

WELCOME ADDRESS

**BY MS. JENI NACHEVA, DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH OF BULGARIA
AT THE CONFERENCE “THE HEALTHY FUTURE OF EUROPE:
HEALTHY NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN”
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HONOURABLE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Presidency conference under the moto “The healthy future of Europe: Healthy nutrition for children”.

The healthy nutrition for children is one of the leading priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council. This is a topic closely related to the debate on the future of the EU. The future of a competitive Europe is inconceivable without healthy and educated young generation.

From the health perspective our emphasis is on nutrition for children. It is a fact that nutrition is one of the key health determinants: the unhealthy diet being among the main causes for chronic non-communicable diseases at European and global level.

Today we envisage discussions on the impact of nutrition and foodstuffs on health: on the physical and intellectual development of children. We will debate on the need of foodstuffs, which are not only safe, but healthy as well; about the marketing of foods intended for children, about the traditional diets in Europe and the need to preserve the unique diversity in the Old continent.

Good children's health is an early investment in healthy, productive and prosperous population. I believe that this discussion will give impetus to a stronger health perspective in debates on foods and nutrition, including in the context of a future healthier Common agricultural policy.

Successful prevention policies depend on the availability of healthy and affordable foodstuffs. Within this priority agriculture and healthcare need to join efforts. It is on purpose that we invited all of you – distinguished experts from both the ministries of health and agriculture. We strongly rely on your active participation: take the chance and benefit from the opportunity to see the picture from others' perspective.

Today's conference is a forum for exchange of experience and best practices, gathering together the best available expertise at national, European and global level.

I am convinced that you will arrive at clear messages, important to all the Member States of the EU – together with representatives of academia, the European Commission, the World Health Organization and UNICEF, NGOs. This debate will be a solid basis for the Council Conclusions we are preparing.

Bulgaria initiates a timely discussion on a topic vital for the whole European Union. I believe that today's debate is of genuine added value for the EU Member states and is an evidence that the EU contributes in a tangible way to the cooperation in the area of public health. This is a message of paramount importance in the strategic debate on the future of Europe and the role of health.

In that context the relation between health and economy is extremely important: the growing trend of chronic diseases and the decreased working capacity already have negative impact on the economy. This is why it is so important before the implementation of a given policy to measure its impact on health. This is the actual purpose of "Health in all policies" approach.

The Bulgarian presidency ensures continuity and coherence with the achievements of previous Presidencies such as Greece, the Netherlands and Malta in the area of healthy nutrition, while putting the emphasis on the leading role of prevention and on health as a key perspective when developing public policies. I hope that Austria, as the next Presidency of the Council, will also contribute to that goal, so that we jointly turn Europe into a benchmark of a continent of the healthy, educated and competitive population.

Finally, let me flag one more message: on the importance of further encouraging manufacturers and industry to continue with the undertaken commitments and initiatives. We plan a separate dialogue with them in order to jointly identify solutions and to strike the delicate balance between ambitious and realistic goals.

I wish successful and fruitful discussions to all participants!

Thank you!

Sofia

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JENY NACHEVA

DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH