



Intellectual Output 1 – Weight Matters Framework Report

TRANSNATIONAL SUMMARY REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Background: European data shows that the prevalence of obesity in Europe is rising in many countries and rising fastest in low socioeconomic population groups. The aim of this Transnational Summary Report is to outline the findings as well as the similarities and differences across the four participant countries (UK, Greece, Malta and Italy). The findings from this report will play a key role in developing training materials and resources for the Weight Matters Training Program and Weight Free Groups.

Methodology: National statistics on obesity, key determinants, key stakeholders, current initiatives and current best practices, as well as research results from focus groups and online surveys highlighting the needs, challenges and skills/tools needed for weight management for each participant country were compared for similarities and differences.

Results: In all of the participant countries the consumption of food high in sugar, fat and salt is increasing. Regarding key determinants for obesity, the desk research carried out across partner countries highlighted the following determinants: low cost of food, misleading marketing, low nutrition knowledge, fast-paced lifestyles with no time for food preparation, more women in the workplace, sedentary habits, low breastfeeding rates and maternal obesity. The prospect of group training from a coach mentor blended with online tools meeting specific needs and challenges for weight management was considered highly important and useful in all partner countries.

Conclusion: All countries agreed that there is a great need for actions such as comprehensive weight management programs and policies. The value of group coaching for weight management focusing on behaviour change is clearly identified transnationally.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

European data shows that the prevalence of obesity in Europe is rising in many countries and rising fastest in low socioeconomic population groups.

The aim of this Transnational Summary Report is to outline the findings as well as the similarities and differences across the four participant countries (UK, Greece, Malta and Italy). The findings from this report will play a key role for developing training materials and resources for the Weight Matters Training Program and Weight Free Groups.

Desk Research Findings

Malta has the highest percentage in obesity among the four countries, while second ranks the UK, followed by Greece, and last by Italy. In all participant countries, except for Greece, men seem to have higher percentages of overweight and obesity compared to women. Furthermore, both in Greece and Italy a low educational level is related to higher obesity rates.

In all of the participant countries the consumption of food high in sugar, fat and salt is increasing. Moreover, the Mediterranean diet is being increasingly abandoned in the Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Greece, and Malta.

Regarding key determinants for obesity, the desk research carried out across partner countries highlighted the following determinants: Low cost of food, misleading marketing, low nutrition knowledge, fast-paced lifestyles with no time for food preparation, more women in the workplace, sedentary habits, low breastfeeding rates and maternal obesity.

Social stigma is highly considered in the UK and Malta. Access to appropriate physical activity opportunities is described as a great need both the UK and Greece. In Greece low awareness and lack of nutrition-health education is also considered. All countries agree that there is a great need for actions such as comprehensive weight management programs and policies.

Focus Groups and Online Survey Research Findings

In all participant countries the value of group coaching for weight management focusing on behaviour change is clearly identified.

UK: The results showed that there is a range of factors that come into play with weight management. The popular discourse that it is about calories in and calories out has been largely discredited. Knowledge of food, stress and self-esteem levels, and making long-term behavioural changes were identified as crucial. For the training and coaching/mentoring sessions, the duration should not last more than an hour, and should be encouraging, motivational and most importantly positive. Most of the adults prefer: action learning and blended learning. A mobile app would be extremely useful to support the online learning platform along with a rewards structure that encourages long-term support.

The training program should include: myths and facts about food and exercise, and a page for healthy cooking suggestions.

Greece: The results stressed the need to gain more knowledge in the field of weight management with non-diet approaches. Face-to-face learning in groups is the preferred method of training and coaching; however carefully designed digital tools such as an online platform and a mobile app, could be supportive and useful. For the trainings and coaching/mentoring sessions, the duration should not last more than 2 hours, definitely be interactive and include opportunities for the participants to apply what they have learned. Teaching subjects should range from expanding nutrition knowledge and supporting food literacy (properties of food, link between nutrition and health), practical tools (food label reading, cooking, shopping and physical activity tips). Also, digital tools need to be easy to use, have condensed, fact-based information and applications that will provide ready solutions to everyday challenges.

Malta: The results showed that overweight adults and health professionals from Malta have different mind-sets and targets from each other, but they came up with arguments that can be very much related. The main themes to be tackled are making healthy food easy and accessible, creating consciousness on the ideal portion size and finally acquiring holistic knowledge which abolishes myths and misconceptions. For the trainings and coaching/mentoring sessions, the duration should not last more than an hour, with most popular features being rewards, a mobile app, a chat and email learning. Teaching subjects should range from building motivation, cooking skills, physical activity tips and portion suggestions.

Italy: The results highlighted that it is necessary to integrate the classic dietetic-nutritional management of overweight to manage stress and all the emotional dimensions of eating, as well as boosting self-esteem. For the trainings and coaching/mentoring sessions, the duration should not last more than an hour, and face-to-face learning in groups is the preferred method of training and coaching. Carefully designed digital tools such as an online platform and a mobile app, could be supportive and useful. Most popular features were email based learning, games, quizzes and rewards. Teaching subjects should range from building motivation and boosting self-esteem, physical activity tips, healthy cooking tips and reading nutrition labels, followed by the facts and myths about nutrition and exercise, impact of healthy living on weight and portion suggestions.

Recommendations

The results from this transnational report point out that an online platform when combined with face-to-face, interactive, coaching can be useful. The tools that will be developed should be fun, positive and motivational and should include facts and tips that increase food literacy and awareness following the outlined specifications.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Weight Matters is to offer a unique set of solutions, with strength-based coaching at its core, to support adults in developing weight literacy and help them learn how to shift their mind-sets in order to manage weight loss. The aim of this Transnational Summary Report is to outline the findings on a European level and highlight similarities and differences across countries and cultures. The findings from this report will play a key role for developing training materials and resources for both the Weight Matters Training Programme and Weight Free Groups to ensure that they meet the needs of the target group of adults wanting to improve their weight literacy in partner countries (UK, EL, MA, IT). The Report will also have a wider application in being disseminated to key stakeholders including public health campaigns and networks across Europe.

Weight management is a hot issue currently, as rates of obesity are rising and most Western countries face an obesity epidemic. Obesity is a serious public health problem as it is significantly associated with the prevalence of chronic and life-threatening diseases such as coronary heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, sleep apnea, musculoskeletal problems and a wide of variety of psychological issues. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Europe had the second highest proportion of overweight or obese people in 2014, behind the Americas (Eurostat 2014).

As the number of overweight and obese persons has been growing in recent years, many people find it increasingly difficult to maintain a “normal” weight in today's largely obesogenic environment. This environment spans from low breastfeeding rates to difficulties in geographically or financially accessing the ingredients of a healthy diet, to a lack of cooking skills, to the abundance and marketing of energy-rich foods, to urban planning choices and lifestyle pressures that often reduce the opportunity for physical activity. While obesity was once considered a problem only for high-income countries, there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of people from low- and middle-income countries who are considered to be overweight or obese. Obesity costs national economies billions of Euros per year, including lost productivity and sick days. Strategies to address obesity across the social gradient – but especially in low socioeconomic groups – are urgently required to stem these financial losses.

