



SPLIMUN 2020

BACKGROUND GUIDE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE





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Welcome letter

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Council of Europe at Sciences Po Lille International Model United Nations 2020. We will be serving as your chairs of the Council of Europe for the conference and are thoroughly looking forward to upcoming sessions. Firstly, thank you for choosing to participate in this committee. We strongly believe that at this time, the Council of Europe provides a platform for some of the most stimulating debates and we hope you will gain a great deal in terms of both knowledge and skills from participating in the committee. The European Union is currently in the midst of an era of change. Brexit on the horizon, negative interest rates, and increasing geopolitical uncertainty have all created an environment of instability for the organisation. Adapting to this, whilst also addressing new issues as they arise, presents you with a unique challenge to address over the course of the conference. We would like to highly stress the importance of trying to get to grips with the adjusted rules. We will explain these further at the start of the debate so do not fret if they make little sense at the moment! We will also go through an example directive, although these will resemble something closer to UN resolutions which you should hopefully be more familiar with. This guide intends to serve as a basis for your preparation. You are encouraged to do your own research as well, especially about your country's position. Building on this research should allow you to write your position paper and prepare yourself appropriately for the debate. If you have any questions or need help with your preparation, do not hesitate to get in touch via **marie@munkent.com** or **tristan@munkent.com** – we are happy to help!

Sincerely yours,

Marie Denizot and Tristan Delehonte
Chairs of the Council of Europe SPLIMUN 2020

Introduction to the Committee



The Council of Europe founded in 1949, is **the oldest political organisation of the European continent**, with headquarters in Strasbourg, France, makes efforts to **defend human rights**, to develop continent-wide agreements to standardise member countries' social and legal practices, to promote awareness of a European Identity based on shared values and cutting across different cultures. From 1989, Council of Europe made most efforts and results acting as a political anchor and human rights watchdog for Europe's post-communist democracies, as well as assisting the countries of central and eastern Europe in carrying out and consolidating political, legal and constitutional reform in parallel with economic reform, providing know-how in areas such as **human rights, local democracy, education, culture and the environment**.

Council of Europe's Objectives

The primary aim of the Council of Europe is to create a **common democratic and legal area** throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These values are the **foundations of a tolerant and civilised society and indispensable for European stability, economic growth and social cohesion**. On the basis of these fundamental values, Council of Europe tries to find shared solutions to major problems such as terrorism, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, bioethics and cloning, violence against children and women, and trafficking in human beings. **Co-operation between all member states is the only way to solve the major problems facing society today**. Council of Europe objectives are the protection of human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law, the promotion of awareness and the encouragement of the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity, to find common solutions to the challenges facing European society and to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Committee of Ministers



The Committee of Ministers is the Council's **decision-making body**. Each country is being represented by its **Minister of Foreign Affairs** or by their diplomatic representative.

The CM is responsible for the agenda of the Council of Europe and approves its budget. In collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly, it is the guardian of the Council's fundamental values and monitors member states' compliance with their undertakings.

The Committee of Ministers has a triple role:

1. It is the emanation of the Governments which enables them to express on equal terms their national approaches to the Europeans' problems,
2. It performs as the collective forum where European responses to these challenges are worked out,
3. It is the guardian of the values for which the Council of Europe exists.

Topic A: Coping with the mass immigration issue in Europe

Introduction

For a long time, The European union has to face with immigration within their border it could be refugees or migrants. But a new phenomenon of the 21st century is viewed as a threat for lots of European : mass migration.

It has been estimated that 84% of those fleeing to Europe are coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia and Iraq, which are all nations with high levels of violence and insecurity or governments which are extremely repressive (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

The Oxford English dictionary gives us the following definitions:

- **Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster.
- **Migrant:** A person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions.

The topic of mass migration is really important to this committee, due to both the urgency of protecting human lives, as well as need to aid and protect member states. **The number of immigrants could lead to a major humanitarian crisis which is deeply political**, with lots of states acting in different ways and taking opposite decisions due to the lack of a coordinated EU regional response. The failure of the European Union to act together has been met with a great deal of criticism. Indeed the EU has shown itself to be inadequate and the longer it takes for concrete action the more complex and dangerous the situation becomes. Furthermore, mass migration is highlighted **deep rooted issues of racism** in the whole Europe, which is deeply alarming and concerning. It is for this reason that this topic one which should be the focus of the committee's attention, there is a sense of urgency to not only resolve, but to put measures in place to ensure that both country of origins and welcoming are ready for this evolution.

