Children and obesity: a pan-European project examining the role of food marketing

Given the rise in trends of overweight and obesity all across Europe, this literature search looked at international reviews to provide background information about the nature and extent of food marketing to children as well as the scope of current pertinent regulations. This revealed that food advertising presented to children on television overwhelmingly includes ‘unhealthy’ foods and products. While this was previously shown across different reviews to have an effect on children’s consumption patterns, findings in this report demonstrate a lack of agreement amongst stakeholders across Europe over what should be done to combat its effect.

Recommendations include “the amendment of the European Union’s Television Without Frontiers Directive to ban all TV advertising of unhealthy food to children, the adoption of a commonly agreed European Union definition of an ‘unhealthy’ food, and the establishment of a mechanism for pan-European monitoring of the nature and extent of food marketing to children and its regulation.”