

How to do Effective Advocacy for Healthy, Sustainable School Food at EU level

This fact sheet serves as inspiration for organizations wanting to do effective advocacy towards EU institutions

Advocating for healthy and sustainable school food at the EU level requires a strategic and multifaceted approach. Keeping in mind the EU's structures and processes, this fact sheet provides some guidance on how to effectively engage with these institutions and do impactful advocacy.

Understand the EU Landscape and identify key players

European Commission: DG SANTE, DG AGRI, DG EAC, DG EMPL and DG GROW. Understand their respective remits and how they intersect with school food.

European Parliament: Identify Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are champions for health, sustainability, and children's well-being.

Council of the European Union: Understand which Council formations are relevant and how Member States' positions are formed.

Identify and familiarize yourself with EU Policies and Legislation: understand the existing legal framework and policy initiatives related to food, health, environment, agriculture, and education. This includes: The EU Vision on Agriculture and Food; The EU Public Procurement Directives; The EU Child Guarantee; The EU School Scheme (milk, fruit, and vegetables); The EU Health Strategy; Relevant environmental legislation.

Develop a clear and compelling advocacy message, that focus on the benefits of healthy and sustainable school food, for multiple policy objectives, such as public health, social equality, economic development and environmental sustainability. Build a strong evidence base and back up demands with robust evidence, scientific research and successful examples.

Build alliances and partnerships with existing initiatives, campaigns and coalitions, such as the [BuyBetterFood](#) Campaign and the [Food Policy Coalition](#).

Implement effective advocacy strategies; involve (high-level) policymakers, such as Commissioners and MEPs in advocacy events, raise public awareness through general media coverage, involve children, teachers, chefs and practitioners in advocacy campaigns.

How to do Effective Advocacy for Healthy, Sustainable School Food at EU level

Two successful SF4C examples of advocacy

High-level intervention during the Spanish Presidency of the European Council event on the EU Child Guarantee

During the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU (21 November 2023) SchoolFood4Change intervened in a Round Table on 'The impact of access to school meals on children's outcomes' at the event titled 'Guaranteeing a Healthy Nutrition for all Children in the EU' – towards a greater commitment to the provision of school meals building on the European Child Guarantee'. The end of this event saw the publication of the San Sebastian Declaration on School Meals, stating that:

- The provision of free healthy school meals for each child is one of the main instruments to fight against food insecurity, with positive outcomes for them, their families and the whole society both in short and in long term;
- Member States' priority should be guaranteeing at least one healthy and free meal each school day to every child in need, progressively expanding the coverage of the service in terms of beneficiaries and time;
- It has emerged the need to develop an effective and reliable monitoring system with precise and comparable indicators. The Whole School Food Approach (WSFA) could be a supportive tool for this.

The ICLEI-led European Campaign and Coalition Buy Better Food

The BuyBetterFood coalition brings together over 100 members in Europe that advocate for the public sector to buy healthier, more sustainable, and ethical food. By working together, they can more effectively advocate for policies that leverage significant public spending to improve our food system for everyone. This alliance amplifies their collective voice, bringing diverse expertise to the table and demonstrating widespread support for their petition (over 111.000 signatures) to transform public food procurement.

At the International School Meals Day (13 March 2025) SF4C brought Commissioners and Members of the European Parliament face-to-face with students to highlight the urgent need for healthy, accessible school meals and comprehensive food education for all children. A key moment was the handover of the over 111,000 petition signatures to the EU Commissioners. The event underscored school meals' vital role in public health, social justice, and ecological transition, emphasizing the need for unified EU action, political collaboration, and direct youth involvement to drive change.

Curious to know more about how to advocate for more healthy, sustainable school food towards EU institutions? Take a look at this further reading:

- ➔ [SF4C Policy Brief #1 Policy recommendations to tackle inequality through healthy and sustainable school food](#)
- ➔ [SF4C Policy Brief #2 Policy recommendations to strengthen food security via food production environments in and around cities](#)
- ➔ SF4C Policy Brief #3 and #4 soon to be published

**Find more information at schoolfood4change.eu
or contact us at info@schoolfood4change.eu**