

**16 April 2009**

**Report: MEP Magor Csibi calls on European Commission to create a European Obesity Day**

MEP Magor Csibi (ALDE, RO) held a press conference on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April in the European parliament, calling for the launch of a European Obesity Day, to be held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May. Please find attached related material including the official press release, speaker biographies and presentations.

Speakers at the conference were:

- Mr John Paul Allonsius from BOLD, the patient organisation, Belgium
- Dr David Haslam, National Obesity Forum, United Kingdom
- Prof Ernst Edzard, Peninsula Medical School, United Kingdom

Csibi opened the conference. He said that despite the fact that obesity as an issue receives a fair amount of attention within parliament (he mentioned written declarations, resolutions etc.), it does not seem that much is changing. He stressed that it was the job of an MEP to speak on behalf of the citizens but questioned whether this was actually happening. He also regretted that there was nobody available from the European commission to attend the event.

The idea of European Obesity Day is to create an opportunity to involve all citizens. He felt that his role as an MEP is to involve everybody and increase awareness that this is a serious issue and this would be the goal with a European obesity day.

He then went on to welcome and introduce the speakers.

First speaker was Dr David Haslam of the National Obesity Forum in the UK. Dr Haslam recounted examples of obese patients that had been neglected, resulting sometimes in the death of the patient. He stressed that patients are often unaware that they are suffering from a medical condition.

Losing just a small amount of weight can have very beneficial side effects and can prevent problems such as heart disease and diabetes in future.

He agreed that prevention was extremely important but it needs to go hand in hand with treatment. He likened the attempt to rid Europe of obesity to a calling the health and safety to a housefire so that they can check the plugs and sockets." It's too late for prevention and we need to be treating obesity", he said. He closed by offering European Obesity Day his full support both as a GP and as a member of the National Obesity Forum.

Please find attached a statement from Mr Haslam, "Recognising the voice of obese and overweight patients".

The second speaker to take the floor was Prof Edzard Ernst who researches complementary medicine at the Peninsula Medical School in Exeter, UK. He gave a PowerPoint presentation drawing attention to the high number of herbal remedies for obesity which make false claims. Many of these bogus slimming aids are available to buy online and typing 'weight loss/Alternative medicine' into Google gives you 3 million hits. He said that the vast majority of these remedies are not tested at all. All bar one of these medicines has been effective but all have harmful side effects. For the only effective drug, the side effect has been fatality. The result is that desperate consumers are misled and put at risk on a daily basis and the respectable side of herbal medicine is put into disrepute, he said.

He cited the Australian government's guide to medicines claiming weight loss, as an example of best practice. Slimming aids must not be misleading and must be supported by trials and evidence, he said.

Professor Ernst's presentation can be found attached.

Csibi then gave the floor to Mr Jean Paul Allonsius of BOLD, the Belgian patients organisation, to put forward the arguments from the patient's perspective. Mr Allonsius welcomed the work that Mr Csibi

was doing to bring attention to this illness that can affect 1 European out of 2. He was more critical of the approach of the commission who were tackling obesity through other channels such as food labelling. The BOLD statement in support of European obesity day can be found attached.

Csibi then took the floor saying that a solution had to be found with European citizens. He assured everybody that throughout his political activity he would fight for the establishment of European Obesity Day. Obesity day is needed as no single institution has the answers to this problem. He reminded attendees that the website devoted to the call for a European Obesity day would be launched at the end of April on [www.obesityday.com](http://www.obesityday.com).

### **Questions and Answers:**

A representative from the publication, European Food Law, asked the panel for their views on the effectiveness of self-regulation by the food industry.

Csibi responded saying that from his experience of the self-regulation of industry in Romania, it was an important part of the solution but not the only solution. He cited some examples of initiatives taken by the industry in Romania on GDA labelling and advertising to children

Dr Haslam felt that for best practice to become widespread it needs some kind of legislation.

Csibi agreed that current legislation could be updated to correct current flaws and to make it tighter.

The same journalist asked the panel for their views on claims legislation and whether controls on claims could help.

Csibi stressed that all claims must be assessed.

Professor Edzard said that claims must be supported by evidence. Legislation would be a step in the right direction but somebody needs to police this. He admitted that policing the internet is not easy but suggested that kite marks for websites, to indicate that they have been approved by organisations, could be the way forward.

Mr Allonsius said that Obesity Day would help in creating awareness of this kind of issue. On claims it is not enough to say something is good for your health, this must be proved.

Csibi concluded by saying that not everything can be solved with legislation. "The most important thing is to reach the patients to make them aware that they have the disease", he said.

## Annex I:

### Articles published in the press

#### **El eurodiputado liberal Magor Csibi pide que se cree el Día Europeo de la Obesidad**

Esta enfermedad afectará a 150 millones de adultos en Europa en 2010

Bruselas (15/04/09).- El número de personas que padecen obesidad se ha triplicado en las dos últimas décadas y, si las tendencias se mantienen, 150 millones de adultos y 15 millones de menores la sufrirán el año que viene. Magor Csibi, eurodiputado liberal rumano, considera que la concienciación de la sociedad y de las instituciones públicas sobre esta enfermedad es insuficiente. Por ello, ha reclamado hoy en rueda de prensa, apoyado por tres expertos en la materia, que se instaure el Día Europeo de la Obesidad, a celebrar el 16 de mayo.

SOCIEDAD

## Eurodiputado pide establecer el Día Europeo contra la Obesidad

EFE - 15/04/2009 12 : 28

☆☆☆☆☆ Votar esta noticia | ☆☆☆☆☆ Resultado (0 Votos)



Bruselas, 15 abr (EFE).- El eurodiputado rumano Magor Imre Csibi, de la Alianza de los Liberales y Demócratas para Europa (ALDE), pidió hoy a la Comisión Europea (CE) que apoye el establecimiento del 16 de mayo como el Día Europeo contra la Obesidad.

"La lucha contra la obesidad es una prioridad para la política sanitaria europea", defendió el eurodiputado durante una rueda de prensa, aunque puntualizó que las iniciativas comunitarias para luchar contra esta enfermedad no tienen "tanto éxito" como cabría esperar.

Además, lamentó la ausencia de representación del Ejecutivo comunitario en el acto de hoy, lo que, a su juicio, "demuestra que no estamos lo suficientemente comprometidos" con el problema.

Para Csibi, es importante involucrar y concienciar a todos los ciudadanos sobre las consecuencias de la enfermedad, así como apoyar a los pacientes para que "sigan adelante" y expresen su opinión.

Con este fin, presentó la página web [www.obesityday.eu](http://www.obesityday.eu), que estará disponible a finales de abril para recopilar a través de una encuesta las opiniones de los europeos sobre la problemática y, de este modo, lograr una mejor aproximación a "las necesidades y preocupaciones" de los ciudadanos.

Se trata además de un primer paso para establecer el Día contra la Obesidad en la Unión Europea y se suma a las iniciativas que algunos estados miembros ya han lanzado.

Sobre la legislación comunitaria para luchar contra el problema, el eurodiputado reconoció que las autoridades de la UE tienen que "clarificar algunos temas" y, que "todavía existen lagunas", pero también señaló que no se pueden "solucionar todos los problemas a través de la legislación" y abogó por la concienciación de los ciudadanos.

Las estimaciones prevén que en 2010, si no se toman medidas al respecto, habrá en Europa 150 millones de adultos obesos -el 20 por ciento de la población-, mientras que el problema afectará a 15 millones de niños y adolescentes. EFE aal/mvs/lab



## MEP calls for EU obesity day

**Health professionals have endorsed ALDE MEP Magor Csibi's call to create a European obesity day.**

Estimates suggest that there will be 150 million obese adults (20 per cent of the population) and 25 million obese children and adolescents (10 per cent of the population) in Europe by 2010.

And Csibi, a member of the parliament's environment, public health and food safety committee, told reporters on Wednesday that creating an obesity day would help tackle the problem and involve European citizens in finding solutions.

Obesity day, to be held annually on May 16, would help raise awareness of Europe's growing obese and overweight population, Csibi argued.

"European citizens must be aware that this is a quite important issue and obesity day will actively involve European citizens in the fight against obesity," he said.



□ ue-salud 15-04-2009

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PUBLICIDAD

**Vende y compra  
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coches.net**

\*This article could have been disseminated by EFE the Spanish newswire. It seems to be the same article as the one above on page 4.

## OPEN EUROPE BLOG

A blog about the European Union, foreign policy, politics, etc

### Fat

An MEP on the Environment, Public health and food safety committee has called for 16 May to be made 'EU obesity day'.

Magor Csibi said:

*"European citizens must be aware that this is a quite important issue and obesity day will actively involve European citizens in the fight against obesity. My role as an MEP is to involve everybody in shaping the fight against obesity in the European Union."*

## Annex II: Snap shots of the press conference



MEP Magor Csibi



Mr John Paul Allonsius from BOLD, the patient organisation, Belgium



Dr David Haslam, National Obesity Forum, United Kingdom



Prof Ernst Edzard, Peninsula Medical School, United Kingdom



Panel shot of all four speakers