Effectiveness of school-based interventions in Europe to promote healthy nutrition in children and adolescents: systematic review of published ‘grey’ literature

Previous studies have highlighted that eating habits are established early in life and consequently, it is essential to define healthy diet in childhood. Schools have been identified as a crucial environment for youth, and interventions conducted in these settings have the potential to reach all children of school age, no matter their socio-economic status or their ethnicity. This study therefore aimed to systematically review the evidence for effectiveness from studies conducted across Europe on school-based healthful diet promotion among children.

A total of 56 studies were included in the review with positively-trending results regarding dietary behaviours both for children and adolescents. However, it was also identified that multi-component initiatives had greater chances of success, especially among children. While evidence of effect was found for school-based initiatives promoting healthy diets on eating behaviours, no effects were found regarding the ability of such interventions to prevent obesity.