

## Belgium

### **MANGERBOURGER.BE - Policy for the promotion of healthy attitudes to food and physical exercise among children and adolescents in the French Community of Belgium**

#### **CONTACT**

Gouvernement de la Communauté française de Belgique  
Place Surllet de Chokier, 15-17  
1000 Bruxelles  
Tél. : +32(0)2 227-32-11

Fax. : +32(0)2 227-33-21

Rajae ESSEFIANI : Cabinet de Madame la Ministre présidente Marie ARENA, Place Surllet de Chokier, 15-17, 1000 Bruxelles - Tél. +32(0)2 227 33 48 Fax. +32(0)2 227 33 21 [rajae.essenfiani@cfwb.be](mailto:rajae.essenfiani@cfwb.be)  
Annie DE WIEST : Secrétariat général du Ministère de la Communauté française, Directrice Développement durable, Boulevard Léopold II, 44, 1080 Bruxelles, - Tél. +32(0)495 36 35 36, [annie.dewiest@cfwb.be](mailto:annie.dewiest@cfwb.be)  
Conseillers en alimentation saine : Benoît Rousse : +32(0)497 54 22 61 [benoit.rousse@cfwb.be](mailto:benoit.rousse@cfwb.be); Jean-Marie Dessard: +32(0)477 57 70 88 [jean-marie.dessard@cfwb.be](mailto:jean-marie.dessard@cfwb.be)

#### **FOCUS**

Education/Learning  
Health Promotion

Environment  
Water  
Sustainable Consumption  
Citizenship

Tools and materials (e.g.  
Media & ICTs)

#### **DESCRIPTION**

*Type* Governmental

*Working language(s)* French

*Target group(s)* Young people attending schools within the French Community. 3900 schools

*Starting year & duration* 2006-2009

*Budget & funding sources* Public funding

*Partner organisations* Community Health Promotion Service

*Stakeholders* School canteens and their managers, kitchen staff, teachers and pupils, parents and health professionals



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**OBJECTIVES**

This initiative is aimed at implementing a proactive policy for promoting healthy and considered eating habits at school, as a place within the public sphere. Eating, drinking and physical activity are not only needs but also pre-eminently cultural acts linked to notions of pleasure and desire. The aim is to counter the pressure of marketing and the media by developing critical attitudes among young people and helping them to make responsible choices. It is hoped that this will foster a more active sense of citizenship among tomorrow's consumers. The various measures take account of the physiological, social, psychological, behavioural and environmental contexts in which young people evolve. The point is to develop a culture of good eating habits based more on pleasure and nutritional benchmarks than on medicines and cures. Workshops to educate responses to tastes and flavours will be organized. Particular attention will be paid to drinks and high-calorie snacks through the provision of attractive water dispenser facilities. Preference will be given to local produce in the supply of foodstuffs to canteens, whose staff will receive specific training in dietetics.

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**METHODOLOGY**

This dynamic and evolving policy is organized around specific short-term measures and longer-term thrusts to be elaborated as partnerships are created and validated. It will involve setting collective benchmarks, strengthening the links between families and authorities in the nutritional sphere, mobilizing school canteen staff and all other agents who could help to strengthen the initiative, promoting training in dietary theory, developing discerning attitudes among pupils to advertising and commercial messages, and encouraging sporting activities. Account will also be taken of the culture and social fabric specific to each school.

The project is participative, intersectoral and places the emphasis on the psychosocial dimension. Synergies will be sought between the public sector and associations, parents, health professionals and the different levels of authority.

An educational kit will be made available to schools, which will include a draft monthly newsletter to be sent to parents and reference material on eating and media education. A "healthy eating" label will be awarded to schools that develop an integrated project covering educational activities as well as the quality and variety of the food provided. Continuous training for school canteen staff will be organized. Pupils will be encouraged to drink water by giving them ready access to water provided in carafes and glasses and through the introduction of dehydration breaks. Health and physical activity indicators will be developed.

Complementing these measures, an Internet site [www.mangerbouger.be](http://www.mangerbouger.be) will be created together with a quarterly magazine entitled "mangerbouger.be" to be distributed free of charge in all schools. A travelling exhibition is being mounted. Two healthy eating advisers have been recruited.

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**RESULTS & EVALUATION****Results**

The project is in the start-up phase. An evaluation is planned.

**Strengths**

This project is the outcome of extensive cooperation between the Government,

government departments, school management federations, teachers' representatives, various advisory bodies, doctors, nutritionists and dieticians. Public authorities at all levels coordinate action on the project. Staff have been recruited to assist local agents.

It provides specific and coordinated responses to a public health issue by acting to prevent the stigmatisation of people in difficulty and offering a positive approach to health and sport in the social setting of the school.

The possibility exists for schools to personalize their initiatives.

A wide variety of stakeholders of all ages are involved (pupils, parents, teachers, canteen staff, civil servants, suppliers, etc.)

The project is backed up by a media campaign, an Internet site and a magazine.

*Weaknesses & risks*

Difficulties may arise in giving priority to the issue in schools.

Powerful influence of food stereotypes disseminated by the commercial media

*Why do you consider this a good practice?*

This initiative will have a positive and lasting impact on the eating habits of children and young people in the French Community of Belgium since it is rooted in their everyday experience and is careful, taking into account scientific data, to combine a variety of approaches. It is an inclusive venture involving a wide range of people of all ages and professional backgrounds. The cultural, social, environmental and economic aspects are taken into account to forge an educational project that transcends while relying on the school setting. This initiative is not merely concerned with health but adopts a socially aware approach to food behaviour. The good practices to which it gives rise could serve as models for generating more specific policies.

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