2. DESK RESEARCH - STATE OF AFFAIRS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES – SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

A) COMPARISON OF KEY STATISTICS ON OBESITY ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

United Kingdom

According to the National Report for the UK, 30% of adults are obese or morbidly obese and a further 36% are overweight, leading to 66% of the population being overweight or obese. Being overweight is more common to men than women. In 2015, 41% of men were overweight compared to 31% of women; however, 27% of both men and women that participated in this study were obese. When it comes to income, obesity varies by household income among women but not significantly among men. Those in the second lowest quintile of household income had the highest prevalence of obesity. The relationship between obesity and low-income households is strongest when looking at children of deprived families.

Greece

According to the National Report for Greece, 71.4% of men and women aged 20+ are overweight or obese. Focusing on obesity only, according to Eurostat (2017), in Greece 17.3% of the population is obese. There was no systematic difference in obesity levels between men and women, however obesity is linked to the education level. Adults with primary education present higher obesity rates (21%) in comparison to adults with tertiary education who present lower obesity rates (13.4%) (Eurostat). For Greece there is no data available on the prevalence of obesity that can be disaggregated by socioeconomic factors beyond age and sex.

Malta

According to the National Report for Malta, 69.7% of the population is either overweight or obese. Overweight/obese prevalence was statistically higher for men (76.3%) than for women (63%). Age stratification revealed that both genders had the highest overweight prevalence rates between 55 and 64 years. Over a 35-year period, an overall decrease in the normal and overweight Body Mass Index (BMI) categories occurred with an increase in the prevalence of obesity.

Italy

According to the National Report for Italy, 50% of the population is overweight or obese. Italy has one of the lowest adulthood obesity rates in Europe (approximately 10% of the population) but the latest data show that 40% are overweight. Excess weight is a more frequent feature among men compared to women, among people with many economic difficulties and among people with a low level of education.

Similarities & Differences

In their individual National Reports, the participant countries used different data sources to report overweight and obesity. However, when we look at the latest data from Eurostat, updated in 2017 (based on data from 2014), Malta has the highest percentage (25.2%) in obesity among the four

countries, second is the UK with 19.8%, followed by Greece, 16.9%, and last ranks Italy with 10.5% of the population being obese. Similarly, the percentage of overweight (obese + pre-obese) is the highest in Malta (59.6%) and the lowest in Italy (43.8%). Greece has a slightly higher percentage (55.5%) in overweight adults compared to the UK (55%), putting Greece second in the ranking and the UK third. In all participant countries, except for Greece, men seem to have higher percentages of overweight and obesity compared to women, but according to the 2016 Eurostat News Release there was no systematic difference. In all Member States the share of obesity increases with age. Furthermore, in both Greece and Italy low educational levels are related to higher obesity rates. In almost every EU Member State for which data is available, the share of obesity decreases with education level. Finally, European data shows that the prevalence of obesity in Europe is rising in many countries and rising fastest in low socioeconomic population groups.

Country	Obese (%)	Pre-Obese (%)	Overweight (%) Pre-obese + Obese
UK	19.8	35.2	55
Greece	16.9	38.6	55.5
Malta	25.2	34.4	59.6
Italy	10.5	33.3	43.8

Raw Data: Body Mass Index (BMI) Pre-Obese, Obese, Overweight, Last Update: 16-03-2017

B) COMPARISON OF EATING HABITS ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

United Kingdom

Food culture has changed a great deal over the last few decades, resulting in a shift from a more traditional routine of shopping, food preparation and cooking to an increased reliance on the convenience of processed foods many of which are higher in fat, sugar and salt. During the years 2014-2017 the total number of takeaway food shops has risen by 4000, and the heaviest concentrations of fast food are found in England’s poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods.

Greece

Since 1960, rapid changes occurred in Greece that transformed the eating habits of the population. The mean caloric consumption presented a steady and continuing increase. What is really significant, is that sugar consumption has more than doubled. In the recent years the crisis has caused a favourable environment for the food industry to promote and sell low-priced food of questionable nutrition. Traditional foods made with olive oil, fresh ingredients and local products are now adulterated and mass-produced products using palm oil or other vegetable oils and numerous additives are filling the

food stores. Moreover, only 7.8% consume the daily recommended level of 5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day.

Malta

Although the traditional Maltese cuisine is primarily Mediterranean, based on seasonal agricultural products and seafood and with strong Sicilian influence, the diet of the Maltese population today has been heavily influenced by Western type food consumption, with high fat, high sugar and high salt intake. The Maltese diet changed from one low in fats and high in complex carbohydrates to one high in unhealthy fats and low in complex carbohydrates.

Italy

The eating patterns of Italians are gradually changing compared to data observed just 10 years ago. The first national data on the takeaway market in Italy show that it is strongly increasing in the last six months of 2017 as 51% of Italians used it. The majority of orders are carried out in a domestic environment, with a high incidence of office orders.

Moreover, only 1 in 10 Italians consume the quantity recommended by the guidelines for proper nutrition in fruits and vegetables.

Similarities & Differences

A 'nutritional transition' from traditional healthy diets and fresh produce to unhealthy, convenient, packaged food and fast foods, has been the hallmark of many countries in the Western world and has been greatly associated with the rise of obesity. In all of the participant countries the consumption of foods high in sugar, fat and salt is increasing. Moreover, the Mediterranean diet is being increasingly abandoned in the Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Greece, and Malta.

C) THE KEY DETERMINANTS OF OBESITY ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

United Kingdom

Food prices have a huge effect on households in the UK particularly for the low-income households as they spend a greater proportion of their income on food. Food has exerted an increasing pressure on household budgets since 2007 when food prices started to rise dramatically. A healthy diet does not necessarily cost more than an unhealthy one, but the assumption that healthy food is expensive is still widely believed. Healthy fad diets also help spread this belief as they often focus on exclusive, exotic ingredients such as quinoa and chia seeds at the expense of cheaper, easily consumed sources of valuable nutrition like carrots, bananas, potatoes. Organic and gluten-free foods are also considerably more expensive. While low-income families may be able to afford healthier food, they will often choose to buy something easy and 'filling' for their families which is more likely to be highly calorific, as well as packed with additives' rather than something fresh.

Greece

Greece has been derailing more and more from its traditional diet, victimized by the aggressive marketing and advertising from the food industry. The current financial crisis has worsened the situation as buying habits changed and Greeks these days are choosing food based on price and buying offers. As Greeks are trying to save money, food companies and fast food places are developing products with unhealthy and cheap ingredients marketed to appeal to the consumer. The use of the term “traditional” is often used as a marketing tool. While Greeks know that their traditional Greek-Mediterranean diet is healthy, they are getting mixed messages from the media, the food industry and various experts. According to the IDEFICS European study, nutrition knowledge is very low in the European Union. At the same time changes in the societal and family dynamics enhanced by the Greek crisis have women working more and either do not cook and order out, or cook quick meals based on meat and starch. Another key determinant is that breastfeeding rates have been low in the recent years and processed foods, special kids’ milk, special kids’ yogurt, and special kids’ cookies have been marketed to parents as a healthier and safer choice for their children. Finally, a very important fact: Greeks are not active enough. The challenges of the contemporary lifestyles have created sedentary habits due to increased workload and excessive screen time.

