



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Greece tops the league for fattest children**

A survey of children in seven European countries found Greece topped the league, with twenty percent of all 10-12-year-olds obese, and a further 30% overweight, according to research published today in the scientific journal PLoS-ONE.

Obesity is hitting record levels among Europe's children, with nearly one in ten obese and a further 20% overweight, averaged across all seven countries. Lowest levels were found in Norway where only 4% are obese, and a further 15% overweight (see Note 2).

'Explaining these differences is not easy,' said research coordinator Professor Johannes Brug, of the VU University Medical Center of Amsterdam. 'We found children in Greece have the lowest levels of sports activities, children in Hungary watch the most television, children in Belgium sleep the most, and children in the Netherlands consume the most sugared drinks.'

The team of researchers from 15 institutions across Europe found that girls tended to be slimmer than boys, but girls also tended to participate in sports less than boys. Boys watched more television and drank more soft drinks. The team also found that children of better educated parents tended to be slimmer, except in Greece or Spain.

'Clearly there are differences in the cultural traditions, family customs and dietary habits across different European communities,' said Professor Brug. 'The research tells us that children have one thing in common – they are all exposed to multiple causes of obesity which lead them to gain excess weight. Tackling just one cause on its own will not work.'

The research is supported by a €2.9m grant from the European Commission, and will include pilot testing new interventions designed to reduce sedentary behaviour in children aged 10-12 years.



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Notes:

1. The results of the surveys undertaken in the ENERGY study are published in the April 2012 edition of the journal *PLoS-ONE* (publication date 25 April 2012) <http://www.plosone.org>. A copy of the pre-publication manuscript is available to journalists at <http://www.iaso.org/policy/euprojects/energyproject/energypaper/>

2. The surveys were run in spring 2010 and included a total of 3398 boys and 3727 girls (minimum 1000 children aged 10-12 years in each country). A summary of the results is shown here:

	Overweight (including obese)	Obese	Soft drinks (per day)	TV viewing (per day)	Cycle to school (per week)
Norway	19%	4%	225ml	101 mins	3.3 days
Belgium	21%	6%	455ml	113 mins	1.9 days
Netherlands	22%	6%	630ml	110 mins	3.3 days
Hungary	31%	10%	550ml	120 mins	0.3 days
Spain	34%	8%	185ml	103 mins	0.1 days
Slovenia	34%	11%	330ml	114 mins	0.3 days
Greece	50%	21%	115ml	123 mins	0.1 days

3. Countries involved in the ENERGY study are: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

4. Further details of the ENERGY study are available at [www.projectenergy.eu](http://www.projectenergy.eu)

5. The ENERGY study is funded with a grant from the European Commission DG Research, 7th Framework Programme. The products of the research are the responsibility of the authors: the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of them.