Timeline of events

- **March 15th, 2011:** Syrian crisis begins (internally)
- **October 2012:** UNHCR urges EU states to uphold their asylum principles in response to an influx of refugees fleeing Syria (UNHCR Timeline)
- **September 2013:** More than 2 million Syrian Refugees recorded, many of them attempting to get to Europe by sea (UNHCR timeline)
- **April 2014:** EU adopts Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, part of which goes towards assisting EU member states (UNHCR, more information available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e48e996.html>)
- **August 2014:** Raqqa falls to Daesh, which is significant as this triggers even more people to flee the city in fear of the extremist regime that follows
- **July 2015:** EU leaders agree to accept 32.256 refugees from Italy and Greece
- **September 2nd, 2015:** Aylan al-Kurdi (picture of the young Syrian)
- **September 3rd, 2015 :** The hashtag 'refugees welcome' goes viral 12th September: EU interior ministers fail to come up with solutions.
- **November 13th, 2015:** The Paris Attacks – Daesh launch terrorist attacks at several locations in Paris. As at least one of the perpetrators is thought to have travelled from Syria concerns are raised about whether Daesh militants are using the refugee crisis to sneak into Europe undetected.
- **January 2016 :** Hundreds of sexual assaults in Germany (Cologne) , migrants are seems as responsible of these agressions
- **March 2017:** Turkish interior minister Süleyman Soylu threatened to send 15,000 refugees to the European Union every month while foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has also threatened to cancel the March 2016 EU-Turkey migrant deal.
- **June 2018:** Italy and Malta denied entry to the NGO ship Aquarius with 629 people on board (among them seven pregnant women, eleven small children and 123 unaccompanied minors). The migrants had embarked from Libya on inflatable boats, and were picked up off the Libyan coast. Salvini stated he wanted an end to illegal immigration and human trafficking.
- **January 2019:** The European Union records the lowest number of migrant arrivals in five years. About 150,000 have taken the Mediterranean route; 57,000 of them were brought to Spanish ports, making the Western Mediterranean the most active migratory route in 2018.

Discussion

Mass migration is an incredibly complex issue, and there are multiple different aspects to consider, and there does not seem to be a political solution in sight for either the conflict in Syria or the response to the crisis within the EU. At the root of mass migration is of course the **devastating civil war that has been tearing Syria apart**, made worse by the emergence of Daesh/Islamic State who have been driving people out the stronger they become. For this reason part of the solution to the crisis lies in the world's (not simply the EU's) ability to resolve the internal crisis, if not the long term effects are likely to be severe. To provide an overview the study guide will look at the lack of a coordinated response by EU member states, issues to do with the basic safety of refugees, the issue of crossing at sea and national security considerations.

But mass migration has not only one source, therefore, most of immigrants welcome in Europe this year are from **countries of Africa with low economic prosperity**. This is also a major issue to resolve, the Europe Union, as a welcoming land could probably not welcome all immigrants from over the world who would like to work in our continent.

Protecting migrants

The first issue which needs to be raised is that of the basic safety of the migrants who are fleeing, as they face great perils making the journey, and many do not make it to Europe alive because some of them are refugees. The Mediterranean Sea is claiming the lives of many refugees, who are risking everything to cross the sea in boats which are often overcrowded and it is not just at sea that refugees are losing their lives. **Every month, Europe discovers new tragedies which happen in the Mediterranean Sea.** This is another example of the perilous journeys faced by refugees, and measures need to be taken to ensure that these types of situations don't keep happening. So far the EU has proved ineffective at preventing large loss of life within its borders which is an extremely concerning situation to be in, and there is no simple solution in sight. Furthermore, winter is likely to pose further threats for refugee safety as temperatures plummet, leaving refugees at serious risk of frostbite and death, particularly those staying in refugee camps in areas which are likely to experience heavy snowfall.

One of the reasons for the high death toll, particularly at sea, is that smugglers in around areas such as Libya or Syria are taking advantage of the situation and trafficking people, charging high amounts of money for a crossing. This is attractive to desperate migrants who are trying to flee dangerous situations but puts them at high risk. Some pay but end up being robbed by smugglers, others who make it more often than not end up in boats which are overcrowded in a bid to earn the smugglers more money, which can lead to people falling or being thrown overboard during travels. Sometimes if boats break down people become stranded without food or water (Kingsley, 2014).

