

Childhood obesity: a national crisis and response

GREECE

EPW core priorities and flagships
Promoting health and well-being

WHO collaboration
Technical support
Partnership between the Regional Office and Country Office

Greece faces a critical public health challenge: it leads Europe in childhood obesity rates across several age groups. An alarming one third of Greek children are now overweight or obese. This trend poses significant long-term health risks, including an increased likelihood of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with UNICEF Greece, launched the National Action Against Childhood Obesity (2022–2026), a collaborative effort funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NextGenerationEU). Supported with technical guidance from the Regional Office and Country Office, the WHO Athens Quality of Care Office, and the WHO Special Initiative on NCDs and Innovation, it aims to reduce childhood obesity rates to 24.5% by 2030. The programme unites UNICEF, health and education ministries, academia, and other partners to promote healthier lifestyles through education, improved access to nutritious food, and more physical activity opportunities in schools and communities.

The impact

WHO's expertise has prioritized this issue nationally and introduced innovative approaches, such as digital tools for early obesity detection and comprehensive support for affected children. In addition to ongoing technical support and stakeholder coordination, WHO hosted policy dialogues on childhood obesity with participants from 10 countries, including Greek health and education ministries, to assess interventions and identify future actions. The Athens Office also engaged young participants in interactive sessions promoting physical activity and healthy eating.

Lessons learned

- Addressing childhood obesity requires coordinated efforts across multiple sectors.
- Digital technology and data analysis are crucial for early identification and effective intervention.
- Creating health-promoting environments in schools can significantly influence children's lifestyle choices.

Donors and partners

Ministry of Health; UNICEF; NextGenerationEU



In Athens, children take part in physical exercise as part of a series of activities to combat childhood obesity. © WHO

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“The insights and strategies developed through this partnership are instrumental in our fight against childhood obesity.”

Dr Eirini Agapidaki, Alternate Minister of Health, Greece

What's next?

The next stage of the National Action Against Childhood Obesity will focus on building up school-based interventions and incorporating more sophisticated digital tools for monitoring and early detection of obesity.