Malta

The modern food environment provides a wide range of opportunities for the consumption of food and drink products, commonly leading to what has been described as ‘passive overconsumption’. Studies show that the consumption of energy-dense diets and energy-rich drinks such as sugary drinks are the main factors conducive to this inadvertent overeating. The country is still working on open spaces, sports facilities, safe and pleasant walking and cycling paths. Moreover, the influence of the mother’s body weight prior to conception and during pregnancy has a key bearing on the weight of the neonate at birth and thereafter. The National Obstetrics Information System reports that between 2007 and 2009, 37% of mothers were obese in early pregnancy and 49% were overweight.

Italy

Recent evidence shows that more disadvantaged people are less likely to follow the traditional Mediterranean diet compared to those with higher household income, independently from other socioeconomic indicators. The cost of healthy foods has been suggested to play a role in the dietary choices of people whilst the low cost and high palatability of energy-dense foods is rising concern among the scientific community.

Similarities & Differences

In all participant countries the low cost of food is a key determinant, as people tend to look for cheap food choices. According to the Greek and the UK reports, even though there are healthy cheap food alternatives, aggressive and misleading marketing, financial interests and healthy fad diets mislead the population to believe that healthy food is out of their reach. Moreover, nutritional knowledge is very low in the European Union. At the same time, in today’s fast-paced lifestyles where working hours have increased with more women in the workplace, consumers often make the choice of convenience over healthy alternatives that may take longer to prepare. Sedentary habits, low breastfeeding rates and maternal obesity have also been suggested as key determinants of obesity across partner countries.

D) THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF OVERWEIGHT ADULTS ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

United Kingdom

In Britain the social attitudes that the population has towards obesity affects people with obesity and the population's willingness to support actions that would attempt to halt its high prevalence. For example, the report states that 'since a majority of adults are overweight, being somewhat overweight has been 'normalised' and is therefore not necessarily regarded as something about which to be particularly concerned. This is one of the key challenges to address when working with adults who are overweight, to make them aware of the health risks of being overweight or obese. Also, the stigma of being obese seems to be a great challenge. The impact obesity stigma can have on an individual can include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, body image concerns, binge eating, avoidance of physical activity, self-harm and suicide. The way people who are overweight or obese are perceived negatively by others, can have a huge impact on their mental health making this one of the most difficult challenges adults who are overweight or obese may face. The way to tackle obesity therefore is not just to encourage healthy eating and physical activity but to also consider the psychology of the individual. Obese adults also face a challenge as there is little understanding of appropriate models of activity for those who are overweight or obese. Non-weight bearing activities such as swimming or spinning are recommended, but these present challenges of access.

Greece

In Greece, overweight and obesity is an epidemic, however very few have real awareness of the situation. Overweight and obese people do not have access to conclusive valid information and do not have the tools to improve their eating habits and their weight. Moreover, there are no supportive public health actions and policies, such as marketing regulations, school-based and worksite interventions, mostly due to lack of funds. There is furthermore a lack of community-based programs or low-cost group or personal educational and weight-management programs. Access to healthy foods is often limited and designated areas for walking and other physical activities are scarce.

Malta

Obese and overweight people in Malta are facing bias and stigma that affect their emotional well-being. The society is often internalising negative attitudes and make obese/overweight individuals engage in self-blame for the negative social experiences they confront. It is known that adults who experience weight stigmatisation have higher rates of depression and anxiety and may experience social isolation and poorer psychological adjustment. The reaction of people to weight stigma varies. Some react by internalising and accepting negative attitudes against them, which may in turn increase their vulnerability to low self-esteem. At the same time the obesogenic environment seems to be supporting enhanced eating and lack of physical activity. By classifying obesity as a disease, the society is admitting that these people need help as much as diabetics or other people with chronic diseases do. Realizing this will help reduce the stigma, as obesity is not just a lack of willpower but a condition that merits medical attention.

Italy

Although there is a main program in Italy for health promotion in line with international recommendations and scientific evidence, the scarcity of resources allocated to prevention makes this program insufficient to act on all the areas and to guarantee a continuity of interventions that reach the entire population, especially the working population, where a strong network of actions has not yet been created to promote health in the workplace.

Moreover, promoting healthy lifestyles for the prevention of obesity is an important part of the National and Regional Prevention Plans, in particular with regards to the promotion of breastfeeding, nutritional surveillance, the availability of healthy food choices at school, the promotion of the development of urban environments conducive to physical activity, the organization of information campaigns. Once again, the scarcity of economic resources and personnel that offer these services does not allow the full implementation of initiatives, and especially their continuity, over the territories and over time.

At an individual level, healthcare practitioners in Italy are only able to offer people with obesity prescribed diets to help manage their condition. Past experience has proven that this solution is insufficient, and that a tailored and specialized approach is needed in order to help effectively manage the disease. There are, however, few public structures where obesity can be tackled in a conclusive way and involving all areas of interest (nutrition, behaviour, social support and motivation) but this type of approach is not accessible to the entire population.

Similarities & Differences

In the UK and Malta social stigma that affects the emotional wellbeing of obese individuals is considered one of the biggest challenges. Also, in the UK the acceptance of being obese is considered a challenge. Access to appropriate physical activity opportunities is described as a great need both the UK and Greece. In Greece, low awareness and lack of nutrition-health education is also considered to be a big challenge. Finally, both Italy and Greece stress the need for conclusive programs that take into account psychological issues as well as public health policies, actions and sufficiently funded health promotion programs. All countries agree that there is a great need for actions such as comprehensive weight management programs and policies.

E) SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES ACROSS PARTNER COUNTRIES

United Kingdom

In the UK, four best practices are identified: *Weight Watchers* (UK), *Why Weight?* (Sheffield), *Slimming World* and *NHS Weight Loss Guide*. The best practice examples demonstrate the importance of peer support; most of them have a group element where adults can support each other in weight management, which has proven to be effective. They also include teaching elements, such as what is in food and knowledge about the risks of obesity and being overweight. Initiatives such as 'Why Weight?' have been successful as they have a long-term outlook where the focus is on a change in behaviour and not on dieting and exercise.

Greece

In Greece, two best practices are identified: *Mathaino Diatrofi* and the *Center for Education and Treatment for Eating Disorders (KEADD)*. The Greek non-profit partnership *Mathaino Diatrofi* (Learning to Eat Right), is currently developing and implementing comprehensive coaching and counselling initiatives for individuals and professionals in collaboration with the National School of Public Health and Athens Medical School. *KEADD* is offering training for professionals in coaching for Eating Disorders. Unfortunately, in Greece, there is limited information on other credible training, coaching or mentoring initiatives or best practices that focus on obesity and weight management.

