

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002811/26
to the Commission
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(7 July 2026)**

Subject: Addressing obesity as a chronic disease: recognition, prevention and treatment at EU level

Obesity is one of the most serious public health problems in Europe. Around 51% of the EU population over the age of 16 is overweight, while 17% is obese ⁽¹⁾. Obesity significantly increases the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, and is considered to be responsible for at least 13 types of cancer. At the same time, stigma and fatphobia take a toll on patients' mental health.

Bearing in mind that obesity is the fourth-leading cause of premature death worldwide, that the socioeconomic impact on European health systems amounts to EUR 70 billion per year ⁽²⁾, that EASO has expressed concern that obesity is not fully addressed as a chronic disease in the Commission's Safe Hearts plan ⁽³⁾, that around one in three children in Greece is overweight or obese ⁽⁴⁾, and that the European Parliament resolution explicitly recognises obesity as an NCD and calls on the Commission to propose a new, comprehensive action plan for obesity with measurable indicators and mechanisms to monitor results ⁽⁵⁾, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Does it intend to recognise obesity as a chronic disease?
2. Does it intend to propose a new European action plan for obesity and specific financial tools to strengthen early diagnosis, research and equitable access to obesity treatments?
3. Does it intend to support the Member States in developing targeted public information and awareness-raising activities, combating stigma and integrating obesity education into the curricula of healthcare professionals?

Submitted: 7.7.2026

**Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(3 September 2026)**

The World Health Organisation is responsible for the International Classification of Diseases ⁽¹⁾ (ICD-11).

In line with Article 168(7) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU ⁽²⁾ (TFEU), the EU complements national policies and encourages cooperation in public health across Member States.

The Commission supports Member States in addressing non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, including obesity, through the 'Healthier Together' initiative ⁽³⁾, joint actions PreventNCD ⁽⁴⁾ and Health4EUKids ⁽⁵⁾ and stakeholder-led projects ⁽⁶⁾. The Safe Hearts Plan ⁽⁷⁾ builds on these actions under its prevention pillar.

Obesity is addressed through the Council Recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity ⁽⁸⁾ and initiatives such as the European Week of Sport ⁽⁹⁾ and the #BeActive campaign. Horizon Europe will continue to fund research on evidence-based prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies.

Under Article 165 TFEU, Member States are responsible for the content of teaching and the organisation of their education systems, including decisions on whether and how to integrate obesity education into curricula.

¹ See: EPRS, Obesity in the EU: An ongoing epidemic, March 2025, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/769510/EPRS_ATA\(2025\)769510_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/769510/EPRS_ATA(2025)769510_EN.pdf).

² See: https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/obesity_en.

³ EASO, Safe Hearts Plan: EASO responds to the European Commission Cardiovascular Health Plan, February 2026, <https://easo.org/safe-hearts-plan-easo-responds-to-the-european-commission-cardiovascular-health-plan/>.

⁴ According to the WHO, Greece is among the countries with the highest prevalence rates, ranking second in obesity and third in overweight, <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2025-11788-51560-78769>.

⁵ See: European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2023 on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0467_EN.html#def_1_17.

⁽¹⁾ World Health Organisation (WHO), International Classification of Diseases (ICD), available at: <https://icd.who.int/en/>.

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

⁽³⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/non-communicable-diseases/healthier-together-eu-non-communicable-diseases-initiative_en.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.preventnkd.eu/>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.dypede.gr/health4eukids/>.

⁽⁶⁾ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/projects-details/43332642/101128946/EU4H?order=DESC&pageNumber=1&pageSize=10&sortBy=es_SortDate&keywords=obesity&programmePeriod=2021%20-%202027&frameworkProgramme=43332642.

⁽⁷⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52025DC1024>.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:354:0001:0005:EN:PDF>.

⁽⁹⁾ <https://sport.ec.europa.eu/european-week-of-sport>.

The European Education Area strategic framework facilitates cooperation and mutual learning. Erasmus+ supports pedagogical approaches where the learning process addresses real world challenges and development of inter- and transdisciplinary programmes.

In 2022, the share of children with low family affluence who were overweight or obese was more than 10% above that of children with high family affluence ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee ⁽¹¹⁾ ensures access to healthy nutrition and equal opportunities and was recently strengthened through the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy ⁽¹²⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁾ <https://data-browser.hbsc.org/measure/overweight-and-obesity/>.

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2021/1004/oj/eng>.

⁽¹²⁾ https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7f60af79-936f-42b3-a6c4-a4639c6679ff_en?filename=EC-anti-poverty_ECG_2026.pdf.