Dear Mr Farhan,

Thank you for your email of 1st December 2021 regarding the prevalence of non-communicable diseases and their prevention at EU level. Your request embracing a large number of activities in the field of NCD’s prevention, we have tried to focus on the main sources/reference documents available on line offering answers to your concerns.

Please note that the Commission puts high importance on improving nutrition, enhancing health prevention and fighting obesity, especially among children, since they remain some of the major risk factors of non-communicable diseases including cancer.

In this respect, the Commission works closely with Member States on improving diets and preventing obesity and obesity-related chronic diseases (2019_initiatives_npa_en.pdf (europa.eu)) in line with the WHO targets on non-communicable diseases (https://www.who.int/nmh/ncd-tools/definition-targets/en/) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300), in particular Goal 3.4, to reduce premature mortality caused by non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030.

The Farm to Fork Strategy (Farm to Fork Strategy (europa.eu)), adopted in May 2020, aims to create a fair and environmentally-friendly food system that will help facilitate a shift towards healthier and more sustainable diets across all generations. Under this strategy, the Commission prepares a number of initiatives to promote healthy diets, reduce aggressive marketing of unhealthy products high in fat, sugar and salt, stimulate reformulation of processed food products and improve information to consumers.

The EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Business and Marketing Practices (f2f_sfpd_coc_final_en.pdf (europa.eu)), as one of its initiatives, aims to stimulate the uptake of healthier and more sustainable diets and facilitate sustainable practices by all relevant actors in the food system through pledge commitments signed by a broad range of actors in the middle of the food chain.

The Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan (2021 01 25 Communication - Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan v.24 - CLEAN EVENING (europa.eu)), adopted on 3rd February 2021, aims to address cancer in a holistic way through four pillars: (1) prevention; (2) early detection; (3) diagnosis and treatment; and (4) quality of life of cancer patients and survivors. The Plan is a real game changer since EUR 4 billion will be available for cancer prevention and care. This will benefit all citizens and patients, including the elderly.
In addition, to help Member States reduce the current prevalence of overweight and obesity and to support the implementation of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission launched in 2020 the Best ReMaP joint action on the implementation of best practices in the area of nutrition (Best-ReMaP – Healthy Food for a Healthy Future (bestremap.eu)).

This joint action includes several initiatives focusing on food reformulation, reducing aggressive marketing to children of foods high in fat, salt and sugar and public procurement of food in public institutions.

The EU Youth Strategy (https://europa.eu/youth/strategy/health-wellbeing_en) seeks to promote the health and well-being of young people with particular attention to healthy lifestyles, preventing eating disorders, providing nutrition guidelines, encouraging cooperation between schools, youth and health professionals and raising awareness about sport as a means of promoting teamwork, intercultural learning and responsibility.

The Commission is now working on a new initiative ‘Healthier Together: EU Non-Communicable Diseases Initiative’ to support Member States to improve the health of citizens by reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases. It will reinforce its efforts to support action of the Member States and stakeholders in this area in a more ambitious way. The new initiative will address the leading causes of avoidable premature death. In other words, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, mental health and neurological disorders will be included into this initiative.

The preparatory phase for this initiative is planned until mid-2022 and all stakeholders will have the possibility to engage with the preparations via the EU Health Policy Platform (EU Health Policy Platform (europa.eu)), an interactive tool established with the view to incentivising discussions on issues related to public health including nutrition and obesity. We would like to take this opportunity to invite you to join the Non-Communicable Diseases Network (https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/hpf/), where you can provide further comments/suggestions.

As regards the EU Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, please be informed that the activities of this European stakeholder platform have been discontinued.

In light of the new key political priorities, the Commission has decided that the activities on nutrition and physical activity would, in the future, focus on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, through the identification and rollout of best practices facilitated by the Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases (Steering Group on Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Management of Non-Communicable Diseases | Public Health (europa.eu)).

Best regards,

Philippe ROUX
Head of Unit