Malta

In Malta, two best practices are identified: *Weight Management Classes* and a *Holistic Approach Initiative*. *Weight Management Classes* offer diverse training and courses with the aim of improving the situation of weight, its literacy and management. In Malta, nutrition education is included in the national curriculum for schools and has been recently revised, taking a cross-curricular approach. Food consumption in church and state schools is guided by the Healthy Eating Lifestyle Plan (HELP). The Directorate for Lifelong Learning within the Ministry for Education and Employment offers part-time morning and evening courses in various localities and includes a course on cookery and nutrition, which focuses on teaching basic nutrition and some cookery skills for a nutritious diet.

Italy

In Italy, two best practices are identified: *Accredited Centres of the Italian Society for Obesity and Workplace Health Promotion*, supporting strategies for the multidisciplinary approach to obesity and management of diet and physical activity in the workplace. At the moment, structured experiences of coaching and mentoring courses at the population level are not available in Italy, although more and more professionals are interested in training and are conducting in-depth analysis of these techniques as additional tools available for managing overweight and obesity among individuals and among groups of people. There are numerous coaching schools throughout the country, with notable differences in programs and training courses causing a lot of confusion about the role of coaching support for change in health areas. This type of activity is in fact likely to generate a dangerous abuse and an overlap of competences reserved for the health care professions of the doctor and the dietitian.

Similarities & Differences

In all participant countries the value of group coaching for weight management focusing on behaviour change is clearly identified. In the UK, best practices demonstrate that peer support and groups that already exist focus on behavioural change. Similarly, in Malta trainings and classes that improve weight literacy and facilitate weight management are also offered. In Greece, initiatives that include group trainings for weight management are currently being developed. Finally, in Italy structured experiences of coaching and mentoring courses at the population level are not available but increasingly professionals are interested in trainings and coaching techniques.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Description of the methodology used

In order to explore the training needs across partner countries, two focus groups were organised by each partner. The first focus group comprised of overweight adults while the second focus group comprised of educators, mentors and/or coaches. The focus groups were organised in each partner country using identical questions to ensure that cross-country and cross-cultural comparisons are achievable. The purpose of the focus groups was to capture the perspective of educators and identify their needs, opinions and issues in the area of investigation. The focus groups were held in the respective language of each partner to ensure participants' comprehension. In order to explore the views of overweight adults as well as those of trainers, coaches, mentors, and educators from a wider spectrum, an online survey was also carried out in addition to the focus groups. Two online questionnaires (one for each target group) were developed and disseminated by "Google forms". Each partner translated them into their own language before distributing them to participants.

3.2 Summary of findings per country

3.2.1 Summary of findings for the UK

Focus Groups

In the first focus group, with overweight adults, 5 people participated; all of them with a history of weight management struggles. In the second group, 5 professionals with varied professional capacity participated. The focus groups' duration was 60 minutes each. Regarding the online questionnaires, 22 people completed the survey for adults who want to manage their weight, of which 16 women and 6 men, while 15 people completed the survey for adult educators, coaches/mentors and health workers.

For the overweight adults, all participants had attempted to lose weight in the past and presented a broad range of challenges such as: junk food, stress eating, psychological issues, planning & preparation, misleading information on packaging, work environment. They have tried different approaches to lose weight varying from dieting programmes to exercising. Participants also had experience with coaching and mentoring for weight management, an approach they all considered to be helpful.

Low self-esteem and high stress levels were identified as important factors that negatively affect weight management. The main conclusion that can be made from the overweight adults focus group is that it is extremely important to focus on positive psychology. In the Weight Matters Programme, people should be supported in order to combat both internal and external influences in weight management and this should happen in a positive, uplifting atmosphere where people feel comfortable to open up about their true fears and doubts. The use of an app seemed useful for some. Regarding the preferred features of an online platform these included positive affirmation, mindfulness tools, a chat function (with a mentor as a gatekeeper), no quizzes, games, a reward system. Regarding teaching subjects for the trainings, UK participants would like to see cooking tips, portion suggestions and health tips but no calories guide. Also, they would like tools to improve mental health and assess habits.

The health professionals were all very clued up about the techniques and consider them all useful. They suggested that in the training programme it would be useful to not only focus on related training materials but leave enough space for practitioners to learn from each other and thereby expand their own practical knowledge. The programme should be individualised, targeting the underlying reasons for being overweight, enhance self-efficacy and responsibility and give participants true long-term activities to avoid going back to the vicious cycle of self-destructiveness and punishment when 'failure' happens. Useful features that should be included in the trainings are nutritional information, facts and simple truths, quizzes and finally awareness on marketing practices. In general, there should be broad focus on positivity, growth, factual information on nutrition and health and encouragement of participants to support each other.

Online Questionnaires

Both the overweight adults and the adult educators mentioned the challenges to eat healthily, exercise regularly and the stress of everyday life, as well as food literacy. Moreover, the struggle to maintain motivation and consistency, the importance of high self-esteem and low stress levels in weight management were stated by both groups of respondents. The professionals also identified the obesogenic environment as a major challenge to people who want to lose or manage their weight. The overweight adults were most interested and familiar with positive psychology and least interested and familiar with self-hypnosis. The adult educators were most familiar with mindfulness and were least familiar with Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), however they were most interested in positive psychology and mindfulness and least in NLP. For both overweight adults and adult educators the optimum duration for a group training session was 45-60 minutes as well as for a coaching/mentoring session.

Most overweight adults preferred action learning and blended learning, followed by peer-learning, learning from a mentor and lastly eLearning and learning from books/online.

The most popular feature for both overweight adults and adult educators was a mobile app. An adult educator also thought that email-based learning should feature on the platform. The next most popular features for adults and adult educators were a chat or forum section and a rewards-based system. The least popular feature for both groups was games. Finally, the most popular teaching subject for both overweight adults and adult educators was a 'myths and facts about the food we eat and the exercise we do', followed by 'healthy cooking suggestions' and the least popular subject for both groups was a 'calories guide'.

3.2.2 Summary of findings for Greece

Focus Groups

In the first group with overweight adults, 7 people participated all of them with a history of weight management struggles. In the second group, 6 professionals participated, all of them dietitians. The focus groups' duration was 70 minutes for the overweight adults and 85 minutes for the adult educators. Regarding the online questionnaires, 19 people completed the survey for adults who want

to manage their weight, of which 14 women and 5 men, while 15 people completed the survey for adult educators, coaches/mentors and health workers.

For the overweight adults, all participants had attempted multiple times to lose weight following a diet program and having to follow a specific diet plan for long was their main challenge. Most of them had had at least one useful experience with a coach focusing on behaviour change and using mindfulness tools and they believe this approach was most helpful for them. They all identified stress as a negative factor in weight management, however not all of them agreed that high self-esteem plays a role. Both groups revealed the need to learn more about techniques such as mindfulness and positive psychology to support successful weight management. The traditional diet-based weight loss approach, counting calories, restricting food items and closely monitoring weight loss, seems to not be working for overweight adults. People seeking successful weight management need to expand their knowledge on nutrition, health and weight management and learn how to use tools to manage stress, improve self-esteem and self-confidence, find practical solutions in everyday challenges and have access to ongoing support through digital tools (progress tracking, reminders, tasks, badges etc.). Dietetics professionals strongly believe that increased motivation, awareness and compliance as well as lifestyle change can only happen through a process that includes: individual or group coaching, mindfulness and positive psychology techniques, practical nutrition tips and is combined with digital tools aiming to increase knowledge and track progress, offer encouragement and motivation and enhance compliance.

The Weight Matters training program should definitely be interactive and offer opportunities to apply practical knowledge. Teaching subjects should include: a) nutrition, health and weight facts; b) cooking, snacking and portion control tips; c) label reading; d) physical activity and screen time limitation tips; e) mindfulness, positive psychology, stress management and confidence building techniques. Trainings should aim to create a positive environment that encourages participation and information should be delivered in an easy, practical and fun way. Finally, the training process may include sessions such as cooking, tasting, yoga, walking, meditation and relaxation in order to enhance group dynamics and promote positive experience and feelings about healthy lifestyle.

Online Questionnaire

The two questionnaires revealed both discrepancies and similarities in the way overweight adults and professionals see the challenges of weight management. Overweight adults find they have more difficulty with the actual food in terms of cravings, temptations, eating habits as well as dealing with deprivation and restrictions. On the other hand, professionals believe the biggest challenges that overweight adults face are associated with psychological issues that lead to emotional eating. For overweight adults, emotional eating is not recognised as a great challenge. Even though professionals also recognise temptations as a barrier, they seem to believe this is the result of the excessive availability and marketing of unhealthy foods as well as lack of nutrition knowledge. Overweight adults seem to focus more on their inability to control cravings. Both groups do however agree that stress and anxiety, as well as high self-esteem play an important role. Moreover, both overweight adults and professionals seem to believe that mindfulness and positive psychology techniques would be useful in weight management. Even though professionals seem to be more familiar with the techniques, both groups state that they are interested to learn even more about them. Both groups seem to be less familiar with or interested in NLP and self-hypnosis. When overweight adults were asked about

preferable learning methods most rated blended learning that includes learning from a mentor, face-to-face learning and action learning in addition to digital learning, with group trainings and coaching sessions lasting between 45 and 60 minutes. According to professionals on the other hand, group sessions should be a bit longer, ranging between 45 and 85 minutes. Digital learning for both groups should include a mobile app, email learning and quizzes as well as a chat/forum. The rest of the features mentioned are considered to be useful for both groups, with games being the least favourable feature. Group trainings, according to both groups, should definitely include subjects such as myths and facts about food and exercise and food label reading. However, most professionals would also like to see subjects like building motivation, boosting self-esteem and healthy cooking suggestions, whereas most overweight adults would like subjects such as physical exercise tips and the impact of healthy living on weight. Neither are interested in a calorie guide. Finally, professionals stated that there are a number of important skills they need to have in order to deliver effective coaching and mentoring interventions such as: psychological support skills, empathy, listening skills, adaptability, flexibility, acceptance and mindful eating skills.

3.2.3 Summary of findings for Malta

Focus Groups

In the first focus group with overweight adults, 8 people participated. In the second group, 7 professionals participated. Both focus groups' duration was 120 minutes. Regarding the online questionnaires, 15 people completed the survey for adults who want to manage their weight, 14 women and 1 man and 17 people completed the survey for adult educators, coaches/mentors and health workers.

For the overweight adults, all participants had tried to lose weight in the past multiple times following diet plans. Their greatest challenges included eating frequent meals, planning and preparation as well as low willpower. Most participants agreed that stress and low self-esteem have a degrading effect on the participants' respective weight management. They consider mindfulness and positive psychology techniques to be worth investing in. Moreover, they believe that a more personalised or group-based approach that combines coaching with an online platform could be very helpful and will render a more lasting result. Calorie counts, chats, games, quizzes, reminders (that enhance mindfulness), facts, tips and cooking classes are to be included in the platform. There was a unanimous agreement that interactive training and coaching sessions of a 'hands on' nature would be of a great benefit. From the adult educators focus group, it was suggested that professionals are willing to gain more in-depth knowledge on the techniques such as mindfulness, positive psychology and NLP. Mindfulness and positive psychology are both seen as very important for successful weight management and also to support overweight people in dealing with emotions, establishing awareness, setting goals, increasing compliance, strengthening commitment and maintaining motivation. Not all professionals agreed on the correlation between stress and low self-esteem and the difficulties that they might bring with weight management. They did however agree that an online platform displaying practical tools including quizzes, games, shopping lists, training reminders, mindfulness and positive psychology tools, and a chat forum would be very much supportive, as they believe that everything is achieved better by teamwork. In general, both groups mentioned the importance of creating awareness in the realm of myths, they both dealt with obesity and the psychological problems that it may create and also the

importance of exercise. Positive psychology, portion size, fun physical activities, the notion of “group work and trust”, mindfulness and cooking teaching sessions are the most prominent and popular to list. As a result, the Weight Matters training program should aim to be interactive and individualised. Teaching subjects should include: a) cooking and mindful shopping; b) exercise, snacking and portion suggestions; c) label literacy; d) mindfulness, positive psychology, stress management and confidence building techniques; e) obesity and problems with feet.

Online questionnaire

Although the overweight participants and professionals are usually perceived to be leading different paths, in reality they came up with arguments/subjects that can be very much related. When it comes to the challenges overweight people face, the overweight group identified: sticking to a diet, lack of motivation, junk food, lack of will power, keeping up with a diet and family responsibilities, while the professionals group mentioned mostly lack of awareness, knowledge and tools.

Both groups agree that there is a correlation between high self-esteem, low stress levels and weight management. The professionals were more familiar with positive psychology techniques for weight management whereas the respondents from the overweight group were equally familiar with all four techniques, however the familiarity level was low (only 5 out of 15 respondents were familiar with each technique). Both groups were most interested in learning more about positive psychology. Regarding the optimal duration of the training and coaching/ mentoring sessions, most respondents from the two groups answered 45-60 minutes. The combination of “group work and trust” and a free online and coaching platform for weight management were identified as useful tools for both professionals and overweight individuals. The most preferred features for the overweight group included: rewards, a mobile app and a chat. Similarly, the professionals expected the same features enriched with email-based learning that delivers bite-sized training unit to learners’ inboxes daily. Finally, the most preferred teaching subjects for both the overweight group and the professionals included: building motivation, cooking skills, physical activity tips and portion suggestions.