Refugees are not the only one issue with mass migration. **The European Union needs some workers for particular jobs, as for instance the United Kingdom with picking, which needs necessarily lots of workers.** These jobs become most of the time draw of air to mass migration. Mass migration could question the issue of integration and the reception of immigrants.

Struggle for the European Union

"Europe cannot go on responding to this crisis with a piecemeal or incremental approach. No country can do it alone and no country can refuse to do its part"- Guterres, head of UN refugee agency (UNHCR, Sep 2015).

The crisis is highlighting the weaknesses of the European union and causing massive internal problems. So far the EU has failed to come up with a coordinated regional response, so it is being left down to individual member states to deal with the refugees from mass migration and when it meets their borders which is extremely problematic.

For geographical reasons, some member nations are feeling the strain of this crisis a lot more than others. This inequality is in large part down to the requirement that the countries which refugees get to first take charge of them, meaning that Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus and Bulgaria are truly bearing weight of migration. There are concerns for these countries about strains on their education and public health systems and **a lot of states are responding by shutting their borders and making it more difficult to qualify for asylum.**

The result of this is that **the EU is struggling to uphold its role in the protection of human rights, and public opinion towards the EU is fast diminishing.**

Furthermore, **the crisis is threatening the Schengen Agreement**, as countries are trying to make it less easy to pass through their borders in an attempt to control the flow of people. There is however an argument that in the long term it could bring EU countries together as they increasingly recognise the need for collective action.

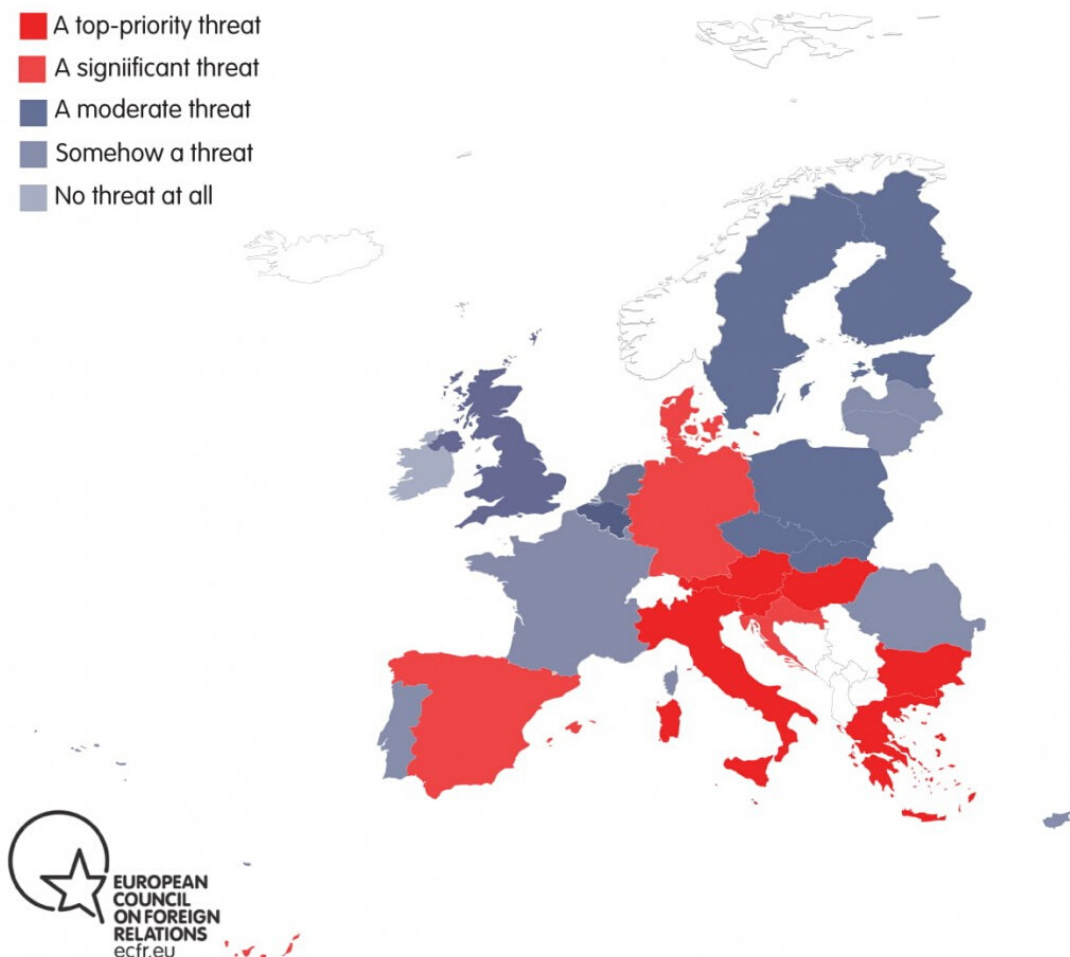
Public opinion within the EU surrounding the crisis fluctuates, but **there are frequent anti refugee and anti-immigration concerns being aired around the EU.** It is important to remember that the mass migration has come at a time where a lot of anti-EU feelings had been brewing within member states, and the effects of the Eurozone crisis are still being felt, and there is an argument to be made that this has had a contribution to the way refugees have a tendency to be demonised. This is in part due to **a lack of education**, as a great deal of the general public do not have a good understanding of the reasons for the crisis. Furthermore, the crisis seems to have led to **a resurgence of racism and xenophobia**, with the new arrivals often being blamed for national problems. This is another important consideration for debate, as not addressing public opinion can have negative consequences both for refugees and for the EU itself, something it can ill afford in a political climate where anti-EU parties are rising to power and the threat of a UK exit.

