

## ToyBox – a European multi-country study to develop an obesity prevention programme specifically for pre-school children



**ToyBox** is an EU-funded study (2010-2014) to develop and test an innovative and evidence-based obesity prevention programme for children aged 4-6 years. It aims to expand our knowledge and understanding of the behaviours and their determinants leading to early childhood obesity. Taking into consideration the cultural, legislative and infrastructural diversities in the participating countries, an intervention will be developed to promote healthy food, fun and active play in preschool settings throughout Europe.

### Why age 4-6?

Early childhood is a critical period for addressing obesity prevention since behaviours, psychological traits and physiological processes are largely developed or formed at this young age. The development and adoption of the desired behaviours will help to ensure optimum growth during childhood and increase the likelihood of long-term health in adulthood.

### What will ToyBox-study do?

The overall goal of ToyBox-study is to promote healthy lifestyles in early childhood in order to prevent obesity. It also aims to guide the scientific community, health and education professionals and policy makers in potentially expanding such initiatives throughout Europe. ToyBox-study will:

- Identify key behaviours and their determinants related to early childhood obesity; evaluate existing behavioural models and educational strategies that best support behavioural change in this age group; assess environments, policies and legislation affecting the implementation of preschool-based health promotion activities;
- Develop a preschool-based, family-involved intervention to influence obesity-related behaviours in 4-6 year olds, adjusting for cultural, legislative and infrastructural diversities in the participating countries;
- Implement the intervention program in 6 European countries, assess its process, impact and outcomes and estimate its cost-effectiveness;
- Disseminate the results and make recommendations for European public health policy.

### Study partners

**ToyBox** comprises a multidisciplinary team of 15 partners across the EU:

Harokopio University, Greece – Coordinator  
Dr von Hauner Children's Hospital, University of Munich  
Medical Centre, Germany  
Ghent University, Belgium  
VU University Medical Center, Netherlands  
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  
Netherlands Institute for Health Promotion and Disease  
Prevention, NIGZ, Netherlands  
AOK-Verlag GmbH, Germany  
Roehampton University, UK  
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