

## Press Release

Tuesday 12.00 noon, September 17, 2013

International Congress on Nutrition, Granada, Spain.

### **Spanish kindergarten children now 24% overweight**

Kindergarten children in Spain top the league for the most overweight and obese pre-school youngsters, according to a new survey by researchers in Europe. Nearly a quarter (24%) of all children aged 5-6 years old are overweight or obese in Spain, in contrast with Germany where fewer than 10% carry excess weight.

Results of the survey form part of the ToyBox-study, presented at the International Congress on Nutrition, Granada, Spain. The team of ToyBox researchers examined over 7000 children in 300 kindergartens in six sample countries: Poland, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany and Belgium. The results show great variation between the countries (see table) which overshadow the differences between girls and boys, and the differences between children of higher-educated parents and those of less educated parents.

The survey, led by Dr Yannis Manios of Harokopio University, Athens, Greece, also asked parents about children's lack of physical activity. A quarter of all the children surveyed had a television in their bedrooms, with Bulgarian families topping the league (nearly 70% have a TV, and 44% a computer, in the child's bedroom).

	Belgium	Germany	Greece	Bulgaria	Poland	Spain	All
Children aged 5-6years overweight or obese	12%	9%	20%	14%	13%	24%	15%
Children 5-6 years with TV in bedroom	15%	6%	27%	69%	32%	14%	25%
Children 5-6 years with computer in bedroom	9%	2%	9%	44%	24%	9%	14%

Dr Manios and his team highlighted the need for health-promoting policies. 'We found that many countries are lacking clear guidelines on healthy eating and active play,' he said. 'However, there is good evidence linking sedentary behaviour (like TV watching) with subsequent obesity. TVs in the bedroom and unhealthy snacks in the kitchen cupboard are a bad idea. Parents should also remember that their role is not only to provide healthy food and drink options but to act as a role model themselves, since kids are copying their behaviours.'

The multi-country research project is supported by a €2.9m grant from the European Commission, and will include development and testing of a new programme

designed to help kindergartens in 6 EU-countries to promote healthy snacking, water consumption, physical activity and limiting sedentary activities such as TV-watching and playing computer games.

Contact Dr. Yannis Manios mobile 0030 6945 203040  
email [manios.toybox@hua.gr](mailto:manios.toybox@hua.gr)

## Notes

Countries involved in the ToyBox-study are: Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Institutions involved are:

Harokopio University, Athens, Greece – Coordinator  
Dr von Hauner Children's Hospital, University of Munich Medical Centre, Germany  
Ghent University, Belgium  
VU University Medical Center, Netherlands  
Oslo and Akershus University College, Norway  
University of Zaragoza, Spain  
Durham University, UK  
State Institute of Early Childhood Research, Germany  
Children's Memorial Health Institute, Poland  
Medical University of Varna, Bulgaria  
International Association for the Study of Obesity, UK  
CBO B.V., Netherlands  
AOK-Verlag GmbH, Germany  
University of Roehampton, UK  
University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg

Further details of the ToyBox-study can be found at [www.toybox-study.eu/](http://www.toybox-study.eu/)



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