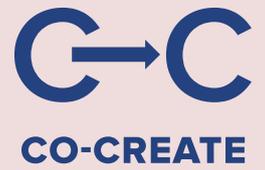


October 2020



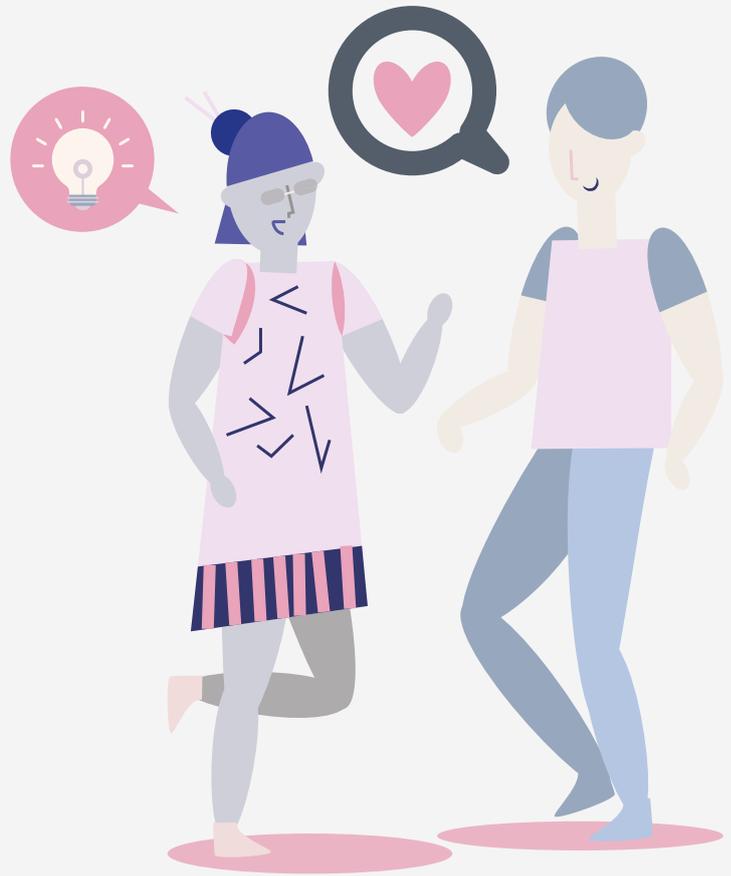
CO-CREATE Youth Alliances' Policy Briefs

Poland



Introduction

CO-CREATE tackles the current gaps in obesity research by focusing on adolescents, their perspectives and the factors that influence their health. The project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and led by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health. It brings together 14 international research and advocacy organisations to work with young people to create, inform and promote policies for obesity prevention. CO-CREATE provides young people with the policy tools, knowledge and infrastructure they need to make the healthiest choices.



By working together in groups, known as alliances, young people participating in the CO-CREATE project have developed policy ideas to address the systemic factors which influence adolescent obesity and health in their respective countries. This brief summarises the policy ideas of CO-CREATE alliances in Poland and outlines the steps they took to finalise their proposals. This brief aims to inform relevant stakeholders, such as policy- and decision-makers, about policies relevant for adolescents to tackle excess weight and obesity and to introduce a model on how to actively involve young people in the development of policies.

Youth participation and co-creation

Young people are still rarely involved in addressing issues that are directly relevant to their lives.¹ Co-creation with adolescents through participatory action research has proved to be an effective tool for young people to tackle inequalities on various social issues, in particular those which directly affect them, such as health, and to successfully promote civic and political engagement among young people.²

Poland

Summary of childhood obesity levels in Poland

Data from the Institute of Mother and Child³ indicates that, according to the WHO's BMI categories (2007),⁴ excessive body weight occurred in 21.3% of 11-to-15-year-old children in Poland, of whom 4.7% were obese. The incidence of overweight and obesity decreased with age, from 25.8% in 11-year-olds to 15.3% in 15-year-olds. Overweight and obesity are most prevalent among 13-year-old boys (31.7%). The percentage of students aged 11, 13 and 15 years who are overweight and obese has increased since 2014 by almost 2 percentage points from 14.8% to 16.5%. The increase in the percentage of overweight and obese students was significantly greater among boys (3.4%) than girls (0.4%).



