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## D5.5: Evaluation reports on the sustainable Alliances for overweight prevention policies

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## List of abbreviations

**CEIDSS** – Centre for Studies and Research in Social Dynamics and Health

**EAT** - non-profit foundation for food system transformation

**EBRB** – Energy Balance Related Behaviour meaning dietary, physical activity and sedentary behaviour.

**EYP** - European Youth Parliament

**NOURISHING** - framework developed by the World Cancer Research Fund International

**PRESS** – Adolescent branch of Save the Children Norway

**SES** - Social Economic Status.

**SWPS**: University of Social Sciences and Humanities

**UiO** – Universitetet i Oslo

**UvA** – Universiteit van Amsterdam

**WP2** - Work package dedicated to developing and testing methodology for (1) monitoring and benchmarking policies which influence EBRB (dietary, physical activity and sedentary behaviour); (2) developing a new physical activity and policy monitoring tool to complement the NOURISHING framework, and (3) policy monitoring tool that is focused on nutrition.

**WP3** - Work package dedicated to (1) establishing evidence regarding effective policies and policy measures to prevent overweight and obesity among adolescents across different environmental sectors, (2) investigate (cross-country) changes in overweight and obesity rates, (3) to explore if associations between policies and prevalence differs according to socio-economic background of adolescents.

**WP4** - Work package dedicated to developing visual system maps of policy dependent multi-level drivers of adolescent obesity.

**WP5** - Work package dedicated to recruit, train, and collaborate with adolescents aged 13-18 from diverse backgrounds in five European countries (Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom) and establish with them sustainable and transferable Youth Alliances for Overweight Prevention Policies. Integrating scientific research and adolescents' experiential knowledge, CO-CREATE will develop transferable, novel and context-specific policy options that will contribute to upstream overweight prevention, as well as reducing inequalities in overweight/obesity among adolescents across Europe and beyond.

**WP5-7** - Collaborating between work packages to develop prototype outcomes, policies, and solutions that policy makers and businesses can respond to, based on engagement with, and feedback from youth. These prototypes will also accelerate the move from dialogue to implementation at a local, national, and regional level.

**WP6** - Work package dedicated to establishing, make use of, and evaluate policy dialog forums between public and private sector stakeholders (including adolescents) that define and/or are influenced by obesity prevention policies to work towards wider acceptance and support for effective obesity prevention policies.

**WP7** - Work package dedicated to use system dynamics modelling to assess and predict the potential impacts of selected evidence-based and CO-CREATED policy options for obesity prevention, including the socioeconomic distribution of any such impact.

**WP7-8** - Work package dedicated to developing an infrastructure for the implementation and evaluation of CO-CREATED policies and advocacy tools and strategies.

**WP9** - Work package dedicated to communicating and disseminate purpose, progress, toolkits and other deliverables of CO-CREATE to all stakeholders and a wider audience, including scientists, policy makers, youth, and the general public.

**YPAR** - Youth Participatory Action Research.

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## All country summary

**While we present a summary of the report here, the main contribution of this report is the detailed description of our approach (introduction), methodology and actual activities per country. The report is meant as a basis for further analysis. It also enables all participants and other interested parties to get a microscopic view on the different ways participatory action plays out even within one general format.** This aspect is further investigated at the moment of finishing this report. We are also amid analysing the way experiential and scientific knowledge are related throughout the projects.

There are many ways to approach childhood obesity. In CO-CREATE we hold that (1) it is desirable to prevent childhood obesity if this is carefully done to avoid stigmatization; (2) that there is a lack of population-based policies addressing systemic changes to prevent overweight; (3) that those policies should benefit more vulnerable groups and (4) that there is a need to involve those who are addressed through the policies in the policy-design. Particularly the fourth point necessitates cocreation, in this case with youth across Europe. Within this overall framework, CO-CREATE was meant to engage young people from diverse backgrounds, to empower them and to combine their knowledge with that of scientists and stakeholders in the joint development of policy ideas for system directed prevention of overweight among young citizens.

In WP5, about which we report here, this took place in 15 so-called youth Alliances in Norway, Portugal, Poland, the UK and the Netherlands. Moreover, youth led-policy proposals were also prepared at the EU level in collaboration with the European Youth Parliament (EYP) in an international session in Novi-Sad. This is a summary of the separate country reports included in this deliverable, with an additional report of the EYP session. A full cross-country comparison will be part of the next deliverables (D5.6 and D5.7). Additional Alliances have been set up in South Africa and the Netherlands, but beyond the reporting period. The country reports which we summarize here, are based on a multi-sited comparative fieldwork approach. We used structured participant observation, observations, minutes, survey data (from WP7) and outcome data which are triangulated, contextualized in retrospect and collaboratively interpreted.

We based the Alliances on a (youth-led) participatory action approach (Y-PAR). Y-PAR stresses collaboration between young collaborators and other stakeholders, action-oriented research and training. To our knowledge, CO-CREATE is unique because most PAR projects involve one or a few groups, while we are looking at 15 projects/Alliances based in five different countries within the same framework. In addition, CO-CREATE is somewhat different from many Y-PAR projects since the issue of childhood obesity was already given. Moreover, we recruited interested youth, which means that we did not start with an existing community, as is often the case in Y-PAR. Alliances consist of a series of activities which were flexibly implemented, altered, and expanded in line with youth and staff goals: group building, training, photovoice, mapping, policy forms, capacity building, advocacy training and budgeting. Each Alliance had a budget with which to try out elements of policy ideas. Each Alliance was meant to attract a small number of participants (5-15) aged 15-18. Next to underaged members and one or two adults CO-CREATE consortium members serving as facilitators, each Alliance had one or two so-called co-facilitators: a young adult bridging the gap between young members and (academic) adults. Part of the approach is furthermore to tailor it to the local context:

we started our work with an exploration of social and political relations that might influence the Alliance, for example, what “diversity” or “vulnerability” means in each specific case.

### *Various Alliances*

Between summer 2018 and 2022, Alliances have shaped up differently: in Portugal, they were building on existing collaboration between the CO-CREATE consortium member organization and the scout movement. The Alliances were set up in three local scouts groups based in a larger city and in adjacent communities and were stable and high in their turnout. In Poland, the Netherlands and the UK (Alliance 2 and 3), Alliances were part of (voluntary) school programs and backed by youth organizations or schools at large. They took place in the capitals and in peri-urban and rural areas. These Alliances attracted a relatively large number of participants across a whole school term, but it was still difficult to engage young people outside school hours. In Norway, Alliances were not tied to any specific organization in 2 out of the 3 Alliances. The third Alliance was nested in a CO-CREATE consortium youth organization. In the UK, a collaboration with municipal (youth) organizations resulted in one youth Alliance. At the EU level, an Alliance-like activity was organized by the European Youth Parliament.

In general, the support of municipal or youth organization did not directly lead to a high turnout and prolonged participation. We saw the largest and most stable participation when an Alliance was not only supported but also embedded within an organization (scouts, schools). However, even this is no guarantee when we see that the Alliance embedded within the Norwegian youth organization was small and members had a hard time continuing their efforts. Depending on Alliance members and organizational preferences, the Alliances also developed varying modalities of engagement: from a small number (6-8) of long sessions to a large number of short session (20+) (see Appendix 3). In all Alliances, youth members shaped the process and modes of engagement. Online engagement was much stronger during Covid-19 restrictions and in some Alliances and for some time rather intensive. However, we did not find a general inclination towards online modes of engagement, but rather a preference for in-person meetings with social interactions and food. The facilitators (who were researchers with expertise in sociology, psychology, public health or nutrition) and the co-facilitators (who were youth organization members, scouts, students, research assistants or teachers; see Appendix 5) seemed to have influenced the Alliance processes in specific ways, as related to how their different backgrounds affected the interactions in which they engaged.



## Successful Recruitment

In total, 209 young (aged 15-18) Europeans participated in the Alliances (199 in the country-based Alliances and 10 at the EU level). The Alliances also involved several youth organizations, schools, scouts, policy makers and scientists between the summer of 2018 and 2022. Participants came from diverse backgrounds in terms of socio-economic position, rural-urban context and migration background. Girls were overrepresented, partly because of the composition of the organization in which they were based. Alliances did attract boys though, and boys and girls did collaborate. There are stark differences between the Alliance regarding diversity. Some Alliances consisted of youth coming from markedly deprived backgrounds with no experience in voluntary participation such as Alliance activities, while other Alliances attracted well-do youth activists.

**Table 1. Youth and diversity in the country-based Alliances (excluding the EYP)**

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS	UK (n=6)	NETHERLANDS (n=36)	NORWAY (n=21)	POLAND (n=58)	PORTUGAL (n=21)
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	67% (n=4)	78% (n=28)	62% (n=13)	91% (n=53)	57% (n=12)
Male	33% (n=2)	19% (n=7)	38% (n=8)	9% (n=5)	43% (n=9)
Missing		3% (n=1)			
<b>Active member of a political or non-political organization</b>					
No, and I have never been	50% (n=3)	81% (n=29)	67% (n=14)	22% (n=13)	38% (n=8)
No, but previously	17% (n=1)	19% (n=7)	5% (n=1)	45% (n=26)	5% (n=1)
Yes	33% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	28% (n=6)	33% (n=19)	57% (n=12)
<b>Birth country</b>					
UK/NL/Nor/Pol/Port	83% (n=5)	78% (n=28)	86% (n=18)	100% (n=58)	100% (n=21)
Country within Europe	17% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	5% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
Country outside of Europe	0% (n=0)	22% (n=8)	9% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
<b>Mothers birth country</b>					
UK/NL/Nor/Pol/Port	67% (n=4)	47% (n=17)	48% (n=10)	100% (n=58)	86% (n=18)
Country within Europe	0% (n=0)	3% (n=1)	38% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	5% (n=1)
Country outside of Europe	33% (n=2)	50% (n=18)	14% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	9% (n=2)
<b>Fathers birth country</b>					
UK/NL/Nor/Pol/Port	67% (n=4)	53% (n=19)	48% (n=10)	100% (n=58)	62% (n=13)
Country within Europe	0% (n=0)	3% (n=1)	38% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	5% (n=1)
Country outside of Europe	33% (n=2)	44% (n=16)	14% (n=3)	0% (n=0)	28% (n=6)
Missing					5% (n=1)
<b>FAS categories</b>					
Low FAS (0-6 score)	50% (n=3)	22% (n=8)	10% (n=2)	16% (n=9)	5% (n=1)
Medium FAS (7-9 score)	50% (n=3)	45% (n=16)	29% (n=6)	36% (n=21)	57% (n=12)
High FAS (10-13 score)	0% (n=0)	33% (n=12)	57% (n=12)	48% (n=28)	33% (n=7)
Missing			4% (n=1)		5% (n=1)

If in the future we want to reach out to most vulnerable youth, offering Alliances within schools set in deprived areas is feasible although it needs a lot of work and does not guarantee that young people from deprived backgrounds actually participate. At the same time, Alliance activities and staff need to be sufficiently different from school since schools are coercive organization. So rather than accepting or rejecting schools as blueprint organizations for youth engagement, we see that other youth organizations with a wide constituency are also an option. More generally, it takes prolonged effort and fine-tuning with academic and organizational staff to shape up a form of recruitment. CO-CREATE staff, (co)-facilitators and organizational members have put in continuous and repeated efforts, which were intensified during the Covid-19 restrictions. Close, empathetic and context sensitive collaboration is necessary to engage youth. We had planned for “rolling” or continuous peer

recruitment to make up for attrition. This did not seem necessary in scout and school-based Alliances and did not work in other Alliances.



### *Developing Policy Ideas*

In all Alliances, youth suggested and further developed various policy ideas to address childhood obesity. Their ideas were sometimes rather close to existing policies focussing on individual choice and behaviour. In all Alliances though, youth also thought of and further worked out ideas targeting the context in which individual behaviour is shaping up. Ideas covered food and nutrition, physical activity, stress, social media and a healthy environment. Concrete ideas ranged from (cheap) access to gyms, to school canteen take-over and from restricting marketing to sugar-taxation. Often, ideas were closely connected to their everyday life and that is exactly what we aimed for. The added value is that their engagement brought depth and detail to the policy proposals. It worked well to start with collecting ideas and then refining those over the course of several months up to a year. In several cases, youth in the Alliances could built on system maps that had been made by other young people earlier. Maps worked well as a heuristic tool and were hardly refined during the process of developing policies. The combination of Alliances with Dialogue Forums, where policy ideas were further refined in collaboration with stakeholders, could be translated to an online platform. It is worth considering having system mapping as an integral part of the Alliances.

In most cases, CO-CREATE staff guided or at least aided this process. Thinking in terms of policy at all was often new to youth and yet raised interest. It was also difficult for the CO-CREATE consortium partners to translate their knowledge into learning and engagement activities with youth. (Co)facilitators therefore did this translational work. While young collaborators often had a hard time using existing scientific knowledge, they actively produced new knowledge, posed questions to experts and used scientific knowledge for policy ideas. Working with system maps, policy forms, interviews and budgets to experiment with ideas proved helpful for refining or dropping ideas. Input from outsiders was welcomed very much. Discussing their ideas with experts and/or policy makers seemed to strongly boost youth confidence and motivation. The developing ideas – at least initially – had a strong link to the experiences youth had with health and food in their daily lives. Yet, over time, these experiences became less central to the policy proposals.

When looking at the sum of the action ideas the young participants in our project cocreated (see Appendix 4), we can envision how they together negotiated the social order of health in a way that was meaningful to them. Based on the young people's work, we can picture a world where healthy food is freely available in the form of food and smoothy trucks in front of schools and in city centres.

There are water taps in parks and fruit and vegetables can be picked in gardens or taken from the school canteen tables. All schools have healthy restaurants with free or affordable healthy snacks and varying and culturally diverse fresh-made, warm, and spicy meals with vegetables and herbs, and young people have an influence on the menu. School curriculums include workshops and courses that learn young people how to cook and live healthily, as informed by nutritionists and dietitians. Governments have implemented sugar and fat taxes and provide incentives to healthy restaurants. Supermarkets and fast-food restaurants are not allowed near schools and must comply to health standards in the products they offer with useful nutrition information on packages, and by offering healthy products for lower prices, placed at the foreground and promoted by special actions. Marketing for unhealthy products and targeting young age groups is bounded and hence, no intrusive fast-food commercials are repeatedly sent to people's smart phones.

The lifeworld envisioned by youth in Alliances enables free access to physical activity, free transport to get there, and a green and clean built environment that stimulates walking and cycling and trips to nature. Trampolines in front of stores and workshops about unknown sports. Subsidy to enable cheap or free access to sporting facilities at schools and sport clubs which are meant for young people, who offer fun programs that young people can influence, and who offer spaces where young people can move freely without feeling ashamed or uncomfortable through 'youth-only' and 'women-only' time slots as well as a lack of visibility to wider publics. Apps are available with reward systems to promote physical activity. During lockdowns, governments facilitate young people with sport equipment to enable them to exercise at home, at the playground or outdoors. Young people have opportunities to socialise in youth clubs or leisure clubs, as alternatives for chicken shops that now function as social hubs, and as opportunities to reduce stress, support youth mental health and help young people to prepare themselves for adult life. Societal stress and pressure on young people, e.g., time pressure at schools, is reduced, and peer support as well as psychological help – with attention for healthy lifestyles – is available to all youth at school, and especially for those who experienced trauma. Extensive social media use is discouraged, whereas breaks in social media use are encouraged (e.g. during mealtime) and social media is used as a communication platform to provide young people with interesting and helpful health knowledge.

Figure 1. Example of Policy Idea from the Netherlands

### CO-CREATE Almere Alliance's Policy Idea

#### Kitchen take-over; warm, healthy food in school canteens – made by the young people themselves



- Enrich the school canteen with warm, healthy and tasty food, prepared by the young people themselves.
- Share and provide recipes made and tested by young people, which can then be added to the school canteen's menu.
- Raise awareness at the Netherlands Nutrition Centre (Voedingscentrum) that not everyone likes or considers cheese sandwiches to be healthy.



#### Summary of the policy

This policy idea aims to provide healthy and warm food in healthy school canteens by incorporating students' knowledge of and preferences for healthy food based on their different backgrounds and dietary habits at home. The Almere Youth Alliance also wants to produce a cookbook that other school canteens can use in order to rollout their idea to other schools. They also intend to teach young people how to cook.

#### The problem

The young people do not consider the food served in school canteens to be healthy or tasty; they prefer to eat tastier food, even if it is unhealthy. This is partly because the food provided only caters to certain preferences. The young people in this group, who come from different cultural backgrounds and have different eating habits, do not find cold cheese sandwiches appetising. Their knowledge of and preferences for different types of warm and fresh food, vegetables, herbs and particular recipes is currently ignored and not reflected in the range of food available in the school canteen. As a result, not only do they choose not to eat what the school considers 'healthy', they also feel left out and unheard.

#### 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 policy ideas to address these factors. One group decided to focus on providing better and healthier varieties of food in the school canteen.
3. This group took a more active approach to further develop this policy; the school gave them permission to cook healthier food for the canteen.
4. They collected information about the requirements of the own school canteen, in relation to the 'healthy canteen' platform.
5. They participated in debating exercises to think more critically about their policy ideas.
6. They drew up surveys to find out what their peers would like to see as part of a healthy school canteen.
7. The group came up with recipes and discussed them with the teacher responsible for the 'healthy canteen' guidelines.
8. For several weeks they cooked in the school canteen and sold the food to their fellow students.
9. They organised and participated in an online meeting with the regional manager of the Netherlands Nutrition Centre's Healthy Canteen initiative and a policymaker. Action points (in-depth study of the Healthy Canteen guidelines; adapting recipes; joining the Healthy Canteen student participation initiative to implement their idea) will be addressed in the autumn of 2020. The group also engaged with a TV chef who has published a cookbook.
10. By drawing on all these activities and experiences, they were able to refine their original idea and finalise their policy proposal.

CO-CREATE Netherlands Alliances' Policy Briefs 5

### *Getting a bit more ready for system change*

In most Alliances, we see that participants gradually came to approach overweight more as a systemic issue rather than an issue of choice and individual responsibility alone. Thinking in terms of a vast system in relation to health was often difficult for youth, even though those with experiences of stress, poverty, welfare state aid and intervention could relate to a wider context structuring everyday life. Working with system maps, collaborations with stakeholders, research activities, group discussions, comparing experiences and working with the policy form seemed to have triggered this learning process. Alliance members differed strongly in their readiness for action. Some were seasoned activists while most had no experience at all but did aspire to contribute to change in the obesogenic system. Especially youth in more vulnerable contexts seem to have started under the assumption that their inputs would however not be relevant and preliminary analysis suggests that in these cases, CO-CREATE achieved a clear change and boost confidence. We also found that more

experienced activist youth were not always as involved in CO-CREATE systemic change because they had already several projects going on.

### *An empowering and participative process*

The Alliance design allowed for a cocreated and continuously revised set of activities. Decisions on how to move forward were often shaped by youth, for example when it came to the kind of activities, the organizational form or the policy focus. Across most Alliances, youth raised concerns and opinions, which suggests that the Alliance have been a safe enough context. We witnessed that youth were repeatedly involved in initiatives to split up groups from 15 or 20 to 5 or less working on policy proposals or research. We also witnessed that small Alliance groups, consisting of 3 adolescents or less, were vulnerable to attrition. Alliances seem to have engendered ownership and joint decision making. The collaboration between youth and between youth and (co)facilitators was mostly easy and supportive, although repeated efforts from (co)facilitators were needed. Additionally, the contributions of individual Alliance members were often limited. Empowerment seems to come to the fore in taking the lead in the process and in concrete activities, including budgeting and collaboration with stakeholders.

According to the Y-PAR model, young people have been involved throughout the WP5 CO-CREATE project. We collaborated from the beginning with youth organization PRESS and have engaged with young people and integrated their thoughts and feedback in the stages of designing activities and testing recruitment materials. In the Alliances, young people were able to co-decide about their own Alliance activities, focus and trajectories. They were also informed about Alliance processes and outcomes in other regions and countries, international CO-CREATE events and other CO-CREATE work packages to enable their reflection, feedback and participation further. In terms of analysis, we focused on engaging with the young participants in the analysis of their own research products: their photos taken through Photovoice, the surveys and survey results they achieved, their organized pilot activities, and the policy proposals they developed and wrote. During the analysis of the research process after the Alliance work, we collaborated more closely with facilitators and co-facilitators to analyse and member-check the data. In all countries, we used 'open question' feedback forms filled in by the youth (except for the UK, who did a member-check with youth instead) and (follow-up) WP7 process evaluations filled in by the youth to inform and triangulate the analysis of the research process, as written down in this report. Moreover, local youth organizations were involved in many of the countries (e.g. as young co-facilitators) in the stages of project development, Alliance work and feedback (to activities as well as the WP5 report).

### *Changing the obesogenic system*

Looking back at the goals of CO-CREATE - to engage youth from diverse backgrounds, to empower them and to combine their knowledge with that of scientists and stakeholders in the joint development of policy ideas for system directed prevention of overweight among young citizens - we are confident that the Alliances have taken steps into that direction. Change happens in often unplanned ways. We know from research into social movement and social movement success that the vast majority of attempts at changing politics and policies fail and that success is hard to predict,

locally specific and depending on opportunities and chance (e.g Bossi et al 2016). So, in a way, aiding youth in changing the obesogenic system is a grand ambition. In hindsight we might ask why we, adult academics, are oftentimes not able to make a change and yet expect that a collaboration with youth will. We sometimes referred to “Greta Thunberg” as an example of young citizens activism when we started the CO-CREATE consortium and indeed, this is an example of the difficult task of changing a whole system. Yet, in CO-CREATE, youth and (co)facilitators have collaborated often with enthusiasm and openness to learn from each other. Further analysis will address this process but more importantly, we need to situate this in a theoretical framework. Rather than just wanting to give “voice” to youth, which runs the risk of populism, we worked within a framework of cocreation and mutual learning (Ozer and Douglas 2013). As far as the preliminary analysis shows, the policy proposals are indeed an outcome of the combination of experiential, professional and scientific knowledge. CO-CREATE does not seem to have delivered a blueprint for engaging youth, but it does provide the insight that context-sensitive, close and prolonged collaboration provides fertile ground for empowering youth, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is at least what we seem to see on the basis of six separate country analyses presented in this report. Future reports will compare Alliances across countries more in depth and thus analyse and interpret contradictory findings, while we provide a descriptive account of all countries in the present report.

## Introduction

Citizens are increasingly called upon to participate in research and policy design like in our case, the EU wide project CO-CREATE (Confronting Obesity: Co-creating policy with adolescents). Among other tasks, CO-CREATE set out to engage diverse youth, to empower them and to combine their knowledge with that of scientists and stakeholders in the joint development of policy ideas for system directed overweight prevention. This was meant to happen in the so-called youth Alliances about which we report here. We have been fortunate to work with about 209 young people and several youth organizations towards this goal. In addition, but outside the content of this report, youth has been involved in new Alliances in the Netherlands and South Africa. This report analyses the 15 Alliances and tries to answer the core research questions for each of the countries involved separately: Norway, Portugal, Poland, the UK and the Netherlands. There is descriptive report on an EU level Alliance-like activity with the European Youth Parliament too, in chapter three. In addition, we present a summary covering all Alliances. Building on these insights per country, we are amidst more focussed and cross-country analyses. The current analysis concerns the Alliances and WP5 activities in the period between autumn 2018 and autumn 2020. This period includes preparations, implementation and the running of Alliances. During this period, all Alliances were affected by COVID-19 policies, which triggered more online work, shifts in participation, a strong increase of the workload for CO-CREATE staff and also created new momentum. This report mentions the Dialogue Forums held with Alliance members. The analysis of the Forums themselves will be reported separately by WP6 lead.

The original Alliances have come to an end, while new Alliances have been set up in Cape Town / South Africa. We have also collaborated with some former Alliance members in the EU wide Youth Task Force, a joint activity with the European Youth Parliament and a CO-CREATED organized youth conference took place in March 2022. Within countries and cities, other activities to transfer learnings to new Alliances, consolidate collaborations with youth organizations and support the work of active youth have been ongoing. These activities will be summarized for each country.

This report contains the following elements: we first outline the underlying rationale of the Alliance, Youth-led Participatory Action research and how this has been translated into a detailed yet open program for the Alliances. After an outline of this program, we will present the research questions and the methodology. We will present the findings in four descriptive sections, looking at recruitment, policy ideas, readiness for action and obesity prevention and process, decision making and ownership. The conclusion will address the goals and question and provide reflections. Each country report contains a summary too. The report itself has been truly cocreated. From day one, the set-up, implementation and running of the Alliance, data collection and data analysis have been jointly devised, repeatedly with input from youth (organizations). Team NL initially drafted this report and country partners – team leads and Alliance facilitators – amended and enriched it, using their detailed local experience and consulting the data they have collected, largely during the first half of 2021. The report has been shared with co-facilitators (young collaborators bridging staff and youth) in summary form. This has corroborated and deepened the findings. The UK report, PART 2 / Chapter 5 was devised the other way around: the UK team started the analysis and the NL team responded. PART 3 / Chapter 6 contains a description of the EU level attempt to work towards policy propels. This part has been affected by COVID-19 measure even more than any other part. Luckily, the European Youth Parliament members who collaborated with us took very much the lead and came up with an approach different from what we designed for the country-based alliances. Therefore, the

report is different too.

### *Participatory Action Research*

WP5's activities in the Alliances are based on participatory action research (PAR) (Baum, MacDougall, and Smith 2006), which is similar to Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Leun, Yen and Minkler 2004). We particularly base WP5 on youth-led participatory action research (Ozer and Piatt 2017) where youths themselves learn more about their environment and use this knowledge to CO-CREATE with us new policy ideas to tackle obesity.

Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR) is a form of Participatory Action Research (PAR), an approach to conducting studies that originated as a critic towards a top-down research approach where 'expert outsiders' are studying 'research subjects' (Jacquez, Vaughn, and Wagner 2013; Bennett 2004, Nyden and Wiewel 1992). The origin of PAR has been credited to the thinking of Saul Alinsky (1989/1971), Paulo Freire (2018/1970), and Kurt Lewin (1946) who first coined the terms 'action research'. PAR, as well as a CBPR are rooted in participatory research where community members in research are seen as equal partners with the researchers and the approach values their active involvement and contribution to the entire process. Both PAR and CBPR assume that: Community members are actively participating in every phase of the process; researchers and community members are in true partnership, bringing different strengths to the table; community members have situated knowledge and lived experience that are critical to a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

PAR is "a cooperative, iterative process of research and action in which non-professional community members are trained as researchers and change agents, and power over decisions are shared among the partners in the collaboration" (Ozer and Douglas 2013, p. 66). Furthermore, "[PAR] focuses on research whose purpose is to enable action. Action is achieved through a reflective cycle, whereby participants collect and analyse data, then determine what action should follow" (Baum, MacDougall, and Smith 2006, p. 854). An essential element of PAR is the transfer of [...] knowledge, particularly the technical skills transferred from researcher to community partners" (CalFresh 2012, p. 5). PAR thus includes a phase of empowerment in which participants are provided with capacity building through training or facilitation to further enable them to understand their own lived situation and make use of their situated knowledge.

PAR that is led by youth is commonly known as YPAR (youth-led participatory action research). Youth are still rarely involved in participatory research, not even on issues that are immediately relevant to their lives (CalFresh 2012, Jacquez, Vaughn, and Wagner 2013). Youth-led PAR has found to be an effective tool for young people to address inequalities on various social issues, particularly those that are directly impacting them, including health, as well as successfully promote civic and political engagement among youth (Berg, Coman, and Schensul 2009; Cargo 2003; Ozer and Douglas 2013).

YPAR has been systematically studied in terms of its effectiveness in producing 'empowered outcomes' among young people specifically (Ozer and Douglas 2013), including increasing adolescents' motivation to influence their community setting, inspiring participatory behaviour among youth, improving their general socio-political skills, and heightening perceived control in their schools (Ozer and Piatt 2017).

## *Outline of Youth Alliances*

WP5's activities were conducted in Alliances where young people are facilitated to work together as a group. The youth Alliances were meant to build on and integrate the information gathered in WP2, WP3 and WP4 while preparing youth for WP6 and creating input for WP7. In these Alliances, young people could learn more about the systemic factors that affect health related lifestyles to produce policy ideas and they received capacity building to collect information through activities such as Photovoice or conversational interviewing in order to support these ideas. An 'Alliance' is operationalized as a temporal gathering of a group of young people where they work together towards a common goal. It is the organizational form in which YPAR is taking place.

Alliances themselves are co-created by adolescents, facilitators (CO-CREATE staff) and co-facilitators (slightly older youth, students or younger organization members engaged by CO-CREATE). An existing organization - for example a chapter of Save the Children or a school, were possible as a basis for Alliances if they allowed room to modify the organizational form according to the need of the implementation of the CO-CREATE Alliance model. In each country, three Alliances were meant to be set up consecutively and in collaboration with schools, youth organizations, community organizations or by reaching out to (under-represented) youth themselves. Each Alliance was meant to be facilitated by a CO-CREATE local country personnel we call a facilitator, and by a co-facilitator. A co-facilitator could be recruited from existing youth organizations. The inclusion of a co-facilitator was meant (1) to support the work of the main facilitator and (2) to include youth organizations more integrally in the process in order to allow the possibility for youth organizations to be more substantially involved with the Alliance after the CO-CREATE project is completed. We sought support by youth organizations or schools to enable collaboration beyond a single Alliance.

In line with the objectives of CO-CREATE and following from YPAR, youth themselves eventually should decide on the activities and forms of the Alliances, e.g. in what way and how often they wanted to communicate and/or meet, what topics to discuss during their regular meeting, what capacity building they needed to support their creation of policy ideas, etc. WP5's engagement protocol (D5.1) served as a starting point and offers activities for young people to do. In total we had designed 10 meetings, lasting 1 to 3 hours. The CO-CREATE consortium agreed to offer the same program while opening up for youth to change it. The changes and the reasons for that are documented in meeting minutes and observation notes. To ensure that the activities were exciting and useful for young people while at the same time not being burdensome, youth could also indicate their preferences in terms of which activities they would focus on more or be more involved in. All young people in the Alliances should have received training in different skills, e.g. doing Photovoice or conversational interviewing, but some might be more involved in doing one activity than another, e.g. a young person might do more information collection with Photovoice while opting to do less conversational interviews. In addition, if conducting the activities in their own time is too burdensome, information collection, e.g. with Photovoice or conversation interviewing could also be done during CO-CREATE meetings.

WP5 meetings were designed to offer constant empowerment for young people which is both an overall goal, a prerequisite for meaningful outcomes and a way to enhance participation. The PAR approach in general aims to empower and motivate youth by giving them co-ownership of the activities. Within each activity, empowerment means we allowed young people to personalize,

contextualize, and take control of the outputs of their activities and of the inputs presented for them during the meetings. These considerations and detailed pedagogical or practical instructions for all potential activities have been documented in the Alliance Handbook. Below is a summary of the core activities:

**Getting started: Who are we? What is the problem? What are we going to do?**

1. Introduction of WP5 process, group building, WP4 system maps and ideas prioritization, defining goals of the Alliance
2. Introducing the policy form, identifying information to be collected

**Alliances in action: Where do we see the obesogenic environment? What does science say? What can we do to change the system?**

3. Photovoice training, ethics and data management training
4. Photovoice analysis
5. Discussion on results from WP2 and WP3
6. Conversational interview training
7. Conversational interview analysis
8. Advocacy training, budgeting for activity
9. Analysing the result of activity, finalization of policy form for dialog for a

**Looking back and ahead: How did we like it? What do we propose? How do we proceed?**

10. Evaluation, continuation of Alliance, and transition to dialog fora
11. Dialogue for a (WP6)
12. Reporting back, amending policy form

**Figure 2. Flowchart Alliance activities**



## *Comparing YPAR and CO-CREATE*

With its ambition to engage young people in addressing political issues, empower them towards that end and regard them as equal partners at all stages of the process, YPAR resonates very strongly in the CO-CREATE project. Additionally, the ambition of YPAR to get young people to “identify root causes that create and perpetuate the manifestations of [the identified] problems” (Ozer & Piatt 2017:5; see also Cammarota & Romero 2011) is very much in tune with CO-CREATE’s systemic approach to childhood obesity. YPAR was however designed and often used in such a way that youth participants start with an open-ended issue selection process. In contrast, CO-CREATE were to build on a prescribed topic, i.e. childhood obesity. Bearing with this constraint, the design of the youth Alliance programme has included special attention and activities meant to ensure the young people’s ownership, therefore building on earlier YPAR projects where it was the case (see Ozer & Douglas 2013). Overall, the CO-CREATE Alliances and YPAR largely align, in particular in their ambition to be transformative, participatory and inquiry-based (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009).

In line with the Y-PAR model, young people have been involved throughout the different stages of the WP5 CO-CREATE project. We collaborated from the beginning with youth organization Press and have engaged with young people and integrated their thoughts and feedback in the stages of designing activities and testing recruitment materials. In the Alliances, young people were able to co-decide about their own Alliance activities, focus and trajectories. They were also informed about Alliance processes and outcomes in other regions and countries, international CO-CREATE events and other CO-CREATE work packages to enable their reflection, feedback and participation further. In terms of analysis, we focused on engaging with the young participants in the analysis of their own research products: their photos taken through Photovoice, the surveys and survey results they achieved, their organized pilot activities, and the policy proposals they developed and wrote, in order to achieve a ‘reflective cycle’, whereby participants collect and analyse data and then determine what action should follow’ (Baum et. al, 2006). This was also done in order to obtain a ‘transfer of knowledge’ from the researcher to ‘community members’, especially in terms of theory and technical skills (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Anyon et al., 2018). During the analysis of the research process after the Alliance work, we collaborated more closely with facilitators and co-facilitators to analyse and member-check the data. In all countries, we used ‘open question’ feedback forms filled in by the youth (except for the UK, who did a member-check with youth instead) and (follow-up) WP7 process evaluations filled in by the youth to inform and triangulate the analysis of the research process, as written down in this report. Moreover, local youth organizations were involved in many of the countries (e.g. as young co-facilitators) in the stages of project development, Alliance work and feedback (to activities as well as the WP5 report). The main similarities and differences between CO-CREATE and YPAR are highlighted in the table below.

**Table 2. Similarities and differences between YPAR and CO-CREATE**

	<b>YPAR</b>	<b>CO-CREATE Alliances</b>
<b>[Similar] Purpose</b> (‘transformative’) (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Anyon et al., 2018)	‘Uses collaborative research to increase the power of marginalised groups to improve community conditions’ (Ozer & Piatt, 2017)  ‘to actively intervene in order to change knowledge and practices to improve the lives of youth and their communities’ (Anyon et al., 2018)	Broadening knowledge basis available to obesity prevention by exploring perspective of individuals exposed to obstacles to a healthy lifestyle (framed as ‘obesogenic environments’) – thereby providing opportunities for public health policymaking to complement the epidemiological knowledge usually involved in public health policy
<b>[Similar] Role of young people</b> (‘participatory’) (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Anyon et al., 2018)	‘Valuable collaborators in generating evidence and as agents for changes in systems and communities’ (Ozer & Piatt, 2017)	Acknowledging participating adolescents as equal to academic researchers in their ability to generate evidence that is useful to policy and, as such, entitled (and actively encouraged) to take part in all phases of the action-oriented project
<b>[Similar] Combination of activities</b> (‘inquiry’-based and training-based process) (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009; Anyon et al., 2018)	Action is achieved through a ‘reflective cycle, whereby participants collect and analyse data, then determine what action should follow’ (Baum et. al, 2006), resulting in a necessary transfer of knowledge from the researcher to ‘community members’ especially in terms of theory and technical skills.	1. Capacity building and training programme (a) introduction to low-threshold research methodologies (b) fostering critical thinking (c) advocacy training (d) introduction to budgeting (*)  2. Youth-led output and analysis of outputs (generating, refining, analysing and finalizing policy proposals)
<b>[Similar] Expected outputs</b>	‘Yield even a modest action step within a feasible time frame’ (Ozer & Piatt, 2017)	Policy proposals that make sense to them and that they have had a chance to discuss with local stakeholders.
<b>[Different] Issue selection</b>	Open-ended issue selection process (Ozer & Piatt, 2017)	Pre-defined topic: childhood obesity prevention
<b>[Different] Setting</b>	‘Local communities’, tacitly profiled as socially relevant and culturally cohesive units of experience and mobilisation	Expectedly diverse groups ‘likely to contribute in different but complementary ways’ → ice-breaking and group building activities
<b>[Partly similar] Academic research data</b>	Multiple forms of data to triangulate their findings (i.e. on youth outcomes), incl observations and interviews; chiefly on a single site	A diversity of data collected by a diversity of actors in a diversity of settings, allowing analysis of social processes of fostered engagement of adolescents  Youth input in analysis research through open-ended feedback forms and surveys; member-check with young co-facilitators
<b>[Partly similar] Youth outcomes</b> (‘any change or	Agency and leadership Academic and career	Agency and leadership

improvement in participants' growth or development') (Anyon et al., 2018)	in	Social Critical consciousness Interpersonal Cognitive	Critical consciousness  Cognitive
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## *Research Objectives*

WP5 has the following objectives as stated in the Grant Agreement:

O5.1: To promote and support adolescent participation and political efficacy complementary to the formulation of policies for upstream obesity prevention, particularly in tapping into means and modalities more suitable to and identified by adolescents themselves. This empowers adolescents and contributes to capacity development.

O5.2: To establish sustainable and transferable youth Alliances for overweight prevention policies that allow exchanges of knowledge and learning to happen among and between adolescents and scientific researchers, integrating adolescents' experiential knowledge, scientific knowledge and political knowledge for upstream overweight prevention. We aim for adolescents to continuously recruit peers as a basis of an ever-growing group of adolescents that is policy aware and active.

O5.3: To develop transferable, novel, context-specific and science and experience informed policy options that will contribute to upstream overweight prevention.

O5.4: To collaborate across the work packages, particularly WP2 for existing policies, WP3 for evidence-based policies, WP4, WP6 and WP7 for novel policies. WP5 will recruit and train adolescents also for WP6. Furthermore, WP5 will collaborate with colleagues across WP2-WP7 to identify sustainable and effective upstream overweight prevention policies and forms of collaboration with adolescents and support dissemination through WP9.

## *Research Questions*

To achieve these goals, we have devised an approach based on Youth-led Participatory Action Research as described in detail above. We thus ask if and how WP5's forms of engagement with youth contribute to achieving the above-mentioned goals More precisely:

### **Original research questions**

1. Given the recruitment strategies and the type of engagement approach (YPAR) chosen, how successful were the Alliances in recruiting and keeping diverse youth? How do WP5's forms of engagement mitigate attrition?
2.
  - a. How do Alliances evolve during WP5's engagement with youth?
  - b. What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5's engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth?
3.
  - a. How do WP5's form of engagement affect youth's readiness to take political action
  - b. and perception of the problem of obesity?
4.
  - a. What policy ideas do youth come up with as a result of participating in WP5 activities?
  - b. How do they come up with these ideas?