National Security

Part of the debate around mass migration needs to focus on **national security, in particular in light of the tragic attack carried out by Daesh militants in Paris**. There are concerns being raised that one of the attackers may have entered Europe via Greece on a boat alongside genuine refugees, and despite being registered and having his fingerprints taken still managed to journey undetected to France (BBC, 2015). It still raises a valid point that Daesh militants seeking to carry out attacks in the West could take advantage of the situation to be able to easily gain access to Europe. Furthermore **there are concerns about the radicalisation of immigrants**. Debates surrounding terrorism and national security should however be treated with some degree of caution, as a lot of arguments are over exaggerated, and the reason that a lot of people are fleeing is to escape Daesh and its brutal regime. Nonetheless, it is still something which adds an extra layer of complexity to the issue, as it is still a consideration for national governments. There is considerable evidence to suggest that Daesh can and will continue to attempt to penetrate western security in this manner, even if Daesh is at this moment near disappearance. **Thus the debate of the committee should bear in mind security checks for people entering Europe, considering both the safety of European countries as well as the safety of migrants**. This is of course easier said than done, the overwhelming number of legal or illegal migrants means that it is not too difficult to slip under the radar. It may be worth considering the use of shared intelligence in protecting borders, but not at the detriment of the safety of migrants.

Perceptions of uncontrolled migration as a threat

- A top-priority threat
- A significant threat
- A moderate threat
- Somehow a threat
- No threat at all



Bloc Positions

Positions on this topic are highly complex, so this section will highlight some significant broad positions in order to highlight the contentious nature of the response to mass migration.

More Economically Developed Countries

There has been a mixed response to the crisis among the EU's wealthier and more influential nations. **Germany** is doing an exceptional job compared to other EU member states, having granted refuge to thousands of individuals. However, Germany is beginning to struggle with the amount of people seeking asylum, and both Germany and France have called for binding migrants quotas for EU members. On the other hand, the United Kingdom has taken in very little refugees and is being criticised for its lack of action.

Border countries

The effects of mass migration is not being felt equally across European countries. Those who share their borders with popular escape routes are finding themselves having to deal with the biggest consequences, and are quite simply overburdened and are struggling to cope. Countries such as Hungary are also becoming extremely significant. **Hungary** is *"suddenly find itself fielding the most asylum applications per million of population"*, and it is struggling. On the 13th of September 2015 a record number of 5,809 people arrived in Hungary, the following day a state of emergency was declared and those trying to enter the country were threatened with arrests. Hungary has also made the decision to put up a metal fence to prevent people from entering the country, a decision which has been met with a great deal of criticism from EU countries.

