1 - THE FOLLOW ME TO BE HEALTHY WITH EUROPE CAMPAIGN

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a. Why was this programme created?

Since 2012, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and cancers, have been the leading cause of death worldwide. In Europe, 1 in 5 adults is obese, and by 2030 it is estimated that more than 50% of the European population will suffer from obesity.

Nutrition is one of the most important health determinants. A balanced, nutritious diet helps to prevent the onset of chronic diseases, extend life expectancy and improve people’s overall quality of life regardless of your age. Specifically, there is a broad consensus among the scientific community on the health-giving effects of regular consumption of fruit and vegetables.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), we should eat at least 400g of fruit and vegetables per day. But the truth is that fruit and vegetable consumption levels across most of the EU Member States remain well below this target consumption level. Only 14% of the European population reaches this recommendation1.

This low fruit and vegetable consumption is particularly noticeable among 18-30-year olds, who are the target of this campaign. In fact, European young adults are barely aware of the importance of consuming fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet.

Increasing this awareness is the first step in changing dietary habits. This is the main objective throughout this three-year campaign, which started in 2019 and is ending in December 2021.

The overarching goals of the campaign are to translate this awareness into concrete action and to increase consumption of EU fruit and vegetables among 18-30-year-old Europeans.

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1 Eurostat 2014
b. The transition to adulthood: a key moment in life

This programme is aimed at 18-30-year-old Europeans, or ‘Millennials’, who are at a crucial moment in their life. This is when you move out of your parents’ home and into a place of your own by yourself or with roommates, go to university and find a new job. It’s an exciting moment in our lives, but it also comes with new challenges and responsibilities.

Our goal is to accompany these young adults throughout this transition by helping them adopt new healthy eating habits. For the first time in their lives, they are totally in control of their diet and this lifestyle change might also be accompanied by other obstacles:

- Lack of interest in food and health;
- Minimal knowledge of good nutrition;
- Limited cooking skills;
- Fear that a healthy diet is too expensive.

As a result, young adults often opt for convenient, ‘ready-made’ food while adjusting to their new lifestyle. In young minds, the ‘pasta and pizza diet’ is the easy and only solution. The Follow me to be Healthy with Europe campaign has been showing them that cooking and eating fruit and vegetables every day is simple, cheap, and extremely tasty!

Young adults are not very concerned about eating fatty and sugary foods as they don’t face serious diet-related problems at this young age\(^2\). Contrastingly older generations, who are beginning to experience health complications arising from the onset of NCDs, have a higher awareness of the importance of a healthy diet.

c. The benefits of fruit and vegetables for your body

Fruit and vegetable are delicious, but they taste even better when you know their health benefits for your mind and body!

There is a wide scientific consensus that eating fruit and vegetables every day is essential for health:

- They contain important nutrients for our body, such as water, fibres, vitamins, minerals, oligo-elements, and antioxidants, while also having a low-calorie content;
- Daily consumption helps to reduce the risk of obesity, heart attack, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, certain cancers and many other chronic diseases;
- Fruit and vegetables have beneficial effects on physical and intellectual performance and have preventive effects on cognitive decay, allergies, asthma and skeletal health;
- Fruit and vegetable-rich diets help your mind stay positive and could help prevent depression and anxiety.

Beyond these undisputed health benefits, fruit and vegetables are one of the most sustainable food categories in Europe. **Fruit and vegetables have the lowest environmental impact and the highest recommended consumption level.** Consequently, increased fruit and vegetable consumption may reduce the environmental impact of food consumption and simultaneously allow for a more balanced and healthy diet.

Low fruit and vegetables consumption is considered as a risk factor for population health by the WHO, just like smoking or alcohol consumption.
The objectives are being achieved through a mix of events, including workshops with social media influencers, spreading key messages via videos, infographics, informative tips on social media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter), as well as face-to-face engagement at campaign stands at public events.

a. An online campaign

Millennials are hyper-connected and fond of visual content, which is why Follow me to be Healthy with Europe is a predominantly online campaign. Most of the communication has been digital with an online outreach via:

- A YouTube channel with monthly videos. Each video has challenged the community to eat more fruit and vegetables;
- Posts on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to disseminate creative and inspiring infographics, tips, and videos.

All content has been developed in English and French, with key messages translated into German, Spanish, Italian, and Polish to capture a wider European target audience. The campaign website hosts and gathers all content.

The campaign’s theme is ‘Follow me to be healthy’ and the central concept of the campaign is a series of challenges that the campaign’s target audience has been invited to take. Over the last 3 years, 18-30-year olds have been asked ‘Are you up to the #400gchallenge?’. Each month they were asked to participate in a specific #400gchallenge to help them change their eating habits and incorporate at least 400g of fruit and vegetables in their daily diet.
b. Involving the online community

Young adults spend lots of their time on social media and consider influencers as role models or a source of inspiration. For this campaign, high-profile European influencers have been chosen to raise awareness of the importance of eating fruit and vegetables. With their large European networks, they have helped the campaign resonate across borders and reach the largest audience possible.