5. How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas?
6. a. Which concrete activities might have contributed to empowerment  
b. and policy ideas?

### *Structure of the report*

During analysis and reporting, we found out that these research questions were partly overlapping and therefore structured the report in 4 sections which together address the research question as follows:

#### ALLIANCE INTRODUCTION

1. Types of collaborators and recruitment attempts (question 1a and 1b.1)
2. Start date and finish date Alliance (question 1b.2)
3. Number of sessions (question 1b.3)
4. Attendance over time (question 1b.4)
5. Composition/diversity (question 1b.5)
6. Types of activities (question 1c.1)

#### POLICY IDEAS

7. What policy ideas do youth come up with? (question 4a)
8. Which activities contribute to the policy ideas? (question 6b and 4b)
9. How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas? (question 5)

#### READINESS FOR ACTION AND OBESITY PERCEPTION

10. How do WP5's form of engagement affect youth's readiness to take political action? (question 3a)
11. How do WP5's form of engagement affect youth's perception of the problem of obesity? (question 3b)

#### PROCESS, DECISION MAKING, AND OWNERSHIP

12. Decision making about activities and process (question 1c.2)
13. Group dynamics, involvement, commitment, responsive, in relation to activities (question 1c.3)
14. Which concrete activities might have contributed to empowerment? (question 6a)
15. What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5's engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth? (question 2b)
16. Potential effects on attrition (question 1c.4)

Note: 'How do Alliances evolve during WP5's engagement with youth'? (question 2a) has not been answered separately as it is already subsumed in point 12-16 in this structure.

## Methodological Approach

To answer our questions, we employ a complex methodological approach. The projects and the Alliances themselves work on the basis of Youth Participatory Action Research. The process of the Alliance is documented, and then analysed using a multi-sited comparative fieldwork approach (Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009; Clerke and Hopwood 2014) with fieldwork preparation interviews, structured participant observations, fieldnotes, logs, survey data (from WP7) and feedback forms, while outcome data is contextualized in retrospect and collaboratively interpreted.

Hence, the first core element of our approach is triangulation of *data sources* (Hammersley 2008; Flick 2017): different data sources are used in order to assess our research questions to control for and complement one another. The fieldwork preparation phase furthermore provided information on the wider social, cultural and political context of the Alliances (structure of the population, political opportunities, underrepresentation, salient issues in the local context) necessary to interpret the specific workings of the Alliances. The second core element of our approach is triangulation of *interpretations*. By constantly comparing the documents, our interpretations and the interpretations of the facilitators and co-facilitators, we have tried to come to an intersubjectively valid understanding of what happened in the Alliances. In all stages of the research – during the YPAR, while creating the fieldnotes and other documents and during the detailed analyses – we were in constant contact, did many member checks and we made efforts to create continuous contextualization.

### *Methods in practice*

One of the main objectives of the research is to trace back important elements in successfully organizing the groups and the path dependency of specific Alliance proposals. For example: if at the end of WP5 and WP6 activities, a certain type of Alliance proposal gained widespread support, we could trace its origin in the earlier policy ideas, the Alliance proposals and the fieldnotes and reconstruct the local conditions under which this proposal developed in comparison to other cases. In qualitative social science these types of approaches have recently gained popularity: *Explaining-outcome process tracing* (Beach and Pedersen 2013), focusing on mechanisms and *Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)* (Ragin and Rihoux 2009), focussing on regularities of necessary and sufficient causes.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan was to do field visits to collaboratively discuss different possible pathways, share interpretations, code collaboratively in ATLAS.ti and possibly even fill in a QCA matrix. Hence, we planned to have a collaborative learning and action process in a trajectory of collective abductive reasoning (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). For three reasons this did not work out as planned. First, due to the pandemic, a lot of interaction was done digitally. This meant that collaboratively analysing was harder and WP5 researchers had to interact individually with the facilitators within countries. As explained above however, these fruitful collaborations led to more valid and contextually sound interpretations. Second, our first option for secure remote working was within the SAFE digital environment, which turned out to be technically challenging and offered too many constraints. Third, the first readings of the fieldnotes and proposals in the different countries led to such diverse images, that focussing only on common factors would remarkably simplify the

specificity of the different local situations. When regularities are hard to be found at first sight, forcing simplicity upon the data would lead to spurious results. Especially because the pandemic added to the complexity and the different contexts of the Alliances, making comparisons even harder. Therefore, WP5 decided to start with a country-specific descriptive analysis in order to do justice to the data. In the comparative phase (following this report), we focused on tracing processes, cross-case comparisons and looking for necessary and sufficient causes to obtain specific outcomes.

This means that different researchers of WP5 took responsibility for close reading and analysis of all the data of the different countries and communicated with the Alliance facilitators, for clarification, ascertain specific facts and contexts, answering additional questions and member-checking interpretations. As an important part of the triangulation of different data sources, seemingly contradictions and data tensions were discussed with the facilitators.

Since we mostly had indirect access to the youth – through the surveys, the feedback forms and how adolescents were described and quoted in fieldnotes – our descriptions are based on secondary data analysis. This means that in order to properly analyse, come up with credible, dependable, transferable and confirmable descriptions (Guba and Lincoln 1981), and indeed bring forward serendipitous findings, we were very much indebted to the country teams, the co-facilitators and facilitators, who were in direct contact with youth and also part of the research and analysis team. We would like to thank the collaborating colleagues for patiently explaining the specific contexts of the Alliances, the processes, the policy ideas and the Alliance proposals. The data is thus co-constructed by the facilitators and co-facilitators. Fieldnotes and logs were largely based on (co-)facilitators views and understandings of their interactions with Alliance participants and the Alliance contexts, and the surveys and feedback forms were based on direct responses from the young Alliance participants themselves. The triangulation and close collaboration ensure as that our interpretations align very much with what happened in the groups, which makes our research credible, dependable, and confirmable.

### *Data analysis strategy*

In quantitative research of large amounts of textual data, it is common for researchers to first define their methodology, set up their coding scheme, define the codes, describe the (automated) coding strategy, collect the data, and then run analyses in order to answer their research questions. The great advantages of this sequential form of analysis are that a large part of the conceptual work has been done before collection of information, and that large amounts of data can easily be processed. However, serendipitous findings, or totally new notions or knowledges are in this approach more easily overlooked.

Since it is one of the goals in CO-CREATE to make use of the novel ideas and creative minds of the adolescents, our approach needs to foster openness to new narratives and knowledges. Likewise, it is common in qualitative research of textual data that the approach is characterised by acknowledging the insecurity of what the data will bring. Qualitative researchers therefore work with smaller amounts of texts and try to look for details and new information brought forward in these texts, in order to come to an expansion of knowledge on the research questions. Qualitative researchers thus deal with the intricacies of the field under study and the puzzles of the data by iteratively moving

between data, methods, interpretation, and research questions. Much of the categories and codes that people arrive to are constructed in this iteration. By allowing the data to guide the analysis, more openness for new narratives in the data, as well as unexpected or even serendipitous findings, is possible.

In the CO-CREATE data collection, data management and analysis we are somewhere in between both approaches. On the one hand we need a clear structured coding system to make the analyses feasible and come to sensible comparisons on a more aggregated level. On the other hand, we have learned that the multi-country, multi-institutional, multi-cultural, multi-class, and multi-facilitator settings leads to very idiosyncratic differences among successful Alliances. Which is very strong as an outcome, but not fully compatible with using a completely predefined analysis approach.

### *Data collection*

The main aim of data collection in WP5 is process evaluation with which we look closer at the lifeworld of adolescents and their developing perception of obesogenic environments, as reflected in the outputs of YPAR activities and questionnaires. Hence, we report about youth activities and youth gathered material, but we do not include their material as primary research data unless they were part of a policy proposal, which is then relevant data. In case adolescents gathered material (e.g. during Photovoice activities), they were trained to do this in an ethically responsible manner. In the Alliances, adolescents learned how to introduce their activities in case these involved other humans or, for example, businesses. We provided introductory texts/letters. Since we did not use the material gathered by youth for research purposes, we did not aim for consent of the people the youth involved.

In setting up the data collection and data management, we have taken the tension into account between a more guided and structured research strategy versus a more open and in-depth approach by combining both strategies, as is to some extent also done in other multi-sited comparative fieldwork approaches (see Marcus 1995; Falzon 2009; Clerke and Hopwood 2014). In CO-CREATE, this means that we combined openness with a strict organization of the data collection through fieldnotes, logs and proposals on four aspects: meta coding, fieldnote feedback rounds, meeting overview tables and hashtags.

The first aspect is the organization of the automated meta-coding in the fieldnotes, logs and Alliance proposals. By using a semi-structured form, the fieldnotes, logs and Alliance proposals were all organised in the same manner, leading to different themes to be discussed in more or less the same sequence. This sequence was then used to code the different themes automatically. When analysing, simple queries could be run to retrieve information on a specific theme. Appendix 1 provides a list of the automatically assigned codes.

The second aspect is the collaboration between the facilitators and the WP5-team in the fieldnote feedback rounds. Due to the nature of the Alliance meetings and the observational narrative of the facilitators in writing the fieldnotes and logs in English, they are not very structured by default. Fieldnotes can never be fully organised by forms with predefined questions and meta-codes. Furthermore, not all facilitators were trained ethnographers, most of them were non-native English

speakers and their fieldnote writing was informed by their knowledge, views and positionality. Therefore, all fieldnotes were checked for clarity, level of observational detail and quotes, completeness, possibly additional new information, and necessary reflections. This second aspect of our approach led to higher quality fieldnotes, containing ethnographic detail. These fieldnotes were either discussed in country meetings, or written feedback was given. The revised and extensive fieldnotes are the ones we are using in the analysis. The team of WP5 was impressed by the quick learning of some facilitators and very satisfied with the overall quality of the fieldnotes.

The third aspect of our approach consists of what we call meetings overview tables. These tables have been updated after each round of fieldnote inspection to give an overview by means popularized by Jane Ritchie and Liz Spencer (1994) as Framework analysis. These tables show attendance and summarizes, amongst other things, the challenges in and follow-ups for each meeting.

The fourth aspect to solve the tension between pre-structuring data and analysis versus making the data guide the analysis concerns the introduction of hashtags. Since all meta coding was done semi-automatically, it was helpful for writers and readers of the fieldnotes to have the possibility to hashtag relevant and important information in the fieldnotes when it did not strictly fall within the range of the predefined structure. Therefore, all facilitators could add predefined hashtags. When these hashtags were added to paragraphs, we transferred the paragraph to a quotation in ATLAS.ti and added these so-called 'hashtag codes'. This turned out to be highly useful in retaining the narrative structure while adding information at a more abstract code level. Using #discussion and #interesting, facilitators could also bring attention to discussion points or interesting processes.

To give all facilitators the possibility to improve the analysis and interpretation by bringing in aspects they found important in answering the research questions, they could propose new hashtags. During the iterative work between writing and checking the fieldnotes, the new hashtags (for example #research for youth doing research) were discussed and created. Obviously, this led to different focusses of attention between the different facilitators. This was only partly a problem, because we have used these codes mostly as indicators of themes, rather than quantifying and comparing or using the codes unreflectively to answer the research questions. Besides, in the feedback meetings the new hashtags were discussed, in order to make other facilitators aware of the views of the facilitators from other Alliances.

### *Data Management*

The research data management protocol for WP5 data is detailed in a separate document and has been implemented by all WP5's personnel in each country. The following is a summary of the protocol.

The research data collected – policy forms and proposals, fieldnotes, observations and feedback forms – were first stored on facilitator or co-facilitator individual devices, e.g. notebooks, computers, mobile phones, audio recorders, video recorders. Some data have first been collected in written format on paper (e.g. fieldnote minutes, observations) and were later digitized (e.g. transcribed and typed into computer) in standard formats. Whenever possible, the storage of digital data was

password protected while paper-based data has been kept securely, e.g. in a locked office and/or in person.

As stated before, data collected by adolescents participating in WP5 activities has primarily been used to inform young people's policy ideas; the material itself was not intended to be used as a part of the research process. As a result, adolescents' data has not been gathered or stored by WP5 researchers unless it was made part of a fieldnote, or Alliance proposal.

All country data have first been stored on a secure cloud in-country, in accordance with the approval obtained in the specific country. This made that all data containing personal data were compartmentalized and were backed up on a university based and/or secure cloud server in each country of activities.

Person data (e.g. name, contact numbers, etc.) has only been used to support communication between in-country personnel and members of youth Alliances. Person data was not shared with the central WP5 personnel or other CO-CREATE members. Therefore, this document does not contain any names or even indirect data on participants. Names or localities of Alliances are sometimes used, depending on sensibility in its context. Names of schools or clubs have been pseudonymised.

All files accessible by the central WP5 personnel or other CO-CREATE members were pseudonymised before being uploaded to the central secure cloud (MS Teams) at University of Bergen. The collective data could be accessed by CO-CREATE consortium members according to the data management plan.

Within WP5, all files were kept on the MS Teams cloud. The created ATLAS.ti projects were used on secured researcher computers. For backup and exchanging the files, a secured university cloud service (SURFdrive) was used. A file versioning system helped with safely storing the files for later backups.

### *Data analysis and interpretation*

As explained above, our preconceived idea in analysis was to use a simplified version of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (Ragin and Rihoux 2009) or process tracing (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennett and Checkel 2015) with which we would identify combinations of activities, or mechanisms leading up to desired outcomes (changes in action orientation and perception, policy ideas, sustainable Alliances). From close reading of the texts, as well as several discussions within the team and with different country partners, we came to the conclusion that filling the tables for such a QCA-like approach was too difficult without excluding the enormous amount of ethnographic particulars. In the spirit of iterative qualitative analysis, we therefore, adjusted our methodology.

To answer the research questions, we have identified the relevant sources, documents, meta-codes and hashtags per research question (and reorganised parts individually, fitting with the Alliances in the country). Just using the framework tables lacked information on specificities and context. Similarly, only retrieving the codes, however, turned out to be far from sufficient to do justice to the developments that occurred in the Alliances. The codes are mostly administrative and thematic, meaning that they 'open up' the data, describing the topic for the predefined codes. The codes do not directly answer the research question. For instance, simply retrieving all codes that describe

challenges of the adolescents leaves out many challenges that were not considered challenges by the facilitator when writing at that specific moment. Underlying challenges do become clear when considering the texts more holistically, considering backgrounds of the groups, the facilitator, the institutional setting and the whole CO-CREATE Alliance situation.

Therefore, in answering the research question, the main goal is first to try to fully understand what has occurred in the process of each Alliance. How were the different proposals developed? In order to do this, several steps have been taken by all analysts.

The first step has been very **close reading** of the relevant documents. These were the fieldnotes, the logs, the proposals and the feedback forms, but also the meeting overviews and other texts such as deliverable 5.2 and related preparatory documents such as the fieldwork preparation reports (December 2019) and facilitators' surveys (May 2020).

From this understanding of the processes within each Alliance, we came up with a tentative answer to each research question, by describing and **summarising per Alliance**. Using a descriptive approach, we studied all the material available, in order to come to a proper comparative case study of the different Alliances.

We substantiated these answers to the research question by showing on what data we based the claims made in these descriptions and summary, by **retrieving quotations** based on codings and by using the meetings overview. When necessary, extra codes and memos have been created. The WP7 survey, filled in by the adolescents themselves, was used in dialogue with the qualitative material, to either substantiate or negate findings.

When necessary, we **contacted** the different **country teams** to pose specific questions. Due to their kind collaboration and patience, we could engage in sensible distance ethnography (see for some advantages of distance (Hughes and Tarrant 2020) or for defamiliarisation (Tavory and Timmermans 2014). The added clarifications, the contextual and factual information, and the additional information when triangulation led to tensions in interpretations were indispensable.

If possible, **comparisons** between different Alliances within a country were made. In these comparisons, we tried to relate different outcomes to the different conditions and mechanisms within the Alliances. When necessary extra codes and memos have been created.

The next step concerned sharing the interpretations and findings with the country teams to reiterate the process undergone by the Alliances that led to outcomes, co-substantiate the findings, and **member check** the different interpretations. In the case of fieldnotes, direct engagement with the adolescents about these data sources was impossible. This meant that for these data sources, we provided a very engaged form of secondary analysis. We have done this by iteratively member checking the material under analysis.

1. We included evaluation data from the participating adolescents through feedback forms which were filled in by the adolescents themselves.
2. Moreover, we have had a feedback-round in which all (co)facilitators had the opportunity to react to the report. We distributed summaries and provided access to the full report. Meetings

with all country teams were organised to discuss the interim results for feedback but also feedforward: the meeting was set-up for each Alliance, which supported comparisons.

3. Throughout all steps, we have had discussions among the WP5 coordinating team about the structure of the reports and on the different methodological or content issues we ran into.

### *Data used for the country specific reports*

For this report the following types of data have been used. These types have been combined, as shown above with extensive in-person communication with the different country teams.

#### Fieldnotes: structured Observations and Minutes

After each meeting the facilitator made notes of the group dynamics, etc. in English that was reported to WP5 (see Annex 4 for the observation scheme in the form of regular reporting). This report was informed by the PAR minutes taken by the co-facilitator during meetings. We expected 10 meetings in three Alliances totalling 30 observations of about 4 pages each. This differed over the different countries and Alliances, also because of COVID-19 lockdowns. In total 137 Fieldnotes with over 590 000 words were written.

#### Evaluation and Feedback Forms

Next to the structured observations, we have asked adolescents to give qualitative feedback on the Alliance building process and its outcomes by digitally answering a list of open questions. This happened before youth entered in dialogue fora. If members dropped out earlier, we have sent them a short drop-survey to elicit feedback.

#### Logs

All Alliances kept a log to keep track of project progress, including meetings, Alliance contexts and relevant national and local events such as COVID-19 regulations. These logs were used to reconstruct the process of the different groups and were very useful for our descriptive analysis, by giving a rough narrative structure to the data.

#### Policy Ideas and Alliance Proposals

Since creating readiness for action and formulating policies was one of the main objectives for the Alliances, policy ideas have been generated and refined repeatedly: discussing WP4 maps, first draft of policy form, refining the policy form, and preparation for WP6 dialogue forums. We used a form on policy ideas to keep track of all ideas, of which some were developed into a full-fledged Alliance proposal.

## Chapter 1: Netherlands

### *Summary the Netherlands*

#### Introduction and recruitment

CO-CREATE Team NL successfully recruited adolescents from low-income areas of the Dutch population and recruited adolescents having little to no prior experience with political participation. Building on the partnership with two secondary schools (one pre-vocational school and one pre-university school) and with a youth organization (providing co-facilitators), local collaborators and CO-CREATE researchers from Team NL founded two Alliances in the basic vocational school (thereby recruiting 31 adolescents in a middle-sized city) and one Alliance in the pre-university school (thereby recruiting 10 adolescents in a larger city). The three Alliances have been mixed in terms of gender and in terms of ethnicity, especially in the groups in the middle-sized city. In contrast, there was a majority of girls in the group in the larger city, as well as a majority of adolescents reporting the Netherlands as their birth country and that of their parents. In both cities, most students were unacquainted with extra-curricular group participation. School-based recruitment secured recruitment and helped preventing attrition. It also entailed significant adaptation of the Alliance activity programme, to fit short but weekly meetings and also to accommodate some elements of the working methods of the schoolteachers, especially in the groups in the middle-sized city (where the two schoolteachers have been heavily involved in the rolling out of the Alliance process). Although set within the school, the Alliance activities were not mandatory and were not graded. The facilitators had to regularly check as to whether the students have felt coerced into participation, which they overwhelmingly did not.

Most of the 41 recruited adolescents stayed up until the end of the Alliance training programme. Having to move to online work in the middle of the process (due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020) proved doable in one of the groups (NL\_A1) but somewhat challenging in the other two groups (NL\_B1 and NL\_B2). However, in each of the three Alliances sufficient adolescents were able to come up with fully worked out policy proposals and discuss these proposals online with local policymakers. Two participating adolescents (from NL\_B2) have even enrolled in CO-CREATE youth participation activities at the international level.

#### Policy Ideas

The three Alliances came up with good numbers of policy ideas: 16, out of which 9 were fully developed (and 5 of them included in the CO-CREATE Policy Brief of the Netherlands). The initial policy ideas covered a wide range of policy areas: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media and healthy environment. In terms of knowledge distribution, the way the Alliances were implemented in the Netherlands conveyed varied opportunities to get the adolescents further acquainted with expert knowledge on childhood obesity and overweight as well as ample opportunities to explore and express themselves about their experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments (in all three groups). Overall, the adolescents felt at ease to contribute some information and views based on their own experience and some of their experiential views on obesogenic environments translated in some initial policy ideas, some of which made it to the end of

the process (Kitchen take-over, Sugar Tax and Free Sports in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, and Waste Bins in Schools and Cooking Classes in NL\_A1). Finding ground for the development of policy ideas based on other forms of knowledge brought to the Alliances (scientific knowledge brought by facilitators building on reviews and articles; policy knowledge; map knowledge) proved somewhat more difficult for some students in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 – though not for all of them (e.g. Sugar Tax group). In NL\_A1 scientific knowledge and opinions on overweight prevention were repeatedly discussed through reading articles, which seemed fruitful for the students even though engagement in the discussions varied. Encouraging the adolescents to find more (policy or scientifically) based knowledge was hardly successful in all three groups. The research knowledge generated by youth did inspire some adolescents in all Alliances.

#### Readiness for action and obesity perception

In the Dutch Alliances, a readiness to take political action was rather absent at the first part of the process and developed slowly, but gradually. In NL\_A1, in the first meetings, the data shows that the facilitators and co-facilitator related the lack of action amongst the Alliance members and their rather slow developing sense of ownership and aim to make a change for a large part to the young age of the Alliance members and the school setting, in which the Alliance members seemed to perceive the CO-CREATE project as a school task: something mandatory that ended as soon as the hour was over. Young people being active in politics in that sense seemed to be very unfamiliar to the young people in this Alliance, even though they participated in pre-university educational tiers and their backgrounds often reflected a more privileged position in the Dutch society. Similarly, in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, the participating adolescents suggested they did not regard themselves as relevant actors in politics. In contrast, a number of them were quite eager for immediate action in their own circle, i.e. in their own school (e.g. canteen-take-over group). As the policy forms were introduced to the NL\_A1 adolescents, the Alliance members started to become more active when it comes to making real plans about social change. In the case of NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, the availability of a budget to be used to test an idea helped engaging as prospective actors in a policy-oriented way. In the next meetings, a readiness for action kept developing, especially when the Alliance members worked on their action ideas and not so much when they engaged in more generally related activities. Interestingly, some young people mentioned in the feedback form that they would recommend enabling 'action' much earlier in the Alliance process, which may also indicate a discrepancy between the provided activities and the action some young people desired in the first meetings.

Many students in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 had difficulties engaging with system thinking, either because reflecting on what may have an influence on the rise of overweight among youth was experienced as difficult as such (Alliance B1) or because system thinking appeared to be at odds with their own views on the issue (overarching individual responsibility – particularly in Alliance B2 where the matter was vividly debated and contested – although not by all e.g. the Sugar Tax group). For youth in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 it seemed easier though to approach "stress" through a systemic lens. Some of them were indeed acquainted with thinking in terms of involuntary involvement with institutions and the effect on their family life. In NL\_A1, the students seemed inspired by system thinking and could apply the new perspective rather quickly, even though they focused most on the environment directly related to secondary schools. Moreover, they used system thinking pragmatically, which

meant that they considered system solutions suitable in some cases and a focus on healthy individual choices in other cases. In the three Alliances, system maps proved useful as attempts to get the adolescents acquainted with the systemic perspective as well as Photovoice, organizing pilot activities and applying for a related budget (e.g. the Restaurant Group cooking in the school canteen) and additional activities such as debating and organizing an excursion.

#### Process, decision making and ownership

The Dutch Alliances provided varied opportunities for young people to take part in decision-making regarding the tempo and the organization of the meetings. In spite of not being very acquainted with youth participation from the outset – either because of being relatively young (NL\_A1) or because of not being familiar with the youth participation culture (NL\_B1 and NL\_B2), all students engaged in at least some YPAR activities. Although the training programme was largely initiated by facilitators and co-facilitators, the students took an active role in deciding about certain training activities such as, in the case of NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, debating skills training as well as research training (NL\_B1) and urban excursion organizing training (NL\_B2). In NL\_A1, the students took an active role in deciding about Photovoice training, presentation training and formal email writing training. Regarding youth empowerment, taking part in the Alliances led some Dutch adolescents to gain power in terms of knowledge acquisition – especially regarding obesity as a major health issue to be addressed in a systemic perspective; but also in terms of knowledge production (in particular in the groups carrying out surveys) and in terms of voice – e.g. making use of or creating space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, including articulating some issues that matter to them to a larger extent than childhood obesity (such as racism or sex abuse in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, and a sustainable environment in NL\_A1).

The feedback session two years after the start of the Alliances with two co-facilitators, one of them being the schoolteacher, provided us with information about longer term empowering effects of the Alliance work. On a personal level, the co-facilitator/ teacher who had stayed in touch with the students after they left school mentioned that some students were accepted on higher school levels and others were enabled to finish their follow-up education sooner as a direct result of their Alliance activities (in terms of their CV or by showing the work they had produced). One of the adolescents felt so inspired by a group conversation led by one of the facilitators about system level neighbourhood effects on individual lives that she realized that her experiences of loss were not normal nor ok, which helped her and other family members to deal with these experiences in a different way and take new steps in societal participation. At the graduation ceremony, some parents appeared to be exceptionally proud and pleasantly surprised about their children's activities and achievements in an international context. On a readiness for action level, the co-facilitator/ teacher reported that many of the young people had developed research skills and a more critical approach due to the Alliance activities, in terms of asking about references and sources "who else is saying this?" and questioning why things were organized in a particular way by the government or municipality (e.g. "why is it made so complicated for students to apply for student loans? This is not doable for everyone"). Moreover, one of the adolescents – who seemed rather absent in the last meetings at school and who did not continue activities online – started her own investigation in correspondence with the co-facilitator/ teacher about how the municipality had/ had not organized options for Muslimas to participate in sports.

## Conclusion

CO-CREATE in the Netherlands resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in a number of activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent childhood obesity, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members presented and discussed their policy ideas with outsiders (including policy makers), and in particular how those policy ideas can be turned into action. Throughout the data, the following conditions came to the fore that made the Alliances suitable and sustainable for the youth:

- Regularity in the meetings schedule, to enable young people's gradual familiarity with the topic of childhood obesity and with policy from an actor's perspective
- A good atmosphere in the meetings (e.g. group building and providing food)
- A supportive role of the facilitators and co-facilitators to facilitate an inspiring and creative environment and helpful activities
- In the case of NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, the presence of schoolteachers as adult allies, supporting the building of trust relations between researchers (facilitators) and students, especially the most insecure ones
- The young people who got to discuss their policy idea with stakeholders (policy makers, experts from the industry, school professionals) highlighted this activity as very empowering and meaningful

One of the main challenges in the Alliances in the Netherlands was that a large majority of the students were unacquainted with politics and struggled viewing themselves as worthwhile contributors in the matter of policymaking. The other main challenges turned out to be the COVID-19 outbreak, including having to cope with the resulting anxieties among the students and having to switch to online meetings: this resulted in significant dropout among the students, which was fortunately mitigated by the sustained participation of some others, both in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 and NL\_A1, due to the perspicacity and creativity of facilitators.

## *Alliance Introduction and Recruitment Strategy*

### Youth recruitment in Netherlands: Identifying political units, gatekeepers and co-facilitators

To recruit a diversity of adolescents for WP5, in line with preceding WP4 system mapping activities and following WP6 dialogue forums, the Dutch team selected a larger city (more than 700.000 inhabitants) and a middle-sized city (about 200.000 inhabitants).

In addition to being the city where the team has a lot of local connections, the larger city has been a model city when it comes to dealing with childhood and adolescent's obesity. From 2012 to 2015, the percentage of children with obesity declined from 21% to 18.5% (Volkskrant, Het Parool). In spite of the efforts, obesity remains an issue for local governmental authorities, which is addressed along an area-based strategy for a healthy weight. Despite the overall trend of decline, the prevalence of obesity among young people in the larger city is higher among those who are of migrant background (Franssen and Jansen 2015) and young people from lower social economic status (SES) are still dealing with the challenges of healthy living more than those from higher SES.

In the middle-sized city, 19 per cent of children and youth are considered overweight or obese (respectively 15 per cent and 4 per cent), which is higher than the average of 12 per cent of children and youth in the Netherlands. Therefore, the municipality has launched a policy approach for a healthy weight and the municipality coordinates and synchronizes all efforts focused on youth health. Hence, stakeholders of the municipality, the Municipal Health Organization, Youth on a Healthy Weight policy focusing on primary school children and a community organization providing youth work in all neighbourhoods, playgrounds, community centres and activities in the city and successfully involved with diverse youth in all neighbourhoods in the city, as well as with youth participation and youth councils drawn from these young people, meet on a regular basis to join forces and promote youth health. Stakeholders from all these parties were eager to collaborate with Team NL, especially since policies are currently focusing on children rather than on adolescents and all parties are keen to include older age groups and on the participation of young people. The city offers several vocational educations (MBO and HBO) where students acquire knowledge about health, food, lifestyle and the environment.

In the Netherlands, there are many opportunities for youth to participate in public affairs, in particular youth councils appointed by municipalities and/or by secondary schools. However, research shows that there are sharp differences within the youth population: adolescents from higher socio-economic background are more represented than adolescents from the lower socio-economic background in youth councils (Feringa, 2013; Feringa & Tonkens, 2017). This strongly correlates with differences in parents' educational levels (high/low) and tier of secondary education of adolescents (pre-university/vocational and pre-vocational). Actually, the tier of secondary school these young people are enrolled in serves as a proxy of their socioeconomic positions (Kloosterman 2010; Fukkink et al. 2016; Van Daalen 2010). In the vocational tier, 'VMBO' secondary schools have higher portions of students whose parents have basic educational levels and low-income backgrounds while on the pre-university tier, 'VWO' secondary schools, have higher portions of students whose parents have higher educational levels and are relatively more affluent (Cohen 2018; Kloosterman 2010).

Consequently, recruiting in various tiers of secondary education sounded as a relevant way to ensure that both under-represented adolescents and well represented adolescents get a chance to take part in the Alliances (in line with WP4 recruitment strategy). However, while investigating schools populated with a sizeable share of under-represented youths, the UvA team figured that it would be difficult to enrol them outside of school hours, since many of them possibly have a job and contribute to the income of their households, so we looked for a way to hold the Alliances during class time. This entailed that teachers in charge of classes compatible with the CO-CREATE research became important gatekeepers. Two of those teachers have attended the co-facilitators' training in Lisbon (September 2019).

Regarding the recruitment of co-facilitators, the UvA team contacted a community organization as well as members of the youth councils and checked whether to collaborate, integrate and build on their experience in youth work in the local context. The community-based organization has been involved in supporting, developing and facilitating youth participation in general and youth councils in particular for 8 years. Eventually, two members of these youth councils were recruited as co-facilitators. Each of them first engaged with the youth in both Alliances in the middle-sized city. However, after a few meetings, in a rather natural and spontaneous way, each of them started to focus on a particular Alliance.

On the side of the larger city, attempts to recruit co-facilitators involved contacts with youth organizations like Humanity in Action, United Network of Young Peacebuilders, Butterfly Works, DOCK, societal organizations like JOGG and academic student organizations. In the end, the co-facilitator for this Alliance came through the network developed with the school of Applied Sciences. Their students were interested to be connected to CO-CREATE as an internship and learning opportunity. While selecting candidates, the UvA team looked at the kind of youth in the Alliance in relation to the skills of the co-facilitator, and also at practical things like «could they start right away in September» and «would it be a problem to travel to the respective city». Tasks assigned to the co-facilitators are: writing PAR minutes; making photos and videos; making a vlog, supporting the internal communication (between the facilitation team and the youth); and helping with small on the spot tasks. In addition to the 2 teachers, 3 co-facilitators attended the co-facilitators' training held in Lisbon (September 2019).

#### Alliance level recruitment: collaboration and access

While approaching gatekeepers in the middle-sized city, Team NL were told by members of the municipality and policy initiatives on a healthy weight that youth with a practice level education were deemed an underrepresented group of youth in terms of political participation. These gatekeepers connected Team NL with a practice-level school, whose students are not enrolled in regular education, due to (a mixture of) cognitive challenges, behavioural problems and/or financial challenges (entree criteria include lagging behind for three years and being below 18), so that eventually students are issued a certificate acknowledging their basic labour market skills in different directions (such as catering, stores, construction). In particular, the teachers thought the CO-CREATE project connected very well to the youth in the activities they need to do to complete the certificate that provides access to regular education. The school was also interested in relation to the "Healthy School" label they have and pursue to keep, as do 335 other secondary schools in the Netherlands.

This label concerns a national initiative, partnered by several health organizations and Ministries (including Education, Public Health, Agriculture and Social Affairs), and establishes coordinators internal and external to the school and an action plan which, when accomplished, promotes healthy behaviour in schools and assures the possibility to use the “Healthy school” label (see: <https://www.gezondeschool.nl>). Therefore, the UvA team successfully engaged with the possibility to enrol two exam classes (of about 15 students each) of the practice-level school, leading to the setting of two Alliances.

Based on the teacher’s suggestion, the two classes could form two Alliances, following their own preferences on with whom they wanted to work. She made two columns and all the youth indicated where they wanted their name to be placed. In the end, they ended up with two groups that were more or less similar to the classes, with a few of the youth who had switched to the other group. The group that largely overlapped with one teacher’s class was named ‘group A’ (NL\_B1) and the group largely overlapping with the other teacher’s group was named ‘group B’ (NL\_B2).

In the larger city, the UvA team reached out to a school based in in the larger city, preparing for the higher secondary educational degrees (VWO and HAVO). The school is based on an education philosophy in which emphasis is placed on stimulating individuality and initiative coming from the students’ learning needs. Generous amounts of rooms for open meeting spaces are offered. Getting to know each other personally, and facilitating communication are other focal areas of the educational philosophy. The hierarchy is flat, while critical and ‘out of the box’ thinking is highly appreciated in this setting. Education should be focussed on gathering knowledge but also other (intra- and interpersonal, and creative) skills. Hence, learning is approached as a lifelong process and creativity is welcomed. The school is a recognized ‘culture profiling’ school. The coordinator of the ‘culture profile’ of the school in charge of all the arts projects, provided Team NL with access to the school. Students choosing this school are mostly from middle to high-income families. There is a random selection done in the city, so the 12-year-olds have to fill out their choices in terms of the high school they want attend. Then the random selection decides where they go. For the school this means not all of the young people attending the school are living in the direct neighbourhood. Upon hiring, the teachers are required to make a conscious choice for the educational philosophy. The 4th year students of the school need to select an elective course that runs one hour per week for 4 to 8 months. CO-CREATE’s youth alliance programme was shaped to fit the mould of being an elective. The purpose of the ‘elective program’ for the fourth-year students is to broaden their perspective. Modules are offered on a wide range of topics like philosophy, dance, drawing, photography, climate change, Spanish. The CO-CREATE elective course started in September 2019 with 10 participants, that chose to take part in the elective themselves.

Alongside the school, the UvA team explored possibilities to set up an alliance in less privileged areas of the larger city. Particular neighbourhoods consist of culturally more diverse populations with a higher number of inhabitants who have a more vulnerable socio-economic position and young people living in these neighbourhoods are less likely to be involved in political participation. The UvA team managed to organize and facilitate a WP4 mapping session in one of these neighbourhoods. Moreover, the UvA team spent six months on getting access to these neighbourhoods, using connections with youth organizations, other societal organizations and schools, for example by offering internships for students. In order to proceed, the UvA team needed to find a sustainable social or youth organization partner but was not able to find one. The UvA team wanted to start a

non-school-based alliance, in collaboration with a societal organization rooted in community work with the prospects of this organization continuing after the CO-CREATE team finished their work. The UvA team contacted a range (7) of youth organizations and youth work organizations, in collaboration with a policy organization. Along the process, the UvA team learned that even though the contacted organizations expressed interest and were enthusiastic to support kickstarting a CO-CREATE alliance, none of the organizations felt they had enough personnel capacity to be a lead partner in this process.

Alliance meetings and attendance over time

For NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, the starting date of the Alliances was 02-09-2019 and the end date 02-07-2020, with a total of 16 face-to-face Alliance meetings, and 4 online meetings with B\_1, and between 1 and 7 meetings with the five sub-groups in B\_2. The first face-to-face meeting was attended by 13 young people in B\_1 and 15 young people in B\_2. In the subsequent face-to-face meetings attendance was rather stable, with 3 young people from the B\_1 group switching to B\_2 from Meeting 11 onwards, and 2 from the B\_2 switching to the B\_1 group for one session (Meeting 3), then back to B\_2.

**Table 3. Attendance youth Alliance in NL\_B1 before COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
NL_B1_01 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_02 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_03 (f)	█	█	□	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	B2	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_04 (m)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_05 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	B2	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_06 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	B2	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_07 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_08 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_09 (m)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_10 (f)	█	█	□	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_11 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_12 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B1_13 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
NL_B2_05 (f)	B2	B2	█	B2	█	B2	B2	█	█	█						
NL_B2_09 (f)	B2	B2	█	B2	█	B2	B2	█	█	█						

When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their group work online. From March onwards, the

facilitators continued with 13 motivated Alliance members through separate WhatsApp discussion groups and Skype or Zoom meetings for each sub-group separately (organized based on the policy ideas: 5 groups - 7 members in total, for NL\_B2, and one group - 6 members, for NL\_B1). For three of the sub-groups, only one young person per policy idea was involved, and the communication was mainly progressing through WhatsApp and/ or phone calls.

**Table 4. Attendance youth Alliance in NL\_B2 before COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
NL_B2_01 (f)																
NL_B2_02 (f)																
NL_B2_03 (f)																
NL_B2_04 (m)																
NL_B2_05 (f)																
NL_B2_06 (f)																
NL_B2_07 (f)																
NL_B2_08 (f)																
NL_B2_09 (f)																
NL_B2_10 (f)																
NL_B2_11 (m)																
NL_B2_12 (m)																
NL_B2_13 (f)																
NL_B2_14 (f)																
NL_B2_15 (f)																
NL_B1_03 (f)	B1															
NL_B1_05 (f)	B1															
NL_B1_06 (f)	B1															

**Table 5. Attendance youth Alliance in NL\_B1 after COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants	1 Online	2 Online	3 Online	4 Online	5 Closing activity	6 Dialogue forum
NL_B1_01						
NL_B1_02						
NL_B1_04						
NL_B1_09						

NL_B1_12							
NL_B1_13							

**Table 6. Attendance youth Alliance in NL\_B2 after COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings	Participants	1 Online	2 Online	3 Online	4 Expert interview	5 Online	6 Online	7 Online	8 Online	9 Dialogue Forum
NL_B2_09	Food prices									
NL_B2_13	Food prices									
		1 Online								
NL_B2_03	Free sports									
NL_B2_14	Free sports									
		1 Online								
NL_B1_10	Helping hand									
		1 Online								
NL_B2_01	Abuse/ trauma									
		1 Online								
NL_B2_02	Nutrition course									

In NL\_A1, the starting date of the Alliance was 02-09-2019 and the end date 02-07-2020, with a total of 17 face-to-face Alliance meetings, and 10 online meetings. The first face-to-face meeting was attended by 10 young people. In the following face-to-face meetings attendance was rather stable.