3.2.4 Summary of findings for Italy

Focus Groups

In the first focus group with overweight adults, 6 people participated with common characteristics of overweight and obesity, low socioeconomic status and history of dealing with difficulties to keep a healthy weight. In the second group 6 professionals participated, all of them experienced in working with overweight and obese clients who seek weight management advice. Both focus groups’ duration was 60 minutes. Regarding the online questionnaires, 74 people completed the survey for adults who want to manage their weight, of which 51 women and 23 men, while 49 people completed the survey for adult educators, coaches/mentors and health workers.

All participants had a history of multiple efforts to lose weight in the past, mostly following diet plans (even Mediterranean diet plans vs Mediterranean way of eating), and their greatest challenges included following the diet itself, economic difficulties and forming/overcoming habits. Most

participants however had at least one experience with a coach, which they considered to be very helpful.

Weight management requires an approach that targets food and nutritional literacy, skills and competences such as food preparation, portions, and managing food consumption outside the home. There is also a need for valid nutritional information and increased awareness of dangerous dietetic practices such as fad diets. On the other hand, there is a need for techniques that can support stable change in eating habits and food choices.

Both overweight people and professionals pointed out a correlation between stress and weight management. It is clear that professionals do not have sufficient tools to apply coaching techniques but they have a great interest in mindfulness, NLP and positive psychology, as well as stress management. There is also a certain interest in both groups for an online platform, as well as chats, forums, games, badges and quizzes, that allow interaction with the professionals and peers who share the same/similar problems in order to receive support and reinforce motivation. According to the professionals, the Weight Matters training program should include information on dietary supplements, information on body composition, reading and understanding nutrition labels, personalisation of the food plan, recipes and cooking methods, facts and valid information.

Online Questionnaires

Both professionals and overweight adults agree that the major challenges that overweight people face correlate with a lack of psychological, behavioural and social support, lack of awareness and food nutrition and weight literacy, as well as shopping and cooking skills. Both groups consider high self-esteem and low stress as fundamental aspects in weight management.

Both groups are familiar with the coaching methods suggested, mostly with positive psychology. Paradoxically, the percentage of professionals who declare to be familiar with the coaching methods is lower than that of the overweight adults. Both groups are greatly interested in learning more about the coaching methods with positive psychology ranking first. Regarding the optimal duration of training and coaching/ mentoring sessions related to weight management, both groups chose 45-60 minutes. The preferred features for an online platform for both groups include email-based learning, games, quizzes and rewards. The training program should focus on building motivation and boosting self-esteem, physical activity tips, healthy cooking tips, information on nutrition labels and the facts and myths about nutrition and exercise. Finally, professionals stated that there are a number of important skills they need to have in order to deliver effective coaching and mentoring interventions such as: empathy, active listening, problem solving skills and motivational skills.

3.3 Overview of findings for all Partner countries

3.3.1 Overall findings obtained from Desk Research

Overall findings obtained from Desk Research	
Key statistics on obesity across partner countries	<p>Obesity</p> <p>Malta: 25.2%</p> <p>UK: 19.8%</p> <p>Greece: 16.9%</p> <p>Italy: 10.5%</p> <p>Overweight</p> <p>Malta: 59.6%</p> <p>Greece: 55.5%</p> <p>UK: 55%</p> <p>Italy: 43.8%</p> <p>Latest data from Eurostat, updated in 2017 (based on data from 2014)</p>
Eating habits across partner countries	<p>In all participant countries: transition from traditional healthy diets and fresh produce to unhealthy, convenient, processed food and fast foods, increased consumption of food high in sugar, fat and salt is increasing.</p> <p>The Mediterranean diet is being increasingly abandoned in Italy, Greece, and Malta.</p>
Key determinants of obesity across partner countries	<p>In all participant countries: cheap food choices, aggressive and misleading marketing and financial interests. Lack of nutrition knowledge. Fast-paced lifestyles, more women in the workplace, choice of convenience over healthy ones, food preparation time. Also, sedentary habits, low breastfeeding rates and maternal obesity.</p>
Needs and challenges of overweight adults across partner countries	<p>Challenges</p> <p>In the UK and Malta: social stigma that affects the emotional wellbeing, overweight is considered a norm.</p> <p>In Greece: low awareness and lack of nutrition-health education.</p>

	<p>In Italy: low implementation of preventive programs.</p> <p>Needs</p> <p>In the UK and Greece: access to appropriate physical activity opportunities.</p> <p>In Italy and Greece: conclusive programs that take into account psychological issues as well as public health policies, actions and sufficiently funded health promotion programs.</p> <p>All countries: agree there is a great need for actions such as comprehensive weight management programs and policies.</p>
Summary of best practices across partner countries	In all participant countries (existing, developing or interested in): group trainings and coaching for weight management focusing on behaviour change and weight literacy, groups that offer peer support.

3.3.2 Overall findings obtained from Focus Groups

Overall findings obtained from Focus Groups with Overweight Adults	
Attempts and greatest challenges faced in attempts to lose weight in the past	Multiple attempts included mostly diet-based programs. In the UK a number of participants had also tried exercise plans. Common, biggest challenge was following the diet plan itself (routine, planning, preparation, restriction) and dealing with temptations for a long time. In general, all participants consider that traditional diet-based approaches to lose weight are not working for them.
Techniques used in the past for losing weight	Techniques ranged mostly from professional nutrition advice to fad, restrictive, popular diets, however most participants from the UK, Greece and Italy have had experience with a coach that was helpful for them.
Awareness of Coaching and Mentoring support for losing weight	All participants were aware of the approach.
Potential benefit of Coaching and Mentoring support for controlling and managing weight	All participants consider the approach helpful.

<p>Relationship between self-esteem, stress and weight management and their influence</p>	<p>All participants agree that high stress levels affect weight management (WM) in a negative way and many pointed out that diet plans could also cause stress. All participants from the UK and Malta believe that low self-esteem is negatively associated with WM but most participants from Greece did not find a clear correlation between low self-esteem and WM. The relationship between low self-esteem and WM was not mentioned in the Italian Report.</p>
<p>Awareness of positive psychology and how it can help people improve self-esteem and stress management</p>	<p>Most participants were aware of positive psychology and all believe that it can help improve low self-esteem and control stress.</p>
<p>Benefit of access to a free online learning and coaching platform for acquiring new knowledge on weight management</p>	<p>Most participants in Malta, Greece and Italy consider an online platform to be helpful but did report some prerequisites: free access and combination with face-to-face coaching sessions. In the UK only, some of the participants consider an online platform a useful tool for WM, the rest felt sceptical pointing out that online tools can become obsessive and harm mental health.</p>
<p>Features expected in a free online learning and coaching platform for weight management</p>	<p>Participants from Greece and Malta expect quizzes and games however that is not the case for participants from the UK as they believe such features could be gimmicky and patronising. Participants from Italy and Malta believe a chat/forum would be a main feature. However, participants from the UK and Greece mentioned that a chat/forum function could be useful only if controlled by a mentor to avoid obsessive behaviour and negative influences. Participants from the UK and Greece furthermore mentioned personalised progress tracking tools and reward system.</p>
<p>Teaching subjects expected in the Weight Matters training program</p>	<p>Common subjects mentioned include: mindfulness, motivational/coaching tools, credible nutritional information (UK, Greece, Malta), practical skills on reading food labels, cooking, portion-control and meal preparation (UK, Greece, Italy). All participants from the UK and Greece specifically stressed that they would not like to see a calories guide.</p>