Childhood obesity level of the areas where the alliances were established

Youth Alliances were set up in three locations; Świdnica (57,310 inhabitants, located in Lower Silesia) and Miejska Górka (9,296 inhabitants, located in Greater Poland), which are both rural-urban communes (commune is the lowest administrative level in the country), and Wrocław city (825,300 inhabitants), capital of the province of Lower Silesia. They are all located in south-west Poland and represent a diverse socio-economic background.

According to Wrocław's Municipal Health Department,⁵ in 2017, 9.69% of children aged 7-11 years in Wrocław were overweight and 2.44% were obese.

In Świdnica and its surrounding area, Statistics Poland,⁶ the national office of statistics, indicated that in 2017 there were 17,740 adolescents between the ages of 17 and 18, of whom 3,500 were overweight (19.72%) and 750 were obese (4.23%).

There is no data regarding the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Miejska Górka or its surroundings.

METHODOLOGY

1. Based on Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR),⁷ young people in CO-CREATE alliances were empowered to develop policy ideas to address the systemic issue of adolescent excess weight and obesity.
2. Supported by trained CO-CREATE country staff and assisted facilitators from youth organisations, young people received information and training to help them develop and refine their policy proposals.
3. Using their newly acquired skills and knowledge, they held discussions, did research and worked with relevant stakeholders to finalise their proposals.
4. They met regularly over the course of several months, both in person and online.
5. Policy ideas were often reviewed and revised based on information gathered by alliance members after conducting their PAR activities.
6. The young people also participated in dialogue forums with relevant stakeholders; here, alliance members met with policy-makers, business leaders to discuss their policy ideas and translate them into possible action, follow-up measures or practical steps. Policy ideas were often then refined based on the knowledge gained at these forums.
7. The finalisation of the brief included a feedback round with some alliance members as well as input from the CO-CREATE task force. A small group consisting of representatives from alliances in different CO-CREATE implementing countries.



CO-CREATE Świdnica Alliance's Policy Idea

Fit, Fresh, and Fast: Regular meetings with dietitian



- Increase access to nutrition specialists.
- Raise young people's awareness, knowledge and skills related to healthy eating.
- Reach young people as the target group and reduce the percentage of young people struggling with excessive weight



Summary of the policy

This policy aims to raise secondary school students' awareness of obesity prevalence and ways to solve that problem.

The policy involves organising meetings and workshops with a dietitian in secondary schools in the Świdnica district for students of first grades.

"Youth in high school have limited access to consultations with dietitian." - Poland alliance member

The problem



Secondary school students lack universal access to health specialists, such as nutritionists and dietitians. Additionally, young people have little knowledge about healthy eating and have limited skills to prepare healthy food, which contributes to obesity among young people. In order to tackle the problem effectively, local authorities, such as the district and the city of Świdnica, as well as owners of supermarkets and local companies supplying healthy food, need to be involved in the promotion, provision and financing of the solution to the problem.

The image above is the project logo developed by Świdnica's alliance members

Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified and connected various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with the policy idea to promote a healthy lifestyle by giving young people the opportunity to have regular sessions with a dietitian at school.
3. The group members then decided to introduce healthy workshops for secondary school students of first grades.
4. They created Facebook and Instagram accounts in order to reach out to more people to promote their policy idea.
5. They came up with a name ('Fit, Fresh and Fast') and a logo to publicise their policy.
6. The group regularly published posts and organised live cooking lessons online to increase engagement on social media to promote their policy idea.
7. They also conducted surveys among the accounts' followers to find out more about young people's preferences and opinions.
8. They created promotional material (e.g., lunch boxes and t-shirts featuring the project logo) for ambassadors of the policy idea, who agreed to promote the idea on social media.
9. Finally, during the online dialogue forum the group had the opportunity to discuss their project with the governor of the Świdnica district, a representative from Świdnica's Health and Social Affairs department and a school principal.

CO-CREATE Świdnica Alliance's Policy Idea

Healthy Shelves: Changing the product visibility in stores



- Create an environment that encourages customers to select good and healthy food products.
- Encourage customers to change their food-buying habits.
- Diversify the range of food products available in shops and make it easier for customers to choose healthy products instead of unhealthy ones.



Summary of the policy

The policy proposes to change product placement on shop shelves and at cash registers in order to make healthy food products more visible and unhealthy food products less visible. The project also proposes the introduction of a labelling system on supermarket shelves to indicate the nutritional value of products



The problem

Low consumer awareness of healthy products and the excessive availability of unhealthy products in shops lead to unhealthy food choices among consumers (including adolescents), which in turn leads to obesity. The lack of legal regulations for displaying and labelling products in supermarkets also contributes to the purchase and consumption of unhealthy products.

The image above is one of the project's logos developed by Świdnica's alliance members

Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified and connected various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with the policy idea to promote a healthy environment by changing the way in which products are displayed and presented in shops.
3. They decided to start by implementing small changes (e.g. changing product placement near the cash registers) and conducted surveys to find out what people thought about this idea.
4. The group created Facebook and Instagram accounts to promote and present their policy idea to potential target groups.
5. They came up with a name ('Healthy Shelves') and a logo for the policy.
6. They regularly published posts on the social media accounts and organised live online cooking lessons to increase engagement.
7. The group also conducted surveys among their social media followers to find out more about young people's preferences and opinions.
8. They created promotional material (e.g. sweatshirts featuring the project logo) for ambassadors of the policy idea, who agreed to promote the policy idea on social media.
9. Finally, during the online dialogue forum the group had the opportunity to discuss their project with stakeholders, including an expert in the field of physical activity, a dietician and the vice president of the city of Świdnica.

CO-CREATE Miejska Górka Alliance's Policy Idea

Gym passes for Youth



- Increase the level of physical activity among schoolchildren.
- Encourage physical activity by improving access to those places where young people can be active by lowering the price and making them available through partnerships with schools.
- Improve young people's sense of well-being and self-acceptance through increased physical activity.

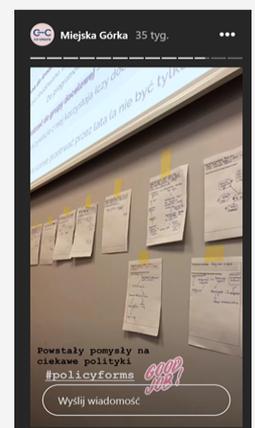


Summary of the policy

This policy idea is to give secondary school students a discount on access to gyms and sport centres in the Rawicz region. Classes/activities for young people would be run by people employed at these centres and they would be funded by the municipality

The problem

According to the Institute of Mother and Child (2018), only 15.6% of students aged 10-19 fulfil the weekly MVPA (moderate-to-vigorous activity) guidelines. Additionally, prices for monthly gym passes in Poland's biggest cities are very high (130200 PLN, or roughly €30-45) and most young people cannot afford it. Such facilities are much less available in smaller towns. Young people stressed the fact that the lack of resources is one of the main reasons why they are not physically active after school.



The first images shows one of Miejska Górka alliance members using system map to create a policy idea; the second image shows the alliance developing their initial ideas for policy; the third image shows the voting process to select the best policies

Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified factors that affect adolescents' physical activity: the high cost of access to sports centers/gyms results in limited access to places where young people can be active.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with the policy idea to focus on promoting physical activity among young people.
3. During the photovoice activity, the group took photos which revealed that there are only a few places where they can go to be active for free, such as open-air gyms and cycle paths.
4. They discussed their policy idea with the rest of the group in order to find out each other's opinions and to reflect more critically on their policy idea.
5. They drew up a list of actions that could be undertaken in order to promote or further refine their idea, including conducting a survey, whereby the respondents would be rewarded with a small gift featuring the policy logo.

CO-CREATE Miejska Górka Alliance's Policy Idea

Mobile App: FITKET



- Promote physical activity by offering attractive incentives to be active.
- Increase public awareness of obesity and overweight problem panels and information tabs in the app featuring reliable data.
- Promote physical activity through real stories of people who used to be overweight

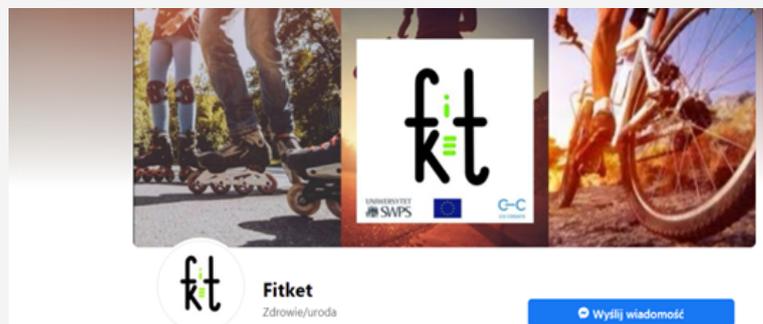


Summary of the policy

This simple mobile app encourages people to do more physical activity by collecting points. Points can be redeemed on a biweekly or monthly basis with discounts in health food shops or gyms.

The problem

The policy aims to address the issue of low levels of physical activity and a lack of public awareness of the severity of the obesity prevalence problem. The young people who came up with the idea indicated that Poland continues to have one of the least active societies in the European Union, which is contributing towards the prevalence of overweight and obesity in the country. Studies have shown that regular exercise helps reduce and prevent chronic diseases associated with obesity, such as type 2 diabetes, hypertension and arteriosclerosis. It is important to implement policies which will be able to raise awareness of this issue and encourage people to be more physically active



The image above shows the facebook profile of one of Miejska Górka alliance members, promoting the mobile app idea

Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with a policy idea to focus on promoting a healthy lifestyle.
3. They discussed their policy idea with the rest of the group in order to find out each other's opinions and to reflect more critically on their ideas. They also completed a policy form.
4. The group used the SMART method to devise a plan to promote their policy idea via social media.
5. They created a Facebook profile to promote their policy idea; a mobile application ('FITKET'). They also designed a logo.
6. They also drew up online surveys to find out what other people think about their idea.
7. They ran the Facebook profile for several weeks, adding posts about their idea and the CO-CREATE project.
8. Finally, the group had the opportunity to discuss their project with an expert in digital product development, an expert in health promotion and a local district authority representative.

CO-CREATE Wroclaw Alliance's Policy Brief

Healthier nutrition, healthier us



- Stop the increase in overweight and obesity – and eventually reduce the prevalence.
- Change the eating habits of adolescents and adults living in cities.
- Increase the availability of healthy food by facilitating access to healthy meals

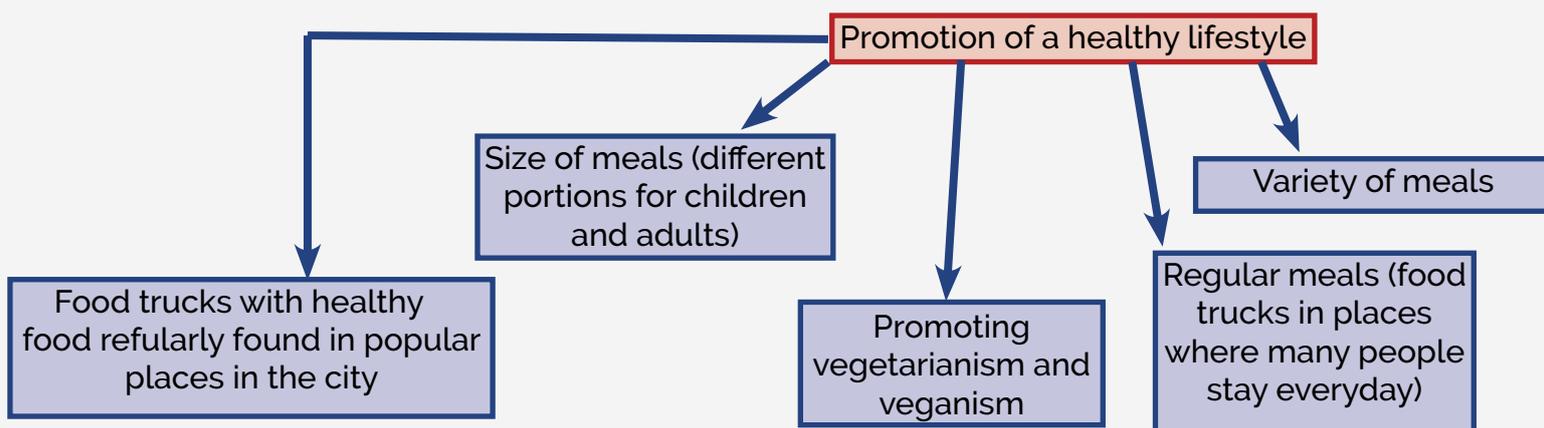


Summary of the policy

The policy aims to encourage people to choose healthy food rather than unhealthy meals by placing food trucks offering healthy meals in popular public places throughout Wroclaw, such as in market squares or on universities campuses. By doing so, this policy will target both adults and young people by providing a healthy range of ready-to-eat meals in the city.