**Table 7. Attendance youth Alliances in NL\_A1 before COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
NL_A1_01 (f)																	
NL_A1_02 (f)																	
NL_A1_03 (m)																	
NL_A1_04 (f)																	
NL_A1_05 (f)																	
NL_A1_06 (f)																	
NL_A1_07 (f)																	
NL_A1_08 (f)																	

NL_A1_09 (f)																	
NL_A1_10 (f)																	

When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their group work online. From 10<sup>th</sup> March onwards, the facilitators continued with the Alliance members in WhatsApp discussion groups and Zoom meetings for each sub-group separately (along policy ideas – 3 groups, 10 members in total).

**Table 8. Attendance youth Alliance in NL\_A1 after COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants		1 Online	2 Online	3 Online	4 Online	5 Online	6 Online	7 Online	8 Online	9 Online	10
	Waste									Dialogue forum	Closing activity
NL_A1_05											
NL_A1_09											
NL_A1_11											
	School fruit	1 Online	2 Online	3 Online	4 Online	5 Online	6 Online				
NL_A1_01											
NL_A1_02											
NL_A1_06											
	Cooking class	1 Online	2 Online	3 Online	4 Online	5 Online	6 Online	7 Online	8 Online		
NL_A1_03											
NL_A1_04											
NL_A1_07											
NL_A1_08											

The attendance of the young people in the sub-group that focused on a waste-free environment was most consistent and they had 10 online meetings, including a dialogue forum training and a dialogue forum. The other two sub-groups varied more in their attendance. The young people in both sub-groups could not be available in the 6<sup>th</sup> online meeting due to school exams, and with the summer Holiday nearing and a busy school year ahead, the young people in the sub-group focused on free school fruit indicated they wanted to end their involvement. Some of the young people in the cooking lessons group stayed involved and kept working towards a dialogue forum in two more meetings and WhatsApp contacts. Eventually, they did not succeed in inviting stakeholders (in particular influencers) and they decided in the fall that they would not continue. Six of the young people were present for the (online) closing activity; the other four could not make it due to a retake for their school exams.

## Composition / diversity

We can sketch a profile of the recruited groups, on the basis of the number of participants and their gender and social-geographical differences.

### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

The young Alliance members in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 lived in a peri-urban environment: the middle-sized city has about 200.000 inhabitants. The young people were diverse in terms of their gender. In NL\_B1, 13 young people participated in the Alliance, including 11 females and 2 males; in NL\_B2, 15 young people participated in the Alliance, including 12 females and 3 males (with 3 females switching from the first group to the second from Meeting 11 onwards). The WP7 survey results show that the young people in the Alliances in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 had somewhat diverse backgrounds in terms of their socioeconomic status, with 30 per cent of the young people of NL\_B1 who participated in the survey (n=10), and 29 per cent of the young people of NL\_B2 (n=14), scoring low on the family affluence scale (FAS), 50 per cent (B1) and 42 per cent (B2) of them scoring on a medium level, and 20 per cent (B1) and 29 per cent (B2) of the participants scoring on a higher FAS level. The teachers of both Alliances mentioned that poverty was a serious challenge for the majority of their school population and that this was also the case for many of the young people in Alliances B1 and B2.

The young people were also different in terms of their descent. In NL\_B1, 80 per cent of the young people reported the Netherlands as their birth country and 20 per cent a country outside of Europe. 40 per cent of the young people had mothers, and 50 per cent had fathers, with the Netherlands as their birth country, whereas 60 per cent had mothers, and 50 per cent had fathers, who were born outside of Europe. In NL\_B2, 64 per cent of the young people reported the Netherlands as their birth country and 36 per cent a country outside of Europe. 29 per cent of these young people had mothers, and 36 per cent had fathers, with the Netherlands as their birth country, whereas 64 per cent had mothers, and 57 per cent had fathers, who were born outside of Europe, and 7 per cent had mothers and/ or fathers (7 per cent) who were born in another country within Europe.

What is also striking regards the political experience of the Alliance members: none were currently member of a political or non-political organization and 60 per cent of the young people in NL\_B1 and 7 per cent of those in NL\_B2 reported to have been a member of an organization in the past. The latter fact was however not reflected in the conversations with the young people, or in the teacher's reports, to the contrary. We have not been able to check with the young people what they meant by indicating that they had been a member of a political or non-political organization in the past. The (currently) absent level of membership of political or non-political organizations is not quite surprising since we purposively targeted 'underrepresented' youth in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2.

### NL\_A1

The young Alliance members in the larger city lived in an urban environment (more than 700.000 inhabitants), in an "upper-SES" area. The young people were less diverse in terms of their gender: 10 young people participated in the NL\_A1 Alliance, including 9 females and 1 male. The WP7 survey results show that the young people in the Alliance in the larger city had somewhat diverse backgrounds in terms of their socioeconomic status, although they generally scored higher on the FAS compared to the young people in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, with 9 per cent of the young people in

NL\_A1 who participated in the survey (n=11) scoring low on the family affluence scale (FAS), 36 per cent of them scoring on a medium level, and 55 per cent of the participants scoring on a higher FAS level. When looking at the descent of the young people in the NL\_A1 Alliance, all of the young people reported the Netherlands as their birth country. 82 per cent of the young people had mothers and/or fathers with the Netherlands as their birth country, whereas 18 per cent had mothers and/or fathers who were born outside of Europe.

In the NL\_A1 Alliance, none of the members were currently member of a political or non-political organization or had ever been a member of an organization. This is in line with the members of the NL\_A1 Alliance being quite young on average (including some 15-year olds).

**Table 9. Youth diversity in the Alliances**

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS	THE NETHERLANDS TOTAL (n=36)	NL_A1 (n=11)	NL_B1 (n=10)	NL_B2 (n=14)
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	78% (n=28)	91% (n=10)	70% (n=7)	72% (n=10)
Male	19% (n=7)	9% (n=1)	30% (n=3)	21% (n=3)
Missing	3% (n=1)			7% (n=1)
<b>Active member of a political or non-political organization</b>				
No, and I have never been	81% (n=29)	100% (n=11)	40% (n=4)	93% (n=13)
No, but previously	19% (n=7)	0% (n=0)	60% (n=6)	7% (n=1)
Yes	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
<b>Birth country</b>				
The Netherlands	78% (n=28)	100% (n=11)	80% (n=8)	64% (n=9)
Country within Europe	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
Country outside of Europe	22% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	20% (n=2)	36% (n=5)
<b>Mothers birth country</b>				
The Netherlands	47% (n=17)	82% (n=9)	40% (n=4)	29% (n=4)
Country within Europe	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	7% (n=1)
Country outside of Europe	50% (n=18)	18% (n=2)	60% (n=6)	64% (n=9)
<b>Fathers birth country</b>				
The Netherlands	53% (n=19)	82% (n=9)	50% (n=5)	36% (n=5)
Country within Europe	3% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	7% (n=1)
Country outside of Europe	44% (n=16)	18% (n=2)	50% (n=5)	57% (n=8)
<b>FAS: car, van or truck</b>				
No	22% (n=8)	9% (n=1)	30% (n=3)	29% (n=4)
Yes, one	53% (n=19)	64% (n=7)	30% (n=3)	57% (n=8)
Yes, two or more	25% (n=9)	27% (n=3)	40% (n=4)	14% (n=2)
<b>FAS: bedroom</b>				
No	19% (n=7)	0% (n=0)	20% (n=2)	29% (n=4)
Yes	81% (n=29)	100% (n=11)	80% (n=8)	71% (n=10)
<b>FAS: computers</b>				
None	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
One	6% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	10% (n=1)	7% (n=1)
Two	6% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	7% (n=1)
More than two	88% (n=32)	100% (n=11)	90% (n=9)	86% (n=12)
<b>FAS: bathrooms</b>				
None	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
One	75% (n=27)	55% (n=6)	90% (n=9)	79% (n=11)
Two	25% (n=9)	45% (n=5)	10% (n=1)	21% (n=3)
More than two	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
<b>FAS: dishwasher</b>				
No	19% (n=7)	9% (n=1)	40% (n=4)	7% (n=1)
Yes	81% (n=29)	91% (n=10)	60% (n=6)	93% (n=13)
<b>FAS: family travel</b>				
Not at all	28% (n=10)	18% (n=2)	50% (n=5)	21% (n=3)
Once	19% (n=7)	18% (n=2)	20% (n=2)	21% (n=3)
Twice	22% (n=8)	37% (n=4)	10% (n=1)	21% (n=3)
More than twice	31% (n=11)	27% (n=3)	20% (n=2)	36% (n=5)
<b>FAS categories</b>				
Low FAS (0-6 score)	22% (n=8)	9% (n=1)	30% (n=3)	29% (n=4)
Medium FAS (7-9 score)	45% (n=16)	36% (n=4)	50% (n=5)	42% (n=6)
High FAS (10-13 score)	33% (n=12)	55% (n=6)	20% (n=2)	29% (n=4)

## Types of activities

### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

In Alliances B1 and B2, the meetings were held at school. Most of the activities from the Engagement Protocol were carried out, but in a different order and with adapted emphasis.

Up until Meeting 3, the main focus was on getting the students acquainted with what was expected of them in general terms and fostering their ownership ('make the project their own' – NL\_B2\_FN02:FN17), in particular in getting them to express their hopes and fears and to encourage them to think on how they want to plan their meetings, leading some of them to consider going to a café to hold the meetings (B1) and some to go on an excursion (B2). To get acquainted with the topic of the project and stimulated to explore their perception, Photovoice was introduced at Meeting 2 in a general fashion:

"The instruction was to look into the school environment and outside (but it was raining, so inside the school would be fine too) what made it difficult for them to live healthy and obtain/ maintain a healthy weight or what helped them" (NL\_B2\_FN02:FN17).

From Meeting 4 onwards, research techniques and instruments were introduced in slightly greater detail to encourage the youth to reach out for external information as resources to strengthen their idea, with the possibility to build on ideas from other youth groups. During Meeting 4 and Meeting 5, the Alliance forms were introduced in a more specific way and were used by all subgroups except for one (Kitchen take-over group). Besides, the Alliance budget was discussed at the request of some students (in particular those most prone to take action) in both B2 (Sport group) and B1 (Kitchen take-over). At Meeting 4, the students were invited to reflect on the system maps produced by other youths. Presentations were purposively short and immediately followed by putting into practice. Photovoice training was repeated in Meeting 6 and reframed as to look for good and bad examples for their ideas, in an incremental fashion, with the facilitator, teacher and co-facilitator trying to slow down the work pace of the students and think more to give a stronger structure to their ideas. During Meeting 7, the few pictures taken were discussed in the B2 group, based on the original SHOWED form (which seemed more appropriate for these Alliances at that very moment than the adapted version featuring in the Engagement Protocol).

In the two Alliances, debating (Meeting 8, preparation and Meeting 9, implementation for NL\_B2; Meeting 9 and Meeting 10 for NL\_B1), a combined school and CO-CREATE activity, was also introduced to help the young people deepen their own reflection (through simple research tasks such as asking questions and seeking information from 'scientists who are on top of things with their topic' in order to strengthen their statement) on issues involving personal responsibility versus a systemic perspective.

From Meeting 10 onwards, the development of policy ideas seemed to be hampered by differing phenomena in the two groups, resulting in somewhat different coping strategies. In NL\_B1, the youth became frustrated not to be allowed for action (Cooking at the school restaurant/helping students with stress to prevent problem eating) seemed to challenge their ability to progress in moving on to a systemic perspective. The facilitators and teachers therefore allowed pausing with the development of policy ideas and took the time for action, before getting back to policy ideas. In NL\_B2, sensing

there was not enough inspiration among the youth and continuing working on their policy ideas as this was difficult for many in the group, facilitators and teachers opted for a turn towards more training and support and building on what worked (watching short movies; debating) and on action-oriented ideas they voiced in previous meetings (excursion): switch to “more practical ideas that related to other school activities” [FN10] then move back to policy ideas later on.

From meeting 12 onwards, in NL\_B2 the facilitator started considering “engag[ing] in some individual chats, also engaging some of the youth to continue the project in a smaller and more focused group, and really work on bringing action ideas further [...] and also make sure not to exclude youth and to open the opportunity to all.” [FN12] Along the way, the youth received training in observation and interviewing and advocacy (by co-facilitators). In NL\_B1, the sub-group setting was maintained from Meeting 12, allowing the Restaurant group to challenge themselves to learn from their experience of cooking to elaborate their idea of a youth friendly cook book; and the Helping Hand to somewhat clarify their vision and relate their idea to existing initiatives in the local environment.

In NL\_B1, not much training activities in relation to the CO-CREATE protocol were offered and/ or continued through. The Photovoice activity was introduced in Meeting 2, 5 and 6, with a Photo assignment. This resulted into little response and action among the young people, despite of initial enthusiasm and the (co-) facilitators encouraging them. The policy proposal was also introduced in meeting 5 and further developed in meeting 15 and 16. Some of the young people eagerly started to fill it in (the Helping hand group) whereas others did not write much on it and did not like to use or develop it later on. The young people received basic interview training in meeting 5, which was quickly picked up by some of the young people in the Restaurant group, who then started walking through the school and entering other school classes to interview young people who were in class. Both the teacher and the rest of the Restaurant group did not agree to this swift approach which ended in agitation and the young people then ended their activity. The rest of the group worked on building a survey, as guided by the co-facilitator, and sending out emails to teachers with questions about the Healthy Canteen guidelines. This was picked up in the subsequent cooking activities, in which the young people practically discussed whether their recipes would fit the Healthy Canteen guidelines with the responsible teacher.

System mapping activities were first introduced in meeting 4, with pre-existing system maps printed on the walls and a thought experiment to come up with potential factors, and with looking at the action ideas. In meetings 9 and 10, the facilitator provided a working sheet with basic questions about the wider system of food production. These questions were not answered by the young people, while they were all too busy with cooking and then evaluating the activity (and receiving critical remarks and feedback from teachers involved in the kitchen). From meeting 10 onwards, the UvA team worked with two facilitators, and one of them focused on NL\_B1. The aim was to move between the cooking plus helping hand activities (in meetings 9, 12 and 14) and evaluating them while reflecting on the wider systemic implications of the policy ideas in meeting 10, 12, 13, 15 and 16. It turned out to be difficult to plan the advocacy training by the facilitator and/ or the co-facilitators (based on their participation in the youth council) which was also provided in Alliance NL\_B2 in Alliance NL\_B1 as well, due to their focus on action and some meetings that were postponed because of holidays and exam preparations.

The facilitators and co-facilitators regularly checked in with the young people who wanted to start a ‘Helping Hand’ peer-to-peer support initiative, using Instagram and collaborating with the school. Rather than making pictures for the Photo Voice assignment, these young people made a collage, recruitment poster and Instagram account where the poster was shared. They filled in the policy form in meetings 5, 15 and 16, and they reached out to social workers who worked with girl groups at schools, who invited the young people over to discuss their ideas. The young people tried to find an opportunity and time slot to make an appointment, which turned out to be difficult. Even though the facilitators and co-facilitators, in particular one of the teachers, regularly supported these young people to guide them with these activities, the group often worked independently and lacked a more constant form of support. At meeting 15, three of the four young people informed the facilitator that they felt less engaged in the activities; they mainly continued out of feeling guilty towards their peer and wanted to focus on their school tasks and upcoming exams.

In this process, the schools suddenly closed due to the COVID-19 regulations and the young people reported a low mood in the subsequent online contacts, which made it harder to have discussions about their idea and about a system perspective, and further developing ideas and the policy proposals. Some of the Restaurant group worked towards a dialogue forum with different stakeholders, whereas others checked in merely to stay in touch about how things were going.

**Table 10. Alliance activities and engagement in NL\_B1 (up to meeting 16)**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	Starting the day (5 minutes) Introduction and presentation (20 minutes) Forming groups: Alliance NL_B2 (and NL_B1) (10 minutes) Splitting up in groups: Alliance NL_B1 moving out to a separate room (5 minutes) Filling in the WP7 questionnaire on paper (45 minutes)	Some anxiety regarding the project. A boy from the newly arrived group asked how long the presentation would last. When the facilitator said about 20 minutes, he relaxed.’ - NL_B2_FN01). During the presentation, increasing engagement: Two girls in the front talked among themselves at the beginning, but stopped when asked’ - NL_B2_FN01). “Attention was raised, the presentation was not experienced as too long and many were engaged in watching the movies.” NL_B1_FN01. “At the end of the presentation when entering practicalities, many of the youth were talking at the same time and it was hard to get them quiet again. This seemed due to how they would act being in one room with this large group, at the beginning of the school year.” NL_B1_FN01. The youth filled in the questionnaire. About 10 of the youth asked questions about particular words. The atmosphere was rather noisy and the room was crowded. “Many of the group were speaking at the same time, and the Alliance seems to exist of youth who easily speak out, or talk with each other. They were engaged though.” A girl who was initially in Alliance NL_B1, asked afterwards to be placed in the quieter Alliance NL_B2 afterwards, saying that she tried, but she liked the calm atmosphere better.” At the end, the majority of the youth greeted the

		facilitator and smiled.
<b>2</b>	<p>Kicking-off: introduction of co-facilitators (youth council) and handing out the CO-CREATE Doppet bottles (15 minutes)</p> <p>Group building (hopes, fears, talents) and group agreement (35 minutes)</p> <p>Photovoice exercise (30 minutes)</p>	<p>Being prompted to write down (on sticky notes) what they hoped (on hearts) and what they would want to avoid and would find unpleasant (on stars) about 1) the assignment and what they wanted to learn, 2) working together as a group, and 3) practicalities such as where to gather, what to eat and drink, breaks, all proceeded and, when finished, all youth walked to the flip-over to attach their notes. No one volunteered to read out what was on the notes, so the facilitator read the notes together with youth council co-facilitator.</p> <p>Being asked to write down their talents all youths started writing for a few minutes and then they handed in the notes, except for one who initialled struggled with identifying her talents.</p> <p>Being invited to a simple Photovoice exercise, the youth took pictures, most of them about the canteen and smoothies sold in there and came back to share the pictures and have a talk about them in small group: "There seemed to be interest for action: a few asked when they would be doing the photo activity. When boy NL_B1_09 read about the Photovoice activity in the list with suggested activities he mentioned that he knew exactly what to do with this exercise. They also understood the exercise rather quickly and seemed to enjoy it." FN02.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p>Group agreement (15 minutes)</p> <p>Talents (5 minutes)</p> <p>Assignment (written by the teacher/co-facilitator who was absent): Being a journalist / being an event manager and thinking in order to a) write about the CO-CREATE project for the school newspaper or b) to plan location and catering (60 minutes)</p>	<p>In the beginning the group was rather calm compared to the previous session. Some of the youth were critical in the beginning, mentioning that they found the project boring, or asking why they were still not going (or being taken) to the Barista café.</p> <p>"The group could move surprisingly fast: they were quick and effective in summarizing the sticky notes with hopes and fears, and they included the youth on both sides of the table in the process. "</p> <p>The co-facilitator (following on the facilitator while the latter had to move to the other group) "noticed that when she posed a question (and in case there was a lot of talking but no answer: when she repeated the question) that the youth were interested and became more focused in continuing their discussion. [The co-facilitator] also noticed that all of the youth looked in the event managing book she took with her. [The substitute teacher] said that in his view, the youth did not listen well to each other, to him, or to [the co-facilitator. The latter] disagreed and mentioned that the group discussion was not very different from what she was used to in the youth council meetings, and that she did experience chaos, but also a will to move on." FN03</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>Simple system mapping assignment: think about (systemic) factors that influence overweight among youth and write them down (20 minutes) Looking at system maps and action ideas of 5 groups of youth in the Netherlands + discuss, write down or take over what stood out of them (20 minutes) Deciding about action idea and filling in the Alliance proposal form, keep documents in multi-map of the sub-group (40 minutes)</p>	<p>As they were invited to work in sub-groups formed previously, the youth first resisted (“we are one group!”), but after a while, the youth remembered they chose sub-groups earlier.” All youth were engaged within their smaller sub-groups. FN04. Out of four sub-groups, two sub-groups wanted to stick to the restaurant idea.</p> <p>Thinking of factors, “not all were as eager to walk to the hallway and look at the system maps and action ideas. In the end, all, or almost all, had a look, but some much more in-depth than others.” Looking at the system maps and action ideas of others inspired all youth to come up with action ideas themselves. The group that focused on problem eating came up with ideas about who to approach (youth) and how to engage them (with a vlogger), and the group that focused on the restaurant went to see the teacher in charge of the kitchen.</p> <p>As a fourth sub-group, girls NL_B1_01, NL_B1_02 and NL_B1_03 were focusing on making sports mandatory on high schools. They moved on to look up information about this on Internet, since [the facilitator] mentioned that there were new developments about this in policy making. After the meeting, when talking to the Restaurant sub-groups, they decided that they wanted to go back to the Restaurant idea. They did not know whether they were still able to, and when it was said that they were, they liked that idea better.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Presentation to fill in Alliance proposal form, getting more info, Photovoice and system perspective (+ interviewing training mentioned) (10 minutes) Handing out new Alliance proposal forms (5 minutes) Continuing with Alliance proposal forms and action ideas in three sub-groups (60 minutes)</p>	<p>The group seemed to be interested and engaged during the presentation.</p> <p>The sub-groups engaged with strengthening and continuing their idea using Photovoice and finding information:</p> <p>The school restaurant group approached teachers related to the canteen and kitchen and made appointments with them to discuss their idea. They were also supported to make pictures of the school canteen, and the canteens of the two alternative locations of the same school elsewhere in the city. The school information evening group wants to find out the planning of the information evenings for parents at school. The Helping Hand group is setting up an Instagram account, anticipates to help youth with problems and how to handle this in peer-to-peer contacts, in collaboration with [the class teacher]. They also consider how to use Photovoice in the upcoming meetings.</p> <p>All youths “moved to organizing activities, although still very much on the school level. There were ideas about photo voice, yet somehow they were not put into practice (despite of repeated encouragement)</p>

		and when asked, there was little response on why they did not do it.” FN05.
<b>6</b>	<p>Start of the day (5 minutes)</p> <p>Short introduction of photo voice (5 minutes)</p> <p>Preparing and doing Photovoice/ continuing with Alliance proposal in sub-groups by “making pictures of 1) activities/ situations/ places they see as a good example or 2) as a bad example for their idea, and/ or 3) of the place where they want to locate their idea, showing how and where the place is or is not suitable” (less elaborate than protocol, since the youth prefer short explanations and want more action/ start with cooking) (80 minutes)</p>	<p>The youths engage with the Photovoice exercise but the three sub-groups don’t seem to go much beyond the school level (yet not explicitly encouraged or questioned about that yet); except for the helping hand group, “by using Instagram and making a linkage to the online world, their scope and aim is potentially broader” (i.e. connecting to a woman working for the municipality) FN06.</p> <p>“Photovoice did not seem fully clear, and when it did seem clear, there was little interest and action. The idea of going out for observation, taking pictures, how this would relate to their action idea, and sharing it with the group all seemed to be too much trouble and not appealing.” “only after kindly pushing them a bit, the Information Evening group made a picture of the aula and screen shots of potential menus on Internet.” FN06</p> <p>“All sub-groups are ready to act and easily start asking and walking around, writing things down, and plan for activities on the school level. Particularly in the Helping Hand group, and to a more limited extent in the Restaurant group, there are clear linkages to the level of the broader city and the online level. The Helping Hand group also expressed interest to take over the CO-CREATE Instagram account, and started looking it up and imitating making a vlog.”</p>
<b>7</b>	<p>Taking fruit and smoothies from the table (5 minutes)</p> <p>Introducing Instagram account take-over and announcing online WP7 survey next week (10 minutes)</p> <p>Discussing progress activities (10 minutes)</p> <p>Preparing presentation (presenting the action plans to each other next week)/ filling in Alliance proposal form/ making pictures (20 minutes)</p>	<p>No picture taken as part of the Photovoice exercise; the youths seem to simply want to move on with their activities.</p>
<b>8</b>	<p>Start of the day (10 minutes)</p> <p>Introduction of the debate (5 minutes)</p> <p>CO-CREATE announcements (Instagram take-over, upcoming survey Friday, bol.com vouchers, colleagues visiting next week) (5 minutes)</p> <p>Explanation and showing how to ask questions to researchers as</p>	<p>Instagram take-over: nothing had happened this week. The facilitator also received minimal response when she mentioned it this day (including from a member who showed interest two weeks before).</p> <p>All youth were about equally engaged in the activities: “all sub-groups got a bit further and they seemed to enjoy and appreciate this [...] According to [the co-facilitator, in charge of facilitating the subgroup], the budget form helped the Restaurant Group to come to</p>

	<p>preparation of the debate (5 minutes)</p> <p>Preparation of the debate in small sub-groups: girl NL_B1_03 (50 minutes)</p> <p>Filling in the budget proposal: the Restaurant group: girls NL_B1_01, NL_B1_02, NL_B1_12, NL_B2_13 and boys NL_B1_04 and NL_B1_09 (50 minutes)</p> <p>Handing out bol.com vouchers (15 minutes)</p> <p>Making flyers with the menu for the parent information evening (Information Evening group) (30 minutes)</p>	<p>a concrete plan of cooking and buying groceries.” {NL_B1_FN08}</p>
9	<p>Restaurant group: Meeting with school canteen teacher about problems and practicalities, cooking in the school canteen, cleaning, serving and selling the dish to students and staff at school;</p> <p>Helping Hand and information evening group: start with Alliance NL_B2, then engage in debate or continue in own sub-group/ social media coverage on Instagram (Helping Hand)</p>	<p>Restaurant group: during the cooking, the youth divided tasks and were all engaged in cooking, managing and/ or cleaning. All youth were highly engaged and serious in cooking. The role division went smooth and all had clear (and diverse) roles, by which they managed to succeed in preparing and selling the food they wanted to serve, as well as leaving the kitchen clean for the next users. Girl NL_B1_02 has been appointed/ self-selected as the leader, although all took and alternated leading roles at times. [NL_B1_FN09]. The group dynamics were productive and constructive. Even under stress and time pressure, the Restaurant Group collaborated well (in a lively manner, which seems familiar to them).</p> <p>Helping Hand: successfully logged on Instagram (with help of teacher and facilitator) + In the afternoon, they had posted their Helping Hand project as a story on Instagram. To [the other facilitator], they said that the project was boring, since they had to think and prepare so much before they could be doing something. When [he] said that when preparing well, you can also do better things, they responded positively. Girl NL_B1_11 took the lead in taking the paper [...] handed to them and in answering the questions (see NL_B1_FN_08) about their project. [NL_B1_FN09]</p>
10	<p>Opening (10 minutes)</p> <p>Working in small sub-groups on CO-CREATE and on other school activities (65 minutes)</p> <p>evaluating cooking of the Restaurant group</p> <p>others did other tasks due to the Dance day from 10.00 hr. onwards, we engaged with them informally and about their other (Democracy) project (focused on facilitating the</p>	<p>The atmosphere in the room was calm, particularly with everyone working alone or with two on diverse school projects. The restaurant group concerned the only youth who worked in a bit of a larger group of six youth today and they were more vivid and noisy in their discussion of e.g. the feedback they received. They split up in a rather natural way to divide tasks for the project, with boy NL_B1_09 and girl NL_B1_13 going after approval of the recipes, and the others were also engaged. Girl NL_B1_12 was less engaged today, and she also expressed to be annoyed by the</p>

	youth and their drive to start the activities, and stimulate them to see the systemic side to their actions and ideas, even though the system level is not always that clear and inspiring to them)	feedback of [the canteen] teacher. [NL_B1_FN10]
<b>11</b>	preparing debate about statements related to overweight debate about statements budget proposal for 2 <sup>nd</sup> cooking session	All were very much engaged in the debate and also in the topics they discussed. They invested in preparing their arguments. The atmosphere was respectful and all of the young people were able to speak out and listened to. The debate worked very well to get the youth engaged on the topic, to have them sharing and discussing perspectives and to add a systemic perspective to the individual responsibility perspective. [NL_B1_FN11]
<b>12</b>	cooking	This group itself is particularly vocal, especially NL_B1_04 and NL_B1_12 seem to be dominant factors but the others do not seem bothered by it, they engage in debate when questions and can defend their ideas and visions. In this meeting the roles were already divided between cooking different dishes and so they were mostly working in smaller groups, within these smaller groups there seemed to be a consensus and a generally pleasant vibe, everyone seemed to be involved and sharing ideas with each other. [NL_B1_FN12] However there are still 'problems addressing the system level. The group is very enthusiastic when it comes to cooking within their own schools but getting them to upscale their thoughts is quite a challenge.' [NL_B1_FN12]  The Helping Hand group worked independently; they chose a separate room to work in, and the facilitators from Alliance B1 and B2 both thought they were with the other group.
<b>13</b>	Evaluating of action ideas (Cooking/ Instagram/ Helping Hand) looking and moving forward	Within the Helping Hands, NL_B1_10 is clearly the most dominant, she is clearly present and the most vocal. However, this does not mean that she makes all the decisions, all four participants are involved in the thought process and others also speak out. They are also able to 'stand up' against NL_B1_10 if need be. Within the Restaurant group, there is more balance. Here the two dominant factors are mostly NL_B1_04 and NL_B1_12, they are quite loud and opinionated. However, the others do not really seem bothered by this and are able to voice their own opinions and concerns without hesitation. [NL_B1_FN13]
<b>14</b>	For the restaurant group: Meeting in the kitchen (5mins) Cooking (1hour 15mins) Cleaning (10mins) Selling the products (15min) Helping Hands: NL_B1_07,	There were some a little bit of tension in the restaurant group, mainly because NL_B1_04, NL_B1_12 and NL_B1_13 were not actively participating and quite loud and dominant. The other group members (mainly NL_B1_01 and NL_B1_02) have made several attempts to include them, without

	NL_B1_08, NL_B1_10 and NL_B1_11 were working on their project in a different room: their intentions for the use of budget	success. This tension did not go any further however, both groups seemed to go their own separate way and leave each other be. Many of the group were speaking at the same time, and the Alliance seems to exist of youth who easily speak out, or talk with each other (e.g. boy NL_B1_04, girls NL_B1_12 and NL_B1_13). They were engaged though. [NL_B1_FN14]
15	Work on the policy proposals and filling policy forms (in two groups)	<p>Restaurant group: Overall, it was difficult to keep this group engaged, they are very active when it comes to the practical cooking but sitting down and filling in policy forms is very tedious and boring for them (they do not see the use of it). So it was quite challenging, most of the policy forms have about 5 sentences filled in as of now. NL_B1_13 and NL_B1_12 were constantly influencing others, not putting in any work. Their distractions ended up with others also stopping their work and having casual conversations. NL_B1_13 and NL_B1_12 seem to remain dominant factors, it does not bother others so much but they are very much distracted by it.</p> <p>Helping hand group: some important developments, working on two ideas simultaneously, one a set of lessons through which they want to inform other youths about the dangers of over-eating through a form of peer education. The other idea was to further build on their Instagram page where they would share information regarding over-eating and providing a space where youth can come and talk to them in private (eventually left aside once part of the group left).</p> <p>The youth were working on the policy proposals but it did not seem very 'real' yet, it feels like they still view it as a school assignment. [NL_B1_FN15]</p>
16	further developing the policy ideas	Again, NL_B1_04, 12 & 13 continued to refuse working on the project properly, they are not talking back when [the facilitator] ask[s] them to work on something but they just do not do it. NL_B1_04 & 12 seem to be the dominant factors here. [The facilitator has] approached NL_B1_13 separately and then she does agree to work but then quickly gets dragged back into doing nothing with the others. The other group (NL_B1_01, 02 & 09) were also more distracted than usual, but they always work and interact with you and are willing to engage. [NL_B1_FN16]

**Table 11. Alliance activities in NL\_B2**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	<p>Starting the day (5 minutes)                      Introduction and presentation (20 minutes)                      Forming groups: Alliance NL_B2 (and NL_B1) (10 minutes)                      Splitting up in groups: Alliance NL_B1 moving out to a separate room (5 minutes)                      Filling in the WP7 questionnaire on paper (45 minutes)</p>	<p>Polite toward the facilitator ('Half of the youth shook hands with me when entering the room, all nodded or smiled' NL_B2_FN01); some tension though regarding where to sit down ('About five of the youth in the class were dissatisfied with where they were placed to sit, as indicated by name cards' - NL_B2_FN01) and some anxiety regarding the project ('Boy NL_B1_04 from the newly arrived group asked how long the presentation would last. When I said about 20 minutes, he relaxed.' - NL_B2_FN01).                      Increasing engagement ('Girls NL_B1_12 and NL_B1_13 in the front talked among themselves at the beginning, but stopped when asked' - NL_B2_FN01).                      Forming groups (NL_B1 and NL_B2) went rather smoothly, guided by the teacher. In the end, the two groups appeared to be rather similar to the existing classes.                      Some shy, in need of being prompted to take part. At the end, the majority of the youth greeted the facilitator and smiled.</p>
2	<p>kicking off: introduction to co-facilitators and CO-CREATE Dopper bottles                      introduction Alliance form                      Photovoice activity                      group building: introduction suggestions box and 'parking lot'; hopes and fears activity (as introduction to group agreement)                      Talents activity (introduction)</p>	<p>Youth increasingly familiar with facilitator (many shook hands upon arrival) and expressing interest in health and curiosity about the project.                      All of the youth were speaking out when probed. There was some chatting, but the youth were easily quiet to listen to their peers again. All cooperated well with the exercises. Some were questioning the project and activities more than others (e.g. girl NL_B2_02 and boy NL_B2_11). Girl NL_B2_02 volunteered at the same time, while inviting girl NL_B2_01 to join, and together they took the lead in reading the hopes and fears to the group. This was accepted by others.</p>
3	<p>Starting the day (10 minutes)                      Discussing action ideas and plans in 3 groups (50 minutes)                      Group agreement and talents (30 minutes)                      Certificate</p>	<p>All groups working calmly: one focusing on the topic ("map with factors related to (improving) health" – B2_FN_03; leading to some discussion of whether or not weight is a personal responsibility); one focusing on where to meet as a group; one focusing on how they could use their group budget and on group agreement.                      When the facilitator moved between the groups, all youth in the groups talked and shared the ideas they had been talking about. In the bigger group discussions, some talked more than others (girl NL_B2_02, boy NL_B2_11 talked the most and the easiest – FN03). Some tension among some of the students/sub-groups, regarding whether the project is taken seriously.</p>

		The reflection about the hopes and fears and the group discussion afterwards provided quite some consensus, also confronting (rather than avoiding) tensions between some of the youth.
<b>4</b>	<p>Starting the day (10 minutes)</p> <p>System maps (30 minutes): coming up with systemic factors that affected overweight among youth in small groups and writing them down; with the possibility to look and get inspired by system maps and action ideas of 5 groups of youth in the Netherlands</p> <p>Action ideas and Alliance proposal forms (40 minutes):</p> <p>deciding about action idea to focus on as a subgroup and filling in the Alliance proposal form</p> <p>keep documents in multi-map of the sub-group</p>	All the groups worked on filling in the proposal form, one of which seemed to have been inspired by looking at system maps. Some went from writing action points to already taking initiative or looking up information. The group dynamics seemed cooperative (no more tension between groups). Working in the sub-groups worked well and the system maps and Alliance proposal forms and multi-maps appeared to be productive and helpful to the youth to develop their action ideas. However, one student (working alone due to absent co-worker) seemed rather confused and unable to understand the purpose of the project (while her own views being challenged by systemic talk – albeit having an action idea that could be seen as systemic – harder punishment for sexual offenders).
<b>5</b>	<p>Starting the day (5 minutes)</p> <p>Presentation on strengthening action ideas as a prerequisite to action (10 minutes): geared at 1) encouraging the youth to think bigger than their own group; using a peer (18y girl from a vocational school in Rotterdam) as a role-model; 2) Seeking for more information through research; 3) getting the youth acquainted with research tools such as Photovoice for their observations (framed in a more specific perspective, research-oriented – using peer-led illustration) and interviewing</p> <p>Action ideas and Alliance proposal forms (40 minutes): (added to protocol, since the system focus is still very limited in the action ideas)</p>	There was limited attention at the beginning of the presentation, some were looking away, no questions were asked. There seemed to be appreciation that the presentation was brief. Yet, it was not noisy and some did look at the screen. Especially when the facilitator highlighted the Detroit photo voice examples, the youth seemed more engaged, although this did not translate in being eager to take pictures themselves. The sheets seemed to be appreciated, to have a summary of next steps to take on paper. When working in the sub-groups all were engaged. All groups projected themselves in doing research (either interviewing – some making interview questions – or visiting other places). Some initially resistant to systemic perspective gradually move forward. For one group there is an enduring tendency to focus on their own school and own activities.
<b>6</b>	<p>Start of the day (5 minutes)</p> <p>Short introduction of photo voice (5 minutes)</p> <p>Preparing and doing Photovoice/ continuing with Alliance proposal in sub-groups (80 minutes) with an</p>	<p>Despite the invite to go out all sub-groups stayed in the classroom. Starting up slow after one-week vacation. Photovoice did not seem fully clear, and when it did seem clear, there was little interest and action.</p> <p>All youth were engaged in their sub-groups. Except one group, all come up with plans for reaching out to external source of information (e.g. through interviewing identified resource persons from their</p>

	<p>invite to “make pictures of 1) activities/ situations/ places they see as a good example or 2) as a bad example for their idea, and/ or 3) of the place where they want to locate their idea, showing how and where the place is or is not suitable.” + some examples connected to the different ideas, and support to go out and make pictures of e.g. other schools/ restaurants/ canteens</p>	<p>own network or beyond). The readiness to start making pictures for Photovoice was limited, except for the Food Prices group, who made screenshots of food prices.</p>
7	<p>Start of the day (5 minutes)</p> <p>Taking fruit and smoothies from the table (5 minutes)</p> <p>Introducing Instagram account take-over and announcing online survey next week (10 minutes)</p> <p>Photovoice analysis (building on SHOWED steps): 2 pictures (20 minutes)</p> <p>Preparing presentation/ filling in Alliance proposal form/ discussing motivational challenges (50 minutes)</p>	<p>Introduction of the Instagram account that the youth can take over: The general response was a mixture between surprise and enthusiasm (especially NLB2_14, NL_B2_01) and some did not respond so much.</p> <p>Some tensions between some youths and facilitator + teacher (“a number of the youth spoke out that they did not want to influence other youth, or make a change on the system level.” – NL_B2_FN07).</p> <p>The photo voice analysis seemed important: it created some new ways of thinking and also initiated, or revealed, resistance. Motivation seemed to be dropping for many of the youth as the project lingers on and many had expected to be doing the activities by now. The facilitator and the teacher questioned them and listened, which seemed to help for some (e.g. boy NL_B2_11), but hampered others (e.g. girl NL_B2_15).</p>
8	<p>start of the day (10 minutes)</p> <p>introduction of the debate by teacher (5 minutes)</p> <p>CO-CREATE announcements (Instagram take-over, upcoming survey Friday, bol.com vouchers, colleagues visiting next week) (5 minutes)</p> <p>Explanation and showing how to ask questions to researchers as preparation of the debate (5 minutes)</p> <p>preparation of topics and statements for the debate in small sub-groups (50 minutes)</p> <p>handing out bol.com vouchers (15 minutes)</p>	<p>No engagement with the Instagram yet.</p> <p>Some are open to get extra information (Healthy Voices) to strengthen their arguments, some rather “feel that they did not need extra info and [...] rely on themselves” (NL_B2_FN08).</p> <p>Most youth were engaged, some were quicker than others in starting to work. The youth seemed eager to formulate statements and debate about the statements (about who and what is responsible for overweight). The debate seemed to help some to engage more with some sort of systemic perspective: “Some of the statements reflected overweight or lifestyle as a systemic issue and this was picked up by the youth. Girls NL_B2_15 and NL_B2_03 found arguments for providing support to people with limited financial means to enable them to buy vegetables and fruit. Others (NL_B2_06, NL_B2_07, NL_B2_14) also said that they agreed to this statement.” (NL_B2_FN08)</p>

<p>9</p>	<p>Opening (5 minutes)</p> <p>Preparing the debate (45 minutes)</p> <p>Debating (30 minutes)</p> <p>Break (10 minutes) + ordering and picking up food (60 minutes, after project time)</p>	<p>All of the youth were engaged and collaborated well in the preparation as well as in the debate.</p> <p>Confirmation of the role of debating to provide openings for engagement: “While individual responsibility was highly valued during the debate and previous meetings, several youth started to argue in the debate for a stronger role of the government and municipality in influencing the opportunities and incentives for individuals.” FN09</p> <p>“Today, there were more references to overweight as a systemic issue compared to the previous meeting. Some youth had chosen to defend the more systemic statements and looked for/ found arguments to support that. Yet, overweight as an individual responsibility remained acknowledged and the youth found it hard to counter this.” FN09</p> <p>It was also good for group building that the youth ordered some food afterwards</p> <p>Motivation to continue with action ideas seemed better than during previous meeting (see NL_B2_FN_08)</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Introduction excursion (10 minutes)</p> <p>Movies of health and youth participation reference projects in Rotterdam (30 min)</p> <p>Assignment to investigate sites and projects to attend in Rotterdam (30 min) (not in line with protocol, inserted to stimulate having fun in the project, to raise interest in existing policies and to stimulate engagement at the level of the city, since motivation has been dropping: the youth find the project and aims too difficult)</p> <p>Time to fill in questionnaire (15 minutes) some filled in the WP7 survey</p>	<p>The responses to the excursion plan were generally enthusiastic and curious about where to go. The youth generally paid attention to the video and were engaged with the stories of the volunteers. Quite a few came late and were not very engaged, in contrast to those arriving on time. Some seemed to be bothered by other pressing issues: “So the fact that she was there and stayed in the class was quite something for her given her situation.” [FN10] “The fact that some youth are less motivated and/ or struggle with personal problems can pose some challenges to the group process.”</p> <p>It worked that the facilitator and teacher took another direction, and offer more guidance</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Starting the day (10 minutes)</p> <p>Movies of reference health projects in Rotterdam + discussions (20 minutes)</p> <p>Movie news item ‘our city snack city’ + discussion (10 minutes)</p> <p>What to learn from the CO-CREATE project (10 minutes)</p> <p>What would your ideal healthy city look like + discussion (30 minutes):</p>	<p>Some struggling to engage with the movies of reference, some more easily. Some productive response to being prompted for debating what they watched (what do you see as positive? Do you have any critique? – FN11). Some quieter youths though. One boy openly distrustful toward the value of the project.</p> <p>“Food and drinks worked, watching movies and discussing them worked, addressing critique (while also setting some boundaries to influencing the context of the meeting) worked and thinking about the ‘ideal city’ worked as well.” (FN11)</p>

	brainstorming and writing down ideas which the youth would actually (like to) use in the city (not in line with protocol, inserted to stimulate having fun in the project, to raise interest in existing policies and to stimulate engagement at the level of the city, since motivation has been dropping: the youth find the project and aims too difficult)	
<b>12</b>	<p>starting up after the Holiday (20 minutes)</p> <p>looking back and forward</p> <p>action ideas so far (10 minutes)</p> <p>searching on the Internet: some initial context to the action ideas (find more information in order to see whether these idea(s) would be fitting in the city) (10 minutes)</p> <p>studying the urban environment: preparing the excursion, deciding on roles and on where to go (50 minutes - not in line with protocol, inserted to stimulate having fun in the project, to raise interest in existing policies and to stimulate engagement at the level of the city, since motivation has been dropping: the youth find the project and aims too difficult)</p>	<p>The youth were generally interested when the facilitator walked through the ideas. Upon receiving information regarding the initial ideas (as to whether such ideas would close some gap in the local context), there were few responses, and although the youth seemed to listen, attention also seemed to be dropping.</p> <p>More engagement as to whether going on an excursion; eventually voting for The Hague, with the prospect of visiting the Parliament.</p>
<b>13</b>	<p>Research questions for excursion (45 minutes)</p> <p>training in interviewing and observation, including how to prepare oneself for this (45 minutes)</p>	<p>Many of the youth were nicely engaged in research about the Hague and what they could learn from the excursion (coming up with research questions and observation list); some in larger group, some rather in smaller group. Some were not comfortable with writing down research questions and observation list or interview questions.</p> <p>“There was some energy to make in between steps towards action: thinking about environments, preparing an excursion, preparing observation and interview questions. The youth needed some encouragement, explanation and examples (after the general explanation; most fruitful in small groups), but the majority went to work.” (FN13)</p> <p>The presentation about interviews and observation was said to be long by some youths (15 minutes) but the majority was engaged and the facilitator was</p>

		satisfied with ‘making it a bit harder for [the youth] and [...] felt that we also gained from more CO-CREATE perspective and activities’: “When they say (boy NL_B2_11) they don’t learn from the project, they may be right when we downgrade too much on what we teach them. At the same time, we need to keep attuning what they can and want to handle and process in terms of training and teaching.” [FN13]
<b>14</b>	<p>Introduction by teacher (non CO-CREATE related)</p> <p>Discussion about system level and overweight</p> <p>Choosing the best ideas (which will be turned into policy proposals next week)</p> <p>Showing the shocking statement clip by Kees-Jan for the documentary</p>	<p>“It was the first Monday morning after the vacation. Nevertheless, some students participated really well. Namely NL_B2_01, NL_B2_02, NL_B2_04 and NL_B2_15. Girl NL_B1_05 also contributed to the discussion. They were participating in the discussions and answering questions. The rest was a little bit less engaged [especially WHO graphs] and only spoke when asked” (FN14)</p> <p>System level: some moves forward but still quite some resistance to systemic thinking, paired with political distrust.: “In this session we tried to explicitly raise this concern, this was met with mixed success. Most participants find that while system plays a part, we are still responsible for our own actions. However, some did acknowledge that marketing and income has a significant influence on people’s choice (NL_B2_15: If you are poor you can only afford certain unhealthy foods)” [FN14]</p> <p>English spoken message by video maker was well understood by the youths but raised questioning.</p>
<b>15</b>	<p>Choosing which idea they wanted to work on (10 minutes)</p> <p>Working on the policy idea by filling in the form (50 minutes)</p> <p>Looking at the system maps whether their idea would fit in one or more of the maps (10 minutes)</p> <p>Looking ahead (10 minutes)</p> <p>Voucher preferences (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Some engagement with working on policy ideas as long as adult attention is provided</p> <p>End of Alliance work announced: some explicitly relieved (2); some keen on continuing and going to policymakers (4).</p> <p>Some unmotivated youths have influence on peers, in particular “boy NL_B2_12, who has since the beginning been engaged (although being shy), but it is hard for him to join another group instead of his peers (boys NL_B2_11 and NL_B2_04) who are less motivated.” Some bothered by less hard-working peers.</p> <p>Some progress in filling forms</p>
<b>16</b>	<p>Starting up (10 minutes)</p> <p>introducing option to go to the city for the September meeting (10 minutes)</p> <p>preparing next week dialogue forum (10 minutes)</p> <p>workshop youth participation by youth council co-facilitators: how youth can have an influence on their</p>	<p>Some youths interested to go to the city (including one who never left the city)</p> <p>About half of the group was very engaged in the workshop (on youth participation) and the related assignment (“what would you like to change, and how would you approach this? It could be anything: something for the elderly, for youth, for the city, some injustice they experienced.”) and the other half was not interested and expressed they did not want to work on the ideas. Some boy seemed ‘so motivated and fast at the beginning’ but his motivation seemed to have dropped.</p>

	environment, on behalf of the Youth Council (60 minutes)	
	Introduction Dialogue Forum tool	

## NL\_A1

In the NL\_A1 Alliance, the first two meetings were mainly dedicated to group building and getting started as a group. From meeting 3 onwards, the Alliance members were more clearly introduced to the project theme of obesity prevention and creating healthy living environments for young people. This was done by reading and discussing newspaper articles in meetings 3, 8 and 11 and by a number of training activities. In meeting 4, the Alliance members discussed causes of the rise in obesity alongside system maps and action ideas designed by other young people in the Netherlands. In meeting 5 and 6, they received a photo voice training in which they made pictures themselves, which were discussed in meeting 7 and 8. In meeting 9, they received a vlogging training and in meeting 12 a training in conversational interviewing. From meeting 13 onwards, the Alliance members started to use the policy form to write down and develop their policy ideas. When the Alliance members anticipated encounters with stakeholders through a planned visit by EAT to explain the dialogue forum tool, a planned health policy day by the AAGG where the Alliance members were invited, and envisioning their own dialogue forums, they asked for a presentation training, which they received in meeting 15. In the online meetings from meeting 18 onwards, the Alliance members focused on their policy ideas and policy forms. They created and distributed (and were helped by) a survey, they reached out to stakeholders and prepared dialogue forums. One of the sub-groups who focused on waste bins and waste separation at schools managed to organize and participate in a dialogue forum. Another group was not able to attract influencers and first postponed their dialogue forum to after the summer, but they were eventually not able to organize one.

**Table 12. Activities NL\_A1**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	Introduction games Provide overview of what CO-CREATE is and what we will do in the Alliance Provide consent form (youth and parents)	The class seemed easy going, except from the boy that noted he was here involuntarily and wanted to go to another elective.
2	Hopes/fear (expectation) exercise (WP7?) Hand in consent forms	They seemed to like the interactive exercise and started to work on it enthusiastically. The atmosphere was very vibrant, relaxed and nice. The youth took part actively.
3	Contextualizing their idea of a healthy living environment with newspaper articles assignment	The atmosphere was relaxed while the youth were working independently. In their small groups, it wasn't always about the topics they should be working on, but when the co-facilitator went to the groups to ask them about the progress, they went back to work. One of the groups thought it was a

		nice and clear assignment.
4	WP4 system mapping exercise World cafe to develop their own ideas based on the maps	There was a good atmosphere, clear structure and an overall nice vibe in the classroom. It was nice to see that all participated in the small groups, the talks and discussions were relevant. They came up with bright ideas and dared, in a friendly way, to comment on each other. NL_A1_03 (m) was very negative but slowly starts to be more respectful and engaged.
5	Deciding on a group agreement Photovoice training 1 (in visual literacy & working with text). I choose to split the photo voice training in two parts since its only 1 class hr, so there is too much information to be put in a short time frame to do it at once	General atmosphere: Everyone looked a bit tired, after the first half hour everyone started to participate nicely. It seemed that some students liked the photography and text exercises more than others. Some felt comfortable with the exercises that left room for interpretation and creativity, while others felt less comfortable and were seeking how to go about it.
6	Taking a moment to get back to hopes/fears/talents Second introduction session Photovoice	The atmosphere was positive. They looked happy regarding the fact that they could really do something physically like going around and taking pictures. This brought a nice vibe into the classroom. The co-facilitator observed: "In the beginning, largely everyone was a bit tired and absent. Later everyone participated well, especially with the practical assignment".
7	Showing a youth health/climate art exhibition in the city Discussing the photos they made of their living environment and what they liked and thought could be improved in it Explaining policy form Filling out policy form Re-introducing budget and asking every small group to decide on one representative that could be part of the budget committee	Group looked distracted in the beginning. They became more engaged when they all had to share why they selected a certain image. Quiet and pleasant working atmosphere.  NL_A1_03 (m) was yawning a lot. But he has been difficult to engage throughout the whole process. The group of this person did not get very far with the policy form, while that other two groups got quite a lot done.  It worked to call them upfront and have them explain the photo's they took. When the facilitator asked the others to ask deepening question, then not much came out, just some minor questions they had heard the facilitator ask earlier.
8	Introduction article "youth moves too little" Explain how to use IG of CO-CREATE Talk about privacy / ethics when using photo voice Look and talk about photo's made to support their policy ideas	There was a pleasant work environment. They all seemed to be quite focused and feeling relaxed within the setting of the class.  To the Instagram account, they reacted with an attitude as if everything said sounded very basic, simple and understandable. When talked about ethics, they also reacted as if it was all very logical to them.  When the group split in smaller groups of three, with them being so young (mostly 15, some 16)

		each group seemed to need some guidance.
9	vlogging training (given by co-facilitator)	There was a pleasant work environment. They had fun with the video making.
10	Connecting previous session with this session: Showing co-facilitators vlog as inspiration Introduction WP leader and senior researcher CO-CREATE who share about the project as a whole and how the youth in other countries are doing work on the policy proposals in 3 groups	The atmosphere was nice and the students worked enthusiastically.  The students reacted well when asked questions by the facilitator/ country leads, a lively discussion followed.  It worked nicely to have the country leads sharing about the project on a larger scale and also giving them a sneak peek on how the youth in other countries were doing.
11	discussed two relevant articles related to healthy living environment the youth worked on their policy proposals (focus on content and budget)	The two groups that read this article discussed the questions shortly with each other. Their answers were quite minimal (so they were not going into sharing their own thoughts much). They treated it like a school assignment (answer the question and move on).  After their Christmas holiday break, the youth felt slightly fresher/ more rejuvenated. They raised more curious questions than normal  The facilitator noted indifference of some youth. To be the eight' hour on Monday means they are tired and pretty much done with their day. It took a lot of energy out of the facilitator to lift the group energy and get them enthusiastic and/or engaged.
12	short debriefing of the process so far Update on what is coming in the weeks to come Conversational interview training & role games	The young people seemed absent and preoccupied with other things. They needed a lot of guidance and encouragement to be present. There seemed to be an overall lack of motivation, it seemed quite unclear to the youth where they were heading with this project.  NL_A1_03 (m) and NL_A1_04 (f) paired up. Their body language was one of being disinterested, with their heads on the table and expressions like "I am hungry, tired, I just want to go home". Some Alliance members explained that they were tired and found it a bit boring as they could not see the practical relevance yet.
13	Working on the policy proposal	There is a bit the same dynamic in the three groups each week. Some of the youth are more enthusiastic than others.
14	Discussing plans for coming weeks, discussing eating diaries, policy proposal, having informal drinks as a group	The class was very calm and quiet. They reacted enthusiastic to the presentation training, the documentary maker, and the policy day and the dialogue forum that were upcoming.

		<p>Overall, they worked enthusiastically on the tasks given to them, and when a task needed to be divided amongst them, they did this in a democratic way</p> <p>During the informal meeting the students suddenly loosened up a lot.</p>
<b>15</b>	<p>Presentation training (invited trainer) React to (video) shock statements for the World Obesity Day Hand out coupons &amp; informal drinks in cafe</p> <p>In between meetings: the cooking lessons group visited cooking lessons at another secondary school</p>	<p>The youth were enthusiastic about and engaged in the presentation training, which they requested themselves.</p> <p>Now that they went a bit more into action, and the school management was finally on board as well, it felt a bit better. For the youth it was important to feel that their school management and the project management (CO-CREATE) really cares about them and sees them as equal partners.</p> <p>The drinks helped enormously to build the connection with the youth. An app group was started after the drinks, to which the youth reacted much quicker than they did to the emails.</p>
<b>16</b>	<p>Update budgets and planning, introduction of two articles and dialogue assignment, working out policy proposals (together)</p>	<p>The morale was really good within this group and they seemed really thrilled to get into action. There seems to be a positive shift after the informal drinks last week, and the visit of the 'cooking classes program' at another secondary school with the CO-CREATE 'cooking group' on Wednesday</p>
<b>17</b>	<p>Introduction and preparation AAGG day; Introduction budgeting tool (excel template); Introduction of the W6 dialogue tool; Work time policy proposals</p>	<p>There was a positive vibe in the classroom. They seemed to realize that the practical part we work towards (pilots of policy ideas and the forum) is getting closer. So, while talking over the visit of EAT mid-March and the AAGG day beginning of April they listened attentively and asked quite some questions. There was no clear leader in terms of asking questions, they all seemed to be active in the collective part of the session.</p> <p>During the individual part (where they worked in groups) the cooking and free fruit group were more energetically present and pro-actively making use of their time, in comparison to the waste bin and waste separation group.</p>
<b>18-27 online</b>	<p>Finalizing policy form; designing and distributing surveys; approaching stakeholders; preparing dialogue forum; dialogue forum (one sub-group)</p>	<p>The first sub-group who worked on the idea of waste bins and waste separation at schools worked very engaged on their policy idea and surveys up until the dialogue forum with three stakeholders.</p>

		<p>In the second sub-group the youth that focused on cooking lessons at school were not all as active but were nevertheless very engaged to shift their policy idea to an online (Instagram) format and to also prepare a dialogue forum. They did not succeed to get a response from influencers and wanted to move their activities to the fall, but in the end, this did not turn out to be compatible with school.</p> <p>The third group who focused on free fruit at schools started rather engaged but were at the same time disappointed that their planned action could not be realized due to the closing of schools and they indicated shortly before the final meetings that they lost their confidence in making an actual change, and hence their motivation.</p> <p>All of the Alliance members were interested in a closing activity. Unfortunately, the youth of the sub-group who focused on the cooking lessons were told shortly before the meeting that they had an exam, so they could not join. Those who participated did so enthusiastically.</p>
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Most of the Alliance members were engaged in the initial activities, apart from one boy who made clear from the beginning that he did not choose neither liked this course, but he needed to participate anyway to be able to pass his school year, which was discussed with him by the facilitators in the light of ethics (he was not obligated to participate in terms of research). Even though his lack of motivation had an influence on the group, the young people were generally involved in the activities. There appeared to be a dip in engagement around meeting 11, where the Alliance members seemed quieter and more distracted (FN\_A1\_11). The facilitators (a second facilitator jumped in) tried out different ways and activities to engage the young people more, and what eventually got their interest were ‘real life’ activities: the policy day on health where they were invited, the opportunity to organize actions and events in relation to their policy idea, and the dialogue forums. Up until the final face to face meeting 17 at school, the young people were increasingly engaged now that the project became “more real” and action focused. In the online meetings, the first sub-group who worked on the idea of waste bins and waste separation at schools worked very engaged on their policy idea and surveys up until the dialogue forum with three stakeholders. In the second sub-group the youth that focused on cooking lessons at school were not all as active but were nevertheless very engaged (including the boy who was not motivated at the start) to shift their policy idea to an online (Instagram) format and to also prepare a dialogue forum. They did not succeed to get a response from influencers and wanted to move their activities to the fall, but in the end, this did not turn out to be compatible with school. The third group who focused on free fruit at schools started rather engaged but were at the same time disappointed that their planned action could not be realized due to the closing of schools and they indicated shortly before the final meetings that they lost their confidence in making an actual change, and hence their motivation.

All of the Alliance members were interested in a closing activity and collecting a CO-CREATE certificate. This activity took place online, while the Alliance members received their certificate and some food via post before the meeting. Unfortunately, the youth of the sub-group who focused on the cooking lessons were told shortly before the meeting that they had an exam, so they could not join. Those who participated did so enthusiastically and commented that they liked the Kahoot quiz and 'get together'.

## Policy Ideas

What policy ideas do youth come up with?

The Alliance members in the Netherlands came up with several policy ideas in the early meetings of their Alliance. In the NL\_B2 Alliance, the members voted on the ideas they wanted to develop further and small groups of Alliance members gathered around one of the ideas with the most votes, to develop this idea further. Two of the members continued with their own idea, even though these ideas did not get many votes. In the NL\_A1 and NL\_B1 Alliance, small groups of young people decided to proceed with the ideas they came up with themselves and there was no voting. The following table provides the complete list of ideas, including which Alliance proposed it and a brief summary of the idea. The ideas are clustered under four main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media, and healthy environment. The policy ideas that were fully developed and were included in the policy brief from the Alliances in the Netherlands are in blue font.

**Table 13. Policy ideas in the Netherlands**

No	Alliance	Name of Policy Idea	A Brief Summary of the Idea
<b>FOOD AND NUTRITION</b>			
1	NL_A1	Cooking classes for young people in schools and online	There should be cooking classes at school. The canteen needs to be expanded. In the cooking classes, young people must learn how to prepare healthy food and learn more about the origin of products and when food is healthy. Following the closure of schools by COVID-19, the young people also want cooking lessons to be posted online.
2		School fruit in all secondary schools	The young people want to place baskets with fruit in the canteen, which can be taken for free. They want to place these on different tables in the canteen. This policy can be implemented in many places. Such an action would be perfect in all secondary schools. But also, for example, in offices or other workplaces.
3	NL_B1	Kitchen take-over; young people's recipes and cooking in the school canteen	Young people come up with tasty and healthy recipes for hot meals, cook these recipes in the school canteen and sell it. Other schools can adopt this idea as well as the recipes. The recipes are bundled in a cookbook (or on a website). The young people from this group want to cook at different

			locations of the school. They want to give cooking lessons to other young people who cannot cook themselves.
4		Cooking for parents on information evenings	Cooking for parents on information evenings to inspire parents and teachers with tasty and healthy food, so that they could pass this on to their children and students.
5	NL_B2	Sugar tax and making unhealthy food more expensive and healthy food cheaper	To introduce a sugar tax in the Netherlands per quantity (grams) of sugar in sugary drinks. Products for sale in supermarkets do not mainly apply to unhealthy foods and drinks, but to healthy foods and drinks. The healthy foods and drinks are placed in the prominent places in the supermarket instead of unhealthy products, which are now more often much more visible.
6		New health courses at schools	Information in schools about nutrition, nutritional value, vitamins and minerals
7		Fresh fruit, vegetables and choice making at the Food Banks	The food banks should have fresh products (vegetables, fruit, herbs) in their supply. They also thought it was important that the food bank would be less strict. According to the young people, people could then make healthier choices instead of receiving mainly canned food.
8		Healthy takeaways	Availability of healthy food, or healthy snacks, at public places. Making unhealthy products, such as burgers, less unhealthy. A food truck with free healthy food.
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>			
9	NL_B2	Women only	Free exercise every week in the gym or swimming pool only accessible to women
10		Free sports	Young people exercise for free in the gym, swimming pool and in their own neighbourhood. To provide access to sports despite of financial means; to

			change the priority of sporting vs. Gaming, TV and social media
11		Sports days and lessons by young people	Young people organize sports days and engage in sports activities at school.
<b>STRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA</b>			
12	NL_B1	Helping Hand	Youngsters between 13 and 16 years old can talk to young people at school if they have problems. Some young people enjoy talking to adults, but some would like to talk to someone their own age. Eventually, the idea is that several young people can offer talks to other youngsters in multiple schools, and that these young people also receive support themselves when they hear about problems that are very serious.
13	NL_B2	Prevention of unhealthy lifestyle due to abuse and trauma	Abuse of children and women must be combated by higher sentences for child abuse and rape, and by providing victims with professional help to help them live and eat healthily and take care of themselves. So, there is a link between abuse, healthy eating and health.
<b>HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT</b>			
14	NL_A1	Recycle bins that make it more fun and easier to throw away and separate waste	The idea is to create a trash can that makes separating and disposing of waste easier and more fun for young people. This trash can work on rewards so that people will throw out their waste even faster. The reward can also be linked to healthy food, so that it gives a price for waste from healthy food. It can be placed anywhere: at schools, offices, stations, etc.

Which activities contributed to the policy ideas? How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas?

Generally, the Alliances (NL\_A1), (NL\_B1) and (NL\_B2) carried out the same type of activities during the project. All of the youth participated in training in System Mapping, Photovoice and were encouraged to think of action ideas. Although, some activities differed between the Alliances. Namely, Alliances B1 and B2 also engaged in various other activities such as (1) networking / connecting with stakeholders (2) advocacy training, and (3) preparing for an excursion / observation (D5.2 survey), whereas Alliance A1 engaged in (1) networking/ connecting with stakeholders, (2) discussing popular and scientific articles and (3) presentation training.

In terms of knowledge distribution, in line with the 'iterative cycles of research and action' advocated by YPAR proponents (Ozer & Piatt, 2017:1; see London, Zimmerman & Erbstein, 2003), the WP5 Alliance programme sensitized the young people to various forms of outsiders' knowledge on childhood obesity (scientific knowledge, policy knowledge, map knowledge) to nurture their reflection and imagination and to feed into their policy ideas. Additionally, also in line with YPAR, the Alliance programme conveyed a series of opportunities for the young people to express and to explore their experiential knowledge of the issue (knowledge acquired through 'living the life' in contrast to knowledge building on scientific research or other forms of expert knowledge). These opportunities – as they were offered to the young people involved in the two Alliances in all three Alliances – are sketched hereafter. Subsequently, the ways in which and the extent to which experiential knowledge has been expressed by young people and actually involved in policy idea development amidst other forms of knowledge are discussed for each of the three Alliances, based on WP5 data (chiefly Fieldnotes and Logs) as well as on Policy Brief the Netherlands.

### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

In the two Alliances, as said, facilitator and teachers paid sizeable attention to encouraging the students to explore and express their own perspective on obesogenic environments, for example by inviting them to a Photovoice exercise, as soon as Meeting 2. At the same time the students were encouraged to think of policy ideas and were soon offered some policy forms to fill in. So unsurprisingly some policy ideas were strongly influenced by the own perspective of students, including some experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments. However, some ideas were rather inspired by the system maps designed by other youths as part of WP4.

In **Alliance NL\_B1**, the policy ideas are discussed hereafter, including one that was fully developed and discussed in an informal forum and included in Policy Brief (Kitchen take-over).

The **Kitchen take-over** idea (students proposing recipes and cooking at the school canteen) emerged as soon as Meeting 3 in rather chaotic circumstances, among a group of students who were quite prone to take action (this was already obvious at Meeting 2) and to find some use the budget allocated to the group, and having had received an (unclear) assignment about planning an event (conceived by the class teacher – who was absent – but implemented by the co-facilitator (NL\_B1\_FN03:FN19 and 20). The idea appeared to be a switch "from 'going to a restaurant' to 'being a restaurant and serving' [which the co-facilitator deemed] a very nice change compared to last week. This shows that they consciously think about how they can incorporate the 'health' part in it." NL\_B1\_FN03:FN20. During Meeting 2 (Meeting 2 – NL\_B1\_FN02:FN17 and 18) some students from the group went to the canteen as part of the Photovoice activity (in particular to take pictures about the smoothies sold there) and their pictures were discussed by the young people as a group and alluded to in subsequent meetings, suggesting that their exploration of the canteen as an unhealthy place as part of the Photovoice activity played a role in the emergence of this idea. The content of the group discussion was not reported in the Fieldnotes, so it is unclear to what extent the Photovoice activity led them to reframe what seemed to be a strong sense they had from the start: that the canteen doesn't provide much healthy food. Possibly the talents activity (as part of getting them acquainted with the project and with the prospect of being agents) was influential as well.

Photovoice was also involved in the refinement of their idea: During Meeting 5, upon another go at Photovoice with a more precise assignment, the restaurant group went to the canteen again [NL\_B1\_FN05:20]:

The participants were also engaged when thinking about making pictures of the school canteen: they only sold pizza and bread with melted cheese at their canteen. Girl NL\_B1\_13 suggested that pictures could also be made of the furniture and options to sit, since these were also not supportive to live healthy. Another location of this school was offering much healthier food, although a second alternative location did not.

Hence, the Photovoice activity with a more precise assignment gave another chance to go and make pictures at the canteen, leading the restaurant group to confirm their argument about the need to change canteen practices.

In the subsequent meetings, although continuing together, the group members did not all have the same attitudes regarding taking action based on their own perspective and letting oneself considering the perspective of outsiders, in particular teachers involved in the canteen (expert knowledge) and regulations (policy knowledge). During Meeting 6, the group was still very eager for action, but some in a more reflecting and calm manner (prepare questions together before going to resource persons – canteen teachers – and understand the reasoning behind the canteen policy: “NL\_B1\_09 had sent an email to canteen teacher with their questions about using the canteen and national regulations of ‘the healthy canteen’ to which the school was related.” In contrast, some others just went to teachers to ask if they could ask questions to their students in spite of their teacher urging them to proceed differently (Boy NL\_B1\_04; girl NL\_B1\_12 and girl NL\_B1\_13). NL\_B1\_03 (f) is in an intermediary position, at first very upset it was not possible to proceed but calming down when facilitator:

“asked NL\_B1\_03 what the initial idea was she wanted to pursue, which she felt was being held down. If it was up to them, they would interview other youth what they wanted to cook, buy groceries and go cooking.” [...] “Boy NL\_B1\_04, girl NL\_B1\_12 and girl NL\_B1\_13 just wanted to step into a class room and ask the teacher whether they could ask some questions. They said they could not wait any longer and walked out to start asking other youth, despite of remarks from [co-facilitator] that this would not work with other teachers and different ideas of the rest of the group, who tried to stop them from going. The rest of the group, girl NL\_B1\_03, boy NL\_B1\_09, girl NL\_B1\_01, girl NL\_B1\_02 chose a different strategy. They wanted to write down some questions first and ask teachers for a suitable time. [co-facilitator] suggested making an online survey. Girl NL\_B1\_01 and girl NL\_B1\_02 started writing up the questions, boy NL\_B1\_09 started looking up online surveys, and girl NL\_B1\_03 engaged in the debate about how to proceed with the survey. Even though the distribution of the survey was postponed to a later time (and not prioritized after COVID=19 restrictions), these group members did sit down to write down questions for other youth, that would help them to adapt and develop their plan. Girl NL-B1\_03 expressed that she had a problem with the other three just walking out and go ask youth, while this was not the group decision. Later on, she said to [teacher] that some of the group made the project difficult. [Facilitator] asked the remaining youth of the sub-group whether it was correct that they would not be taking pictures, and they started asking about the pictures, what the idea

was again. When I explained, there seemed some willingness to take pictures of the canteen when it was open and of the food, but this did not result in action (yet).” NL\_B1\_FN06:FN20.

Later on, the idea further developed, both building on the urge of some students to take action (cook in the canteen and prepare themselves for that in a very concrete fashion – buying the food) and some students’ readiness to follow facilitator’s and teacher’s urges to include the perspective of outsiders. At Meeting 8, the budget form was filled in, a WhatsApp group was formed by facilitator, involving Girls NL\_B1\_01, NL\_B1\_02, NL\_B1\_13, Girl NL\_B1\_12 and boys NL\_B1\_04 and NL\_B1\_09.

In the later steps, the students were invited to reflect on their experience of cooking at the canteen in such a way that they further engaged with a systemic perspective, thereby enriching their experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments. This invite to reflect on their experience as to further develop their idea was eventually successful, as evidenced in the Policy Brief: The group pushing for greater youth involvement in creating recipes and cooking food for the school canteen organised an online meeting with the regional manager from the Netherlands Nutrition Centre’s Healthy School Canteen programme and a policy officer from the City. During the meeting, the group presented their idea and their project, received feedback and exchanged ideas with the attendees on how to proceed. Follow-up steps include potential collaboration with Healthy Canteen programme and with other schools in the city. Hence, this policy idea was fully developed and included in the Policy Brief.

A somewhat related idea born to Alliance NL\_B1 is **Cooking for parents on information evenings**. At Meeting 5 [NL\_B1\_FN05:20]:

“Two members of the restaurant group, NL\_B1\_06 and NL\_B1\_05 started focusing on their own idea, which is offering healthy food to parents and teachers on information evenings. [Facilitator] asked them about the connection to youth, how would this contribute to a healthy environment for youth, and they suggested that through reaching parents and teachers, you can reach youth, since parents and teachers have an influence on youth.”

“When [facilitator] discussed the idea with girl NL\_B1\_06 and girl NL\_B1\_05 later, they were working together in an engaged way, girl NL\_B1\_06 drawing a mind map and girl NL\_B1\_05 filling in the Alliance proposal form. They jointly answered [facilitator’s] questions about their idea, and how this would relate to youth.

Also very much rooted in their own experience at school, the development of this idea was accompanied by Photovoice but not only, the students being also keen to search the web for inspiration (although what kind of knowledge was unclear in the data) – NL\_B1\_FN06:FN20:

The Information Evening group (NL\_B1\_05 and NL\_B1\_06) worked on developing their idea to cook for the information evening by making a picture of the aula where the meeting could be held, and anticipating to make a picture at a second location of the school where information evenings are often held. Moreover, they looked for food on Internet and made pictures of them, while considering food that is healthy and suitable to serve parents and teachers, and the message this gives to them, which they potentially pass on to youth. They came up with wraps with salmon and eggs and water with a taste and they showed [facilitator] a picture of a desert, with dairy/ cream and red juice they thought was suitable.

[facilitator] asked them how they judged the health of the dessert, and they said it was not so healthy, but the rest was, and it is healthy to also include something that is tasty ('lekker'), which can be a good message to youth as well. They did not move beyond the particular evening or school level, and [facilitator] (or the other (co-)facilitators did not encourage or question them about this (so far).

In contrast the third idea born to Alliance NL\_B1 was clearly inspired to the **Helping Hand group** by taking on the system maps:

At Meeting 4, girls NL\_B1\_11, NL\_B1\_10, NL\_B1\_08 and NL\_B1\_07 sat together with the substitute teacher. They had written down factors and looked at the maps and ideas on the hallway and [facilitator] asked what they noted down so far. Girl NL\_B1\_08 said that problem eating was interesting. Girl NL\_B1\_10 responded to this and together, they came up with the idea, while becoming enthusiastic, that they wanted to help youth, as peers, with their problems, so that they would not turn this into eating.

Although inspired by looking at the system maps, some remarks voiced later on by some of member of this group suggested that the idea also partly built on a degree of experiential knowledge, i.e. the experience of relatives being deeply affected by a divorce in the family and thereafter developing an eating disorder [NL\_B1\_FN04:FN20].

While developing their idea further, the group proved quite open to engage with the teacher's invite to liaise with outsiders:

When [facilitator] walked by later on, they were enthusiastic about an idea, inspired by [teacher], to approach a YouTube vlogger who had been rapping about this. The group went on to develop this idea further [NL\_B1\_FN04:FN20].

This group was not only open to learn from the experience of outsiders (rapper) but also to consider feedback from outsiders. At Meeting 6, NL\_B1\_FN06:FN20:

Girls NL\_B1\_11 and NL\_B1\_07 also told [facilitator] that they had been in touch with someone who organizes a project with girls on a school and they were invited to relate to that. In the week after today's meeting, [teacher] forwarded an email of this woman [to facilitator], working for the municipality, in which she complimented the group with their idea and invited them to try it out in one of her two health projects with girls; 1 at a school and 1 in a neighbourhood in the city.

Besides, the group was reaching out to peers – as from Meeting 5:

The Helping Hand group is setting up an Instagram account, anticipates to help youth with problems and how to handle this in peer-to-peer contacts, in collaboration with the teacher. They also consider how to use Photovoice in the upcoming meetings.

At Meeting 6 – NL\_B1\_FN06:FN20:

The Helping Hand group (girls NL\_B1\_07; NL\_B1\_08; NL\_B1\_10; NL\_B1\_11) had planned to make a poster today which they could hang in the school to draw attention of other youth to come to them with problems. They have already made an Instagram account.

At a later step, the group was to visit other projects. However, reflecting on outsiders' knowledge seemed demanding – NL\_B1\_FN06:FN20:

[Facilitator] encouraged them to either think about the linkage with food: what food would youth with problems eat, where would they get it and why, could they capture this? Or to step into the online environment, e.g. Instagram, where youth may share how their problems link to eating and make screen shots of pictures and/ or text. They were considering to do the latter, but when [facilitator] came back later, they had been working on the poster after all. The sub-group is presently rather focused on youth at their school, but by using Instagram and making a linkage to the online world, their scope and aim is potentially broader.

They filled in the policy form in meetings 5, 15 and 16, and they reached out to social workers who worked with girl groups at schools, who invited the young people over to discuss their ideas. The young people tried to find an opportunity and time slot to make an appointment, which turned out to be difficult.

In **Alliance NL\_B2**, the policy ideas are discussed hereafter, including two that were fully developed and one that was discussed in a dialogue forum and included in Policy Brief (Sugar Tax).

The Sports day idea was expressed as soon as Meeting 3, building on the talents exploration exercise carried out at Meeting 2 and the strong leadership of one of the group member - NL\_B2\_FN03:FN20:

The second group (boy NL\_B2\_11) mentioned based on the sticky notes of their talents and what they would want that many of the group liked sports. They had a discussion in which it was a) explored whether they could do something with sports as a group during the project (boy NL\_B2\_04, boy NL\_B2\_11, but not such a good idea according to girl NL\_B2\_01), and b) in which it was emphasized that sports was good and important for everyone (girl NL\_B2\_15, and here the idea was posed (girl NL\_B2\_02) to sport more at school, and to make sport more important and part of the curriculum on schools in general.

Boy NL\_B2\_11 asked for hands of all the youth who did/ and or valued sports and (about) all raised their hands.

At Meeting 4, the project was further affirmed – NL\_B2\_FN04:FN20:

The group with boys NL\_B2\_11; NL\_B2\_12; NL\_B2\_04 and girls NL\_B2\_06; NL\_B2\_07; NL\_B2\_05, NL\_B2\_15 called themselves the Sport Falcons and decided to focus on sports; organizing a sports day, making sports mandatory at school, and/ or organizing sporting activities in the city. I asked them a bit more about their idea and they showed me what they had written in the Alliance proposal form.