Conclusion: key issues to consider

- Do countries have a moral obligation to accept refugees and/or migrants?
- Does accepting refugees and migrants into European countries encourage them to make the perilous journey across the Mediterranean?
- Is it possible to regulate and crack down on the people smugglers transporting migrants and refugees across the Mediterranean?
- Does the problem require a Europe-wide solution or will individual country responses be sufficient?
- Could we prevent easily next mass migration?
- Do we need to protect more our borders in order to face mass migration concerning future climate migration?

Further Readings

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Topic B: Child obesity in Europe

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century and especially over the last three decades, **the issue of childhood obesity has exploded into a global public health crisis**. The prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased substantially. Obesity is defined by the World Health Organization as "*a condition of abnormal or excessive fat accumulation in adipose tissue, to the extent that health may be impaired*". Worldwide in the past thirty years, **rates of obesity in children have more than doubled while rates in adolescents have tripled**. It is usually measured by the use of a **Body Mass Index (BMI)**, the measure of percentage of fatty mass the body contains as compared to overall size, which unfortunately undergoes some variations from country to country, as they do not all agree on what BMI differentiates "overweight" which refers to having excess body fat, muscle, bone from "obese", which refers to a severe excess of body fat. Despite this crisis seemingly appearing as a developed world issue, as hunger is still a current phenomenon in some countries, the World Health Organization has estimated that **75% of obese children live in developing countries**. Europe therefore has the duty **to lead the way in the fight against child obesity by bringing forward new and innovative solutions to this crisis**. In Europe, about 10-30% of adults are obese. Estimates of the number of overweight infants and children rose steadily from 1990 to 2019. Globally, an estimated 170 million children (aged less than 18 years) are now estimated to be overweight. The highest prevalence of childhood overweight is in upper-middle-income countries, and, when taken as a group, low-income countries have the lowest prevalence rate. However, overweight is rising in almost all countries, with prevalence rates growing fastest in lower - middle - income countries. **The high prevalence of overweight and obesity has serious health consequences**. Raised body mass index (BMI) is a major risk factor for diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and many cancers (including, for example, colorectal cancer, kidney cancer and oesophageal cancer). These diseases – often referred to as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) – not only cause premature mortality, but also long-term morbidity. In addition, overweight and obesity in children are associated with significant reductions in quality of life and a greater risk of teasing, bullying and social isolation. **Due to the rapid increases in obesity prevalence and the serious public health consequences, obesity is commonly considered one of the most serious public health challenges of the early 21st century.**

Discussion

In 2004, the World Health Assembly endorsed **Resolution WHA57.17 on the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (DPAS)**. The Global Strategy addresses the increasing prevalence and burden of NCDs, and, more specifically, global diet and physical activity patterns. Subsequently, in 2008, the World Health Organization developed **a framework which proposes that national governments demonstrate leadership and facilitate collaborative action** in the implementation of policies and programmes to promote supportive environments for health. These actions are expected, in turn, to facilitate positive changes in diet and physical activity behaviours, with related health, social, environmental and economic outcomes. In 2012, the World Health Assembly endorsed **Resolution WHA65.6 on the Comprehensive implementation plan on maternal and young child nutrition**. The Resolution urges Member States to put into practice the implementation plan, including the strengthening of nutrition policies that address the double burden of malnutrition.

Despite these actions, rates of obesity are climbing due to changing diets, urbanization and disruption of previously active lifestyles. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute estimates that a typical meal for today's American of a bagel and coffee, pizza and soda, and a salad and soda over three meals contains almost 1,600 more calories today than the same meal – in smaller portions – thirty years ago. Portion size has become so distorted in terms of what today's world thinks is healthy that without proper education as to the nutritional facts of the food one consumes, one can unknowingly consume more than 500,000 extra calories per year than someone with the same tastes thirty years ago. **Despite consuming more calories of less healthy food, children are less active and leading sedentary lives.** Over the years, leisure time for the typical child has evolved to now include watching television, playing video games, or computer use after school, rather than outdoor or active pastimes. Parents of these children may lead similar lives working at desks or in stores or behind counters, sedentary lifestyles they likely will pass onto their children. Public transportation and cars have reduced the need to walk, playing sports can be costly, and children are growing up observing and being trained for careers that require less and less manual activity. As the global population spends more time at computers than performing manual exercises, obesity will continue to rise, threatening global health and healthy genetic patterns, productivity, life expectancy, and more.