Overall findings obtained from Focus Groups with Adult Educators, Health Workers, Coaches and Mentors	
Awareness of techniques such as Mindfulness, Positive psychology and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and how they could be used to support weight management for adults	In all participant countries, the professionals were generally aware of the three techniques. In the UK the professionals seem to have more detailed knowledge and pointed out the usefulness of learning from each other. In Italy the professionals seemed to be not at all knowledgeable about the practical applications of the techniques whereas in Malta and Greece professionals agree they need to learn more about the techniques.
Techniques most interested in finding out more about	In the UK the professionals seemed to be satisfied with their knowledge regarding the three techniques and need more practical training. Professionals from Italy and Malta were interested in all three techniques whereas professionals from Greece were mostly interested in positive psychology and mindfulness techniques and tools.
Usefulness of techniques supporting adults through the use of positive psychology, mindfulness and NLP	Most professionals agree all three techniques to be equally useful. Professionals from Greece consider positive psychology and mindfulness to be more useful.
Relationship between self-esteem, stress and weight management and their influence and ways of incorporating possible relevant techniques that aim to evaluate their target group's self-esteem and stress levels.	Most professionals, except for some professionals from Malta, can find a strong relationship between self-esteem, stress and weight management.
Awareness of positive psychology and how it can help people improve their self-esteem and stress management	All professionals are aware of positive psychology and believe it can help improve self-esteem and control stress. However, professionals from Greece, Malta and Italy agree they need more practical tools.
Role of an eLearning Platform as a supportive tool for the provision of weight management in the practices of professionals	All professionals believe that an online platform when combined with face-to-face, interactive, coaching can be useful.

<p>Features expected in a free online learning and coaching platform for weight management</p>	<p>UK: mobile app, email-based learning, chat or forum section and rewards/ badges</p> <p>Greece: quizzes, games, progress tracking, badges, tasks and assignments</p> <p>Malta: quizzes, games, shopping lists, reminders, mindfulness and positive psychology tools, and a chat or forum are seen as very supportive</p> <p>Italy: chat or forum, games, badges and quizzes</p>
<p>Teaching subjects expected in the Weight Matters training programme</p>	<p>UK: nutrition information, facts and simple truths, quizzes and raising awareness on marketing practices</p> <p>Greece: food labels, cooking, snacking, portion estimates, physical activity, mindfulness, relaxation techniques</p> <p>Malta: cooking, mindful shopping, exercise, snacking and portion suggestions, label literacy, mindfulness, positive psychology, stress management and confidence building techniques, obesity and problems with feet.</p> <p>Italy: information on dietary supplements, information on body composition, reading and understanding nutrition labels, personalisation of the food plan, recipes and cooking methods, facts and valid information.</p>

3.3.3 Overall findings obtained from Online Survey

<p>Overall findings obtained from Online Survey with Overweight Adults</p>	
<p>Age Group</p>	<p>UK: 25-39 (41%), 40-60 (41%), 60+ (18%)</p> <p>Greece: 40-60 (52.6%), 25-39 (47.4%)</p> <p>Malta: 18-24 (40%), 40-60 (40%), 25-39 (20%)</p> <p>Italy: 40-60 (64.9%), 25-39 (25.7%), 60+ (9.5%)</p>
<p>Gender Mix</p>	<p>UK: 16 (F) and 6 (M)</p> <p>Greece: 14 (F) and 5 (M)</p> <p>Malta: 14 (F) and 1 (M)</p> <p>Italy: 51 (F) and 23 (M)</p>

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<p>Greatest challenges important for people who want to lose and control their weight</p>	<p>UK: eating healthily, exercising regularly, the stress of everyday life, food literacy, the struggle to maintain motivation and consistency.</p> <p>Greece: difficulty with the actual food in terms of cravings, temptations, eating habits as well as dealing with deprivation and restrictions.</p> <p>Malta: sticking to a diet, lack of motivation, junk food, lack of willpower, keeping up with a diet and family responsibilities.</p> <p>Italy: lack of psychological, behavioural and social support, lack of awareness, food nutrition and weight literacy, as well as shopping and cooking skills.</p>
<p>Importance for adults to have high self-esteem for weight management</p>	<p>In all participant countries the respondents agree that high self-esteem is important for WM.</p>
<p>Importance for adults to have low stress levels for weight management</p>	<p>In all participant countries the respondents agree that low stress levels are important for WM.</p>
<p>Familiarity with techniques such as Mindfulness, Positive psychology and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) and Self-Hypnosis as a means to control weight</p>	<p>UK: most familiar with positive psychology and less familiar with self-hypnosis</p> <p>Greece: less familiar with NLP and self-hypnosis</p> <p>Malta: familiar with all four techniques</p> <p>Italy: familiar with all, mostly with positive psychology</p>
<p>Interest in the above approaches as a means to control weight</p>	<p>UK: most interested in positive psychology and less interested in self-hypnosis</p> <p>Greece: most interested in mindfulness and positive psychology and less interested in NLP and self-hypnosis</p> <p>Malta: most interested in positive psychology</p> <p>Italy: most interested in positive psychology</p>
<p>Optimal duration of a group training session related to weight management</p>	<p>In all participant countries the respondents agree that the optimal duration is 45-60 minutes.</p>
<p>Preferred learning styles</p>	<p>UK: action learning and blended learning ranked highest, followed by peer-learning, learning from a mentor, eLearning and learning from books/online</p>

	<p>Greece: blended learning was most preferred, followed by learning from a mentor, action learning, face-to-face learning, peer-learning, and least preferred were e-learning and gathering information from books or online</p> <p>Malta: peer learning and e-learning ranked highest, followed by face-to-face, action learning, from a mentor, from a book or online, blended learning</p> <p>Italy: blended learning was most preferred, followed by peer-learning and face to face learning, action learning, from a mentor and least preferred were learning from books or online and e-learning</p>
<p>Optimal duration of a coaching/mentoring session for weight management applied to a group between 5 and 8 people</p>	<p>In all participant countries the respondents agreed that the optimal duration is 45-60 minutes.</p>
<p>Features expected in a free online learning and coaching platform for weight management</p>	<p>UK: Most popular feature was a mobile app, followed by a chat or forum section and a rewards-based system. Least popular feature was games.</p> <p>Greece: Most popular was a mobile app, followed by email-based learning and quizzes, a chat/forum. The least favourable feature was games.</p> <p>Malta: Most preferred features were rewards, a mobile app and a chat.</p> <p>Italy: Most preferred features were email-based learning, games, quizzes and rewards.</p>
<p>Teaching subjects expected in the Weight Matters training programme</p>	<p>UK: Most popular subjects were myths and facts about the food we eat and the exercise we do, followed by healthy cooking suggestions and the least popular subject for both groups was a calories guide.</p> <p>Greece: Most popular were myths and facts about food and exercise and food label reading, followed by physical exercise tips and the impact of healthy living on weight. Least popular was a calories guide.</p> <p>Malta: Most popular were building motivation, cooking skills, physical activity tips and portion suggestions.</p> <p>Italy: Most popular were building motivation and boosting self-esteem, physical activity tips, healthy cooking tips, followed by</p>