The development of the idea draw upon the Photovoice activity but merely as a way to support their endeavour - NL\_B2\_FN06:FN20:

At Meeting 6, The youth in this sub-group (Boys NL\_B2\_04, NL\_B2\_11 and NL\_B2\_12, and girls NL\_B2\_15, NL\_B2\_06, NL\_B2\_05) started up slow. They said they needed some time because it had just been their holiday last week, and because they wanted to wait for boys NL\_B2\_12 and NL\_B2\_11 who came in later. I (facilitator) encouraged them to get started

making pictures, but in the end, they did wait for the others to be there. The sub-group had an in-depth and detailed discussion and task division about what sports to offer on the sports day, for how many minutes, with what focus, on which days and on who of them would accompany what sport. They made a picture of the basketball court of the school, where the sport day could take place, to be discussed next week. Boy NL\_B2\_12 mentioned that they wanted to have the sport day in the sport hall nearby, but they did not have time now to make a picture there.

Overall, the group seemed keen on engaging with outsiders' knowledge (for example policy knowledge) but did not seem to take the steps eventually. At Meeting 5, upon being invited by their facilitator to consider a broader perspective and ways to investigate and strengthen their idea - NL\_B2\_FN05:FN20:

The Sport Falcons want to organize a sport day and are broadening their perspective now to include other youth at their school. I encouraged them to also look up the latest policy on (mandatory) sport at school, the sports offered to youth in the city and on other schools. They did say they wanted to find out more information, and they want to plan a Photovoice activity right from the start of an upcoming Alliance meeting. On the other hand, they still seem to be rather focused on organizing a single activity at school.

At some point, this group fell apart, due to serious doubts about the project among some members and some others moving on to other but related ideas: **Women-only sports**, involving NL\_B2\_06 (f) and NL\_B2\_07 (f); and **Free Sports**, involving NL\_B2\_15 (f). The later idea developed as indicated in the Policy Brief: The point was that young people could exercise for free in the gym, swimming pool and around their own neighbourhood. The group wanted to offer all young people (aged 16 and over) who are facing financial difficulties the opportunity to exercise twice a week for free at a gym or a swimming pool. In light of the measures that have been introduced to tackle COVID-19, the policy also aimed to provide young people with sports equipment at home so that they could exercise in their own home and neighbourhood. The young people in the group witnessed stress, drug use and laziness among their peers due to spending time playing games, watching TV and on social media. However, sport is often expensive and not all young people enjoy it. It was therefore seen as important that young people exercise more, that they have options to do so and that money is not an obstacle. If it is free to play sports and do exercise, physical activity can play a bigger role in young people's lives. The Dutch Youth Sports Fund mainly focuses on team sports and sports clubs. During the lockdown due to COVID-19, the young people in this group discovered interesting information about the wishes and constraints of young people to play sport and exercise at home or in their neighbourhood. This project shows that it is possible to encourage young people to engage in other forms of sport and exercise by providing financial support or sports equipment. Although this idea was initially inspired by considering the experience of peers in their immediate environment, the idea further developed based on checking the policy and practice in the matter of youth sport.

The **Prevention of unhealthy lifestyle due to abuse and trauma** idea was inspired by an earnest and steady motivation of one student, right at Meeting 4, to contribute to stronger punishment for sexual abusers and pedophiles. Looking back at the way the hopes and fears notes were filled over Meeting 2 suggests a degree of (direct or indirect) experiential knowledge in the matter - NL\_B2\_FN02:FN17:

Girl NL\_B2\_01 said when [facilitator] was standing next to her table that she did not have anything to write. She said: 'the only thing I don't want' and she stopped. [facilitator] asked her to finish the sentence, she continued: 'is someone forcing me'. [facilitator] asked her to write that down, which she did.

At Meeting 4, her facilitator asked her - NL\_B2\_FN04:FN20:

whether she saw a connection with the theme and she confirmed: kids who face these difficulties have a hard time living healthy and eating at all. [facilitator] supported her to focus on an idea she actually cared about, and if she could work on this idea, go for it. She then started filling in the form, and seemed motivated. [Teacher] mentioned to [facilitator] afterwards that girl NL\_B2\_01 might drop out, but was pleasantly surprised when [facilitator] told her that she had started to formulate and work on her idea.

In the subsequent meetings the idea seemed to develop based on networking activities geared at reaching to outsiders/expert knowledge: At Meeting 5 – NL\_B2\_FN05:FN20:

NL\_B2\_01 (f) has the systemic idea of increasing the punishment of paedophiles and abusers, and now starts to connect this more clearly with how this may affect the health and eating practice of youth who have experienced abuse. To get to more information, she is focusing on **interviewing people who have experienced this** and on **lawyers**.

At Meeting 6 [Photovoice exercise], NL\_B2\_FN06:FN20: Girl NL\_B2\_01 looked up the influencer who is open about being abused and having a problem with eating. She spent her time reading the entire story to see whether she could make screen shots of things that stood out to her or were important to her. In the end, she did read the complete text, but did not make screen shots. She mentioned that it was a very long text and she had a bit of a hard time reading. [co-facilitator] also suggested to [facilitator] afterwards that the topic may be tough and that she may need a bit of extra support. [teacher] had also supported her this meeting (and other meetings) and she mentioned that girl NL\_B2\_01 is planning to talk to a lawyer about the penalty of child offenders.

In contrast, the **Fresh fruit, vegetables and choice making at the food banks** idea originated in serious engagement with the system map and building on map knowledge. At Meeting 4 – NL\_B2\_FN04:FN20:

The group with girls NL\_B2\_03; NL\_B2\_08; NL\_B2\_09; NL\_B2\_10; NL\_B2\_13; NL\_B2\_14 worked seriously on writing down factors that influences obesity among youth, they took a close look at the system maps and action ideas in the hallway, and when [facilitator] asked them about what they had learned and whether they formulated an action idea, they mentioned that they wanted to offer fresh food at the foodbank. [facilitator] asked them to tell a bit more, and they said that people can tell their allergies, but apart from this, they have few opportunities to choose their food and cook healthy and fresh diets, because of all the canned food.

This group seemed also quite keen to engage with others' knowledge to develop their idea, their teacher's experience but also media knowledge. At Meeting 5,

The foodbank group were planning to go to the foodbank and make pictures. [teacher] suggested to prepare, e.g. what people would they see there? When the group asked about her own experience, [teacher] replied that at a visit she had made herself, it was both a bit of a shock to her, but also empowering. This had an impact on some of the group members. They started looking info up on Internet and wrote this in a mind map. When [facilitator] walked by, girl NL\_B2\_14 asked others in the group: but do you really want to stick to the idea? The four of us (except for NL\_B2\_10 and NL\_B2\_09) can also look for another idea. Girl NL\_B2\_09 stated that she was also not fixed on the foodbank. Girl NL\_B2\_10 showed reluctance at first to split up, suggesting that it would be a shame to start over again. Later, she said that she was also not fixed on the foodbank and the complete group walked to the hallway to look at the system maps and action points, that were still there since last week. In the end, they chose a new idea to focus on from one of the sheets: making healthy food less expensive and unhealthy food more expensive [NL\_B2\_FN05:FN28].

This group was short-lived but it continued as the **Food prices/sugar tax group**, some members of which later joined the Youth task force. Building on their consideration of the system maps made by other youths and their first round of research, they decided to target the Sugar tax and making unhealthy food more expensive and healthy food cheaper.

While being open to outsiders' input, the group did not seem quite inspired by Photovoice. At Meeting 6, (girls NL\_B2\_03; NL\_B2\_08; NL\_B2\_09; NL\_B2\_10 and NL\_B2\_13) their approach was rather looking up food prices of supermarkets on the internet and make print screens - NL\_B2\_FN06:FN20:

'Why go to the supermarket? This is easier.' They printed the pictures of healthy and unhealthy food and glued them on a poster, with the prices aside of the pictures. Supported by the teacher, they engaged in a debate why certain food, e.g. Mango, potato and paprika chips, would be healthy or unhealthy and they wrote down their views."

In their later steps, the group continued building on a variety of research activities (reading summaries of scientific articles, interviewing an academic expert on sugar tax, designing and distributing an online survey) and skills training (preparing for the expert interview, interviewing, preparing for the dialogue forum, participating in national and international meetings). Their willingness to engage with politics was not shared by and caused doubts among some members. At Meeting 7 (confirmed at Meeting 8) - NL\_B2\_03 (f) seemed overwhelmed by the prospect of addressing the 'government' (especially national level) and mentioned it to facilitator in a private talk. Later on, the class teacher informed the facilitator that NL\_B2\_03 (f) "was now focusing on providing dance lessons to the first-year students, since she is a very good dancer herself" NL\_B2\_FN07:FN20.

Regarding the later steps, the Policy Brief reports that the group wanting to introduce a sugar tax in the Netherlands organised a dialogue forum with a manager from a soft drinks company, an alderman from the city and a programme manager/policy officer in the field of healthy weight. During this forum the participants discussed the importance of the idea, the opportunities and obstacles, a shared vision and next steps. The participants committed to providing further information about tax and prices, to sharing the idea at a national level and to engaging in talks with local supermarkets. The young people in this group are also members of the international COCREATE

Youth Task Force, which has established a Youth Statement. Here, too, the young people are developing their ideas and plans regarding the prices of food and a sugar tax per amount of sugar, and they are preparing for upcoming dialogue forums with various stakeholders.

Overall, in the two Alliance in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, having to fill policy forms contributed to the policy ideas, while having to indicate in a form about the problem definition, policy goal, the target group, policy strategy, existing policies, budget breakdown and a dialogue forum. Also useful to some was the budget form to be filled in for those willing to make use of the Alliance budget to test their ideas in the local context. In order to do so, they had to find topics information online. The cofacilitators asked them to answer several questions on their preliminary proposals. An example is with the 'restaurant group' (B1), who were asked to trace back where their ingredients come from and investigate why there currently is no warm food in their canteen.

### NL\_A1

In the NL\_A1 Alliance, the system mapping activities in meeting 4 seemed to have influenced two of the policy ideas which were (almost) fully developed, namely providing **free fruit in secondary school canteens** and **cooking classes at secondary schools**. The Fieldnotes (FN\_A1-04) reflect that in relation to the second system map that was discussed, the Alliance members agreed that "healthy food is expensive". They came up with a number of new action ideas, such as: "mandatory relaxation against high work pressure; free fruit at school; more sports activities at school, and a new subject at school about healthy lifestyle (learning more about physical activity, and about what you can eat that is healthy)". It was suggested that "at the moment, we don't get these classes so for example we don't know what we can cook when you go to university and have to cook yourself. Also, we don't know how to read labels on products and how to know how much sugar a product contains".

The Photovoice exercises in meeting 6 however appeared to relate much closer to the experiences of the young people, when considering ideas about improving their environment into a healthier one. The fieldnotes (FN\_A1\_06) show how the particular school of the group members in a more privileged area in the city informed the experiences of the young Alliance members which they used and shared in the photo voice exercises. Alliance member NL\_A1\_03 made a picture in meeting 6 of a tree on the campus. In the discussion he explained: "Oxygen is very important, trees are useful for that. We do want to keep trees." The fieldnotes mention that "He appreciates trees because without oxygen you can't really live. He would like to see more flowers, trees and plants in the classrooms if he could make a policy."

Other experiences outside of the school campus also reflected that the Alliance members spent time in nature and appreciated nature as important for health. Alliance member NL\_A1\_06 made a picture of many trees behind her house, and explained: "In the summer it's much nicer with flowers and a large lawn. People like to picnic there. Many people go there in the summer. Trees provide oxygen". Afterwards, there was some discussion about how important green spaces like parks are for the wellbeing of people and the conclusion was that it's very important." Subsequently, the Alliance members made a linkage between valuing nature and fresh food, as a central feature for health. Two of the Alliance members discussed their experiences at one of the Dutch Islands, which they used to come up with a new idea. NL\_A1\_08 (f): "I went to Texel a while ago, then we went to a picking

garden. That was a lot of fun.” NL\_A1\_07 (f): “An evening walk on Texel, beautiful nature. It’s important to keep moving. Nature is beautiful and we should keep it that way.” The Alliance members went on to say: “There is no garden in the city where you can pick fruit or veggies as far as I know, maybe that’s an idea? More parks should be created. It’s now very busy in the park. We should cherish the nature there is as much as possible”. Alliance member NL\_A1\_06 made a picture of a vegetable shop. She was thinking about a policy idea to “motivate people to eat more fruit and vegetables. “You can see it’s not clean in front of the shop. More people would go there if it was clean. My idea is to improve the living environment by making it cleaner, and therefore more attractive for people to go to the fruit and veggie shop.” The later experiences developed into the third fully developed policy idea about **waste bins and waste separation in secondary schools**, and also helped strengthen and develop the ideas about free fruit and cooking classes (learning to use fresh food) in secondary schools.

On another note, Alliance member NL\_A1\_04 made a picture of an art work at school and said: “Art around you keeps you open-minded. It keeps you thinking and gets you inspired”. The fieldnotes reflect that “Her idea was to make sure there is more nice art in school because it adds to people health and wellbeing.”

In the later meetings (FN\_A1\_13), the Alliance members that wanted to organize and implement cooking lessons at school(s) discussed their own skills in cooking and mentioned that they only had limited skills: “NL\_A1\_03 said that he usually cooks a quick pasta”. The others in the group “agreed and NL\_A1\_04 said that she thinks youth do not cook very much. The group then settled on giving ‘basic’ cooking classes; what basic is was not yet defined.” In the next meetings, the group started to ask their peers in the Alliance to keep diaries about their eating patterns and when they would want to be able to cook. Alliance member NL\_A1\_08 who participated in the cooking group said: “I know I eat a lot when I am bored or emotional. Then I eat without being fully aware. If I write it down I will become fully aware...”. The facilitator noted that in meeting 14 (FN\_A1\_14) “The group shared their eating diary with the ‘cooking lessons’ group. They can use these experiences to find out what young people mainly eat and how and/or if this can be done in a healthier way.” This shows that experiential knowledge of the Alliance members themselves and their peers proved to be useful for them in developing policy ideas.

The Alliance members also used their own experiences when they discussed obstacles for a healthy environment that is supportive for healthy living (FN\_A1-06; FN\_A1\_07). They raised concerns about the amount of money and effort young people would be willing to invest, and distances they were prepared to travel, in order to make healthy choices. The Alliance members discussed for instance whether “free public transport for youth would encourage them to go to a park or nature that is further away.” The Alliance members agreed that “if it’s far, youth won’t go most likely, and for most youth of this school money is not really an issue. More nature, well maintained parks and picking gardens where you can pick fruit and veggies in the city would work better.” Alliance member NL\_A1\_05 made a picture of a primary school next to a snack bar. The young people discussed that “There is also a (grocery store) present, but that’s further away than the snack bar. NL\_A1\_05 thinks it matters that the supermarket is further way than the snack bar and that there should not be snack bars close to schools”. The young people who later focused on waste bin and waste separation noticed in the photo voice exercise “there are enough waste bins at school, but there is no separation of waste in school”. In meeting 7 it was pointed out that “People don’t want to walk 20

meters further to the paper bin because they are too lazy. So, the bins have to be next to each other". In meeting 8, the young people continued to consider where the waste bins they wanted to develop for a more sustainable environment needed to be placed (next to each other): "otherwise, the students will be too lazy to separate the garbage".

In meeting 7, the Alliance members also discussed that "More people should go into sports", when Alliance member NL\_A1\_01 (f) shared her picture of hockey, healthy food and biking. The Alliance members talked about "equality in terms of possibilities to do sport" and "mentioned that in case of their particular school, money is not really the problem in terms of youth attending sports. So, helping with financing might not be that necessary." They did have some sport workshops at school, but "late afternoon working hours don't work because it's after school." Hence, the young people showed "little enthusiasm for this", suggesting that this would be too much of an effort for young people. Even though a lack of money did not seem to be an issue for the young people attending the school of the Alliance members, they nevertheless considered money as something that would influence choices. The Alliance members mentioned for instance in meeting 6 that young people do not come in vegetable shops near their school very often. A wide choice of healthy sandwiches was offered, but they noted that that these sandwiches were expensive, whereas the food at the school canteen was unhealthier, but nevertheless cheaper. This made them suggest that "maybe making healthy food cheaper is a good idea". Following these considerations, a few of the Alliance members developed their idea into the direction of work of "provide free fruit at school and organize some advertising campaign to promote it". In this idea, knowledge and ideas from other youth they were confronted with in the system maps was combined with own experiences and perceived challenges. Alliance member NL\_A1\_02 explained: "we came up with the idea of free fruit, because now there is only unhealthy food for sale in the canteen, which can only be paid in cash. Youth don't have so much cash, and if they do they will not easily put it into buying fruit. Free apple, pear or banana would be great".

The field notes (FN\_A1\_04; FN\_A1\_05; FN\_A1-06; FN\_A1\_08; FN\_A1\_11) mentioned in several occasions that the Alliance members were capable of having discussions about their ideas, observations and own experiences. Moreover, when they were confronted with system maps and articles (about food prices; educating children about healthy lifestyles; and about environmental impact of an unhealthy life style), they were very well able to discuss these positions in smaller groups. At the same time, the Alliance members were much less inclined to look into other types of knowledge themselves, to investigate and develop their ideas further. In meeting 10 (FN\_A1\_10), the field notes report: "They do not seem so independent or pick up on finding out facts that make their proposals stronger. I would love to see them go online to find out the details of projects that are similar to the ones they propose, to then decide what they can learn from it. What I have done to stimulate them to be more active is to go to the Healthy Voices website (and show them how it works) to ask questions related to their policy proposals to get more facts and information that backs up their proposal. They did not follow through. I also looked up newspaper articles, museum exhibitions and online sources related to their proposal to get them interested to also go and search for more input. I have not seen them taking up this suggestion. The co-facilitator and me asked the group to work on the policy proposal and do research to refine it during the Christmas break; no one did so." In meeting 13, the Alliance members received feedback on their policy ideas by CO-CREATE partners, which they seemed to appreciate. It stood out in the Fieldnotes (FN\_A1\_13) that "They reacted mainly with surprise...as to how many "in between steps" they had to think of." The

facilitator helped the Alliance members who focused on free fruit at school to ask researchers behind the Healthy Voices website about similar initiatives, but unfortunately this did not lead to clear input from the side of the researchers. Later on, during the online meetings following COVID-19 regulations, the facilitator stimulated the Alliance members to look into the NOURISHING data base providing them with a direct link, and also shared some other information about similar projects in Norway, but this also did not lead to a clear response of the Alliance members. The facilitator related this lack of enthusiasm and skills in using other forms of knowledge than the own experiences to the age of the Alliance members and mentioned in the field notes that “Every time when I work with the group on the policy proposals, it strikes me that most of them are really young (15 years old) and need quite some guidance to develop a good proposal that is focused on testing their ideas of how to improve their environment to facilitate them living a more healthy life.”

### *Readiness for Action and Obesity Perception*

#### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

For many youths in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 engaging with system thinking in the matter of childhood obesity proved challenging, albeit not in similar ways in the two groups. In NL\_B1, the youth did not seem particularly resistant to engage with system thinking. It rather appeared that, in about the first 10 meetings, the facilitator had to facilitate the two Alliances (separately) at the same time, with much to do to trigger commitment and calm anxiety down in NL\_B2 and to bear with the absence of either class teachers or co-facilitators in almost all meetings. As a result, she had insufficient time to introduce system thinking properly to the young people in NL\_B1. At the same time, when presenting the system maps and asking the young people what in their view are the environmental factors involved in childhood obesity in Meeting 4, some of the young people indicated they found these questions too difficult:

One girl grasped her head and sighed that she was getting a headache from questions like this.

At Meeting 5, since a number of policy ideas were formulated at Meeting 4 but a few of them focusing on school, the facilitator encouraged the students to consider a broader perspective while ‘strengthening their idea’ – based on a presentation and a discussion of the policy form:

[facilitator] encouraged [students] to think bigger than the own group, to see how others could benefit and how they could contribute to change. The next slide showed a girl (18) from Rotterdam in the newspaper that week, attending [a vocational high school], who was involved in youth participation and how she used her idea for more equality and political involvement of youth (<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2019/10/11/het-politiek-ontwaken-van-de-scholier-a3976457>). Message: youth want to change and affect their environment.

Students were also encouraged to go and find more information, including another go with Photovoice with a more precise assignment and start thinking of interviewing experts or other youths before organising an activity meant to test their idea. In Alliance B1, the reaction was rather conservative – NLB1\_FN05:20:

When [facilitator] asked in the [PowerPoint presentation] on what level the youth focused: group, class, school, youth in the city or in the country, and encouraged them to think a bit bigger than only the group/ school, boy NL\_B1\_04 immediately replied: just the school. When I asked whether their restaurant project could be approached as an example for other schools, both girl NL\_B1\_12 and boy NL\_B1\_04 confirmed.

So engaging with a systemic perspective did not seem as total nonsense among NL\_B1's students and their focus on their school seemed to be rather guided by a genuine desire to change things in their immediate living environment. In contrast, the systemic perspective met another form of resistance in Alliance NL\_B2.

At Meeting 3, after that the class teacher invited the B2 students to consider factors influencing health, one group did discuss the issue and came up with a mind-map (the systems map training wasn't performed yet) and the facilitator noted:

There was attention for systematic factors on health (girls NL\_B2\_01, NL\_B2\_02, NL\_B2\_15) and there was readiness to do something with sport, but this was focused on the youth of the Alliance themselves.

This gave the opportunity to hear about how influential the individual talk is for some participants - NL\_B2\_FN03:FN28:

The first sub-group (girl NL\_B2\_01, girl NL\_B2\_02 and girl NL\_B2\_15) shared their mind map with [facilitator] when probed. [facilitator] complemented them and said that they could compare/ finish their map when [they] would later have a look at the problems they perceived in the environment for youth to have a healthy weight. Girl NL\_B2\_02 commented that weight was up to an individual person, what he or she did. Nobody had anything to do with that. [facilitator] replied that this is often how we perceive and feel about weight and health choices in general, but depending on e.g. what the shops have to offer, it can be much harder or easier to make healthy choices for an individual. The girl replied that it's simple, you can make the healthy choice, you just need to do it. Girl NL\_B2\_15 replied that it matters what food is offered and what you can buy. She pointed to healthy food being expensive. Girl NL\_B2\_02 acknowledged that they had written down things like this on the map, yet in her view when it comes to weight, it's personal.

This quote illustrates a debate that remained quite present in the daily life of Alliance B2.

At Meeting 4, students were introduced to the systems maps and invited to make one, and to consider systems maps made by other adolescents. In B2, it was an opportunity for some students to express how odd the systems perspective was in their perception of the issue.

For some students however, while discussing the systemic roots of childhood obesity sounded nonsense, discussing the systemic roots of stress sounded easier, in particular with experiences some of them were acquainted with, such as dysfunctional family environment.

Girl NL\_B2\_01 stated that she did not understand the purpose of the project. Obesity was an individual choice and what did we have to do about this. She then mentioned that what she

was motivated for, was to have stronger punishment for sexual abusers and paedophiles. I asked her whether she saw a connection with the theme and she confirmed: kids who face these difficulties have a hard time living healthy and eating at all. I supported her to focus on an idea she actually cared about, and if she could work on this idea, go for it. She then started filling in the form, and seemed motivated.

Although the data highlights her perception, it also exemplifies the influence of the micro-context on individual behaviour.

In the subsequent meetings, the students thought of more policy ideas, but the facilitator observed a trend towards a perspective merely focused on the school. To stimulate a broader, systemic perspective and to make it more tangible, the facilitator and teachers set the criteria of “hav[ing] an effect that goes beyond the school and [beyond a] one-time activity.” [NL\_B2\_FN06:FN19]

The development of policy ideas gave rise to colourful discussions in subgroups regarding what is healthy food [NL\_B2\_FN06:FN29]:

When the Food Prices group plus girl NL\_B2\_02 (Health Information on schools) discussed what is healthy, and [facilitator] dropped by later, girl NL\_B2\_02 said that according to girl NL\_B2\_13 what is healthy food is an opinion, asking: what do you think is healthy, while these are facts. Girl NL\_B2\_13 seemed to get insecure, but defended that people have opinions about this. Girl NL\_B2\_02 repeated that nevertheless it is a given whether some food is healthy or not.

At Meeting 7, the Photovoice exercise although nicely engaged gave rise to a hot debate about the individual perspective and the very aim of the project to influence others.

[NL\_B2\_FN07:FN28]:

Both boy NL\_B2\_11 and girl NL\_B2\_06 argued in a fierce way, with some emotion/ indignation, that weight, sporting and eating is up to an individual (and the parents), and they did not want to force or influence anyone. Girl NL\_B2\_06 made a reference to herself and her own choices, and boy NL\_B2\_11 made a somewhat vague reference to his mother. Boy NL\_B2\_04 and girl NL\_B2\_07 agreed to this standpoint.

Meeting 9, debate at NL\_B2\_FN09:FN28-29-30:

Overweight as individual responsibility was present in all the debates (see@FN20). The discussion around sporting against overweight was mostly (also in the statement) about whether sporting helps and whether individuals (should) do it. In the discussion about support to buy vegetables, there was the assumption that people can work, or they can ‘ask for’ a vegetable garden (at the municipality). In the discussion about billboard, the youth agreed about people being responsible for what they choose to eat (including fast food) and they get what they want anyhow.

Systemic references were nevertheless also present in all the debates (see @FN20). Regarding sporting against overweight, it was mentioned that there are funds for youth to pay for sport (to counter the argument that people have no money to go to the gym). In the discussion about support for vegetables, it was mentioned that not everyone can work (e.g. due to diseases), vegetables are expensive for many people, support is needed, the municipality could provide vegetable gardens (although in the debate, this was framed as people needing to ask the municipality for this). In the discussion about forbidding marketing, there was an acknowledgement that marketing, as well as fast food prices, influences eating and overweight.

Today, there were more references to overweight as a systemic issue compared to the previous meeting. Some youth had chosen to defend the more systemic statements and looked for/ found arguments to support that. Yet, overweight as an individual responsibility remained acknowledged and the youth found it hard to counter this.

Also, at Meeting 9 - NL\_B2\_FN09:36:

It was striking in [facilitator's] view on the one hand that the youth did engage with a more systemic perspective in this meeting on the one hand, while the individual responsibility remained very important to them on the other hand. E.g. boys NL\_B2\_04 and NL\_B2\_11 argued for the government forbidding marketing on fast food and girls NL\_B2\_01 and NL\_B2\_2 said in turn that it is up to an individual what choices he/ she makes, and boy NL\_B2\_11 confirmed: yes, we think so too, which was the end of the debate. Girl NL\_B2\_07 and boy NL\_B2\_12 argued that people with limited financial means should not be given money to buy fruit and vegetables, because they can work, or ask the municipality for a vegetable garden. It reminded [facilitator] of youth I worked with earlier who had had police contacts and were often keen on emphasizing their own responsibility and choice, when others would point to the influence of their (social) environment, and how they often disliked when responsibility was taken from them.

That the systemic perspective looks at odd to some students also recalls the works of Silva (2013), highlighting how deeply young people growing up in disadvantage are influenced by an individualistic way of thinking, building on their experiences of not being supported by others (including by government) when they are in need, hence finding a coping strategy in endorsing narratives that emphasize their own agency for the better and the worse, even if it is unlikely to be realized.

Nevertheless, we found examples of young people's willingness to act in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2. In NL\_B1, the Restaurant Group was eager to change and take-over their school canteen and gradually extended this plan to other schools and canteens. The Helping Hand group got connected with community organizations and established an Instagram account to promote their plans to organise peer support and bring it into practice. In NL\_B2, the Sugar Tax group contacted researchers and stakeholders to change the sugar tax system in the Netherlands.

## NL\_A1

In the NL\_A1 Alliance, a readiness to take political action was rather absent at the first part of the process and developed slowly, but gradually. The facilitator reported about meeting 2 when asked about the young people's readiness for action:

"I feel the youth is just getting their heads around the project and the topic. It is a lot to contain. Sometimes their body language expresses, things are going over their heads."

After meeting 4 where the Alliance members engaged in system mapping activities and thinking of action ideas, the facilitator did not yet observe a readiness for action amongst the Alliance members and noted:

"Not in a direct way. They are just brainstorming to understand the process and systemic issues and policies behind obesity",

and after meeting 6:

"This is more the stage where they explore ideas of what might work. It's not yet specified and deepened enough for them to feel they want to move into action".

A readiness for action could also not be found in other instances of the fieldnotes of these meetings. The fieldnotes show that the facilitators and co-facilitator related the lack of action amongst the Alliance members in the first meetings and their rather slow developing sense of ownership and aim to make a change for a large part to the young age of the Alliance members and the school setting, in which the Alliance members seemed to perceive the CO-CREATE project as a school task: something mandatory that ended as soon as the hour was over. Moreover, it was reported after meeting 7 that

"it seemed quite 'new' for the youth to think about policy and politics".

Young people being active in politics in that sense seemed to be very unfamiliar to the young people in this Alliance, even though they participated in pre-university educational tiers and their backgrounds often reflected a more privileged position in the Dutch society.

At the same time, the activities offered in the first number of meetings were much more focused on group building and orientation on the project than on action. The facilitator noted in the fieldnotes of meeting 6 that the Alliance members "seemed a bit unresponsive to the first part about the group vision", and indicated that

"I think they are ready to go to the action part and become engaged and active in the content of CO-CREATE".

In the WP7 questionnaire and the feedback forms, a number of the young people indicated that they thought it took too long before the action started. In meeting 7, the policy forms were introduced and in meeting 8, the facilitators reported:

"I learn more and more, that the Alliance members start to become more active when it comes to making real plans to change something. Even though these plans

might be focused on a small scale. And I love seeing them getting more and more inventive, critical and action oriented”.

In meeting 10, it was noted by the facilitator that “this session I felt they seemed involved on a personal level where they seemed ready to join the action they thought of for the policy idea”. The Alliance members discussed their policy ideas with a (co) facilitator in a smaller group, and one of the facilitators described how this evolved.

“We worked from the very short policy proposal they had. With the experience of NL\_B1 in the back of my mind, I proposed to focus a bit more on in-school cooking. At first, they repeatedly described obstacles to this (there is no time, it’s not allowed, it’s not possible, there is no real kitchen). I turned this around and asked them why there is no time or money or whatever and if it would be desirable to have cooking classes in school. They confirmed this and at that point a more research and “policy” oriented approach seemed to develop. They discussed earlier attempts to cook, they brought up that the school is refurbished which creates an opportunity to build a better kitchen and they referred to other schools where cooking is or is not common. Time was very limited so we only scratched the surface of how to take this plan further, like: find out who is responsible for the canteen, what the plan are for the new kitchen etc.”

In the subsequent meetings, a readiness for action kept developing, especially when the Alliance members worked on their action ideas and not so much when they engaged in more generally related activities. In meeting 11

“the youth did not draw a parallel between the articles and becoming more politically active on the matter”

and in meeting 12 the facilitators both felt that the Alliance members

“found this particular class [in which they were invited to think about a question they would ask a policy maker] a bit school-ish and not very interesting. [...] There was no real readiness for action in this session”.

However, in meeting 13 the facilitators noted that

“We all spent some time with each individual group to further think through and flesh out their ideas. This seemed to spark a new readiness for action”.

In the subsequent meetings, this trend continued and was strengthened further by an informal in-between gathering of the Alliance members and (co) facilitators, and in the case of some Alliance members a visit to a reference cooking program at another secondary school. All three groups submitted a budget proposal and prepared to organize an activity at school to test their action idea. In meeting 17,

“there was a positive vibe in the class room. They seem to realize that the practical part we work towards (pilots of policy ideas and the forum) is getting closer”.

Especially since the Alliance members were engaged in organizing their pilot activities, it was a great disappointment that following COVID-19 restrictions, the school closed, the Alliance meetings proceeded online and the pilot activities could not take place after all. All sub-groups continued to meet separately with the facilitators and co-facilitator online, but not all Alliance members showed up in each of the meetings. The group who wanted to provide fresh fruit in secondary schools, who seemed “ready for action” in meetings 16 and 17, gradually lost their motivation in the online meetings and sent a message a few weeks before the summer Holiday saying that “all three of us do not feel like we can still make the project successful”. The group who focused on garbage bins to create awareness and a sustainable and healthy environment, thereby stimulating fewer packages and more fresh food, did develop further in working towards action and change by preparing, organizing and leading a dialogue forum with policy makers and experts in the waste industry. In a similar way, the group focused on cooking classes managed to change their focus to online cooking and tried very hard to organize a dialogue forum with food influencers, thereby also looking for action. They did not manage to get in touch with influencers however and therefore did not organize a dialogue forum.

After the introductory meetings in which the Alliance members in NL\_A1 invested in group building and formulating their aims for the CO-CREATE project, the facilitator confronted them in meeting 3 with an episode from ‘The Late Late Show with James Cordon’ about fat shaming, and three newspaper articles to introduce the topic of obesity and stimulate a group discussion and thinking process. The young people first watched the show about fat shaming, in which the argument was made that fat shaming needs a comeback as an incentive for people to lose weight, and the counterargument was presented that people with overweight are already constantly made aware of being fat, and fat shaming is a form of bullying which might lead to depression. None of the Alliance members agreed with the first argument, and instead, it was mentioned that

“fat people do not always choose to be fat, and certainly do not need others to tell them they are fat”. NL\_A1\_10 made the comparison with racism: “people are free to express themselves but should not impose their opinion on someone else.”

The Alliance was then split up in three groups; the first group read and discussed an opinion article about making healthy food cheaper and unhealthy food (sugary drinks) more expensive; the second group an article about the importance to teach children a healthy lifestyle, and the third group an article about the link between an unhealthy lifestyle and environmental impact.

In the first group, the Alliance members indicated that the most important points of the article were that unhealthy food is indeed cheaper and more often for sale compared to healthy food; that supermarkets are only concerned about making profit and not about their consumers’ health, and that prices and money are the most important factors for consumers when deciding what to buy or not. NL\_A1\_02 agreed, but also mentioned that “consumers are responsible for making choices about what to buy”. The second group noted that they had “mixed feelings” about the article on teaching children about a healthy lifestyle. As the most important points of the article, they mentioned that being fat is not a choice; a solution that works for one person may not work for all, and it is easier for some people to be slim than for others. According to the Alliance members, the article widened their perspective and they acknowledged “the importance of motivating youth from a young age to eat healthy” but noted at the same time that “overweight could also be caused by

genes or illness". Nevertheless, they stated that "it is important to motivate people with obesity to say no to unhealthy food, to change their eating pattern". Hence, even though the Alliance members engaged in a systemic perception of the problem of obesity with these articles, they came back to more individual responsibilities when it comes to food and eating after all.

In the third group, the Alliance members discussed environmental issues and focused more on a system level perspective. Alliance member NL\_A1\_04 referred to "a climate strike last Friday in The Hague, organized by Green Peace, in which lots of youth participated. I doubt whether there will be a future for us after all. We study to learn about the future but don't even know if we will have one. We should protest against Schiphol airport becoming even bigger, because that will mean more kerosene and air pollution". Alliance member NL\_A1\_09 said: "the green zones get smaller because of building more and more houses in the city." Another Alliance member mentioned that "eating avocado is supposed to be healthier than meat, but not when you look at the transportation costs and the water supply that is needed. So sometimes the 'healthy choices' are not good for the environment". NL\_A1-04 (f) thought that "eating soya products is better than eating meat for our bodies and the environment". Hence, a linkage between unhealthy behaviour and environmental costs was picked up by the young people. Alliance member NL\_A1\_10 focused a bit more on individual behaviour and said that "red bull drinkers are responsible for most of our waste on the streets. I noted this because on 21 September, I participated in the 'cleaning up day' and most of the waste were (red bull) cans. The red bull drinkers kill themselves and the environment". The group also argued back and stressed the "importance of green in the city and the effects on people's overall wellbeing". According to the facilitator in the field notes:

"It is the first time we expose the young people to knowledge gathered in WP2/3/4. In the dialogue, they did go into the multiple aspects of obesity (individual and systemic). It was directly related to the text they studied on which they commented".

In meeting 4, the Alliance continued to develop their thoughts about obesity by looking at the system maps and action ideas produced by five other groups of Dutch young people. Clear linkages were made between potential causes of an increase in overweight and obesity, and suggested actions that could tackle these (systemic) problems. "Marketing targeting children" and "stress" were mentioned in relation to the first system map as the most important factors leading to obesity. The young people also indicated that "People should move more. "It is much too easy not to move". In terms of healthy food, the young people suggested that: "in het past, people ate more vegetables; the entry of fast food made it too easy to eat unhealthy. Also, now we have big food production companies, instead of self-supply. With mass production the quality of food deteriorates". Another Alliance member highlighted mental health: "if you suffer from stress or anxiety you might want to eat out of emotion, to suppress or neglect your feelings and not feel them so much". Lastly, "the availability and use of soda drinks" was mentioned as an important factor leading to an increase in overweight and obesity. Following the list of action ideas provided with the system maps by the other Dutch young people, to which the Alliance members agreed, the Alliance members came up with initial action ideas themselves. These ideas reflect how the young people perceived the problem of obesity (and solutions to it): "warning on packages that the product is unhealthy; give more subsidy to sport clubs so they can offer cheaper rate plans to people who want to do sports; make information about healthy food more accessible, for example by giving guest lessons on schools, and create an online platform where all the information is available".

In relation to the second system map, the Alliance members agreed that “healthy food is expensive”. They came up with a number of new action ideas, such as: “mandatory relaxation against high work pressure; free fruit at school; more sports activities at school, and a new subject at school about healthy lifestyle (learning more about physical activity, and about what you can eat that is healthy)”. It was suggested that “at the moment, we don’t get these classes so for example we don’t know what we can cook when you go to university and have to cook yourself. Also, we don’t know how to read labels on products and how to know how much sugar a product contains”.

In relation to the third system map, the Alliance members agreed with the fact that overweight is influenced by “social media use, which leads to sleep deprivation, stress, misleading ads, people being lazier, and being big or heavy becoming more normalized”. As action ideas, the Alliance members added: “free fruit and veggies in the canteen (such as bell peppers, cucumber, apples, pears, avocado, tomato’s), because not everyone brings food with them from home. Otherwise they will buy fast food.” Also: “Active relaxation to lower the work pressure, meaning that young people get time to work out or do meditation as part of their workhours at school. Just to give them free time will not work as young people will then all just go on social media and get distracted”. Lastly: “Teach classes about health by a VIP: a person with whom people want to identify themselves”.