The problem

Young people consider the time-consuming nature of preparing healthy meals, including shopping and cooking, to be one of the main reasons for obesity. Additionally, eating out is a social activity and a way of spending time with family and friends. It is therefore important to provide healthy alternatives for people who do not have much time to prepare healthy meals and still allow them to enjoy the social aspect of eating out.



The diagram above shows how through the system mapping training and exercise, the alliance members identified different factors that affect adolescents' obesity in their immediate environment

Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with a policy idea to promote a healthy life by presenting an interesting selection of healthy, nutritious options in public places.
3. They discussed their policy idea with the rest of the group, after which they decided to also include adults in their target group.
4. Finally, during the online dialogue forum the group had the opportunity to discuss their project with stakeholders, including a dietitian and representatives from the departments of Health and Social Affairs and Economic Development at Wroclaw city council.

CO-CREATE Wroclaw Alliance's Policy Idea

Saturday awareness



- Make people aware that healthy eating does not have to be time consuming and expensive.
- Encourage people to change their habits and attitudes by introducing them to easy and publicly available forms of physical activity.
- Dispel myths associated with healthy eating and physical activity.



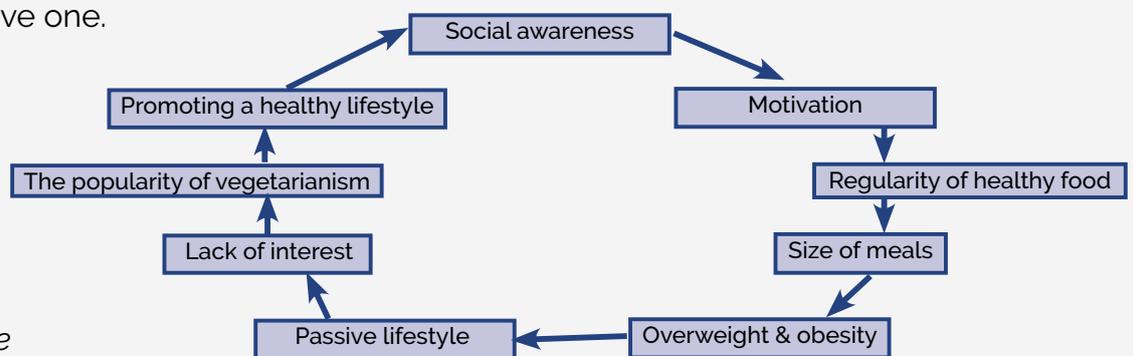
Summary of the policy

This policy idea encourages people to be more physically active and eat healthily by organising events every Saturday at shopping centers in major cities around Poland. The events include healthy cooking activities, exercise and consultations with specialists. A vlogger and a TV crew will record the events to promote the policy among young people and adults

The problem

The main problem addressed by the policy is obesity, which is to some extent caused by a lack of knowledge and awareness of a healthy lifestyle, resulting in a lack of motivation to exercise and an unhealthy diet. The young people who came up with the policy idea stated that this is a very serious problem because research shows that obesity is associated with mental and physical disorders and a lower quality of life. They also stressed the fact that even small changes in our bad habits can result in, for example, slower organ aging and a better physical and mental condition and could help our heart to work more efficiently. Young people also believe that learning about simple ways to prepare healthy meals would increase young people's motivation to follow a healthy lifestyle. If people are then more motivated to eat more healthily and do more exercise, they can replace their passive lifestyle with an active one.

The diagram shows how through the system mapping training and exercise, the alliance members identified different factors that affect adolescents' obesity in their immediate environment



Activities youth undertook to develop the policy idea

1. During the system mapping activity, the group identified various factors in their immediate environment that contribute towards adolescent obesity.
2. After further discussions, the group came up with a policy idea to promote a healthy lifestyle by organising meetings with specialists in the field of dietetics and physical activity. In turn, this will increase social awareness about dietary requirements and physical activity among adolescents and encourage them to eat healthy foods and do more exercise.
3. By drawing on these activities and experiences, the group was able to refine its original idea and finalise their policy proposal.

Follow-up

Following the dialogue forum, the participating school principal offered to help the Fit, Fresh and Fast group in the form of the school administration's support to organise a pilot project in schools in the Świdnica region. The participating policymakers from the Office of President of Świdnica offered them financial or organisational support to implement the pilot.

The Healthy Shelves group received support from the stakeholders participating dialog forum in a number of ways; from the dietitian to develop selection criteria for food products for the healthy shelves, from the policymaker to jointly create a policy petition and a promotional campaign and from the expert in physical activity, representing the NGO Exercise is Medicine-Poland, to reach out to people who could further promote the idea.

