

Detailed catalog of measures for the diet for children between the ages of 4 and 10 years

Background

“Healthy eating from the start!” (REVAN) is a health promotion program to improve the nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding women and families with children up to 10 years of age. Since 2008, REVAN is an ongoing cooperation between the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety, the Main Association of Austrian Social Insurance Fund and the Federal Ministry of Health and Women’s Affairs. For the years 2015 and 2016, a further cooperation with the “Fonds Gesundes Österreich” has been agreed on the elaboration of a “catalog of measures” as well as a “detailed catalog of measures for children between the ages of 4 and 10 years”.

REVAN first published a catalog of measures for the target group “pregnant women, breastfeeding women and children up to 3 years of age”, which contains target-group-specific recommendations for the implementation of health-promoting measures. In order to expand the program’s target group to children up to 10 years of age, in 2015 a “catalog of measures” and based on this catalog in 2016 a “detailed catalog of measures” for 4 to 10 year old children has been developed.

Aim

This catalog provides an overview of scientifically sound and effective interventions in the field of dietary health promotion for children from 4 to 10 years as well as their families. Furthermore, the aim was to identify specific “success factors” for the implementation of measures in Austria as well as the elaboration and detailed description of projects with an explicit focus on the access to socially disadvantaged families/families with an immigration background.

Methodology

The “catalog of measures for the nutrition of children aged 4 to 10 years” includes national and international “models of good practice” and “models of promising practice” subdivided in 3 fields of action and selected measures. Based on this catalog the “detailed catalog” was elaborated.

Based on defined criteria for prioritized measures “best practice models” and their success factors were derived. Each chapter contains a conclusion and recommendations for project implementers. This aims to facilitate the transferability and /or the rollout of successful models in Austria.

Results

In total, 98 best-practice models (37 national and 61 international) in 3 fields of action were identified (Table 1). Of these, only 10 % placed an explicit emphasis on socially disadvantaged families/families with a migration background.

1. Field of Action: "Improving nutritional knowledge and habits"	Number*	2. Field of Action "Catering facilities and catering "	Number*	3. Field of Action "Children's food and advertising "	Number*
Food-Based Dietary Guidelines	12	Quality standards for catering facilities	26	Documentation and review of food supply	6
Nutritional education in curricula/training curricula	9	Consultation of catering facilities	12	Improvement of consumer information	8
Train-the-trainer	11	Improvement availability of healthy alternatives	5	Product development and certification	8
		Analysis of current state of catering offers	7		

Table 1: Overview of the best practice models according to the fields of action and measures

* Multiple projects can be carried out in several ways.

Success Factors for the Field of Action 1 – “Improving nutritional knowledge and nutritional habits”

Food-Based Dietary Guidelines

- Clear and comprehensible graphical illustration
- Classification by food-groups
- Additional movement and behavioral tips
- Consideration of cultural factors
- Accompanying nutritional education and information programs
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders in the elaboration process
- Evaluation – outcome and impact of FBDG

Integration of nutritional education into curricula and training curricula

- Consideration of social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions
- Practical elements
- Carry out the learned information in the family environment
- Overall health-promoting design of the settings

Train-the-trainer

- Needs-oriented implementation
- Participatory approach
- Building on established structures
- Networking and sharing of knowledge
- Provision of training and information documents
- Materials for practical use
- Trainers from the same social environment or with same age
- Supported public relations

Success Factors for the Field of Action 2 – “Catering facilities and catering”

Quality standards for catering facilities

- Declaration of frequencies of the food-groups

- Age-specific portion sizes
- Recommendations for the preparation method
- Focus on seasonal and regional products
- Unified quality criteria

Consultation of community catering facilities

- Participation (feedback groups, focus groups, etc.)
- Supporting the implementation of quality standards with e. g. trainings, information materials
- Provision of training for knowledge and experience exchange and networking
- Measures for quality assurance
- Low-threshold access to events
- Regular updates and communication (e. g. newsletters)
- Practical tips (marketing measures, positioning of products etc.)
- Provision of information materials (e. g. product lists, information graphics, purchasing schedulers)
- Improved information transfer to consumers (information cards etc.)
- Awarding-system

Improvement of the (general) availability of healthy alternatives

- Federally subsidized meals or monetary support for meals
- Integration in school structures
- Coordination with teachers/management
- Participation of students and parents
- Provision of practical materials

Data collection and analysis of the current situation of catering offers

- Installation of a coordinating service point
- Good cooperation of all relevant stakeholders
- Knowledge sharing and networking

Success Factors for the Field of Action 3 – “Children's food and advertising”

Documentation and review of the food supply

- Collection and publication of product information
- Transparent presentation of the data

Improvement of consumer information on children's food

- Low-threshold food labelling
- Supporting materials such as product lists, information graphics or purchasing schedules

Product development and certification

- Publication and media-effective illustration of product components (e.g. sugar, salt, fat)

- Voluntary “promises of action” with the food industry

Conclusion

The “detailed action catalog of measures” shows that some measures for the target group are already being implemented in the field of nutrition in Austria, but there is still a need for action in some areas:

- Austrian Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for 4 to 10-year-olds
- Unified quality standards for catering in childcare and child-care facilities
- Coordinating office for community catering
- Optimization of food supply in restaurants
- Free provision or monetary support for health-promoting meals
- Establishment of a nutrient database
- Development of suitable labeling systems
- Focus on reaching out to children from socially disadvantaged families/families with a migration background

Tackling those fields of actions can lead to a closure of the identified gaps and promote a holistic approach to the creation of health-promoting environments of the target group.