The facilitator reported in the fieldnotes that

*“I feel their thinking has been triggered and fed now in several ways to think more deeply about healthy living environment. So, their ‘lens’ through which they look at the world expanded and became a bit more critical, regarding the topic.” The data also shows how some of the later policy ideas (free fruit, cooking lessons) were initiated when thinking about the problem of obesity in relation to the system maps. According to the fieldnotes: “Some of these factors of obesity and action ideas show that the young people see obesity as an individual responsibility: social media use and people being active or lazy. Others indirectly: after people have been provided with free fruit, they will have to make ‘the right choice’ emphasizes obesity as an individual responsibility. In most conversations I had with youth there was a combination of seeing obesity as an individual responsibility and as a system issue. For example: food packages should be more transparent about what is in the product, but then they also realized it is still up to the consumers to decide if they do or do not buy and consume the product”.*

In meetings 5 and 6, the focus shifted to Photovoice, and this meant that the systemic focus in the perception of the problem of obesity amongst the young people got a bit more lost. The fieldnotes report about meeting 6:

*“They referred several times they to individual responsibility in terms of the kind of food you eat and in whether you move enough or not”. Nevertheless, when discussing the pictures, the facilitator used the opportunity to shift the focus back to a systemic perspective. “When they showed the images they made, I asked them: imagine a policy maker walking into the classroom right now to whom you can show your picture: what message do you want to convey? Then, they started to think more on a system level”. Alliance member NL\_A1\_06 reflected for instance on the vegetable shop of which she made an image: “Pupils don't come here very often themselves.*

*There is a wide choice of healthy sandwiches, but they are expensive. In the canteen at school, products are cheaper but unhealthier". She then went on to suggest that "making healthy food cheaper might help the youth to buy more healthy things".*

Furthermore, in meeting 6 the Alliance members "mentioned that not all students have equal access to money to buy fruits or go to a sport club and therefore it would be a good idea to provide fruit for free and subsidized sports". According to the field notes "it sounded as if they were talking about youth outside their neighbourhood and school, so more referring to lower SES neighbourhoods".

In meeting 8, another news article was introduced in order "to keep the young people up to date about the last developments regarding healthy weight and obesity". The article stated that a majority of the Dutch children and youth does not get enough exercise. The article did not cause a lot of response, but Alliance member NL\_A1\_07 comment that she was "very much shocked" by this percentage.

In meetings 10 and 11, there was some discussion among Alliance members about the importance of influencers, "indicating that they were aware about 'power differences' and also about their own weight, health and choices in relation to the food diary". The focus here was mainly on (over)weight as a personal and individual matter. In meeting 14 however, the diaries were again discussed and the focus had shifted to how they could use their own experiences and those of their peers to invent a plan that enhances an educational program at school, including cooking lessons.

*The fieldnotes reported about the policy proposal of the 'cooking lessons' group, in which the Alliance members had written: "if you develop an unhealthy eating pattern when you are young, it is difficult to change this when you are older". On the same page they noted that "it would be good to make a link between individual eating patterns and the environment", by suggestion "an environmental tax (so to make the tax higher on non-biological meat, and lower the price of organic meat)". The idea was that "people will then be rewarded if they eat healthy in an indirect way". The same group questioned what it takes to change a habit (on and individual level), to then draw conclusions about what it takes to shift the routine and habits of youth.*

In meeting 15, the facilitator presented shock statements produced on the World Obesity Day. Some Alliance members reflected on the challenges around obesity as a systemic issue, namely social media influence:

*"What we found most shocking is that the stigmatization of obesity has an effect on people's lives in a psychological, physiological and social way. People who are overweight are often insecure in several ways, especially young people because they get a lot of influence from social media, where they see for example models that set a certain example".*

The Alliance members also stated that they found it "awful that young people have to deal with such problems at an early age, because of the influence of social media". Alliance members NL\_A1\_09 and NL\_A1\_11 made a video about fat shaming, where they shifted from a focus on individual responsibility (what people eat) to the way a culture looks at people.

All in all, the field notes show that the members in the NL\_A1 Alliance were triggered to develop more knowledge and ideas about obesity as a systemic issue, through discussing articles, engaging in system mapping and photo voice activities and developing their own action ideas and policy idea. Even though they also kept expressing ideas and experiences in which they perceived obesity as an individual responsibility, linkages to a systemic level were continuously made within the various CO-CREATE activities. Accordingly, one of the Alliance members said in the feedback form: “I learned a lot about societal problems that I did not know much about yet”.

### *Process, Decision-Making and Ownership*

Decision making about activities and process

#### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

In NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, that participating students would gain ownership on the proposed topic seemed to be an important challenge from the outset: it was not self-evident that childhood obesity was an issue that affected them personally and/or about which they felt they are entitled to have an opinion, as any other citizen about all societal issues. As a matter of fact, some critical comments were made by some students at Meeting 2 (B2; NL\_B2\_FN02:FN24). Moreover, it soon became clear that there were other pressing issues on the plate of many of them that were likely to prevent them from dedicating time and attention to CO-CREATE as freely as other Alliance members. All of them have had a troubled relation to school (seriously lagging behind and being aware they have reached a critical moment, having been given a last chance to get back to vocational education and having demonstrated their motivation to accept the challenge albeit a stressful one). For many of them, there were serious issues such as growing up in poverty and for some heavy burdens such as having an intimate knowledge of child abuse, family disruption and/or race-based discrimination which were likely to hinder their availability to reflect on childhood obesity. Facilitators of Alliances B1 and B2 therefore paid quite some efforts to foster ownership although not denying the other pressing issues.

#### NL\_B1

In Alliance meeting 1, the introductory activities were decided upfront by facilitator and teacher. The young people were offered to split in two groups and they decided in which group they want to work. Forming groups was guided by the teacher; many youths had ideas about a few fellow students they wanted to work with, no negative sentiments were presented. The programme of the subsequent meeting was discussed by facilitator and teacher.

In between meeting 1 and 2, the youth sat down together with teacher/co-facilitator and they talked about where they want to have the meetings (at school or an alternative location) and what they want to eat and drink during the meetings. They formed smaller sub-groups in which they can work on a topic, which they can pick over the coming weeks.

At meeting 2, when all the notes about hopes and fears for the project were shared, the teacher offered to summarize them (eventually done by the co-facilitators) and the group agreed to turn this

into a group agreement next week. There was huge consensus among the students to have the meetings at a barista bar (as they came up with the week before as a group). The facilitator would provide budget info, i.e. the total budget for venue and catering for their group for the entire period. The group also planned to work on sharing their work in school paper or through a blog/ vlog.

At Meeting 3, the group decided on the group agreement, based on a summary of hopes and fears notes, apparently without much discussion. Besides, being asked to think as event organiser (both a CO-CREATE and school assignment), the group came up with their first policy idea. The circumstances in which this idea was born are unclear in the Fieldnotes but the co-facilitator recollected that the group decided that they wanted to start a restaurant and sell food to other youth at school. When they were thinking about what they needed to organize in order to have the Barista bar as their meeting place for Alliance work, the co-facilitator encouraged them to think about whether and how this would be doable, and what needed to be arranged for this. The young people then felt that attending the Barista bar would become too complicated and figured that they would have food delivered at the school. Some of the young people said that they could also prepare food and cook themselves; pizza at first, which they gradually changed to healthy food. Based on this, they went to the idea that it would be nice to start selling their food and cook for the entire school. That's how they came up with the idea to start a restaurant in the school. Judging they proceeded too fast toward action, the facilitator and teachers prepared the next meeting by somewhat stepping back to introduce the training activities (system mapping and Photovoice) but in a 'basic, abstract and creative sense' in order not "to take away their initiative and focus and offer unclarity by introducing the methods instead. Rather, [they would] use these methods as techniques to facilitate them and bring [the students] further." (NL\_B1\_FN03). The program of the subsequent meeting was discussed and decided by facilitator, co-facilitator and teacher.

At Meeting 4, all youths accepted (some reluctantly) to split into subgroups to work on system-maps assignments, although at the previous meeting they reached group consensus to work on the restaurant idea. Working in subgroup allowed some to go their own way (seemingly escaping a sort of coercion), some to decide, after having explored other topics, to get back to the restaurant idea. The program of the subsequent meeting was discussed and decided by facilitator, co-facilitator and teacher.

At Meeting 5, the three subgroups decided how they wanted to include external inputs to strengthen their ideas. The facilitator, teachers and co-facilitators decided and introduced to the youth (on request, also by Alliance NL\_B2) that the budget for organizing activities for the total group is 1800 euro, and that they will discuss/ [the students] will decide how to divide this between the sub-groups in the next meeting, after the holiday break. Some pupils are very keen to take youth leadership seriously: When the class teacher attempts to limit the number of students (to 2) going and reaching out to teachers who are likely to provide them with information (in order not to overburden the teachers). Boy NL\_B1\_04 and girl NL\_B1\_12 took initiative and walked out the classroom to go see the teacher, "girl NL\_B1\_03 suggested that in this project, they as youth should decide and they went out with the three of them."

At Meeting 7, "given the resistance of some to make a change and the difficulty to focus on a long-lasting project" (NL\_B1\_FN08), while the youth steadily wanted to move on to the activities they had in mind and already took some steps (e.g. getting a positive response for the restaurant groups to

use the kitchen), the facilitators decided to support them by bringing structure to their ideas: “Next week, group NL\_B1 will write a proposal to ask for budget for their restaurant, information evening catering and helping hand. The Helping Hand group wants to gain visibility and visit a related project for girls at two schools, for which they are invited.” The teacher and facilitator decided that the youth “will fill in the budget proposal form next week and prepare the debate the week after. Before the end of December, they can perform their activities, to be evaluated and presented in January. NB. The information evening is taking place in February. Those interested to bring their project to the next (more systemic) level can volunteer to continue.” (NL\_B1\_FN07).

At Meeting 8, the Restaurant group decided they will be cooking in the school Restaurant the week after, on their own initiative. The other groups will also continue with their action ideas. Three weeks later (Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019), they would engage in the debate they started to prepare.

At Meeting 9, the Restaurant group decided (with teacher and facilitator) that the subsequent week they will evaluate the cooking and make plans for the next cooking sessions. The Helping Hand group and Information Evening group will also evaluate their activities and progress (and therefore will be provided with the Alliance proposal form and budget proposal form to fill in), and also reflect with the facilitator on the questions handed to them to deepen the systemic dimension of their reflection (see NL\_B1\_FN\_08). The week after, the group will engage in a debate about the statements related to CO-CREATE (and formulated and discussed by [teachers, CO-CREATE coordinating staff WP5, WP9, WP2 and WP3 and facilitator] - eventually one week later – as the youth were not prepared for the debate on Meeting 10). The facilitator would use the opportunity (and the experiences of Alliance NL\_B2) to point them to the Healthy Voices website and possibility to ask questions (not ceased on Meeting 10; second chance ahead of Meeting 11).

At Meeting 11, it was co-decided (between the youth, the school and the facilitators) that the restaurant group will be cooking. The other groups will also continue with their activities: the questions will be discussed, and they will fill in the Alliance proposals. This is based on the facilitator(s) and CO-CREATE team, to strengthen the progress and system focus. [NL\_B1\_FN11]

At Meeting 12, it was decided that the evaluation of the second cooking session will be done in January 2020 and that it would be aimed to bring it to a more system level. [NL\_B1\_FN12] Besides, the facilitator assigned a ‘coordinator’ for the group, who would oversee everything and divide the tasks accordingly, this was NL\_B1\_09. This seemed to have a positive influence as he was able to overlook everything and answer the questions of the other group members. [NL\_B1\_FN12]

At Meeting 13, there were several decisions made. The Helping Hands group will contact the local school radio in order to talk about healthy food. They are also starting to create a ‘lesson’ that they can give on other schools regarding health and they are going to be more active on Instagram. The Restaurant group has started thinking more systematically and is now creating a cookbook, contacting other schools to see whether they can cook there and are planning their own cooking within their school further ahead. [NL\_B1\_FN13]

At Meeting 14, it was decided that the Helping Hands group would further flesh out their ideas for the lessons and the content for their Instagram page: They decided to combine their own experience with more ‘factual’ knowledge, which they will seek out in the coming week(s). It was also decided that the cooking group will focus on cooking more, next time I will ask them to think about the

cookbook, the 'kitchen takeovers' (where they cook at other schools) and more policy ideas.  
[NL\_B1\_FN14]

At Meeting 15, it was decided that the restaurant group would further work on the cookbook and the [one girl left in the group] Helping Hands would now redirect her focus towards the lessons.  
[NL\_B1\_FN15]

At Meeting 16, it was decided, after a discussion with the most engaged part of the Restaurant group that the two facilitators would contact a TV-chef (who lives in the city, has made her own cookbook and has her own restaurant) for a session in order to continue working on the proposals and the cookbook [NL\_B1\_FN16]. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the group did not manage to pursue this plan. Nevertheless, they did organise a dialogue forum with stakeholders of the Nutrition Centre (Het Voedingscentrum) and the municipality, who was interested in their take on student participation. They were also involved in a policy implementation session organised for WP7 and discussed with their school that they wanted to follow up with a workshop at school and align activities with the policy implementation plan outcomes.

## NL\_B2

Like in NL\_B1, in Alliance meeting 1, the introductory activities were decided upfront by facilitator and teacher. The young people were offered to split in two groups and they decided in which group they want to work. The programme of the subsequent meeting was discussed by facilitator and teacher. At Meeting 2, young people were offered a Photovoice activity (to find out what in their school environment “made it difficult for them to live healthy and obtain/maintain a healthy weight”) and come up with a group agreement, based on a hope and fears exercise. Girl NL\_B2\_02 and girl NL\_B2\_01 together took the lead in reading the hopes and fears to the group. This was accepted by others. All the subsequent meetings, the decision-making pattern seemed similar: the activity programme of the session was discussed and decided upfront by the facilitator and the teacher, based on the CO-CREATE training programme brought in by the facilitator and the teacher’s advice to take account of the learning challenges of the youth group and adapt the training programme accordingly, e.g. broken down in a larger number of sessions. The youth engaged in the proposed activities (some more in earnest than others – although all were regularly reminded that participation is not mandatory) and were responsive but they usually didn’t seem to take much initiative beyond what was proposed to them. Although the programme of the sessions was discussed by facilitator and teacher (in-between sessions) and proposed to the youth, the facilitator and teachers have at all times been scrutinizing any comment from the youth (collected during the session or during off time) and a few times adjusted the activity programme depending on the youth feedback, including both positive and critical feedback. That a significant share of the young people attending were struggling with remembering what happened during the previous session could have influenced the decision to maintain an adult-led decision-making on the backbone of the programme and process.

## NL\_A1

Like in the NL\_B2 Alliance, the decisions in the NL\_A1 Alliance were mainly made by the team of facilitator(s) and co-facilitator, who for instance decided about the content of the next meetings. In

some instances, the fieldnotes show that the Alliance members were also engaged in these decisions, such as in meeting 2: “we collectively (youth and facilitators) made the decision what of the group agreement exercise we would postpone to a later moment, in terms of the ‘hopes/fears/talents’ assignment”. Moreover, each meeting, one of the Alliance members could choose their favourite music to listen to as a group during their work, which was met with enthusiasm.

The main decision that was made by the Alliance members themselves was in meeting 10, when the Alliance members prepared for dialogue forums and a policy meeting in the city to which they were invited. The Alliance members then decided that they wanted to arrange a presentation training, which was subsequently agreed on and organized together with the (co-) facilitators for meeting 15. Moreover, during the online meetings with the smaller groups who finalized their policy ideas and prepared a dialogue forum, the Alliance members also decided, with support from the (co-) facilitators, who they wanted to invite and engage in a dialogue forum with.

The survey results for the NL\_A1 Alliance show a rather low score on the sense of ‘control over the way the Alliance runs’ (on average 2.83 and then 2.25 on a five-point scale, filled in by about half of the Alliance members) which however increased over time (to 3.83, filled in by 6 Alliance members). The facilitator reflected on this in the fieldnotes after meeting 15:

*“I notice that now that we’re doing what we promised: “letting them lead, working with their input”, for example with arranging a presentation training, that they start to be more engaged. I struggle with the fact that there seems to be a design fault in CO-CREATE, where youth have not been engaged enough in the design. And therefore, in the execution we run into problems putting a lot of pressure on facilitators to try and make it work. Making maps, letting them fill in forms, and having the formal set up (that is common for research) does not go with youth engagement very well. Youth has no attention for long complex processes; they want something quick and flashy. So, to arrange a presentation trainer (where they asked for) should not have been such a long process to get permission for.”*

Hence, even though the Alliance members could eventually achieve having some influence on the decision making, the facilitator indicated that in her view, this was not always compatible with a pre-designed list of activities.

#### Group dynamics and involvement in relation to activities

The involvement and engagement of the young people in each meeting are reflected in table 10 (NL\_B1), table 11 (NL\_B2), and table 12 (NL\_A1).

#### NL\_B1

At Meeting 1, there was some anxiety regarding the project, especially about the presentation. Eventually, “the presentation was not experienced as too long, and many were engaged in watching the movies” according to the teacher NL\_B1\_FN01. Attention varied though: “At the end of the presentation when we entered practicalities, many of the youth were talking at the same time and it was hard to get them quiet again. This seemed due to how they would act being in one room with

this large group, at the beginning of the school year.” NL\_B1\_FN01. The group seemed to “exist of youth who easily speak out, or talk with each other (e.g. boy NL\_B1\_04, girls NL\_B1\_12 and NL\_B1\_13). They were engaged though.” At the end, the majority of the youth greeted the facilitator and smiled.

At Meeting 2, being prompted to write down about hopes, fears and talents, all proceeded. No one volunteered to read out what was on the notes about hopes and fears however, so the facilitator read the notes together with youth council co-facilitator. Being invited to a simple Photovoice exercise the youth walked around and took pictures and came back to share the pictures and have a talk about them in small groups: “There seemed to be interest for action: a few asked when they would be doing the photo activity. When boy NL\_B1\_09 read about the photo voice activity in the list with suggested activities he mentioned that he knew exactly what to do with this exercise. They also understood the exercise rather quickly and seemed to enjoy it” [NL\_B1\_FN02].

At Meeting 3, in the beginning the group was rather calm compared to the previous session. Some of the youth were critical in the beginning, mentioning that they found the project boring, or asking why they were still not going (or being taken) to the Barista café. The group seemed to be bothered by the unclear assignment – designed by the class teacher who wasn’t present, hence unable to provide further explanations, resulting in chaotic discussion. However, the group managed to become proactive and build consensus: “The group could move surprisingly fast: they were quick and effective in summarizing the sticky notes with hopes and fears, and they included the youth on both sides of the table in the process.” The co-facilitator (following on the facilitator while the latter had to move to the other group) “noticed that when she posed a question (and in case there was a lot of talking but no answer: when she repeated the question) that the youth were interested and became more focused in continuing their discussion. [The co-facilitator] also noticed that all of the youth looked in the event managing book she took with her. [The substitute teacher] said that in his view, the youth did not listen well to each other, to him, or to [the co-facilitator. The latter] disagreed and mentioned that the group discussion was not very different from what she was used to in the youth council meetings, and that she did experience chaos, but also a will to move on” [NL\_B1\_FN03].

At Meeting 4, As they were invited to work in the sub-groups formed previously, the youth first resisted “(‘we are one group!’), but after a while, the youth remembered they chose sub-groups earlier.” Out of four sub-groups, two sub-group wanted to stick to the restaurant idea. All youth were engaged within their smaller sub-groups. Thinking of factors, “not all were as eager to walk to the hallway and look at the system maps and action ideas. In the end, all, or almost all, had a look, but some much more in-depth than others.” Looking at the system maps and action ideas of others inspired all youth to come up with action ideas themselves. The group that focused on problem eating came up with ideas about who to approach (youth) and how to engage them (with a vlogger), and the group that focused on the restaurant went to see the teacher in charge of the kitchen. The fourth sub-group were focusing on making sports mandatory on high schools. They moved on to look up information about this on Internet, since [the facilitator] mentioned that there were new developments about this in policy making. After the meeting, when talking to the Restaurant sub-groups, they decided that they wanted to go back to the Restaurant idea. They did not know whether they were still able to, and when it was said that they were, they liked that idea better.

At Meeting 5, the whole group seemed to be interested and engaged during the presentation. The sub-groups engaged with strengthening and continuing their idea using Photovoice and finding information: The school restaurant group approached teachers related to the canteen and kitchen and made appointments with them to discuss their idea. They were also supported to make pictures of the school canteen, and the canteens of the two alternative locations of the same school elsewhere in the city; The school information evening group wanted to find out the planning of the information evenings for parents at school; The Helping Hand group was setting up an Instagram account, anticipated to help youth with problems and how to handle this in peer-to-peer contacts, in collaboration with [the class teacher]. They also considered how to use Photovoice in the upcoming meetings. All youths “moved to organizing activities, although still very much on the school level. There were ideas about photo voice, yet somehow they were not put into practice (despite of repeated encouragement) and when asked, there was little response on why they did not do it” [NL\_B1\_FN52].

At Meeting 6, The youths engaged with the Photovoice exercise but the three sub-groups did not seem to go much beyond the school level (yet not explicitly encouraged or questioned about that yet); except for the helping hand group, “by using Instagram and making a linkage to the online world, their scope and aim is potentially broader” (i.e. connecting to a woman working for the municipality) FN06. “Photovoice did not seem fully clear, and when it did seem clear, there was little interest and action. The idea of going out for observation, taking pictures, how this would relate to their action idea, and sharing it with the group all seemed to be too much trouble and not appealing.” “only after kindly pushing them a bit, the Information Evening group made a picture of the aula and screen shots of potential menus on Internet.” The youth were engaged in the sub-groups and developed their ideas further.” FN06 “All sub-groups were ready to act and easily started asking and walking around, writing things down, and plan for activities on the school level. Particularly in the Helping Hand group, and to a more limited extend in the Restaurant group, there were clear linkages to the level of the broader city and the online level. The Helping Hand group also expressed interest to take over the CO-CREATE Instagram account, and started looking it up and imitating making a vlog.

At Meeting 7, there was little engagement with training activities such as Photovoice (no picture taken, hence no basis for discussion). In contrast, all the subgroups seemed very keen on advancing their activities, for which they already had made important steps (e.g. getting a permission to use the kitchen for their restaurant project; gaining visibility on Instagram to help youths with eating disorder). However, the teacher seemed somewhat pessimistic about the restaurant project.

At Meeting 8, the facilitator received minimal response from the youth regarding the Instagram take-over when she mentioned it this day (including from an Alliance member who showed interest two weeks before). However, all youth were about equally engaged in the activities: “all sub-groups got a bit further, and they seemed to enjoy and appreciate this [...] According to [the co-facilitator, in charge of facilitating the subgroup], the budget form helped the Restaurant Group to come to a concrete plan of cooking and buying groceries.” {NL\_B1\_FN08}.

At Meeting 9, within the Restaurant group, all youth were highly engaged and serious in cooking. The role division went smooth and all had clear (and diverse) roles, by which they managed to succeed in preparing and selling the food they wanted to serve, as well as leaving the kitchen clean for the next

users. Girl NL\_B1\_02 had been appointed/ self-selected as the leader, although all took and alternated leading roles at times. [NL\_B1\_FN09]. The group dynamics were productive and constructive. Even under stress and time pressure, the Restaurant Group collaborated well (in a lively manner, which seems familiar to them). The Helping Hand group successfully logged in on Instagram (with help of teacher and facilitator). In the afternoon, they had posted their Helping Hand project as a story on Instagram. To [the other facilitator], they said that the project was boring, since they had to think and prepare so much before they could be doing something. When [he] said that when preparing well, you can also do better things, they responded positively. Girl NL\_B1\_11 took the lead in taking the paper [...] handed to them and in answering the questions (see NL\_B1\_FN\_08) about their project [NL\_B1\_FN09].

At Meeting 10, the atmosphere in the room was calm, particularly with everyone working alone or with two on diverse school projects. The restaurant group concerned the only youth who worked in a bit of a larger group of six youth today and they were more vivid and noisy in their discussion of e.g. the feedback they received. They split up in a rather natural way to divide tasks for the project, with boy NL\_B1\_09 and girl NL\_B1\_13 going after approval of the recipes, and the others were also engaged. Girl NL\_B1\_12 was less engaged today, and she also expressed to be annoyed by the feedback of the canteen teacher [NL\_B1\_FN10].

At Meeting 11, all youths were very much engaged in the debate and also in the topics they discussed. They invested in preparing their arguments. The atmosphere was respectful, and all of the young people were able to speak out and listened to. The debate worked very well to get the youth engaged on the topic, to have them sharing and discussing perspectives and to add a systemic perspective to the individual responsibility perspective [NL\_B1\_FN11].

At Meeting 12, the group itself was particularly vocal, especially NL\_B1\_04 and NL\_B1\_12 seemed to be dominant factors, but the others did not seem bothered by it, they engaged in debate with questions and could defend their ideas and visions. In this meeting the roles were already divided between cooking different dishes and so they were mostly working in smaller groups, within these smaller groups there seemed to be a consensus and a generally pleasant vibe, everyone seemed to be involved and sharing ideas with each other. [NL\_B1\_FN12] However there were still 'problems addressing the system level. The group was very enthusiastic when it comes to cooking within their own schools but getting them to upscale their thoughts was quite a challenge [NL\_B1\_FN12].

At Meeting 13, within the Helping Hands, NL\_B1\_10 was clearly the most dominant, she was clearly present and the most vocal. However, this did not mean that she made all the decisions, all four participants were involved in the thought process and others also spoke out. They were also able to 'stand up' against NL\_B1\_10 if need be. Within the Restaurant group, there was more balance. Here the two dominant factors were mostly NL\_B1\_04 and NL\_B1\_12, they were quite loud and opinionated. However, the others did not really seem bothered by this and were able to voice their own opinions and concerns without hesitation [NL\_B1\_FN13].

At Meeting 14, there was a little bit of tension in the restaurant group, mainly because NL\_B1\_04, NL\_B1\_12 and NL\_B1\_13 were not actively participating and quite loud and dominant. The other group members (mainly NL\_B1\_01 and NL\_B1\_02) made several attempts to include them, without success. This tension did not go any further however, both groups seemed to go their own separate way and leave each other be. Many of the group were speaking at the same time, and the Alliance

seemed to exist of youth who easily speak out, or talk with each other (e.g. boy NL\_B1\_04, girls NL\_B1\_12 and NL\_B1\_13). They were engaged though [NL\_B1\_FN14].

At Meeting 15, it was difficult to keep the Restaurant group engaged: “they are very active when it comes to the practical cooking but sitting down and filling in policy forms is very tedious and boring for them” [...they “do not see the use of it”]. “So it was quite challenging, most of the policy forms have about 5 sentences filled in as of now.” [Dominant figures] “NL\_B1\_13 and NL\_B1\_12 were constantly influencing others, not putting in any work.” “Their distractions ended up with others also stopping their work and having casual conversations.” [NL\_B1\_FN15] In the Helping Hand group, some important group development, as three out of four confessed their lack of intrinsic motivation (staying on out of guilt with regard to the fourth member). Although two policy ideas were profiled (a/ a set of lessons through which they want to inform other youths about the dangers of over-eating through a form of peer education and b/ to further build on their Instagram page where they would share information regarding over-eating and providing a space where youth can come and talk to them in private), the latter was eventually left aside once part of the group stepped down. The youth were working on the policy proposals but it did not seem very ‘real’ yet, it felt like they still view it as a school assignment [NL\_B1\_FN15].

At Meeting 16, Again, NL\_B1\_04, 12 & 13 continued to refuse working on the project properly, they were not talking back when [the facilitator] ask[ed] them to work on something but they just did not do it. NL\_B1\_04 & 12 seemed to be the dominant factors here. [The facilitator had] approached NL\_B1\_13 separately and then she did agree to work but then quickly got dragged back into doing nothing with the others. The other group (NL\_B1\_01, 02 & 09) were also more distracted than usual, but they always work and interact with you and are willing to engage [NL\_B1\_FN16].

## NL\_B2

The young people were a bit shy and anxious at Meeting 1, although there was also laughter and fun. Group building activities seemed to have a positive effect on building a productive connection between the students (who already knew each other) and the facilitator, an outsider to school.

At Meeting 2, all of the youth were speaking out when probed. There was some chatting, but the youth were easily quiet to listen to their peers again. All cooperated well with the exercises.

At meeting 3, all groups working calmly: one focusing on the topic (“map with factors related to (improving) health” – B2\_FN\_03; leading to some discussion of whether or not weight is a personal responsibility); one focusing on where to meet as a group; one focusing on how they could use their group budget and on group agreement. When the facilitator moved between the groups, all youth in the groups talked and shared the ideas they had been talking about. In the bigger group discussions, some talked more than others and there were some tensions among some of the students/sub-groups, regarding whether the project was taken seriously. The reflection about the hopes and fears and the group discussion afterwards provided quite some consensus, also confronting (rather than avoiding) tensions between some of the youth.

At meeting 4, all the groups worked on filling in the proposal form, inspired by looking at system maps. Some went from writing action points to already taking initiative or looking up information. The group dynamics seemed cooperative (no more tension between groups). Working in the sub-

groups worked well and the system maps and Alliance proposal forms and multi-maps appeared to be productive and helpful to the youth to develop their action ideas. However, one student (working alone due to absent co-worker) seemed rather confused and unable to understand the purpose of the project.

At Meeting 5, there was limited attention at the beginning of the presentation, some were looking away, no questions were asked. There seemed to be appreciation that the presentation was brief. Yet, it was not noisy and some did look at the screen. Especially when the facilitator highlighted the Detroit photo voice examples, the youth seemed more engaged, although this did not translate in being eager to take pictures themselves. The sheets seemed to be appreciated, to have a summary of next steps to take on paper. When working in the sub-groups all were engaged. All groups projected themselves in doing research. Some initially resistant to systemic perspective gradually moved forward. For one group however, there was an enduring tendency to focus on their own school and own activities.

At Meeting 6, despite the invite to go out all sub-groups stayed in the classroom. However, all youth were engaged in their sub-groups. Except for one group, all came up with plans for reaching out to external source of information (e.g. through interviewing identified resource persons from their own network or beyond). The readiness to start making pictures for Photovoice was limited, except for the Food Prices group, who made screenshots of food prices.

At Meeting 7, there were some tensions between some youths on the one hand and the facilitator and the teacher on the other hand, regarding whether to influence other youths (looking beyond their school) or make a change on the system. Despite the limited engagement with Photovoice in the first few meetings, the photo voice analysis seemed important then: it created some new ways of thinking and also initiated, or revealed, resistance among some of the youths.

At Meeting 8, some progress was noticeable in the way young people were open to the opportunity to use some external contents in their CO-CREATE activities: some were open to get extra information (Healthy Voices) to strengthen their arguments, some rather “feel that they did not need extra info and [...] rely on themselves” (NL\_B2\_FN08). Debating proved a productive way to foster engagement: The youth seemed eager to formulate statements and debate about the statements (about who and what is responsible for overweight). The debate seemed to help some to engage more with some sort of systemic perspective: “Some of the statements reflected overweight or lifestyle as a systemic issue and this was picked up by the youth. Girls NL\_B2\_15 and NL\_B2\_03 found arguments for providing support to people with limited financial means to enable them to buy vegetables and fruit. Two other adolescents also said that they agreed to this statement. (NL\_B2\_FN08) Motivation to continue with action ideas seemed better than during previous meeting (see NL\_B2\_FN\_08).

At Meeting 9, the role of debating to provide openings for engagement was confirmed: “While individual responsibility was highly valued during the debate and previous meetings, several youth started to argue in the debate for a stronger role of the government and municipality in influencing the opportunities and incentives for individuals.” FN09 “Today, there were more references to overweight as a systemic issue compared to the previous meeting. Some youth had chosen to defend the more systemic statements and looked for and found arguments to support that. Yet, overweight

as an individual responsibility remained acknowledged and the youth found it hard to counter this” [NL\_B1\_FN09].

At Meeting 10, the responses to the excursion plan were generally enthusiastic and curious about where to go. The youth generally paid attention to the video and were engaged with the stories of the volunteers. Quite a few came in late and were not very engaged, in contrast to those arriving on time. Some youths seemed to be bothered by other pressing issues: “So the fact that she was there and stayed in the class was quite something for her given her situation.” [FN10] “The fact that some youth are less motivated and/ or struggle with personal problems can pose some challenges to the group process.” That the facilitator and teacher took another direction and offered more guidance to the youths seemed to trigger their engagement.

At Meeting 11, Some youths struggled with engaging with the movies of reference, while some others engaged more easily. Some productive response to being prompted for debating what they watched (what do you see as positive? Do you have any critique? – FN11). One boy was openly distrustful toward the value of the project and its aim to achieve system change.

At Meeting 12, the youth were generally interested when the facilitator walked through the ideas. Upon receiving information regarding their initial ideas (as to whether such ideas would close some gap in the local context), there were few responses, and although the youth seemed to listen, attention also seemed to be dropping. However, there was more engagement as to whether going on an excursion. The youth eventually voted for The Hague, with the prospect of visiting the Parliament (which was suggested by the teacher).

At Meeting 13, many of the youth were nicely engaged in research about the Hague and what they could learn from the excursion (coming up with research questions and observation list); some in larger group, some rather in smaller groups. However, some were not comfortable with writing down research questions and observation list or interview questions. “There was some energy to make in between steps towards action: thinking about environments, preparing an excursion, preparing observation and interview questions. The youth needed some encouragement, explanation and examples (after the general explanation; most fruitful in small groups), but the majority went to work.” (FN13) The presentation about interviews and observation was said to be long by some youths (15 minutes) but the majority was engaged and the facilitator was satisfied with ‘making it a bit harder for [the youth] and [...] felt that we also gained from more CO-CREATE perspective and activities’: “When they say (boy NL\_B2\_11) they don’t learn from the project, they may be right when we downgrade too much on what we teach them. At the same time, we need to keep attuning what they can and want to handle and process in terms of training and teaching.” [FN13]

At Meeting 14, despite just coming back after the vacation. Nevertheless, some students participated really well, namely “NL\_B2\_01. NL\_B2\_02, NL\_B2\_04 and NL\_B2\_15. Girl NL\_B1\_05 also contributed to the discussion. They were participating in the discussions and answering questions. The rest was a little bit less engaged [especially WHO graphs] and only spoke when asked” (FN14). Regarding addressing the system level: there were some moves forward but still quite some resistance to systemic thinking among some youths, paired with political distrust: “In this session we tried to explicitly raise this concern, this was met with mixed success. Most participants find that while system plays a part, we are still responsible for our own actions. However, some did acknowledge

that marketing and income has a significant influence on people's choice (NL\_B2\_15: If you are poor you can only afford certain unhealthy foods)" [FN14]

At Meeting 15, some engagement with working on policy ideas was noticeable, at least as long as adult attention was provided: "When I talked with a group, at least a part of every group was engaged, thinking out loud, making decisions and filling in the form. When I moved on, they often stopped and waited until I returned. When co-facilitator/ teacher and I had a brief talk on the hallway, I looked through the window and saw almost all eyes on us, waiting for our return. When we walked back in and I attended the groups again, some of the youth were eager to talk about the idea and move on. Others were much less motivated and were open about that." [FN15] When the end of Alliance work was announced, some youths were explicitly relieved (2) while some were keen on continuing and going to policymakers (4):

"The group was a bit mixed (also within the smaller groups) between youth who did not seem eager to work on the project or take action to change the environment and youth who seriously discussed, wrote down, looked at the system maps and anticipated next steps to actually try to realize their idea." Some unmotivated youths seem to have influence on peers, in particular "boy NL\_B2\_12, who has since the beginning been engaged (although being shy), but it is hard for him to join another group instead of his peers (boys NL\_B2\_11 and NL\_B2\_04) who are less motivated." Some bothered by less hard-working peers. "At the same time, youth who are motivated seem to continue regardless of others who seem demotivated, so their engagement also becomes more visible and clear." Some progress in filling forms was noticed: "I noticed that those who did fill it in while we also talked about the questions, what they wanted and envisioned and how, and when discussing the system maps, they made clear progress."

At Meeting 16, Some youths expressed their interest in going to Norway for a European youth meeting (including one who never left the city). During the session, about half of the group was very engaged in the workshop (on youth participation) and the related assignment ("what would you like to change, and how would you approach this? It could be anything: something for the elderly, for youth, for the city, some injustice they experienced.") and the other half was not interested and expressed they did not want to work on the ideas. Some boy seemed 'so motivated and fast at the beginning' but his motivation seemed to have dropped.

Once the schools were closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak mid- March 2020, the facilitator offered to continue through WhatsApp discussion groups with those motivated to further develop their policy ideas and discuss them with "policy-makers." Six thematic groups were formed (out of 10 girls willing to continue, out of which two working alone). One group (Food Prices) proceeded up until a dialogue forum (including some Skype meetings) and the two girls (out of the three initially) involved joined the Youth Task Force (with the facilitator serving as a translator). The other groups didn't go that far, the youths struggling with having to engage on distance. Some however positively responded to being prompted by the facilitator across the first months of the pandemic.

#### NL\_A1

From the start of the Alliance meetings, the fieldnotes report that "the class seemed easy going" and there was a good and "relaxed vibe" in the group. This did however not apply to "the boy that noted he was here involuntarily and wanted to go to another elective". Because the school had listed

Alliance member NL\_A1\_03 to the CO-CREATE project as his elective within the school curriculum, and he was not able to switch, the course was actually made mandatory for him by the school, whereas he was clear that it did not have his interest, and that he “was too tired for this”. These two processes can be found throughout the meetings; the group that was rather engaged and easy going on the one hand, and the boy who was not motivated and “had a strong negative impact” (meeting 2), was “yawning a lot, and “has been difficult to engage throughout the whole process. The group of this person did not get very far with the policy form, while the other two groups got quite a lot done. It seems he pulls the other girls in this group (that are quite enthusiastic) down” (in meeting 7) and “paired up” with Alliance member NL\_A1\_04 whereas they did not seem to have a “positive influence on each other (meeting 12). At the same time, he also turned out to “slowly starting to be more respectful and engaged” (in meeting 3), he was more engaged since the informal drinks, WhatsApp groups, presentation training and working on their ideas in smaller groups in the later meetings. During the online meetings after the school closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, he was not as active in his group of four young people as the others, but he was no longer negative either, and did collaborate with his group.

In general, the Alliance members collaborated well together and were interested and actively engaged in the activities. The level of engagement varied however in relation to the particular activities (the more action and the more practical, the more engaged the Alliance members were), and over time. While there was a dip in enthusiasm and involvement around meeting 11, engagement strongly increased from meeting 15 onwards, when the young people received their requested presentation training and were working on and heading towards “real” activities. It was found in the field notes that the level of engagement corresponded with the described atmosphere in the group and the group dynamics: when the Alliance members were not involved, the atmosphere was described as “difficult”, “very quiet”, “lack of motivation” and “not easy to work with”, whereas it was described as “nice”, “enthusiastic”, “a relaxed vibe”, and “pleasant work environment” when the young people were involved.

