

# MONITORING NETWORK FOR FOOD COMPOSITION



## A pilot study

### What is it about?

The study highlights the best practices regarding food monitoring and consumer information for nutrition policies and enhances reformulation processes. Nutritional information is a determinant factor for improving the quality of food and for making the *good choice* easier for the consumer. The monitoring of nutritional information also allows to evaluate the nutritional quality of food and to promote reformulation in the food industry. The information gathered permits to establish a mapping of products and to identify the best formulation for a family of products, creating a *virtuous circle* among the food producers.

The aim of the report is to describe the pilot studies on monitoring the food composition that have been implemented in Austria and Romania during the project, based on the French experience *Oqali* and the establishment of a network of monitoring systems at EU level.

### Results of the comparisons

- Among cereals and soft drinks, great variability of the sugar and fat content has been observed for several groups of products (for example chocolate-based breakfast cereals), suggesting real possibilities of reformulation
- Differences in the sugar (and/or fat) content have also been highlighted between the 3 countries
- These differences between countries can be due to:
  - a different segmentation of the market (between types of brands and groups of products)
  - a different offer (type of products available on the market)
  - a low proportion of common references (same brand, same name and same flavor)
  - differences in the composition of common references.

### Using in practice

#### How can the report be used?

The pilot studies highlight that it is necessary to have a monitoring tool for each country, at the product groups and sub groups level (for example, chocolate-based breakfast cereals within the broader sector of breakfast cereals), in order to qualify the nutritional quality of the food offer.

A European harmonized tool would enable comparisons, and through adequate use by various stakeholders increase competition between companies' products from a nutritional point of view. It would allow a monitoring of global progresses through reformulation or launch of new references with higher nutritional value.

The development of a monitoring network constitutes an important step for the success of JANPA and its follow-up: Austria, France and Romania now constitute the *hard core* of this newly constituted monitoring network, which needs to be developed.

The exercise has also demonstrated that the implementation of such a tool is feasible with limited time and resources.



### Main objectives

- Test the implementation of a monitoring tool in order to assess the nutritional quality of food products
- Describe the food offer through the comparison of the nutritional contents in two sectors of products: soft drinks and breakfast cereals in 3 countries (Austria, Romania and France).

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## Who needs to be involved?

The report can be useful to anyone interested in the nutritional quality of the food offer, e.g. policy makers, industry, retail sector, consumer associations, etc.

Governments should consider the monitoring at brand level as a valuable tool in order to assess the quality of the food offer in their country and to set a baseline for discussions with food producers.

This monitoring system must be driven by public institutions to ensure its impartiality and to get confidence from all the stakeholders.

A possible collaboration with industry and the retail sector for data collection should be considered, to enhance the food monitoring. A systematic transmission of the data from companies should complete a harmonized database, which could be set-up at European level.

The market shares of the products should also be made available by industry to public authorities in order to allow a precise design of food and nutrition policies for public health purposes.

## Which actions?

Each country needs to combine various actions, including promotion of food reformulation, to improve the quality of the whole diet but also to develop monitoring tools in order to assess the consequences of these actions on food composition.



## Perspective and conclusions

- Reformulation can improve the nutritional quality of the food products but its impact would be limited if applied only to some products, brands or nutrients
- A harmonized monitoring system at European level for all categories of foods is feasible with relatively limited resources and would bring benefits in each country and allow comparisons among countries.

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