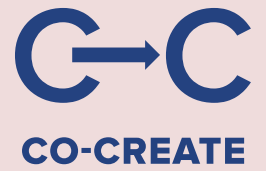


October 2020



## CO-CREATE Youth Alliances' Policy Briefs

Norway



## Introduction

CO-CREATE tackles the current gaps in obesity research by focusing on adolescents, their perspectives and the factors that influence their health. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and led by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. It brings together 14 international research and advocacy organisations to work with young people to create, inform and promote policies for obesity prevention. CO-CREATE provides young people with the policy tools, knowledge and infrastructure they need to make the healthiest choices.



By working together in groups, known as alliances, young people participating in the CO-CREATE project have developed policy ideas to address the systemic factors which influence adolescent obesity and health in their respective countries. This brief summarises the policy ideas of CO-CREATE alliances in Norway and outlines the steps they took to finalise their proposals. This brief aims to inform relevant stakeholders, such as policy- and decision-makers, about policies relevant for adolescents to tackle excess weight and obesity and to introduce a model on how to actively involve young people in the development of policies.

### Youth participation and co-creation

Young people are still rarely involved in addressing issues that are directly relevant to their lives. Co-creation with adolescents through participatory action research has proved to be an effective tool for young people to tackle inequalities on various social issues, in particular those which directly affect them, such as health, and to successfully promote civic and political engagement among young people .

# Norway

## Summary of childhood obesity levels in Norway

Between 2005 and 2018, the percentage of 8- and 9-year-olds suffering from overweight and obesity remained stable, at just under 20% of boys and around 20% of girls. The rate of obesity also remained stable at between 2-6%.



The proportion of 15-year-olds with overweight or obesity increased between 2005 and 2011 and then stabilised between 2011 and 2018. During this time period, the prevalence of overweight among 15-year-old boys remained relatively stable. This would suggest that the increase in the percentage of 15-year-olds suffering from obesity was mainly driven by increases among the girls; in 2005, the percentage of 15-year-old girls with overweight or obesity was about 16%, while in 2018 it was about 21%. Over the same time period, the proportion of 15-year-old girls with obesity has more than doubled, from about 2% in 2005 to about 5% in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

## Childhood obesity level of the areas where the alliances were established

The original intention was to set up the Norwegian alliances in two areas of Oslo (the capital city with 694,086 inhabitants) and one in Hadeland (a smaller rural district about an hour from Oslo, with 29,528 inhabitants). The two alliances in Oslo were unable to attract enough young people to take part, so an alliance was formed comprising members of the national youth organisation Press in addition to the one in Hadeland. Press members are between the ages of 13 and 25, and this alliance includes members from all over Norway.

There are major social inequalities in health in Norway, especially between educational groups; those who study the longest live five to six years longer and have better health than those with the shortest education. Social inequalities in life expectancy are increasing, especially among women. Within Oslo, there is up to eight years difference in life expectancy between the city's districts. Inequalities in health are greater in Norway than in many other European countries.<sup>2</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

1. Based on Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR), young people in CO-CREATE alliances were empowered to develop policy ideas to address the systemic issue of adolescent excess weight and obesity.
2. Supported by trained CO-CREATE country staff and assisted by co-facilitators from youth organisations, young people received information and training to help them develop and refine their policy proposals.
3. Using their newly acquired skills and knowledge, they held discussions, did research and worked with relevant stakeholders to finalise their ideas.
4. They met regularly over the course of several months, both in person and online.
5. Policy ideas were often reviewed and revised based on information gathered by alliance members after conducting their PAR activities.
6. The young people also participated in dialogue forums with relevant stakeholders; here, alliance members met with policy-makers and business leaders to discuss their policy ideas and translate them into possible action, follow-up measures or practical steps. Policy ideas were often then refined based on the knowledge gained at these forums.
7. The finalisation of the brief included a feedback round with some of the alliance members as well as input from the CO-CREATE task force; a small group consisting of representatives from alliances in different CO-CREATE implementing countries.



# CO-CREATE Hadeland Alliance's Policy Idea

## Easy and affordable access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools in Innlandet



- Allow students to use gyms, exercise equipment and weight-lifting rooms at upper secondary schools after school.
- A teacher or adult must be on hand when the gym and equipment are available in order to supervise students, help them set up the equipment correctly and ensure that there is no harassment.



