

SCHOOLFOOD4CHANGE POLICY OPPORTUNITY BRIEF

SCHOOL MEALS AS A POLICY AREA WITH HUGE POTENTIAL



This brief captures opportunities of policy development for achieving sustainable and healthy food systems, zooming in on school meals and focusing on children and youth. Rather than seeing school meals as an administrative and financial burden at national and local level, we should use the provision of school food as a tool to improve our current food system, and see it as great opportunity to path the way to build a resilient, sustainable food systems that ensures long-term food security.

The SchoolFood4Change project

SchoolFood4Change is an EU-funded project, co-created by a consortium of 43 European partners, including environmental and non-governmental organisations, local governments, schools, research institutes, meal professionals and health experts. Together, we aim at making school meals enjoyable and healthy for both our children and our planet by integrating a whole school food approach and implementing food education in everyday school life. We are also implementing sustainable food procurement through innovative criteria and healthy and sustainable menus through the training and empowerment of school chefs.

What is the problem and what do we want?

Multiple global crises, including an increasingly warmer world, rising food prices as well as (child) poverty are severe threats to global food security. Recent analyses have shown that neither climate, biodiversity, public health action, nor efforts to eradicate child poverty are moving nearly fast enough to align with globally set targets, goals and ambitions. Collectively, we need to realise the potential and necessity of urgently accelerating implementation of possible solutions, shifting school meals and food environments for children, a vulnerable group, into a new paradigm.

Providing all children with access to at least one healthy and sustainable meal each school day, thereby promoting their health and ensuring equal educational opportunities is one of the main pillars of the European Child Guarantee – an EU Council regulation since 2021. School food programmes create the incredible potential to expose children to nutritious, sustainable, regional and delicious meals from early on, enabling them to become change agents and to carry the message into their homes. **Acting now is crucial.**

It's time for a new menu

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POLICY-OPPORTUNITIES TO SEIZE BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Children must be recognised as agents of change. They are a vulnerable group, with children in need at high risk of exclusion from decisionmaking processes and often left out as a key target group for policies. The key asks of the **EU Child Guarantee** must form part of present and future development of food-related policies to be implemented within the European Union.

1. Mainstream and include food education and schools as well as school restaurants as enabling food environments in upcoming policy developments relating to food system transformation and the revision of the **EU School Scheme**.
2. Consider and include training and upskilling of school chefs and meal staff as crucial contributions to the green transition building on experiences from the **2023 European Year of Skills** and **Pact for Skills** as well as any policy development relating to transformation of food systems for increased sustainability.
3. Create and legislate minimum **mandatory sustainable public procurement criteria** for school food and reform/simplify the **EU Public Procurement Law** to boost local and regional development.

The SchoolFood4Change consortium is therefore calling for the prioritisation of three interconnected and decisive action areas when reviewing and developing the European Green Deal legislation and any upcoming policy processes relating to sustainable food systems:

1. Implement and standardise **food education**;
2. enable schools to provide **sustainable food and food environments for the well-being of people and our planet**;
3. use the power of **sustainable public food procurement**.

Commonly, they all require collaboration and action at multiple levels, during and beyond the SchoolFood4Change project period. These areas will be central to unlocking the true potential of school food and schools per se.

The transformation is already ongoing with many companies in the food supply chain ready and willing to act and supply the school food stakeholders with more sustainable offers. **Now decisionmakers on all levels must create enabling and ambitious conditions to make school meals enjoyable and healthy for both our children and our planet.**

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Now we set out with the aim of shifting school meals into becoming healthier and more sustainable for the future of our children and our planet.

For more information:

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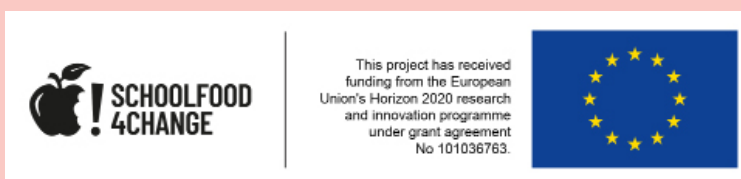
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