Health Organization (WHO). In 2016, the EPHNA presented itself officially to the European division of the World Health Organization (WHO-EU) for the first time. The WHO values the work that EPHNA and its members do and has adopted EPHNA as an important network. It supports and helps the EPHNA to expand further, on condition that only independent centres (government subsidised) participate. In 2017, the first joint meeting of the EPHNA and WHO-EU was held. The results of this meeting were published in an official WHO publication<sup>1</sup>.

### WHY IS A EUROPEAN ALLIANCE NECESSARY?

The EPHNA feels that all consumers in Europe must have access to objective information and effective tools that help them make healthy food choices. That objective information and the tools are still missing in many countries. The main problem in practically every country remains the growing number of people that are overweight (above all children and young people). All the EPHNA's member organisations strive to reduce the obesogenic environment that we live in and feel that the food on offer in our environment must become healthier.

### INSPIRE AND LEARN

The individual countries can get a clear picture of what is happening in neighbouring countries thanks

to EPHNA. This can be inspiring. Here are a number of examples. The Latvian government has set statutory conditions that the food offered at schools must meet. Energy drinks are henceforth banned from schools. The Latvians are furthermore nudging healthy choices by introducing higher taxes on drinks with a high sugar content and lower taxes on fruit. Portugal is focusing on a local approach by setting up overweight interventions for families at municipal level. During the past few years, Denmark and the Netherlands have focussed on men with the message to maintain a more plant-based diet. This was done in a humorous way. The members inspire each other by exchanging experiences, campaigns and interventions. However, the EPHNA network also makes it easier to enter into direct partnerships with each other and thus learn from each other. One organisation will opt for a local approach whereas another will actively use social media. The exchange of knowledge is extremely important to all EPHNA members and leads to an effective use of the knowledge available in Europe.

### WHAT HAS THE EPHNA ACHIEVED UNTIL NOW?

- The creation of a pan-European community for nutrition communication with countries from northern, western, southern and eastern Europe.
- A website: [www.ephna.eu](http://www.ephna.eu).
- The differences and similarities between the dietary guidelines of various countries were charted.
- Work groups have been set up that focus on common challenges, for example increasing the consumption of vegetables.

- Presentations by EPHNA at various relevant European conferences (e.g. the 'Nutrition Communication in Europe' symposium during FENS 2019 in Dublin).
- European financing possibilities were examined.

### OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Naturally there are many differences between countries, but there are certainly also many similarities, especially with regard to the dietary guidelines in the various European countries. Despite cultural differences and variations in the communication models the dietary guidelines are very similar throughout Europe. In time countries may move towards an even more harmonised advice on European level.

1. Meeting Report Nutrition Communication in Europe (2018) - <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/nutrition/publications/2018/nutrition-communication-in-europe-2018>