### Summary of the policy

Many upper secondary schools in Innlandet county do not have sports or exercise facilities for their students. The Hadeland Youth Alliance wants more schools in Innlandet to offer students the opportunity to play sport and exercise at school and to instruct them on how to use the equipment.

*"Many students have little money, especially if they have moved away from their parent's house. A gym has a lot of possibilities in terms of that you could both train strength and endurance." - Norway alliance member*

### The problem

Physical activity is key to feeling in healthy; being in good physical condition can help you to feel more productive.. It is therefore important that students in upper secondary schools have the opportunity to exercise at their school (if the school has the equipment or plans to acquire it). This will give students the opportunity to work out and be physically active. Some schools in Innlandet county allow their students to use the school's gym and equipment, but many schools do not.

### Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. They compiled a survey to find out what people think causes overweight and obesity. They then asked their friends and family to complete it. They used the results to find out what factors might be influencing the development of obesity and to better understand the problem. Based on the survey, they selected proposals for policy ideas.
3. They then discussed and prioritised their initial policy ideas among themselves, which resulted in a number of policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on the idea that all upper secondary schools should offer their students the opportunity to do exercise after school.
4. They drew up a questionnaire to find out whether students at upper secondary schools are engaged in physical exercise, whether they are able to exercise at their schools and whether they are happy about it.
5. They contacted schools in Innlandet county to assess their current situation and needs. It was important to find out how many schools already offered their students the opportunity to use the school gym after school hours and what the schools thought about introducing the idea to all upper secondary schools in the county.

# CO-CREATE Hadeland Alliance's Policy Idea

## More information about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle in upper secondary schools



- Incorporating the subject diet and how it affects the body into the curriculum in upper secondary school
- Providing students in upper secondary school with visual and digital tools that can be used throughout life, even after finishing school



### Summary of the policy

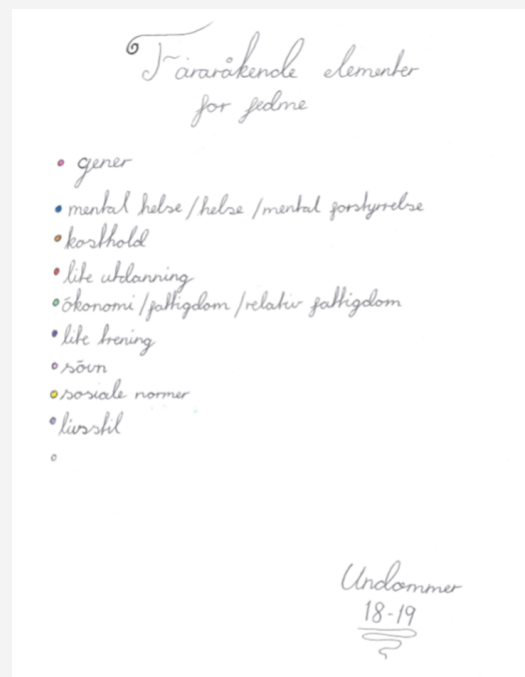
This policy idea aims to provide more information about healthy food and lifestyles in upper secondary schools. Students should learn more about nutrition and about what happens to the body when you eat certain foods. They can then use this newly acquired knowledge in their own daily lives. The subject will be incorporated into the curriculum in various subjects and taught using digital/visual learning tools.

### The problem

There is a lack of knowledge about obesity. People particularly struggle when it comes to understanding what is actually healthy and how to eat healthily. A particularly product might be considered healthy, for example, but it might not be if you eat a lot of it.

To really know what is healthy and what is unhealthy, it is essential that people are aware of the effects that different types of food have on the body. For this reason, more information about nutrition and how food affects the body should be provided in schools.

*The group asked their friends at another school in the same county to ask their friends about "Causative elements for obesity". They wrote the answers down on paper*



### Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. The youth conducted the system mapping exercise and identified different factors that contribute to the challenge of adolescents' obesity in their immediate environment.
2. The youth made a survey about what people think is causing overweight and obesity that they shared and got friends and family to respond to. They used the results to find out what factors could influence the development of obesity and to better understand the problem. Based on the survey, they selected proposals for policy ideas.
3. Discussion and prioritizing of policy ideas among themselves resulted in some policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on that upper secondary schools should have more education on healthy diet and lifestyle.
4. Youth then did research on the education system and searched for contact information on people in the education committee in the Parliament. An e-mail was sent to the education committee. However, they never received a response.