Another dynamic that was described in the fieldnotes was that there was quite some variation within the group in terms of their backgrounds, which affected their ways of working together: “these youth come from different backgrounds: some are from high economic background and just move through VWO very easily, while others come from MAVO and had a harder road to take before ending in HAVO/VWO”. Moreover, “two girls, NL\_A1\_05 and NL\_A1\_06, who expressed in the beginning they are not Dutch (and who cluttered together before we started to make the small groups which pulled them apart) are most observant and reserved. They let the others in their group take more of the lead”. The facilitator even noted some “light bullying” in meeting 17 in relation to one of these girls: “NL\_A1\_11 and NL\_A1\_09 were both not very positive about NL\_A1\_05 (who was not there today). When they were dividing tasks, NL\_A1\_09 said, when discussing who could be a spokesman about NL\_A1\_05: ‘We should not send her, because she can't really talk well anyway’.” The co-facilitator and facilitator discussed this with the two Alliance members in order to “make them aware not just for the particular moment, but for the future too”. Girl NL\_A1\_05 actually took a more leading role in approaching stakeholders in the subsequent meetings, and she was very successful in organizing the participation of three key stakeholders in a dialogue form. In this forum, all three of the young people were active, even though Alliance members NL\_A1\_11 and NL\_A1\_09 took more of the lead in opting for the moderator role together (and Alliance member NL\_A1\_05 did not want to).

## Empowerment

As highlighted in previous sections, the adolescents participating in the Dutch Alliances were not much acquainted with youth participation at the beginning of the project, so expectedly they were to be empowered in many regards. According to Kohfeldt and colleagues (2011:29), YPAR projects are likely to be conducive to alterations in power through shifts of **knowledge; knowledge production and voice** (here understood in the sense of a capacity to make use of or to create space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, typically among more powerful stakeholders).

## NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

That knowledge acquisition would be a challenge was evidenced very early in Alliance B2, i.e. at Meeting 1:

‘Boy NL\_B1\_04 from the newly arrived group asked how long the presentation would last. When I said about 20 minutes, he relaxed.’ (NL\_B2\_FN01:FN17).

In the subsequent sessions, facilitator and teachers primarily focused on encouraging the students to explore their own experience of obesogenic environment, which proved quite challenging and new to most of the students. In the subsequent sessions, knowledge acquisition seemed to be somehow hampered, as quite a few students were not able to remember new contents or instructions from a session to another. In the later sessions, the students were provided with outsiders’ knowledge (in particular map knowledge), from which some students seemed to learn a lot (in B2 in particular Sugar tax group). Besides, although reflecting on the environmental causes of obesity proved difficult, for quite some students, reflecting on the environmental factors involved in stress seemed easier, both in B1 (Helping Hand group) and B2 (Punishment). With regard to knowledge production, the young people in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 were provided with basic research training and some subgroups carried out surveys. Besides, the Kitchen take-over group worked on a cookbook, which they (found very hard and) were not able to finish when meetings moved to an online format following COVID-19 restrictions.

In terms of voice - i.e. making use of or creating space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them – the Alliance activities provided some students with the feeling of being entitled to speak-up about what matters to them including articulating some issues that matter to them to a larger extent than childhood obesity (such as racism or sex abuse). Especially in B2, most students were very committed to debating, as well as in the preparation of the debate, which entailed looking up for knowledge to back their arguments, a demanding exercise for some of them. The students from the Sugar Tax group were also able to present and discuss their policy form in a dialogue forum with stakeholders and in the Youth Task Force with youth from other countries, which they evaluated as a very empowering experience.

The feedback forms inform us about how NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 students regard what they have learned across their participation to their Alliance: A bit of knowledge acquisition - somewhat in the direction of a systemic perspective (doing something to the 'environment') however with some remains of an individual choice perspective) – and importantly about readiness for action and voice:

NL\_B1\_FF\_02

*"I didn't like working together so much now I still don't, but I do accept now that you have to do something with everyone [...] Many young people are bullied because they are overweight, and I find that unacceptable and would like to help them lose a bit of weight and become a bit of a good weight".*

NL\_B2\_FF\_01 (Sugar Tax group, proceeding to dialogue forum)

*"I found it important to change things in the Netherlands".*

NL\_B2\_FF\_02 (Sugar Tax group, proceeding to dialogue forum)

*"That I could make my own voice heard to people".*

NL\_B2\_FF\_04

*"Over how to change things".*

NL\_B2\_FF\_05

*"That we had to do things to change the environment or help people".*

NL\_B2\_FF\_06

*"It depends on how you look at it, because sometimes they can choose to eat unhealthy or healthy, but sometimes it is also because of the environment they are in".*

The feedback session two years after the start of the Alliances with two co-facilitators, one of them being the schoolteacher, informed us that the Alliance work has had different empowering effects over the longer term. On a personal level, the co-facilitator/ teacher who had stayed in touch with the students after they left school mentioned that some students were accepted on a higher school level and others were enabled to finish their follow-up education sooner because of their Alliance activities. One of the young people was so confronted by a group conversation led by one of the facilitators about system level neighbourhood effects on individual lives that she realized that her 'personal' experiences of loss were not normal nor ok, which helped her (and later her two brothers as well) to seek trauma therapy and take new steps in education and work. At the graduation ceremony, some of young people's parents appeared to be exceptionally proud and pleasantly surprised about their children's activities and achievements in an international context (including one young person being involved in the Youth Task Force). On a readiness for action level, the co-facilitator/ teacher reported that many of the young people had developed research skills and a more critical approach due to the Alliance activities, in terms of asking for sources "who else is saying this?" and questioning why things were organized in a particular way by the government or municipality (e.g. "why do they make it so complicated for students to apply for student loans, this is not doable for everyone"). Moreover, one of the young people – who seemed rather timid and absent in the last meetings at school and who did not continue activities online – started her own investigation in correspondence with the co-facilitator/ teacher about how the municipality had/ had not organized options for Muslimas to participate in sports.

Earlier in this report (page 86), we have indicated how the Alliance members discussed the ‘problem of obesity’ over time, and how more systemic perceptions about problems and solutions started to develop throughout the different activities (such as system mapping; discussing newspaper and scientific articles; Photovoice, and developing their policy ideas). Accordingly, in the feedback form **shifts in knowledge** were mentioned in a few instances; one of the Alliance members wrote for example: “I’ve learned a lot about societal problems, and I didn’t know so much about this yet” and another Alliance member answered the question about ‘what was the most important activity’ with “learning the new things”.

At the same time, ideas about individual responsibility as causes of and solutions to obesity seemed to come up rather naturally, and were brought to the fore up until the later meetings. When asked about ‘the role of youth in tackling overweight amongst young people’ in the feedback form at the end of the meetings, almost all responses were related to “motivating and convincing friends and other young people to make healthy choices”. Only one Alliance member wrote on the other hand “trying to do something about it ourselves”.

The facilitator concluded after meeting 8: “They still think quite “small”, as in ‘school setting’ and not on a bigger systemic level. They need someone to ask them critical questions about this, and give them examples of systemic issues related to the individual matters they bring up, for them to make the link”. The (co-)n facilitators had an important role in precisely this “asking critical questions” and “giving examples of systemic issues” in the Alliance meetings, as was recurring in the fieldnotes.

One of the articles discussed in meeting 16 highlighted the role of urban planning in stimulating active ways of living. “The youth however felt, that it was “too much hassle” to redesign cities. So, it would “be better to stimulate sports” in case a city was already designed, and consider urban planning to promote physical activity for newly designed cities and neighbourhoods”. This does not in the first place reflect a prioritization of individual responsibility, but rather a very pragmatic approach in which systemic solutions were increasingly seen as a good option in some, but not in all, cases. This does imply a shift and increase in knowledge that turned out to be empowering in the sense that it stimulated creativity and ownership in considering where and how change was deemed fruitful.

When asked in the WP7 open questions to ‘name something going well in the Alliances’ most of the Alliance members mentioned “coming up with a plan”, “developing the ideas” and “our plan is moving forward”, which indicates that **producing knowledge** in the form of “a plan” and working towards presenting this plan has been central for the NL\_A1 Alliance members.

The young people in the first sub-group started to orient themselves on organizing cooking lessons at their own school. To this end, they attended a cooking class at a high school in the city and evaluated how they would like to do this themselves. They then applied for a budget (for pans and kitchen utensils, as well as for groceries) to try out how cooking works at their own school. For the cooking class they wanted to ask permission from the canteen and the school management, and then look for students who wanted to participate. Because the school was closed during the lock down and the meetings were now held online, the young people started to think about other ways of conveying knowledge and raising enthusiasm about cooking amongst young people. Eventually, they set up a

CO-CREATE Netherlands Instagram page and started recording healthy cooking videos which they posted here. The Alliance members also approached influencers in the domain of food, cooking and health, canteen experts and key persons in the school to set up a dialogue forum. Despite of numerous attempts, it turned out to be especially hard to get a response from influencers. After postponing the dialogue forum at first, the dialogue did not take place in the end. The Alliance members were engaged however in spreading their knowledge and plan through Instagram, and in having their idea presented in a booklet for policy makers.

The young people in the second sub-group thought and talked a lot about waste and also about the link between waste, a healthy living environment and healthy food. They then contacted GOM, a cleaning company that developed the Trash Roulette. The young people wanted to design a waste bin together with GOM, and place a small number of waste bins at school. They wanted to draw attention to the trash can during breaks with, for example, a movie, posters at school and spreading the idea via social media. They then wanted to observe how the students dealt with the waste bin at school and adapt the design if necessary, and then approach manufacturers who could make a larger number of waste bins. Other stakeholders the young people considered were the school management, people in the government who want to improve the environment, students and teachers. Due to the closure of the schools, it was not possible to have a waste bin made and placed at school, and neither to observe how the students would deal with this. Therefore, the young people from this group conducted a survey among the youngsters at their school about waste separation. The questionnaire was completed by 34 young people and 80 percent of these young people were between 14 and 17 years old. The majority of the youth indicated that waste should be better separated at school. When asked what would motivate them to separate waste, young people answered: “rewards”, “having several waste bins in several places”, “waste bins with separate compartments”, “making the waste bins more attractive” and “more information about why it is good to separate waste”. The Alliance members then organized a dialogue forum in which they were able to discuss their idea with someone from the national government; a policymaker from the municipality who deals with waste separation, and a manager from the cleaning and waste sector (GOM) who develops waste bins in the city. The Alliance members and stakeholders discussed several obstacles and opportunities and came to a shared vision with the aim to bring different parties together to realize the waste bins and create awareness about waste separation and the link to health.

The young people in the third sub-group reasoned that by eating healthy you can feel fitter, which is also good for school performance. They felt that children easily make unhealthy choices during the break at school and therefore wanted to make the healthy choice easier and stimulate youth not to buy a chocolate bar, but rather grab an apple or a banana, especially because the fruit would be for free. As an example, the young people mentioned the hockey club, where young people can pick tangerines, apples and bananas from baskets on the table. They aimed for the policy to be implemented in many places, such as in all secondary schools, but for instance also in offices or other workplaces. The Alliance members continued to think about how to realize free fruit in schools and what was needed for this. They have looked at initiatives by NOURISH and <https://schoolfruit.nl/> to learn from these policies. As a next step, they planned an action and applied for a budget to place free fruit in various places at school and to observe and keep track of what happened next: would the fruit be grabbed and eaten? The school board was asked for permission and at a later stage, the Alliance members planned to ask the school for money to continue the project. They planned to ask

permission from the canteen manager and they wanted to start promoting the free fruit. However, the young people needed to adjust their plans when the schools unexpectedly closed due to COVID-19. They then started thinking about similar projects at schools in the city, in other European countries, and also the project "European school fruit". Moreover, they considered stakeholders they would like to submit their ideas to, such as people from the municipality who are engaged in projects with secondary schools and healthy food for children; people from the industry who could give financial tips on how to keep costs low, the school management and the contact person at school responsible for a healthy living environment and healthy eating. Even though the group was very engaged during the final face-to-face meetings, they did not progress much in the online meetings and indicated shortly before the end of the project that they lost motivation and did not think that within the time frame, or afterwards, they could make their project happen. They were therefore not so much able to share the knowledge and plan they produced with others. However, they were keen on their plan being presented in a booklet for stakeholders and policy makers.

The Alliance members were not able to pursue their knowledge production and distribution as planned due to COVID-19 restrictions or other setbacks (e.g. influencers not responding), which was disappointing for them. One of the Alliance members mentioned in the feedback form as a response to 'what were the most important activities': "we were unfortunately not able to do much activities because of the corona restrictions 😞". Nevertheless, developing their policy plans turned out to be an empowering experience, as was also indicated in the feedback forms: "I think that we are progressing well, despite of everything that's happening at the moment [the lockdown]. Everything is taken care of well, and I like it that our plan is increasingly starting to look like something 😊". Another example of knowledge production as empowering was provided in the feedback form, where one Alliance member indicated to 'definitely' recommend these kinds of activities to friends because "it's not only good to be aware of problems amongst youth, but you also learn skills that you will use for the rest of your life".

The opportunities the Alliance members had to raise their '**voice**' – and hence their capacity to make use of, or to create, space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, typically among more powerful stakeholders – concerned a) organizing pilot activities at school that involved other youth and stakeholders at school, b) the AAGG day where they were invited to do a dialogue forum with policy makers subscribing to the workshop, and c) the dialogue forums.

With the first and second options being cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions, the main opportunities for voice were the dialogue forums. One of the sub-groups managed to organize one, and this appeared to be a very empowering experience for the Alliance members involved. In the feedback form, one of the young people participating mentioned "I thought the forum was the most important, because here we really got to talk with people from the field". Directly after the dialogue forum, as well as during the closing activity, the three members who participated expressed that it was an interesting and powerful experience and they were proud of their achievement.

At the same time, one of the young people said she was hesitant whether the stakeholders really learned from them, because they were at times having discussions among themselves rather than with the youth. This is partly in line with feedback provided by one of the stakeholders after the dialogue forum who mentioned on the one hand: "beautiful way of having a conversation about this

topic with different generations and organizations” and on the other hand “[I was not encouraged to think differently because] I think we are already very experienced with the topic. We are still very active in the topic so very good to see the youth is very engaged with the topic as well”.

Another way of giving the young people voice was to describe their plans in a booklet for stakeholders and policy makers. All Alliance members were positive towards that and keen to have their real names written with their policy idea, in case someone from the field would be interested in their idea. This also indicates a sense of pride and ownership. Moreover, the CO-CREATE meetings could also be seen as ways to create and support space for the Alliance members to develop and express their voices, which was for instance prominent in the Photovoice exercises and in the presentation training. In the WP7 open questions, one of the Alliance members wrote about ‘what was going well in the Alliance’: “everyone is super well listened to”, and “every plan gets equal opportunities”.

### *What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5’s engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth?*

#### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

In NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, until the COVID-19 outbreak, in-person meetings were held weekly, in two classes located near each other with students, facilitators, teachers and co-facilitators easily and often moving from one room to the other. The two Alliance groups both started to work together, building on the same inputs of the facilitator, assisted by the class teachers, one per class groups, often replaced by substitute teachers or co-facilitators. Subgroup work started very soon and became the work norm when the policy ideas emerged. All along the process the guidance provided by facilitators was quite substantial, for different reasons, depending on the subgroups. Some subgroups needed substantial support and encouragement to get started and also to get going. In some other subgroups, students were quite prone to dash to action and facilitators rather felt they needed to slow them down and take time to follow the preliminary steps. In some of these subgroups, student leadership soon appeared, with some charismatic figures coming up with an idea and pushing for action at the expense of the desired gradual and reflective engagement process (Kitchen take-over group; Sport/Falcon group). In the course of time, some work figures emerged among the students accepting to follow the steps to progress and to actually implement them (Kitchen take-over group). Some other subgroups were more balanced in terms of work (Sugar Tax; women only sport). Some ideas were born by individual students (Punishment). After COVID-19 outbreak, in-person meetings were banned and some subgroups continued online, in close collaboration with the facilitators.

#### NL\_A1

In the NL\_A1 Alliance, the CO-CREATE project was part of the school curriculum in the sense that students could choose CO-CREATE from a list of topics as their **elective course**. When looking at the

consistency in presence of the Alliance members with barely any drop out (except for the 'free fruit group' stopping shortly before the end), the group size of 10 young people, and the progress all Alliance members made over time, we can clearly see that this recruitment strategy and set-up worked well and has clear advantages.

At the same, it also generated particular challenges. One of the Alliance members was placed in this project even though he did not want to. In the open questions in the WP7 questionnaire after the first meeting, he expressed to be very critical about the project, stating that "I'm saying this, whereas this was my last choice on the list". In the end, he sort of accepted his participation and was able to take part without any sense of resistance or negativity, while he also showed a degree of action, engagement and collaborating with his peers. Nevertheless, this can be seen as coercion, which is not desirable nor required in a research project. Moreover, the lack of motivation of this Alliance members posed clear challenges to the facilitators, and it was mentioned several times that this also had an influence on the group dynamics, atmosphere and progress of other Alliance members.

A second challenge concerned that the set-up allowed for, and made it mandatory to offer, weekly meetings of 55 minutes, which is rather frequent and yet short. The facilitator expressed that she often could not run a good program within this time frame: "I think it will continue to stay a challenge that the time we have is so short. With 5 min opening and 5 debriefing, we only have 45 min to work together".

The third challenge concerned the attitude of the young people. The facilitators reported in the fieldnotes, especially when there was a dip in engagement around meeting 11-15, but also in instances in which the Alliance members actually were engaged, that the young people had a very school minded take on the project.

Lastly, running the CO-CREATE project in a school year provided many opportunities during that year (even though in this case restricted through the COVID-19 pandemic), but the ending also provided a natural stop; both the school program and the activities of the young people end before the summer, followed by a clear break, and then a new school program with new obligations in the new year. This makes forms of engagement less sustainable, because it is much less likely that Alliance members will continue. In the feedback form, Alliance members mentioned when asked whether they 'wanted to pursue with project activities': "I don't think so, because we are all entering our exam year", and "I would like to continue but say 'no' anyhow, because this will become an important school year for me and I notice that school is already taking me so much time". Regarding the latter, as something that 'was not going so well' in the answers to open questions of the WP7 survey, an Alliance member said "sometime there is a little less understanding for our school activities". This implies that even when running the project within the school curriculum, it can be challenging for young people to combine the project with their other school tasks.

When looking at forms of engagement suitable for youth, the fieldnotes as well as the feedback forms and WP7 survey indicate that being active and practical, and also dealing with 'real life' problems and stakeholders was met with the most motivation and engagement. In the NL\_A1 Alliance, it took a rather long time before the young people got into **action**, and it seems like this sometimes took too long in their view. In the WP7 survey, when asked what 'was not going so well' an Alliance member mentioned two months after the start of the project "we did not really undertake much action yet". One month later it was again mentioned that "there is still no action"

and another month later someone mentioned that “motivation and speed” was ‘not going well’. At the end of the project, an Alliance member indicated that ‘what could be changed’ was: “more doing than thinking”.

From meeting 15 onwards, the Alliance really seemed to sparkle when the young people were planning pilot activities, asked for budget, and prepared dialogue forums and encounters with policy makers. It was unfortunate that COVID-19 restrictions made a number of these plans and activities impossible. Some of the young people lost their motivation in this process, as someone mentioned in the feedback form: “I felt a bit like I was walking a dead-end road”. Others were able to work with the new situation, or even turn it into an advantage (e.g. the cooking lessons group). One Alliance member did not want to change anything about the project (as mentioned in the WP7 survey): “Since everything needed to be done online, I think we did it very well this way!”.

The facilitator reflected after meeting 15 on the challenge of providing the young people with the level of action they apparently needed to get engaged. The opportunities that were facilitated to “practically implement the young people’s ideas” did have an activating effect, as seen in the fieldnotes after meeting 17: “Alliance members “NL\_A1-03 and NL\_A1\_04 were sceptical at first, which did not have a good effect on the rest of the group. However, after joining the cooking program at the other secondary school where they were given an active role as the assistant of the teacher, their attitude shifted. They acted more responsible and enthusiastic. Where their whole policy idea first felt abstract for them, now they are really in action mode and seemed to have a better idea of which steps to take to realize the pilot for their policy idea”.

Whereas the fieldnotes show that the CO-CREATE activities of system mapping, photo voice, presentation training and developing a policy idea had an important function in shifting knowledge, knowledge production and developing and using ‘voice’, through discussions, exercises and engaging with different perspectives, these activities could at the same time compete with getting into action before the young people would lose interest, which appeared to be a tricky balance.

## *Potential effects on Attrition*

### NL\_B1 and NL\_B2

In NL\_B1 and 2, attrition up until the pandemic was fairly limited. The youths were reminded a few times that they could quit if they fancy.

It is not that clear whether the youth are always aware that they also participate in research, even though this is mentioned in the information sheet and in the introduction meeting. [Facilitator 1] try to pay attention to it, by asking whether [she] can take pictures of their work (or of them at work), while stating that [researchers] use this to follow and evaluate the process see FN\_B1\_07 @FN37 and FN\_B1\_08 @FN37”.

Facilitator 2 took other initiatives to remind students of their freedom. For example, at Meeting 13, in the Instagram group, consisting of four students (all female, NL\_B1\_10, NL\_B1\_11, NL\_B1\_07 & NL\_B1\_08) [NL\_B1\_FN13:FN17]:

All but NL\_B1\_10 were hesitating on quitting CO-CREATE. [The facilitator] sat down with them and talked about their reasoning. At first, they felt like nothing was happening, the Instagram page wasn't growing and they had asked the school for permission to hang up posters several times, without success. These small setbacks combined with a busy schedule made them consider quitting. The only one who wanted to continue, with or without her fellow students, was NL\_B1\_10. She really sees the potential and likes the idea of the Helping Hands and explicitly stated that she would continue on alone. After a brief discussion with the other three participants [they] concluded that [they] needed to write down a course of action to help them proceed. They [were] now planning on talking about health on their school radio, increasing the amount of posts and followers of the [Helping Hands] Instagram account and perhaps even giving guest classes about health catered to young people.

At Meeting 15, the three members of the Helping Hand group confessed that they did not want to participate in the Alliance anymore and that they only stayed on because they felt guilty towards NL\_B1\_10. [The facilitator] "asked them why this is and they said that they did not feel motivated anymore and preferred to focus their efforts on their upcoming exam [NL\_B1\_FN15]:

NL\_B1\_08 (f) reported that she also felt that they can't make a difference anyways "It doesn't matter anyway. I'm not motivated and then I'd rather work on my exam". [The facilitator] tried to talk to them to see why they felt unmotivated, but they found it difficult to answer, NL\_B1\_07 "It's just that I don't have motivation for this in general". At this point NL\_B1\_10 returned and [The facilitator] sat down with all of them and asked the three to explain to NL\_B1\_10 what [they] just discussed [with the facilitator]. At that point they honestly confessed that they wanted to quit and that they were going to do so."

In Alliance B1, that some students left resulted from the decision of the teacher. At Meeting 14, following on the 3<sup>rd</sup> cooking session during which they didn't engage, while the facilitator invited the youths to discuss the matter at the subsequent meeting, the teacher decided [NL\_B1\_FN15]:

"to remove NL\_B1\_04, NL\_B1\_12 and NL\_B1\_13 from the CO-CREATE project altogether. [The facilitators] received this information after the students were gone so this was done without [their] consent or input. When [the facilitators] asked her reasoning she claimed that she 'had enough of their attitude and that she had to show consequence'. [The facilitators] did not have an opportunity to speak to the students about this situation. [NL\_B1\_FN14] At Meeting 15, NL\_B1\_13 and NL\_B1\_12 were allowed to participate again but they "seemed completely unmotivated by the whole session and NL\_B1\_04 sat on the side and did not say a word, he seemed to be very angry (at the teachers, because he was swearing at them when he walked in)."

As of Meeting 16, "NL\_B1\_04 has re-joined the restaurant group, although he did not seem very motivated." [NL\_B1\_FN16]

In NL\_B2, one boy somehow did quit, staying in the corridor most of the later in-person sessions, but never quitted completely, from time to time taking a look at what peers did and even expressing the wish to go to Norway for the youth gathering when invited by the facilitator (deemed as surprising news by his peers).

The data suggests that attrition could have been mitigated by:

- 1) the school-based nature of the project and the coupling of the project with school participation
- 2) the enduring efforts of the facilitator and the teacher to adapt the activity programme and training activities to the challenging issues of the youth (in NL\_B1, strong eagerness to proceed to action fast; in NL\_B2, low attention span, high level of anxiety regarding the unknown)
- 3) the collaborative spirit between facilitator and teachers, joining their respective knowledge and skills for the sake of the engagement of the youth in spite of their challenges. Teacher 1 in particular – although being present with B2 (of which she is the mentor teacher) also had classes with NL\_B1, and has a connection with the students, whom she knew from previous years. Teacher 1 worked as a teacher in this school for a couple of years and was assumingly in her early 30's, hence a quite experienced teacher. She could relate to the young people very well and they all had a strong trust relationship with her. This was strengthened by regular one-on-one meetings with her on school days. Also, the collaboration between facilitators/ co-facilitators and teacher 1 was intense and collaborative. Regarding teacher 2, her relation to B1 seemed a little different: she looks much less experienced than teacher 1 (limited work experience as a teacher and no prior experience with vocational school education). However, she was collaborative and worked well together with the facilitators, but less in-depth and she had less input for the project (e.g. too much of inputs from her to support group facilitation once motivation gets lower or when conflict arises). Overall, the youth seemed loyal to her (showing empathy when she and her baby were ill) and did not seem to challenge her much in spite of her lack of experience, except when NL\_B1\_04 (m) was expelled from the CC project
- 4) trust processes developed between the young people and the facilitators and co-facilitators seemed to have played an important role in keeping the young people engaged. Although being often absent, the two co-facilitators seemed (judging from fieldnotes) to have played an important supportive role to the facilitator (especially in B1), in particular when facilitator 1 was alone to facilitate the two groups and the teachers were frequently ill whereas the students did need some adult presence to keep on CO-CREATE assignments/tasks. In addition, the co-facilitators seemed to be experienced with such youth groups and able to liaise with them collectively and individually (e.g. to find out about a nascent misunderstanding or an arising conflict). The co-facilitators both engaged in some PAR minutes, but they found this rather challenging and often provided oral feedback. They were however active in thinking along, they were experienced with young people and with youth participation; how to develop an idea, how to bring it further, how to discuss it with stakeholders? And they shared this with the young people. It was more of a practical choice to focus on the advocacy/ youth participation training in NL\_B2 first, and before we found a right time for NL\_B1, the schools were closed due to the lockdown

Attrition (or limited engagement) could have been caused by:

- 1) anxiety regarding the unknown (especially in NL\_B2)
- 2) struggle to engage with the systemic perspective of the project – complex and at odd with their endorsing of the individual responsibility regarding eating and moving behaviour and their belief that they couldn't change politics (very explicit in NL\_B2 but also suggested in NL\_B1)

3) Exams coming up from January on (very explicit in NL\_B2; in NL\_B1, within the Helping and group, for part of the group the exams came to challenge their (somewhat limited) motivation for the project)

4) COVID-19 regulations and switching from face-to-face meetings to online meetings, meaning less concrete communication and support from the facilitator (and none from the teacher?), seemed to have been a reason for some of the young people to stop their participation (whereas the research team was able to turn the situation into an opportunity for a few others)

5) Feeling forced to engage although the meaning of the project was not clear to them, for example in B1 at Meeting 6 (NL\_B1\_FN06:FN29):

Boy NL\_B1\_04 stated, when being displeased about the restaurant plan not working out as anticipated, that he did not even want to participate in the project from the beginning, but he was forced to, because it was mandatory for his diploma ('entree toets'). Girl NL\_B1\_13 confirmed. Later on, he did proceed and went on the interview youth with two girls from his sub-group. [Facilitators] followed up on this (see FN\_B1\_07 @FN37 and FN\_B1\_08 @FN37) and discussed this with [teacher 1] and [teacher 2] as well as with the youth themselves. Both in the information sheets and in talks with [teacher 1] and [teacher 2], it has been stated that youth cannot be forced to participate and should have alternative opportunities to fulfil their school obligations.

As a follow-up, facilitator reported [FN\_B1\_FN07 @FN37]:

#ethics I discussed with [teacher 1] that boy NL\_B1\_04 stated last week that he was forced to participate to get his degree. She said that they had coupled participation to the school program, but they are now open to youth that they do not have to participate and that they can also look for alternatives within the school program.

And FN\_B1\_FN08 @FN37:

I discussed with [teacher 2] that boy NL\_B1\_04 stated earlier that he was forced to participate to get his degree. Co-facilitator/ teacher told me that they had coupled participation to the school program, but they are now open to youth that they do not have to participate and that they can also look for alternatives within the school program. She has already discussed with boy NL\_B1\_04 that he will try a few more times but can quit if he wants to without further results (and she will then help him with an alternative).

The matter was also discussed with other students [NL\_B2\_FN07:FN23]:

After the group discussion, [facilitator 1] asked girl NL\_B2\_15 whether it was [her] voice or way of explaining that annoyed her, to open up and see how [facilitator] can (or cannot) facilitate her and the rest of the sub-group. She immediately denied and said that it was not that. It was the fact that [teacher 1] and [facilitator 1] entered into discussions with boy NL\_B2\_11 and these discussions were not productive, [teacher 1 and facilitator 1] should not do that. Boy NL\_B2\_11 just does not like the project and we cannot do much about that, and he just needs to do it. He is clever to lead us into a discussion every time, because what did they do as a group today? Nothing. This is what annoys her, it's immature and we feed into that. Let's just do the project and not talk so much about what you

can hold against it. [Facilitator 1] acknowledged that [she] understood what she meant and how our approach here hampers her and the rest of the group. I said that I would discuss this with [teacher 1] (which [facilitator 1] did, and [teacher 1] also acknowledged that she understood her point). [Facilitator] also mentioned *that the dilemma for me is that in school, indeed, you must just do your tasks. However, in research and in this research in particular, someone's perspective and criticism are important to us, and we do try to tease out and facilitate what a person himself or herself wants to do within the project.* But indeed, [facilitator] confirmed to her, this is not always productive, especially for others in the group who are slowed down by this, while girl NL\_B2\_15 is someone who can (and likes to) work particularly fast and focused. So, we can also think about when and in what combinations (e.g. one-on-one) to have these discussions, especially when they keep coming back.

#### NL\_A1

Building on what have been found as 'forms of Alliance that were most suitable and sustainable for youth' (4.4) we can say that offering CO-CREATE activities within the school curriculum facilitated participation and prevented attrition; the Alliance members needed to finish CO-CREATE as their elective in order to pass the school year. This supported their attendance and involvement throughout the school year. Whereas motivation at times dropped, we can also clearly see how by listening to the young people and facilitating their real-life actions and ideas, motivation increased again in many occasions both on the group and the individual level. The school set-up therefore also allowed for difficulties in the process and overcoming them together with the Alliance members.

At the same time, it was shown that when the setting became a bit looser in the case of the online meetings, young people who were less motivated or occupied with other tasks no longer showed up as consistently. The facilitators furthermore noticed a trade-off that with CO-CREATE as part of the school curriculum, whereby the school setting provided boundaries to the 'what' and 'when' of CO-CREATE and the young people also did not easily go beyond approaching the project and their policy ideas as another school task. The setting therefore also complicated ownership.

A similar trade-off was noticed between the predesigned CO-CREATE activities that worked well for shifting and producing knowledge (especially through system mapping, photo voice, discussing articles, presentation training, the policy form and the dialogue forum, and not so much through group building activities and the vlogging training) – which was appreciated by the young people in the feedback forms – but this also postponed the 'action' part, which appeared to be central and crucial for motivation and engagement according to both the Alliance members and the (co) facilitators.

Our data shows that this requires that the (co-) facilitators aim to find a good balance between training skills and engaging with perspectives on the one hand, while at the same time offering swift opportunities for action, real-life activities and encounters, as well as control and influence by the young people, on the other hand. One of the facilitators facilitated a part of the meetings on her own and she reported that a wider team including the co-facilitator and a second facilitator was necessary and really helped to offer the CO-CREATE program in a way in which it could easily serve and involve the young people. The Alliance members also seemed to value this support, as they mentioned in the feedback form: "our group was often struggling with how to proceed, and they really helped us with

that!"; "[The facilitation] was super good! There were many facilitators for our small group", and "I kind of find it nice that we had support to help us".

Engagement was also complicated by the COVID-19 restrictions. Firstly, a number of the planned activities could not proceed, which made some of the young people (in the 'free fruit' group) lose their motivation, because they "lost their confidence in making an actual change" in real life. Secondly, the meetings turned to an online format. While the meetings continued rather consistently and most of the young people were able to develop their policy ideas further, not all Alliance members found the meetings as engaging. One of them mentioned as a suggestion for improvement in the feedback form "in case the facilitation should stick to an online format, I would advise you to explore how you can keep online lessons interesting. It's of course a very different situation and many schools have been providing online courses for years, so I think it would be a good idea to see what kind of tricks they are using to keep the attention of the participants".

## *Conclusion*

As a conclusion we would like to consider the implementation of the CO-CREATE model of the Youth Alliances for Childhood Obesity Prevention in the Netherlands as a whole and reflect on its value regarding adolescent participation and political efficacy. In this report, we do not aim to compare the rolling out of the Alliance model in the Netherlands with what happened in the other four countries. However, it is possible to take a step aside and look back at the initial challenges in terms of adolescent political empowerment in the Netherlands and reflect on what the implementation of the Alliances, following WP4 activities (with other young people) and preceding WP6 activities (with a part of the same young people), contributed in that regard.

While preparing for the setting of the Dutch Alliances, it appeared that there is a diversity of formal opportunities for youth participation in politics (youth councils and youth budgets, in particular at the municipality level or the school level) and opportunities to take part in a wide diversity of youth organizations in the Netherlands – most of which have no political purpose though. However, active encouragement of young people to have a voice in politics is very limited and there seems to be no systematic mechanism implemented to encourage adolescents to join. As a result, adolescent participation in political matters is generally low in the Netherlands and acquaintance with political issues is limited among the Dutch adolescents, especially among those with lower social-economic backgrounds since youth councils often represent adolescents from more privileged and higher-educated backgrounds. Consequently, it was to be expected that the adolescents in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 following basic vocational education would be unacquainted with having to get together and come up with policy ideas to prevent childhood obesity, and that much youth empowerment would be needed at the outset. It turned out to be also the case in NL\_A1 where the involved adolescents, albeit from more privileged backgrounds and following pre-university tracks, were relatively young, hence with limited experience of youth political participation.

Partnering with secondary schools definitely helped reaching out to a diversity of young people and to engage them on a steady and enduring manner, although most of the enrolled students had no prior experience of extra-curricular/voluntary participation. School-based recruitment also secured voluntary participation despite the students having a busy extra-curricular agenda, either in terms of

leisure or of having to work off-hours to contribute to their income. That the Alliances were set in existing class groups partly positioned the Dutch Alliances to be in line with common YPAR experiences, especially in the anglophone world, where the pre-existence of a community is often taken for granted, as scholarly YPAR literature suggests. In addition, the curricular format contributed to mitigate the risk of attrition inherent to youth unacquainted with political issues.

Overall, that the adolescents were already acquainted with each other most probably boosted their ability to get started with CO-CREATE content work despite being unacquainted with the topic and unfamiliar with the systemic perspective on childhood obesity. Attrition was not much of an issue. To the contrary, the Dutch facilitators rather had to actively work on preventing that the students come to feel coerced in their participation.

This also led to some insights regarding motivation. Where it may have been assumed that the youth would develop motivation through the CO-CREATE activities and the opportunity to have an influence, motivation did not turn out to be as self-evident and homogeneous in all Alliances. Where the majority of youth did develop motivation and an increasing level of engagement, a few of the young people were not as interested, either from the start (in NL\_A1, a boy felt forced into an elective outside of his own choice) or along the way (in NL\_B2, where a boy disliked the topic and systemic approach and lost motivation). The unmotivated youth, even though they were few, had a clear influence on some of their peers and the group process in general. In the NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, opportunities were provided to 'drop out' in alternative school activities, which meant that – especially when the activities moved to an online format – about half of the young people chose to end the further development of their ideas and their contribution to the project, and only the more motivated and engaged adolescents continued (with more focus and enthusiasm now that less motivated peers were no longer present). In the case of NL\_A1, dropping out was not an option in the school curriculum and the boy (as well as a few peers), but also the whole group who got less motivated in the middle of the activities, did gain motivation (again) along the process, showing that a school setting that prevents attrition can also provide time to overcome dips in motivation. Except for the Free Fruit group however, who lost motivation shortly before the project ended, because they were no longer confident that they could make a change due to the closing of schools following COVID-19 restrictions. The school setting (curriculum and environment) thus enabled strong possibilities for commitment and overcoming problems during the school year and while working at school, but at the same time made continuation in or after the summer – experienced as a natural break in school activities – unlikely. Moreover, the facilitators indicated that a 'school mindset' also had its limitations in and challenges for engagement and readiness for political action, namely that young people showed limited willingness to think and act beyond their school hours and school program, especially in the first phases of the Alliances.

Regarding youth empowerment, taking part in the Alliances led the Dutch adolescents nevertheless to gain power in three regards. First, in terms of knowledge acquisition. Both in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2 and NL\_A1, we observed that the students gained knowledge particularly in terms of group functioning and output-oriented work and, to a lower degree, about childhood obesity as a major health issue to be addressed in a systemic perspective. Such gains in knowledge encouraged the adolescents to feel entitled to speak and research about the issue at stake. Second, in terms of knowledge production, gains were especially perceptible in the subgroups in which youth surveys were conducted and the outputs of which were included in the refinement process of three policy

ideas. The data suggests that it helped the adolescents to strengthen their self-confidence regarding the refinement of their policy ideas. Third, in terms of capacity for voice – i.e. with the young people becoming able to make use of, or to create, space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, in group discussions and to stakeholders. This is where most gains were booked in the three Dutch Alliances. The Alliance activities following the WP5 engagement protocol helped in that regard as well as a number of activities which were not planned as such in the training programme but added by the Dutch team, either following the suggestions of the school teachers (especially in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2, e.g. debate about childhood obesity as individual responsibility vs systemic responsibility) or as on-the-job reflection on the Alliance development proceeding well enough or not (discussing popular and scientific articles in NL\_A1) or as ways to keep momentum in the circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak. Over the longer term, several empowering effects on personal levels and on the level of skills and readiness for action levels were observed and reported in the feedback session by the co-facilitator/ teacher who stayed in touch with the young people.