The worldwide obesity rate is expected to surge by fifty percent in the next ten years, ultimately leading to increases in severe health problems. Children who are obese and live sedentary lifestyles are more likely than active, healthy children to grow into obese adults with dramatically increased risk of many health problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, osteoporosis, orthopedic issues, and significant hormonal issues, not to mention potential extreme emotional and psychological implications.

Economically, obesity also bears a heavy cost. In the United States in 2009, an estimated \$152 billion went towards direct obesity-related health issues, while the loss in productivity caused by obesity and health issues was estimated to be worth \$30 billion. **A 5% reduction in obesity rates could lower healthcare costs the equivalent of 13% of the 2009 federal deficit.**

Many societal factors contribute to these growing numbers, including lower socioeconomic status, increased availability of cheap, energy-dense foods, and lifestyles that require less physical activity. **Most cases of obesity result from a combination of these factors, but the most direct cause of childhood obesity is obesity of parents.** Lower socioeconomic status has been linked to higher rates of obesity most directly through consumption of the cheapest calories available like fast or processed foods, which often contain higher levels of unhealthy fats and carbohydrates. Children whose parents follow bad eating patterns are likely to adopt those patterns early on, putting them at increased risk of early onset of obesity. Those who are of lower socioeconomic status also tend to have less leisure time to devote to exercise or high-energy recreational activities. The availability of packaged, processed, fast food has dramatically increased in the past several decades, while the cost of fresh foods puts them out of reach for many poorer families. Portion sizes have also exploded; the average bagel size has doubled from three inches to six in thirty years, while the average soda cup size and popcorn bag size have nearly tripled. This therefore creates **social inequalities**.

Conclusion: key points to consider

The issue of childhood obesity has only surfaced in international discussions in the past ten to twenty years, thus the list of laudable international action is short, but an incredible amount of efforts in communities and individual states have emerged. We are looking forward in this committee to **produce concrete plans to advance awareness and education of healthy living worldwide and to control obesity and its detrimental externalities**, particularly in developing countries. This committee should focus on addressing three sub-issues:

- **Cost of Healthy Food Options:** World food prices in general are on a huge upswing, and particularly in urban areas, prices of fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains continuously surge with increased transportation and maintenance costs. How can this committee make healthy food affordable? How can governments promote fresh-food businesses? What education will be necessary to encourage demand for healthier goods?
- **Availability and Economic Viability of Unhealthy Food Options:** Fast food chains and junk food suppliers are amongst the most profitable corporations in the world with the farthest reach. Unhealthy foods fill schools, stores, and restaurants, in enormous portions. To what extent should government or communities be able to limit availability of these foods? How does this committee propose to educate people about the dangers of overconsumption of these foods and the risks of obesity?
- **Decreased Physical Activity:** Now more than ever children can play and learn without ever leaving the sofa. How does this committee propose to encourage active, healthy lifestyles? How can information regarding the benefits of physical activity be disseminated? What can governments and communities do to support programs that focus specifically on getting children moving again?

Eight guidelines can be followed to answer those questions:

- **Support a good start in life:** increase the prevalence of breastfed children, encourage pregnant women to have healthy eating habits and regular physical activity...
- **Promote healthier environments,** especially in schools and nurseries: promote the consumption of water and fresh fruit and vegetables in schools, make physical education more attractive to adolescent girls, educate children about nutrition and physical activity in schools...
- **Facilitate the adoption of healthy behaviours:** promote water consumption, provide information on portion sizes, etc.
- **Restrict communication and advertising to children:** establish recommendations for food marketing on television, on the Internet and at events against children...
- **Inform and encourage families:** promote the importance of time spent together as a family or with friends, make nutritional information more effective and understandable to all...
- **Encourage physical activity:** create urban environments that support daily physical activity...
- **Monitor and evaluate:** harmonize school-based surveillance of children's nutrition, health, eating behaviours and physical activity levels, put in place indicators to assess the action plan...
- **Develop research:** increase financial support for national and European research programmes on this subject...

Childhood obesity stands to present great harm to the global economy and human population, in terms of health care costs, productivity, and long-term morbidity. The United Nations World Health Organization has already deemed childhood obesity one of the foremost problems of the 21st century; uncontrolled and unaddressed, the issue of childhood obesity will follow today's children as they grow into adults and will snowball into a full-blown crisis of human public health, hence why this committee's task is more crucial than ever.

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