# CO-CREATE Hadeland Alliance's Policy Idea

## Change the price and placement of food products in shops



- Change the price of healthy and unhealthy foods, first locally in Gran (a municipality in the Hadeland district), then expand the scheme to other municipalities, other counties and ultimately all over Norway.
- Reduce the price of healthy food (such as fruit and salad) by 10 NOK (appx. 0.93 EUR) and increase the price of unhealthy food (such as sweets, biscuits and fizzy drinks) by 10 NOK



### Summary of the policy

The Hadeland Youth Alliance wants healthy food to be cheaper and unhealthy food to be more expensive to buy in supermarkets.

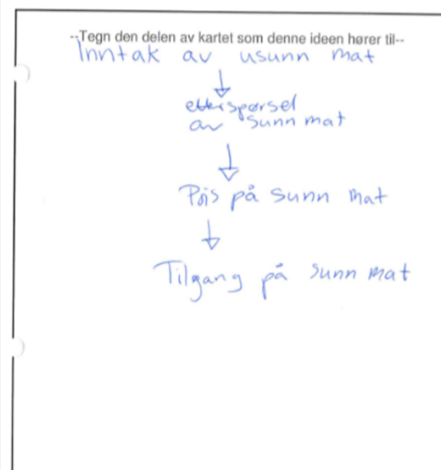
Healthy food should also be more accessible, while unhealthy food should be more hidden and not positioned right next to the cash register

### The problem

Unhealthy food is often cheap and positioned right next to the cash register in supermarkets, tempting people to buy unhealthy food. Supermarkets can still earn money if they increase the price of unhealthy food and reduce the price of healthy food. And by doing so, they will also contribute towards a healthier society. Healthy food should also be displayed much more prominently and be clearly labelled in shops.

*Policy idea to reduce overweight and obesity among adolescents*

Løsningsidé: Sunnere <sup>billigere</sup> alternativer til lussj på butikken  
Beskrivelse: Sunn mat er dyrere enn  
U-sunn og mange kjøper. Make sin på butikken.



### Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. They compiled a survey to find out what people think causes overweight and obesity. They then asked their friends and family to complete it. They used the results to find out what factors might be influencing the development of obesity and to better understand the problem. Based on the survey, they selected proposals for policy ideas.
3. They then discussed and prioritised their initial policy ideas among themselves, which resulted in a number of policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on reducing the price of healthy food.
4. The group then discussed their policy idea further and read articles on the topic. They found an article which stated that, in order to reduce overweight and obesity, measures need to be taken at a social level, such as changing the price of food. They used the information in this article to further reflect on their ideas.
5. They ultimately decided to reduce/increase prices by 10 NOK (appx. 0.93 EUR), a figure they selected at random; they wanted to use it as a test or benchmark to see whether it would have any effect.

# CO-CREATE Press Alliance's Policy Idea

## Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products aimed at children under the age of 18



- Develop stricter and more specific regulations for advertising which targets children.
- Develop regulations against the sponsorship of unhealthy food products by food chains/companies.



### Summary of the policy

The regulations on advertising to children are unclear and food companies have the means to circumvent them. The Press Youth Alliance wants to create a framework for the digital marketing of unhealthy products targeted towards children under the age of 18. The framework should be applied to all advertising on the internet aimed at children.

*"If we can limit the marketing of unhealthy food and strengthen the marketing of healthy food, then people's behaviors might change." - Norway alliance member*

### The problem

There are a lot of ads for unhealthy food, which often use tricks to make the food appear better than it actually is. Advertising is often aimed at children; commercials often feature cartoon characters, for example. These advertisements are everywhere, and you no longer even need to leave your house to see them – they pop up on your mobile, on your computer, etc. Children are easily influenced, and they are less aware of what is healthy and what is not. Habits developed in our formative years can continue for the rest of our life, so it is important to get into good habits early on. By reducing the amount of advertising for unhealthy food, you can create more space to advertise healthy food and physical activities.

### Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity in Norway.
2. They then discussed and prioritised their initial policy ideas among themselves, which resulted in a number of policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on the unhealthy food marketing targeted towards children.
3. The group carried out research on the subject and gathered information from reports.<sup>3</sup> They discussed marketing and advertising in Norway based on what they found and refined their policy idea.
4. They looked for examples of unhealthy food ads targeted towards children, both online and in their local environment. They decided to focus on advertising on the internet/social media.
5. A researcher was invited to talk about advertising aimed at children and how advertising is regulated. After this session, they had a better understanding of the situation in Norway and of the MFU. They used this information to further discuss their policy idea.



# CO-CREATE Press Alliance's Policy Idea

## Reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes



- Take plate sizes back to the 1960s
- Introduce two bag sizes for sweets; an individual-sized portion and a family-sized portion. This should then be clearly indicated on the packaging.



### Summary of the policy

The population unconsciously eats too much. This could be due to individuals dealing with depression, but could also be attributed to portion sizes. This policy idea is to serve food in smaller portion sizes and introduce a maximum plate size for food to be served on.

### The problem

Portion and plate sizes may contribute to obesity.<sup>4</sup> It is easy to consume too much energy by overfilling the plate. The young people mentioned that people often feel obliged to eat everything on their plate because this is the social norm. A smaller plate holds less food, and it is easier to stop and think in between servings to check if you are actually already full. Bags of sweets have also become larger.<sup>5</sup> If an adult consumes only 100 kcal too many a day, they will end up putting on 0.5-1.5 kg in one year. On the other hand, a meta-analysis has found that reducing exposure to large portions, large packaging and large dishes can reduce daily calorie intake by up to 230 kcal.<sup>6</sup> While more research is needed, the current evidence suggests that limiting portion sizes reduces overall energy intake and may therefore reduce the risk of unhealthy weight gain.

*"It is not very tempting to buy healthy food when it is so cheap with unhealthy food. You get the double of the unhealthy food for the price of healthy food." - Norway alliance member*

### Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity in Norway.
2. They then discussed and prioritised their initial policy ideas among themselves, which resulted in a number of policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on reducing portion sizes.
3. The group carried out research on the subject and gathered information from reports and articles (see references 7, 8 and 9). They used this information to refine their policy idea.
4. A researcher was invited to talk about portion sizes. During the discussion they talked to the researcher about the topic and used the information and results to refine their policy idea.

## Follow-up

The Hadeland Youth Alliance and the Press Youth Alliance developed and refined their policy ideas during the CO-CREATE activities. The next step for both groups is to conduct the dialogue forum.

The first policy idea (policy brief 1) addresses physical activity in upper secondary schools and aspires to reduce sedentary behaviour among this age group. This policy also relates to other physical activity policies in Norway.

The Keyhole logo used in Norway highlights the healthy aspects of products. Educating young people (policy brief 2), reducing the price of healthy food (policy brief 3) and serving food on smaller plates (policy brief 5) will make it even easier for young people (and others) to make healthier choices.

The Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian food and beverage industry have developed a self-regulatory scheme for marketing food and beverages aimed at children. The regulations are, however, unclear and there are ways to circumvent them. A framework for the digital marketing of unhealthy products targeted at children under the age of 18 (policy brief 4) has the potential to make this clearer.

## Resources

The policy ideas developed by the Youth Alliances engage with, build upon and are in line with existing policies regarding health and obesity in Norway. Several relevant policies are listed below.

1. The national action plan for a better diet (2017–2021)<sup>7</sup>
2. The Food and Drink Industry Professional Practices Committee (MFU) for marketing guidelines for food and beverages aimed at children and young people<sup>8</sup>.
3. Together about active lives; an action plan for physical activity (2020–2029)<sup>9</sup>

## Acknowledgements

This policy brief was written by Navnit Kaur Grewal, Nanna Lien, Helene Holbæk, Liburn Zuhri, Pernille Perminow, Nikita Amber Abbas, Sherria Ayuandini, Hadeland Youth Alliance members and Press Youth Alliance members. This brief was designed by Margot Neveux (World Obesity Federation).

With special thanks to the University of Oslo, Hadeland upper secondary school and Press. We would also like to thank Arnfinn Helleve for his presentation on marketing and Samira Lekhal for her presentation on portion sizes for young people.

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