	the facts and myths about nutrition and exercise. Least popular were a calories guide and nutrition labels.
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Overall findings obtained from Online Survey with Adult Educators, Health Workers, Coaches and Mentors	
Professional Area of Participants	<p>UK: 31% were coaches/mentors, 23% were Adult educators, followed by 15% health workers.</p> <p>Greece: All respondents were dietitians.</p> <p>Malta: All 17 respondents were of different professional areas, ranging from nutrition and fitness professionals to nurses and coaches.</p> <p>Italy: 94% nutrition professionals and 6% adult educators and dietitians specialised in coaching.</p>
Greatest challenges faced by people who want to lose and control their weight	<p>UK: The obesogenic environment was identified as a major challenge. Other challenges mentioned were: eating healthily, exercising regularly and the stress of everyday life, food literacy, the struggle to maintain motivation and consistency.</p> <p>Greece: The biggest challenge is psychological issues that lead to emotional eating. Other challenges mentioned were: temptations as a result of the excessive availability and marketing of unhealthy foods, lack of nutrition knowledge.</p> <p>Malta: The biggest challenges identified were lack of awareness, knowledge and tools.</p> <p>Italy: The biggest challenges identified were lack of psychological, behavioural and social support, lack of awareness, food nutrition and weight literacy, as well as shopping and cooking skills.</p>
Importance for adults to have high self-esteem for weight management	In all participant countries professionals agree that low stress levels are important for WM.
Importance for adults to have low stress levels for weight management	In all participant countries professionals agree that high self-esteem is important for WM.

<p>Usefulness of using techniques such as mindfulness and positive psychology, as part of interventions based on strengths-based coaching</p>	<p>Positive psychology was identified as most useful among professionals from Malta and Italy. Mindfulness was identified as most useful by professionals from Greece and the UK.</p>
<p>Familiarity with approaches such as Mindfulness, Positive psychology and Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) as a means to control weight</p>	<p>In all participant countries professionals are more familiar with positive psychology and mindfulness.</p>
<p>Approaches most interested in using in their practice as a means to control weight for clients/ beneficiaries</p>	<p>In all participant countries professionals are more interested in positive psychology and mindfulness.</p>
<p>Most important skills needed by adult educators, health workers, coaches and mentors in order to deliver effective coaching and mentoring interventions</p>	<p>UK: empathy, compassion, motivation techniques, knowledge, coaching skills</p> <p>Greece: psychological support skills, empathy, listening skills, adaptability, flexibility, acceptance and mindful eating skills</p> <p>Malta: empathy, patience, motivation techniques, understanding</p> <p>Italy: empathy, active listening, problem solving skills and motivational skills</p>
<p>Optimal duration of a group training session related to weight management</p>	<p>In the UK, Malta and Italy the respondents agreed that the optimal duration is 45-60 minutes. In Greece the optimal duration suggested was 60-85 minutes.</p>
<p>Optimal duration of a coaching/mentoring session for weight management applied to a group between 5 and 8 people</p>	<p>In the UK, Malta and Italy the respondents agreed that the optimal duration is 45-60 minutes. In Greece the optimal duration suggested was 60-85 minutes.</p>
<p>Features expected in a free online learning and coaching platform for weight management designed for adults</p>	<p>UK: Most popular features were a mobile app, followed by email-based learning, then a chat or forum section and a rewards-based system. The least popular feature was games.</p> <p>Greece: Most popular features were a mobile app, followed by email learning and quizzes, a chat/forum. The least favourable feature was games.</p> <p>Malta: Most popular features were rewards, a mobile app, a chat and email learning.</p>

	<p>Italy: Most popular features were email based learning, games, quizzes and rewards.</p>
<p>Teaching subjects expected in the Weight Matters Trainer’s Guide</p>	<p>UK: Most popular subjects were myths and facts about the food we eat and the exercise we do, followed by healthy cooking suggestions and the least popular subject for both groups was a calories guide.</p> <p>Greece: Most popular were myths and facts about food and exercise and food label reading, followed by subjects like building motivation, boosting self-esteem and healthy cooking suggestions. Least popular was a calories guide.</p> <p>Malta: Most popular were building motivation, cooking skills, physical activity tips and portion suggestions.</p> <p>Italy: Most popular were building motivation and boosting self-esteem, physical activity tips, healthy cooking tips and reading nutrition labels, followed by the facts and myths about nutrition and exercise, impact of healthy living on weight and portion suggestions. Least popular was a calories guide.</p>

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As Europe is currently facing an obesity epidemic, more and more adults, children and adolescents are adopting unhealthy dietary habits, are being misled by aggressive food marketing, are spending more time being physically inactive and ultimately, they are getting heavier. This situation shows that there is a huge need for access to conclusive valid nutrition information and comprehensive weight management programs that include coaching for behavioural change. Best practices from the UK and Malta demonstrate that peer support, group coaching and trainings for weight management already exist and are considered helpful. However, in Greece and Italy such programs are not yet available.

The results of the focus groups and the online surveys in the participant countries have shown us that overweight people face a number of challenges when trying to control their weight such as cravings, deprivation and emotional eating. The obesogenic environment as well as personal issues that involve low self-esteem and high stress levels, are also identified as great challenges for people who need to manage their weight.

Both overweight adults and professionals agree that popular diet-based approaches that focus on caloric restriction are not useful. Successful weight management is about good food, nutrition, weight literacy and making long-term behavioural changes. In all participant countries the value of group coaching for weight management focusing on behavioural change was clearly identified. Moreover, both overweight adults and professionals seem to believe that positive psychology and mindfulness are the most useful approaches for weight management and are interested to learn more about them and exchange good practices. Professionals need training and tools in order to deliver effective coaching and mentoring interventions in order to support overweight adults gain knowledge, increase motivation and develop mindfulness and stress management skills.

Most participants agree that blended learning including face-to-face, action learning in groups and digital learning is the preferred method of training and coaching. Carefully designed digital tools such as an interactive online platform with a chat and a rewards structure as well as a mobile app are considered to be supportive and useful. Digital tools need to be easy to use, have condensed, fact-based information and incorporate applications that will provide effective solutions to everyday challenges.

For most participants, training and coaching/mentoring sessions should not last more than an hour, should be interactive and take place in a positive encouraging and motivational environment.

The training programme should aim to enhance nutritional knowledge (myths and facts), support food literacy (properties of food, link between nutrition and health) and include practical tools (food label reading, cooking, shopping and physical activity tips). A great number of participants reported that a calories guide would not be preferred. Finally, coaching sessions should focus on the development of mindfulness and positive psychology skills.