The monthly YouTube videos have starred a student, a young worker, and a couple, to cover the diversity within this target group. To complement this, influencers have been sharing content on their Instagram, Facebook and Twitter feeds and have been present at events in France. Influencers have acted both as campaign ambassadors and community peers to the target audience.

Influencers have been chosen based on their ability to relate to young Europeans - they are from various countries and cultures, and they are passionate about different subjects including cooking, sports, travel or lifestyle. Nevertheless, they all share the same desire to improve their diet by eating more fruit and vegetables. In this way, the chosen influencers have been encouraging the target audience to take part in the campaign challenges, so they understand the importance of fruit and vegetables in their diet. The overall goal is to create a collaborative campaign with an engaged and active community where young people share what it means to them to have a healthy diet.
To meet young Europeans, the Follow me to be Healthy team took part in the Eurockéennes festival in Belfort from 4-7 July 2019, the Paris’ Manga Sci-Fi Show on the 5-6 October 2019, and the POLITICO EU Studies and Career Fair 2020 in Brussels on 15 February 2020.
AROUND THE WORLD WITH FRUIT AND VEG:

GREECE

Travelling might still not be possible, but your tastebuds can go on an adventure from the comfort of your own kitchen! Trying new fruit and veg is a great way to shake up your daily routine.

In the second of our three-part series looking at classic fruit and veg dishes from a country's national cuisine, we're heading to Greece!

Rich in Beta-carotene and Sour/c_e of Potassium + Vit B9

ALSO KNOWN AS HORIATIKI SALAD, IT IS AN EASY WAY TO MEET THE #FOURCAP.ZERO CAP CHALLENGE. CONTAINS FETA, TOMATOES, CUCUMBER, RED ONION AND BLACK OLIVES. FRUITS, GREEK YOGURT, NUTS, AND HONEY – ALL OF GREECE IN ONE BITE!

FRUITS, GREEK YOGURT, NUTS, AND HONEY – ALL OF GREECE IN ONE BITE!

Since its launch in 2019, the campaign has:

- Had a potential reach of 57 MILLION through videos, infographics, tips, and e-influencers;
- Involved more than 20 e-influencers from all over Europe;
- Been covered by 150 articles;
- Interacted with more than 188,000 PEOPLE through social media, other online content, and events;
- Met with more than 2,500 PEOPLE during 3 DIFFERENT EVENTS;
- Encouraged participants to want to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables;
- Helped them learn how to consume the right amount of fruit and vegetables daily and informed them about their health benefits;
- Generated more than 1,5 MILLION views on YouTube.
a. Freshfel Europe

The European Fresh Produce Association (Freshfel Europe) is the forum of the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain in Europe and beyond and is the leading fresh fruit and vegetable organisation in Europe. Freshfel Europe is a non-profit membership driven association based in Brussels that is governed by a Board and several Divisions and Committees.

Freshfel Europe has 127 members from 18 Member States, including all the leading fresh fruit and vegetable companies and national associations in Europe. Accordingly, Freshfel Europe's membership covers the whole supply chain including producers, producer organisations, shippers, exporters, importers, wholesalers, logistics companies, distributors and retailers.

Freshfel's mission is to:

- Improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the sector;
- Facilitate international trade of fresh produce;
- Assist members to comply with the highest safety, environmental and CSR standards;
- Promote the benefits of fresh produce, increase the efficiency of promotion activities within Europe and beyond and share best practices;
- Position the sector in new research and innovation policy;
- Stimulate the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables.

More information about Freshfel Europe, its objective, missions and activities via the Freshfel website: http://freshfel.org/
b. Aprifel

Aprifel is an association established in 1981 by INTERFEL, the French inter-branch organisation of fruit and vegetables, to nurture a network of experts and a source of reliable information within the inter-branch organisation.

The association facilitates and coordinates two boards, which issue verdicts or consensual positions on scientific information to be released to the general public and professionals:

- The scientific board, comprising 8 independent scientific experts;
- The consumer board, comprising 11 national approved consumer associations.

Aprifel strives to ensure the dissemination of scientific data concerning fruit and vegetables for healthcare professionals, professionals in the fruit and vegetable sector, and consumer associations. It is a linking element between scientists, civil society and fruit and vegetable professionals.

Aprifel targets the following goals:

- Developing research initiatives or scientific studies, particularly in areas including nutrition, public health and food safety;
- Bringing together scientific experts, representatives of civil society and consumers to encourage dissemination and discussions with all international organisations which help boost knowledge of fruit and vegetables;
- Developing an international network with stakeholders from the fruit and vegetable sector;
- Organising and coordinating national and international symposia and conferences.

More information about Aprifel on www.aprifel.com
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