After the dialogue forum, the Mobile App: FITKET group was offered help with promotion of the policy ideas in local NGOs from the local policymaker participating in the forum), help in choosing the tools to create the mobile application (from the expert in digital products development); and support in finding sources in creating and implementing the idea (from the expert of health promotion).

The *Healthier Nutrition, Healthier Us* group also received support after participating in the dialogue forum. The dietitian offered assistance in drawing up a sample menu and consulting marketing psychologists, and the city authorities helped them to connect with established food trucks in the city and also provided a list of food truck locations. They also provided free access to city events so that the group members could promote the idea. The city representatives also offered an introduction to the healthy eating certification system.

Resources

The policy ideas developed by the Youth Alliances engage with, build upon and are in line with existing policies regarding health and obesity in Poland. Several relevant policies are listed below.

1. The restriction of food advertising and other forms of commercial promotion, The Amended Act on Food and Nutrition Safety⁸
2. The provision of healthy food and the setting of healthy standards in public institutions and other specific settings, The Amended Act on Food and Nutrition Safety⁹
3. Świdnica Powiat Obesity and Overweight programme¹⁰
4. The provision of dairy products, fruits and vegetables for students, the 'Programme for Schools'¹¹

Acknowledgements

This brief was written by Ewa Kuliś, Monika Boberska, Zofia Szczuka, Magdalena Kruk, Anna Banik, Sherria Ayuandini, Świdnica Youth Alliance members, Wrocław Youth Alliance members, and Miejska Górka Youth Alliance members as part of the CO-CREATE project. This brief was designed by Margot Neveux (World Obesity Federation).

With special thanks to I High School of Jan Kasprowicz in Świdnica, XIV High School of Belgian Polonia in Wrocław, School Complex of Stanisław Mikołajczyk in Miejska Górka, and our co-facilitators.

Contact details

SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities (<https://english.swps.pl/>) is the leading higher education institution offering Social Sciences programs in Poland. SWPS University has been investing in research and development. Annually, it conducts over 300 research projects, in 20 research centers and laboratories. The University is the 5th biggest beneficiary of research grants awarded by the National Science Center. Center for Applied Research on Health Behavior and Health (CARE-BEH), led by Aleksandra Luszczynska, is a part of SWPS University, Faculty of Psychology in Wrocław. The primary aims of CARE-BEH team is to develop and evaluate psychological interventions aiming at behaviour change, explore factors improving quality of life of people with chronic diseases, and investigate issues related to implementation of programs (including policies and interventions) targeting obesity prevention.

CARE-BEH Center for Applied Research on Health Behavior and Health (<http://www.care-beh.eu/>)

University of Social Sciences and Humanities
SWPS Faculty of Psychology in Wrocław
Ostrowskiego Street 30b
PL53238 Wrocław, Poland

References

1. Jacquez, F., Vaughn, L. M., & Wagner, E. (2013). Youth as partners, participants or passive recipients: A review of children and adolescents in community-based participatory research (CBPR). *American journal of community psychology*, 51(1-2), 176-189.
2. Berg, M., Coman, E., and Schensul, J. J. (2009). 'Youth Action Research for Prevention: A multi-level intervention designed to increase efficacy and empowerment among urban youth', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 43, pp. 345-359. Ozer, E. J., and Douglas, L. (2013). 'The Impact of Participatory Research on Urban Teens: An experimental evaluation', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 51, pp. 66-75.
3. <http://www.imid.med.pl/files/imid/Aktualnosci/Aktualnosci/raport%20HBSC%202018.pdf>
4. https://www.who.int/growthref/growthref_who_bull/en/
5. <http://www.spzoz.wroc.pl/files/Raport-z-realizacji-zadania-rok-szkolny--2016-2017.pdf>
6. <https://stat.gov.pl/en/>
7. CalFresh, (2012). Youth Participatory Action Research: A review of the literature. Public Health Institute, Sacramento, USA.
8. https://policydatabase.wcrf.org/level_one?page=nourishing-level-one#step2=1#step3=337
9. https://policydatabase.wcrf.org/level_one?page=nourishing-level-one#step2=3#step3=331
10. https://www.powiat.swidnica.pl/strony/do_druku/aktualnosci/2018/08/006.htm
11. <http://www.programdlaszkol.org/>