Striking in the Dutch Alliances is the enduring presence of childhood obesity to be perceived as individual responsibility in spite of the efforts of facilitators to get them acquainted with the systemic perspective (in particular through system mapping presentations and exercises which triggered the Alliance members to think and discuss the problem of obesity repetitively on a system level) and the obvious good will of a large deal of the students to engage with their facilitators' invites. The reasons are most probably to be found either in pragmatic thinking (NL\_A1) and/or in the fact that the individual responsibility narrative is particularly strong among the most social-economically-vulnerable in the Netherlands, just as in other neoliberal welfare democracies (NL\_B1 and NL\_B2). Pointing towards individual responsibility was also used to go beyond and move away from blame posed by collective interventions: "I do not want to come up with an intervention that changes other people, because it is up to themselves what they want to choose". So individual responsibility was proposed as a right, suggesting that 'it's not my place to influence anyone'. This can also be seen as resistance to political interventions that express a morality of those who know what is 'good' and those who do not. This was also mentioned in the discussions: who is to decide what is healthy? A reference was then made to the project: do the people behind the project get to decide (that overweight is undesirable)? At that moment, one of the young people who raised this question dropped out and more of the young people shared that criticism towards the project. Notwithstanding, a share of Alliance members in all three Alliances developed knowledge about the problem of obesity and gained a more systemic perspective, as reflected in the development and refinement of their policy ideas. Sadly, we cannot use the survey exactly for this point as we hoped to.

All in all, CO-CREATE in the Netherlands resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in, and empowered through, several activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent overweight and obesity among youth, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members present and discuss their policy ideas with stakeholders and how those policy ideas can be turned into action. Activities that worked particularly well according to the (co) facilitators and young people in the feedback forms and WP7 questionnaire included system mapping, Photovoice, advocacy training (in NL\_B1 and NL\_B2) and presentation training (in NL\_A1), facilitating debates and discussions, and working on the policy form to develop the own action ideas.

Throughout the data, the following conditions came to the fore that made the Alliances suitable and sustainable for the youth:

A good atmosphere in the meetings (e.g. building trust and providing food, but also dealing with motivation or the lack thereof, and accordingly with peer influence)

A supportive role of the facilitators and co-facilitators to facilitate an inspiring and creative environment, helpful activities, and options for youth to influence the process

A good balance between pre-designed activities that help develop perspective and ideas on the one hand and quick action and real-life involvement in societal issues and stakeholder contact on the other hand

Technical support (especially in online meetings, and when working in shared documents)

This tends to confirm the worth of the Alliance model and also points to areas of further development such as adding opportunities to debate and get into practical action based on tangible issues that make direct sense to the participants before more thoroughly engaging with somewhat more abstract issues. Overall, the Dutch Alliances succeeded in ‘promoting and supporting adolescent participation in political efficacy complementary to the formulation of policies for upstream obesity prevention’ (**O5.1**), and ‘tapped into means and modalities suitable to and identified by adolescents themselves’, which ‘empowered adolescents and contributed to capacity development’. Moreover, the Dutch Alliance members developed policy options that can be seen as ‘transferable, novel and context-specific and informed by science and experience’, which can be a useful contribution to ‘upstream overweight prevention’ (**O5.3**). ‘Youth Alliances for overweight prevention policies’ were established that allowed for ‘knowledge exchange and learning among and between adolescents and scientific researchers’, in which experiential, scientific and political knowledge’ were integrated (**O5.2**). These Alliances were to some extent sustainable in the sense that a number of the adolescents participated in WP6 dialogue forum, Youth Task Force, and WP7 policy implementation activities, while the WP2 and WP3 studies on existing and evidence-based policies, especially the Nourishing and Movement overviews, and the WP4 system maps served as valuable input for the Alliance work (**O5.4**).

## Chapter 2: Norway

### *Summary Norway*

#### Alliance introduction and recruitment

Recruitment in Norway succeeded but did not go as easily and fast as was hoped for. The recruitment of the Alliance members in Norway was done in collaboration with the youth non-governmental organization Press – Redd Barna Ungdom (Press – Save the Children Youth), a formal CO-CREATE partner, and other youth organizations. The Norwegian team performed a rather open way of recruitment based on youth interest and proposed meetings in the young people's 'free' time (not in school time). For the Alliances, 1) geographical areas were chosen where the Alliances were to be established, 2) schools were chosen within the areas as points of entry, and 3) young people were recruited directly through information meetings, direct contact or through their peers at the schools. The locations that were chosen were selected to diversify the areas' characteristics in terms of their economic, social, and geographical aspects. Recruitment turned out to be challenging. Two facilitators invested a lot of time in recruiting young people in a more deprived urban area to engage young people from more challenging socioeconomic backgrounds. In the end they did not get to recruit youth here, while the facilitators indicated that many of these young people did not recognize the relevance of obesity prevention, as they were concerned about other problems such as a severe conflict that was going on in the area. The recruitment strategy did work in other areas which resulted in two Alliances: 12 Alliance members in a rural area and 13 Alliance members (most of them participating in only one of the three meetings) in a larger city. The third Alliance was organized digitally in collaboration with Press and based on youth organization membership; 13 youth organization-members were recruited from all over the country by organizing a Facebook event, after which they indicated their interest for participating in subsequent meetings via Kahoot, and the team stayed in touch through e-mail, sms and messenger groups.

The diversity across all three Alliances was presented on socio-economic status level (SES) (generally more advantaged for the young people in the larger city (NO\_B1) and youth organization (NO\_C1) Alliances compared to the rural area Alliance (NO\_A1) ), gender, and birth country of the parents. The young people from the NO\_C1 Alliance (based on those who filled in the survey) seemed to come from more affluent backgrounds and have Norway as their birth country and those of their parents. The facilitators indicated however that it was harder to assess in online meetings – especially because the youth were familiar with organizational work – what types of backgrounds the young people had. Based on anecdotal inputs in the feedback meeting with the facilitators, some of the youth did seem to come from more challenging socioeconomic backgrounds. The members from the NO\_A1 Alliance lived in a rural area and the members from the NO\_B1 Alliance in an urban area, while this was mixed for the members of the NO\_C1 Alliance. All young people in the NO\_C1 Alliance were member of a political organization, and this was the case for only a minority of the young people in the NO\_A1 and NO\_B1 Alliances. Diversity was also achieved in relation to the recruited co-facilitators, who were close in age to the Alliance members; they were furthermore diverse in terms of their gender and one of the co-facilitators was in a wheelchair.

The in total 37 young people in the Alliances met every few weeks; the NO\_A1 Alliance from October 2019 to May 2020 with 12 meetings in total; the NO\_B1 Alliance from December 2019 to February 2020 with 3 meetings in total, and the NO\_C1 Alliance from March to June 2020 with 3 whole group

meetings and 2 smaller group meetings. Some of the NO\_C1 Alliance members continued to meet after the summer to prepare for the Dialogue Forum and held their Dialogue Forum in February 2021. The NO\_A1 and NO\_B1 Alliances started with meetings in person and only the NO\_A1 Alliance transitioned to meetings online after the COVID-19 restrictions introduced in Norway in March 2020. Attendance in NO\_A1 fluctuated but dropped from about half of the members attending the first 8 meetings to about a third attending the online meetings after the quarantine. In NO\_B1, new young people were recruited for each of the three meetings. Two of adolescents visited two meetings and the others one meeting. All meetings for the NO\_C1 Alliance were organized online due to COVID-19 restrictions, and attendance was rather stable.

### Policy ideas

Policy ideas were developed in the Norwegian Alliances through several activities including system mapping, questionnaires, Photovoice, expert meeting and preparing dialog forums with policy makers and community leaders. Along the way, public engagement through social media, continuous communication between the members and assistance provided by the facilitators and co-facilitators supported the policy making process.

The Norwegian Alliances came up with a total of 32 policy ideas of which 5 were fully developed into policy proposals. These include:

1. Change the price and placement of food products in shops (NO\_A1 Alliance)
2. Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children (NO\_C1 Alliance)
3. Reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes (NO\_C1 Alliance)
4. Access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools (NO\_A1 Alliance)
5. Education on healthy lifestyle for upper secondary school students (NO\_A1 Alliance)

The NO\_B1 Alliance did not get to develop or finalize their ideas, because the group did not continue to meet after COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. Nevertheless, the facilitators felt that these young people were 'strong' and they quickly came up with some interesting ideas, such as school canteens providing free and healthy food, facilitating sport clubs to provide activities for free, and a "Take a 15min break" media campaign that creates awareness about mobile phone use during meals.

The facilitators noted that there were two different ways in coming up with policy ideas. In the case of the NO\_C1 Alliance, the program was shorter and compromised and therefore the process of developing policy ideas was much faster. At the same time, the young people in this Alliance were also used to work on a fast level. As facilitators, they guided or helped the young people in the NO\_C1 Alliance more to choose a policy idea. The set-up of the meetings, with long meetings at Zoom that asked for a decision at the end also steered this process; the process was more clearly phased, over a shorter period. In the NO\_A1 Alliance, the young people had much more time and meetings and were more in charge of choosing a policy idea, even though they often asked the (co)facilitators for help and support.

In coming up with policy ideas, the Norwegian Alliance members drew closely from their own experience, knowledge, and perspective on the challenge of obesity among young people in Norway,

especially during system mapping activities. The policy ideas were also informed by the questionnaires developed and distributed by the Alliance members themselves (in the NO\_A1 Alliance) and meetings with experts (in the NO\_C1 Alliance). During the meetings in which knowledge was shared and constructed, the Alliance members also referred to scientific knowledge and to social media, as a sources of information about healthy lifestyle.

While developing their ideas, the Alliance members gathered new knowledge and used this to develop their policy ideas further. They were for instance confronted with existing policies and they looked up information on the Internet. In this process, they were helped by the facilitators and co-facilitators, who engaged closely with the Alliance members and with their work and ideas.

#### Readiness for action and obesity perception

The three Alliances developed rather differently in terms of youth's readiness for political action.

In the NO\_A1 Alliance, a clear increase over time in youth's readiness to take political action could be detected, which occurred in different phases and in tandem with different forms of engagement. At the start, the atmosphere was characterized by insecurity and Alliance members being shy, while they were enthusiastic at the same time. The facilitators created a safe and supportive environment and over the course of the first meetings, the Alliance members worked actively and engaged with the system mapping exercises, which resulted in quite a few policy ideas. Within this process, the group showed an initial readiness for action by developing a questionnaire and analysing the results. They also invited an acquainted journalist from the local newspaper to write about CO-CREATE early on. Despite of constraints, such as uncertainty, being unfamiliar with emailing stakeholders, and lack of responses, the Alliance members were committed and kept working on their policy ideas using policy forms, and with the (co)facilitators' support they also reached out to stakeholders in the light of preparing dialogue forums to bring their ideas into action.

In the NO\_B1 Alliance, the Alliance members showed a strong drive and eagerness to participate in developing policy ideas from the start. The (co) facilitators experienced the Alliance as a group of capable young people who worked hard. During the system mapping activities in the first meetings, the Alliance members already came up with several action ideas. A bit unexpectedly, there also turned out to be a downside to the strong motivation and work attitude of the Alliance members. After the first and second meeting and in the subsequent weeks, all Alliance members who participated in these meetings notified the (co) facilitators with regret that they could no longer attend due to school, work and (in the case of one person) political obligations. A third meeting with newly recruited Alliance members was organized, but the (co) facilitators did not manage to keep the Alliance members on board when the meetings moved to the online environment due to COVID-19 regulations. Hence, within these circumstances, the strong readiness to take political action that came to the fore within this Alliance from the start and in relation to system mapping activities, did not develop further or turn into actual proposals and actions within the CO-CREATE project. The facilitators noted that the young people in the NO\_B1 Alliance were not able or willing to prioritize the CO-CREATE meetings within their busy schedules, and according to the facilitators, the extensive offer of (competing and accessible) activities should also be understood as particular to the urban context of the city.

As in the NO\_B1 Alliance, the Alliance members in the NO\_C1 Alliance also showed strong readiness for political action from the start, which is not surprising given that all participants were already active in the youth organization. During system mapping activities in the first extensive workshop, several action ideas came to the fore and two groups were formed to work on one of the ideas each. The groups continued to work actively together with the (co) facilitators while using the policy forms in shared meetings and in-between meetings with the smaller groups. Both groups shared their idea with an invited expert and worked towards dialogue forums to collaborate with stakeholders.

In all three Alliances, the problem of obesity was mainly discussed explicitly in the first (two to four) meetings. While brainstorming and building on experiences, Alliance members typically went back and forth between systemic factors and individual factors as important causes of obesity (but less so in the NO\_C1 Alliance, in which the systemic focus was stronger). The form of engagement that seemed to have a strong influence on youth's perception of obesity was system mapping (producing and revising system maps and using them as points of reference), which triggered the Alliance members to think and discuss the problem of obesity repetitively on a system level. In a more implicit way, perceptions about the problem of obesity also came to the fore when working on the policy form and action ideas. Along the process, the Alliance members in all three Alliances developed knowledge about the problem of obesity and gained a more systemic perspective, even though some members sometimes switched to individual responsibilities as well. The feedback forms and open questions in the WP7 questionnaire confirmed that Alliance members reported a new way of thinking and an increased awareness of societal issues and the role young people could play.

#### Process, decision making and ownership

All meetings in the three Alliances in Norway took place outside of school hours, and CO-CREATE was never part of a school curriculum, even though the meetings of the NO\_A1 and NO\_B1 Alliances were located in the schools of the young people. The (co) facilitators therefore experienced that they needed to compete with other activities and commitments of the Alliance members after school time, such as school obligations, jobs, organizational work and the desire to rest at home, which affected the presence of the Alliance members and the process of the Alliances. Moreover, according to the facilitators in the feedback meeting, it is important to note the effect of small groups: all three Alliances in Norway were quite small, and some of the youth asked: why are there not more people; is this lame? The NO\_A1 youth tried to recruit more youth, and some did manage to bring a friend. In NO\_A1, one girl only showed up when her friend was present, illustrating the safety of having a friend.

Nevertheless, those Alliance members that did attend the meetings were generally very engaged and motivated. In the NO\_B1 Alliance, this engagement had a shorter-term character, but Alliance members stood out in being sharp and gaining ownership rather quickly, and the meetings had a very productive character. It appeared more difficult however to match the meetings to the schedules of the young people. In the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances, a part of the Alliance members showed commitment for longer time engagement. In NO\_A1, the members were rather shy at first, but showed clear development in their roles, engagement and ownership over time, whereby they could benefit well from the activities and (co) facilitator guidance. The young people became quite a close group and safe space in which they also discussed personal issues, whereas most of them did not

know each other before the project. During the final online meetings, the interaction dynamics changed with the Alliance members being more passive in the conversation at times, while their commitment and engagement to develop their policies further was nevertheless rather stable. In the NO\_C1 Alliance, ownership and political awareness of their own role was much more present from the start, while the Alliance members develop steadily in gaining knowledge and developing their ideas.

Some members had a more active and talkative style than others in all three Alliances, but the meetings were generally characterized by positive group dynamics, a strong sense of collaboration with small groups or individuals working on their own ideas, and without clear group leaders. Empowerment of the Alliance members came to the fore in relation to 1) shifts in knowledge, 2) knowledge production and 3) (mainly for the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances) voice, in the sense of developing a capacity to make use of, or create space to express specific preferences or opinions about issues that affected the Alliance members, particularly among more powerful stakeholders.

### Conclusion

CO-CREATE in Norway resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in several activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent overweight and obesity among youth, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members present and discuss their policy ideas with stakeholders and how those policy ideas can be turned into action. Activities that worked particularly well according to the (co) facilitators and young people in the feedback forms and WP7 questionnaire included group building activities, system mapping and working on the policy form to develop the own action ideas. Throughout the data, the following conditions came to the fore that made the Alliances suitable and sustainable for the youth:

- Good planning and timing, to enable young people's commitment
- A good atmosphere in the meetings (e.g. group building and providing food)
- A supportive role of the facilitators and co-facilitators to facilitate an inspiring and creative environment and helpful activities
- Technical support (especially in online meetings, and when working in shared documents)

The main challenge in the Alliances in Norway concerned the smaller groups of young people in the Alliances, which made it vulnerable to develop a policy idea with only a few people, alongside the many activities and commitments the young people needed to attend to outside of CO-CREATE. Even though online meetings appeared to work out in the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances, the (co) facilitators also experienced difficulties in the group interaction process and missed out on informal talk, non-verbal communication and sharing food as a social activity in these meetings.

## *Alliance Introduction and Recruitment Strategy*

### Youth recruitment in Norway: Identifying political units, gatekeepers and co-facilitators

In order to recruit for a diversity of youths and to include different societal and ethnic backgrounds for WP5 (which followed on WP4 system mapping activities, and preceded WP6 dialogue forum activities), the CO-CREATE Team Norway (UiO) decided to focus on a larger city in a populated area (about 700.000 inhabitants) and one rural area with a population of about 30.000 inhabitants. The larger city is a highly divided city – the highest proportion of immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents live in that city, i.e. approximately 33% of the population. The largest groups of immigrants in Norway are from Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Somalia. The city is also a contrasted city geographically, with lower socio-economic status (SES) and higher rates of ethnic minorities concentrating in the Eastern parts of the city. As a result, the UiO identified two political units within the capital city: a low and a high SES areas.

UiO partnered with youth non-governmental organization Press – Redd Barna Ungdom (Press – Save the Children Youth), a formal CO-CREATE partner. Press is politically and religiously independent and consists of youth between the ages of 13 and 25. Press works on structural causes of violations of children's rights, and therefore focuses on changing large systems so that as many children as possible can get even better opportunities. Press announced and selected the co-facilitators. They informed youth organizations about the positions and asked applicants to submit a short text about themselves, their organizational background and why they wanted to be a co-facilitator. Out of the four applicants for three jobs, the UiO team in collaboration with Press chose for the three young ones (+/- 17 years old) to have them all at an equal age and similar level of experience. Two of the co-facilitators are involved in a youth organization. The co-facilitators were diverse in terms of their gender (one boy, two girls).

In Norway, there are varied opportunities for young people to have a voice in the local context. As a result, the UiO team could consider a variety of gatekeepers. Most municipalities have established youth councils or similar bodies for children and young people to be able to influence local politics.

The youth councils are, as of September 2019, mandatory for all municipalities. The school is the most important recruitment arena for members of municipal participation bodies, but young people are also recruited from leisure clubs and youth organizations. Schoolchildren from resourceful homes are over-represented in youth councils. There is a wealth of youth organizations that would be suitable to become partner of CO-CREATE researchers. CO-CREATE Team Norway identified 9 youth organizations (beyond Press) that were likely to help with co-facilitating and potentially continuing the Alliance in the future. All of them were called and have seemed interested in the project and said that they would spread the word, although it seems the contact did not result in anything specifically, and this seems to be equally the case across the three chosen locations.

In each community, the facilitators and country lead met with a wide array of gatekeepers. In the rural area the most useful gatekeepers proved to be: the Secretary of the youth council, having a stand at the school, the co-facilitator. In a district of the larger city (with about 40.000 inhabitants, and the highest rate of immigrant population) important gatekeepers concerned the leader of the youth council, the secretary of the youth council, having a stand and presentations at school, the

leader at one of the youth clubs, possibly social/youth workers. In spite of significant efforts (from June 2019 till December 2019) and a few meetings with youth in this area, the UiO had to give up due to too few adolescents attending. Before making such a decision the UiO had visited the school and talked to almost every class in the general study program, so they were hoping at least five people would want to join the Alliance. Unfortunately, only one boy showed up. He was offered to join the other Alliance in the larger. It seemed that there was generally little interest in the issue of overweight among local youth in the area and that a severe ongoing conflict in the neighbourhood drew much attention. The UiO team therefore focused on other recruitment opportunities. In another district in the city (with about 50.000 inhabitants), the most useful gatekeepers were the secretary of the youth council / the leader of the only (new) youth club, stand and presentations at the schools, the co-facilitator. In addition, a two-day Innovation camp based on the CO-CREATE tools were organized in February 2020 during school time for about 100 youth in collaboration with an upper secondary school. The school organizes this camp annually with different problems to be solved by innovation and this year they reached out to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health for suggestion on the problem to be solved. The Norway team hoped that this could engage and recruit youth into the larger city Alliance, but this did not lead to any new members.

In all areas the recruitment of youth chiefly involved facilitators and co-facilitators and occurred through the youth council and youth clubs (which appeared to be unsuccessful because of their focus on youth aged 13-16 years old), through Students at upper secondary school (at a stand during break time and eventually presentations during class time) and through youth organizations, either political, religious or thematic (health and/or social justice). The team used Facebook announcements of the meetings and boosted the adds. A number of incentives were announced to the youth: opportunity to meet other youth and get new friends; something to put on your resume; valuable experience with research methods, good preparation for further studies; gift card for 500 NOK if completing all meetings; pizza at the information meeting (and food at the other meetings). The UiO team realized that the name "Alliance" in Norwegian can be mistaken for a specific controversial/radical political party. While advertising the CO-CREATE project it turned out that quite a few people did also get negative vibes from the word "Alliance" in Norwegian. They immediately stopped using the word in recruitment settings and decided to change the youth Alliances to "CO-CREATE-groups" instead to avoid more misunderstandings. The difficulty of recruiting youth in the larger city might also be that engaged youth in the city already have several options if they want to work with politics. In contrast, there are few organizations in the rural area, and these youth organizations struggled to recruit young people. Since March 2020, the UiO team in collaboration with Press organized another Alliance based on youth organization membership.

#### NO\_A1

An upper secondary school in the selected rural area, the school where the UiO team recruited youth from and where Alliance meetings take place (in a classroom), provides several vocational education programs. These are: electricity and electronics, construction work, healthcare, childhood and youth development, Service and Transport, Technical and Industrial Production and Restaurant and Food Processing in addition to the general studies program.

#### NO\_B1

The UiO team recruited youth and held a few Alliance meetings at a local high school. This school does not provide vocational education programs, but offers sports programs, generally connected to Sports and Physical Education and for Top-level sports. The Alliance members who do not attend this high school do not attend vocational education programs.

## NO\_C1

Youth have been recruited from youth organization local groups and the UiO team organized longer and fewer meetings (in order to make it easier to attend for the youth with busy schedules). Due to the restrictions on gatherings of groups of people (COVID-19 pandemic), UiO and Press were holding this Alliance digitally. To begin with they were considering recruiting from youth organization local groups outside of the city. The first area has about 70.000 inhabitants and 30 per cent of the population is first- and second-generation immigrants (according to the Statistics Norway). In the second area, there are two municipalities with respectively about 70.000 and 130.000 inhabitants, and 21 per cent and 22 per cent immigrants. Both could be described as (semi) urban and it is usual to live in these municipalities and commute to work in the city. One of the areas is usually considered high SES. However, since Team Norway ended up with having to arrange this meeting(s) digitally, they agreed to invite in all youth organization members, from all over the country and try to focus more on national policies. The reason for this is that they hoped to get more participants. In the end there were slightly more participants from other parts of the country in the first meeting.

### Alliance level recruitment, collaboration, and access

In the rural area, an information meeting was planned a few weeks prior to the first Alliance meeting. Five of the Alliance members attended this meeting and were motivated to join the CO-CREATE project and bring peers. In Alliance meeting 2, two of the youth brought a friend to the meeting. All were interested to look at posters and flyers for recruitment and to come up with ideas for recruitment. They also considered to bring more friends, and in meeting 4, one of the Alliance members brought a new friend to the meeting.

In the larger city, the research team had also organized an information meeting and this again raised interest with some people who then participated in the first meeting and recruited 3 friends themselves. In the second meeting, one of the young people brought a friend again. Moreover, they agreed to merge the meeting to have one Alliance in the city. The facilitators meanwhile invested in recruiting more young people and they succeeded in attracting 6 more young people; 3 of them were recruited from another upper secondary school and 3 were recruited at the table tennis table and they decided to join.

For the youth organization meeting, the facilitators together with Press invested in inviting youth organization members to the Alliance by organizing a Facebook event. Interested young people could sign up and then received a Zoom link to the meeting. By the end of the first meeting, the young people could indicate via Kahoot whether they were interested in follow-up meetings and many of them said they would be. This strategy was repeated for meeting 2, and new Alliance members could join a pre-meeting to catch up with their peers who had already started.

## Alliance meetings and attendance

### Start date and finish date

NO\_A1 Alliance: 22.10.2019 – 20-05-2020

NO\_B1 Alliance: 05.12.2019 – 06-02-2020

NO\_C1 Alliance: 29.03.2019 – 10.06.2020 (follow-up meetings August 2020 – May 2021)

### Number of sessions

NO\_A1 Alliance: 12 meetings (including 4 meetings online)

NO\_B1 Alliance: 3 meetings

NO\_C1 Alliance: 5 meetings (3 group meetings and 2 in-between meetings for each group); monthly follow-ups after the summer

In NO\_A1, the first meeting was attended by 8 young people. In the following face-to-face meetings attendance fluctuated, with a total number of 13 young people participating at least once, and 4 to 8 young people participating in each face-to-face meeting. For instance, in the fifth meeting, 8 young people participated and in the sixth meeting, 4 young people participated. When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their work online. Four meetings took place on Microsoft Teams, and the young people could access the documents they worked on, such as the policy forms on Teams between meetings. The final online meeting was held on Zoom.

**Table 14. Attendance youth Alliance in NO\_A1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 online	10 online	11 online	12 online
NO_A_1 (m)	■											
NO_A_2 (f)	■											
NO_A_3 (f)	■	■										
NO_A_4 (f)	■	■										
NO_A_5 (f)	■	■		■	■	■					■	■
NO_A_6 (f)	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■
NO_A_7 (f)	■	■		■		■			■	■	■	
NO_A_8 (f)	■											
NO_A_9 (m)		■	■	■	■		■	■				
NO_A_10 (f)		■										
NO_A_11 (m)			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■
NO_A_12 (m)				■	■							

In NO\_B1, the first meeting was attended by 5 young people. In the second meeting, 2 of the original young people attended again, together with 3 newly recruited young people. For the third meeting, 6 additional young people were recruited, while no members of the first two meetings were available that date. Hence, a total of 12 young people participated in at least one of the three meetings (see table 15). There was an attempt to have a fourth physical meeting, but none of the young people showed up. Following COVID-19 regulations, the young people were invited and encouraged to continue their Alliance work in online meetings via Microsoft Teams. However, none of the young people showed up and the facilitators, co-facilitators and young people did not manage to proceed with the Alliance.

**Table 15. Attendance youth Alliances in NO\_B1 before COVID-19 regulations**

<i>Meetings Participants</i>	1	2	3
<i>NO_B_1 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_2 (m)</i>			
<i>NO_B_3 (m)</i>			
<i>NO_B_4 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_5 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_6 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_7 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_8 (m)</i>			
<i>NO_B_9 (m)</i>			
<i>NO_B_10 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_11 (f)</i>			
<i>NO_B_13 (m)</i>			

For the Alliance with young people affiliated with a youth organization, 7 to 9 young people participated in the group meetings, and 3 to 5 young people attended the smaller group meetings. In the first meeting, 7 young people participated and 4 new young people started participating from the second meeting onwards, while they could opt for a pre-meeting to catch up before the second meeting. From August until May 2021, the Alliance members continued to have monthly meetings with 3 to 6 youth (including the co-facilitator). The group that focused on Marketing held a dialogue forum in February 2021.

**Table 16. Attendance NO\_C1 youth Alliances online on Zoom until the summer**

	<i>1 All</i>	<i>2 All</i>	<i>3-a Part of group:</i>	<i>3-b Part of group:</i>	<i>4 All</i>	<i>5-a Part of group:</i>	<i>5-b Part of group:</i>
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			<i>Portion size</i>	<i>Marketing</i>		<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Portion size</i>
<i>NO_C_1 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_2 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_3 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_4 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_5 (m)</i>							
<i>NO_C_6 (m)</i>							
<i>NO_C_7 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_8 (m)</i>							
<i>NO_C_10 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_11 (f)</i>							
<i>NO_C_12 (f)</i>							

Composition / diversity

We can sketch a profile of the recruited groups, on the basis of the number of participants and their gender, urban/rural differences and organizational embedding.

The young Alliance members in NO\_A1 lived in a rural environment: the area has about 30.000 inhabitants, and the young Alliance members had to travel relatively long hours by bus to go to school. They were diverse in terms of their gender: 12 young people participated in the NO\_A1 Alliance, concerning 8 females and 4 males. Most of the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=10) were born in Norway (70 per cent), some in another European country (10 per cent) or non-European country (10 per cent), while about half of the young people had a father (40 per cent) and/or mother (50 per cent) who was born in Norway, and half of them had a mother and/ or father who were born elsewhere (resp. 20 and 30 per cent in a country within Europe, and 20 per cent in a country outside of Europe). Most of the young people had no experience with political organizations (60 per cent), while 30 per cent was an active member of a political organization or had been in the past (10 per cent). The SES background of the young people varied: 20 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'low' on the family affluence scale (FAS), 40 per cent scored 'medium' and 40 per cent scored 'high'. Along the way, the facilitators developed the impression that a number of the young people came from families with lower SES backgrounds. An example is a girl who needed to collect empty bottles to earn money and be able to pay for her next school. Moreover, many of the young people were not used to writing formal emails and making phone calls, and one of the Alliance members was very nervous about approaching a stakeholder by email, while expressing fear to make mistakes.

The young Alliance members in NO\_B1 lived in an urban environment, in an "upper-SES" area that has about 50.000 inhabitants. They too were diverse in terms of their gender: 12 young people

participated in the Alliance in the city, concerning 7 females and 5 males. All of the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=11) were born in Norway, while about half of the young people had a father (45 per cent) and/ or mother (55 per cent) who was born in Norway, and half of them had a mother and/ or father who were born elsewhere (resp. 36 and 45 per cent in a country within Europe, and 9 per cent in a country outside of Europe). Most of the young people had no experience with political organizations (73 per cent), while 27 per cent was an active member of a political organization. The SES background of the young people varied but was seemed more advantaged compared to the NO\_A1 Alliance: 0 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'low' on the family affluence scale (FAS), 18 per cent scored 'medium' and 73 per cent scored 'high'.

The NO\_C1 Alliance concerned young people coming from different parts of Norway. 11 young people participated in the Alliance, concerning 8 females and 3 males. All of the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=9) were born in Norway, and so were most of their mothers (78 per cent) and fathers (100 per cent), while two young people had a mother who was born in another European country. As related to the recruitment strategy, all young people were active members of a political organization. The SES background of the young people varied but seemed more advantaged compared to the NO\_A1 Alliance: 0 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'low' on the family affluence scale (FAS), 33 per cent scored 'medium' and 67 per cent scored 'high'. However, the facilitators indicated that it was harder to assess in online meetings – especially because the youth were familiar with organizational work – what types of backgrounds the young people had. Based on anecdotal inputs in the feedback meeting with the facilitators, some of the youth did seem to come from more challenging socioeconomic backgrounds.

Types of activities

In the NO\_A1 Alliance, the main activities concerned 1) developing and discussing system maps and action ideas; 2) developing a survey and analysing results; 3) working on their own ideas with the policy form; 4) introduction to advocacy and 5) introduction to the dialogue forum. The system map and feedback loops returned several times in relation to the activities. The young people were able to disseminate the surveys, discuss the results and look ahead with the facilitators and co-facilitator to dialogue forums. At times, the young people did not seem to value the policy form much and worked on their policy idea without using the form to fill in the details of their plan. Their response to the dialogue forum did not seem very enthusiastic, but they agreed to do it and were interested to hear more about how it would work.

**Table 17. Alliance activities and engagement in NO\_A1**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	Group building Project introduction and questions Consent, survey, informal chat, eating, Dopper bottles System mapping: Factors and connecting the dots Wrap up: stimulated to think and talk about it	Youth shy and more insecure but laughing in the beginning; looked bored at project introduction; quite active at system mapping

<b>2</b>	Welcome: informal walk in, eating food Overview of meeting and group building Introduction project Consent and survey (for some) System mapping Policy ideas Aims and group agreement Group building and wrap up	Laughter in the beginning; bored at introduction, very engaged during system mapping and policy ideas in small groups; group liked the atmosphere
<b>3</b>	Welcome: informal chat, eating food Introduction and overview Questionnaire/ starting to design survey Break and group building game Group agreement Policy ideas and system map	Excellent group dynamic, collaboration and engagement
<b>4</b>	Welcome: informal chat, eating food Peers introducing project to new participants Consent newspaper Survey: showing and discussion results with ppt Local newspaper (present for article) Break Photo voice and ethics Group building game and wrap up	Engaged but collaboration less excellent compared to last meeting; they looked more bored because they were quieter and less active; all were engaged and collaborated during discussion of survey results
<b>5</b>	Welcome, informal chat, eating food, group building Prioritizing policy ideas Introduction policy form Group work with policy form Wrap up	Group was very active and engaged; group dynamic very good, all very kind to each other; ice breaker was well received, they worked well throughout the entire meeting; very focused and engaged when working on policy form
<b>6</b>	Welcome, eating, informal chat Photovoice activity Introduction Dialogue Forums Break Group work with Policy Form Wrap up	Nice atmosphere and the youth all seemed interested and excited about the dialogue forums; motivated to continue working on their ideas
<b>7</b>	Welcome, informal chat, waiting for everyone Working with policy form Wrap up	Good group dynamic, youth were active, seemed to feel safe, asked questions, worked independently and together. Youth needed quite some help of facilitators and did not seem to value policy form.
<b>8</b>	Welcome, informal chat, waiting for everyone Filling in questionnaire Working with policy form Wrap up	Group dynamic was very good; seemed to feel safe; challenge to fill in policy form (only bullet points); needed a lot of help; progress took more time than expected
<b>9</b> <i>Online</i>	Opening, informal chat, technical issues Introducing advocacy Working with policy form Wrap up	It felt like losing 'the feel' online without cameras on; more distance between (co) facilitators and youth; needed more probing online, talked less; less talk about other things; felt more school

		teaching situation; only one person per policy idea, challenging not to take the lead
<b>10</b> <i>Online</i>	Opening, informal chat Working with policy form Wrap up	Less feeling of a group dynamic online (with cameras of the young people off), and more probing needed; they talked less and (co) facilitators felt the responsibility to drive the meeting; youth did not seem so enthusiastic about the dialogue forums but agreed to it, wondered what it would look like
<b>11</b> <i>Online</i>	Opening, informal chat Working with policy form Wrap up	Lot of readiness for action; two friends, joined together since long, so the group dynamic was very good; active, asking each other questions; online less of a challenge than in previous meetings; less support needed when the youth were with two on one idea, instead of having one young person on one idea
<b>12</b> <i>Online</i>	Opening, informal chat Presentation Dialogue forum tool Wrap up	They seemed positive towards dialogue forums, but still a bit unsure; dynamic was good, they all talked

In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the first two meetings were also dedicated to the system maps and revising it, while coming up with own ideas, looking at feedback loops and action areas. Because of the difficulty of this group to keep attending and finding a data compatible with the school schedule, the young people who were present shifted over the meetings, and six new young people started therefore with their system mapping activities in the third meeting.

The activities were in all meetings accompanied by social time, eating food and checking in more informally.

**Table 18. Alliance activities and engagement in NO\_B1**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Engagement</b>
<b>1</b>	Talking and start-up Introduction of the project Questionnaire and consent Team building activity System mapping session Wrap up	Good “vibe”, everyone polite and kind; paying attention in the beginning and active during the exercises; seems like this group is very focused and used to working hard; some are a bit shy than others; co-facilitator connected well and knew some of the girls
<b>2</b>	Ice breaker, meeting overview, group building Revising of system map Goals for the Alliance Wrap up	Youth very engaged; dedicated and committed to take tasks very seriously; seemed very interested in the community and talked about making a change; group participated almost equally; very supportive to each other
<b>3</b>	Introduction to the project; questionnaire Group building activity System mapping Wrap up	Group was nice and sweet, wanted to collaborate, worked well and did the tasks that were suggested; girls were shy and had to be more probed; boys were more confident and

		active in group discussions; one boy took a leader role; challenge that some youths are too busy with school to prioritize CO-CREATE
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The activities in the NO\_C1 Alliance were purposefully planned with a first meeting with a duration of 4 hours. In this meeting, the young people engaged in making a system map, brainstorming about action ideas, on ideas and an introduction to the policy form. In the second meeting, this was continued further, and the young people were introduced to research methods such as photo voice, interviewing and making questionnaires. They used additional meetings to develop their ideas in smaller groups, going through the policy forms step by step, and receiving input from scientists in the field. The young people were also introduced to the dialogue forums.

**Table 19. Alliance activities and engagement in the NO\_C1 Alliance on Zoom**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
<b>1</b>	Start-up, giving everyone some time to join Introduction to the workshop and Zoom, group building Introduction to the project: ppt and share screen Consent form, questionnaire, break System mapping Break Brainstorming about action ideas Vote on policy ideas Presenting policy form Wrap up and motivation for follow-up	Beyond expectations; good atmosphere, especially in beginning; youths were polite, gave each other room, participated in activities, some very actively; there were more creative ideas for effective policies in this group compared to the other groups; apparent that the youth were already engaged in an organization
<b>2</b>	Introduction to the workshop and participants Summary of the 1st workshop Vote on policy ideas Work with the policy ideas in breakout rooms Whole group discussion Introduction to research methods: Photovoice, interviewing, making questionnaires	Atmosphere was also good in this meeting; youths were polite and participated in activities; challenge to keep track of everything happening in the meeting digitally; facilitator felt stressed to have this meeting directly after the pre-meeting with 3 new participants
<b>3a</b>	Informal work meeting in smaller group Policy idea: plate sizes and sizes of candy bags	Open session; facilitator asking questions, youths responding, facilitator making summary; some laughter, one was quieter; there seemed to be trust; all youths talked; group collaborated well
<b>3b</b>	Welcome and informal chat Working on policy form Policy idea: restrict marketing of unhealthy food Group discussions, filling in form	The three youths participated actively in the meeting: good and positive tone

<b>4</b>	Information about Dialogue Forum Further develop the policy ideas in groups Summary and wrap up	Group members seemed motivated; group dynamic was good; “portion size” group needed more probing; “advertisement” group more motivated and inclined to talk; some members were a bit more active and some a bit shy; the atmosphere was light and positive
<b>5a</b>	Welcome, introduction Presentation marketing policy and practice in Norway Break Group discussion Refining policy proposal after discussion Summary and wrap-up	Group dynamic was very good, little discussion during presentation, good discussion afterwards with all participating; all youth contributed and eager
<b>5b</b>	Presentation research plate sizes	Speaker was talkative, not much room for discussion, little response from the youths; facilitator asked some questions and asked whether the youths had posted some clarifying questions afterwards

## Policy Ideas

What policy ideas do youth come up with?

The Alliance members in Norway came up with several policy ideas in the early meetings of their Alliance. Each Alliance then decided to focus on developing two or three ideas that were voted the most by the members. The following table provides the complete list of ideas, including which Alliance proposed it and a brief summary of the idea. The ideas are clustered under six main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media, healthy environment, healthy lifestyle, and others. The policy ideas that were fully developed and were included in the policy brief from the Alliances in Norway are in blue font.

**Table 20. Policy ideas in Norway**

No	Alliance	Name of Policy Idea	A Brief Summary of the Idea
<b>FOOD AND NUTRITION</b>			
1	NO_A1	Change the price and placement of food products in shops	To make healthy food more visible and cheaper while unhealthy food less visible and more expensive
2		Smoothie stand	Making your own trendy healthy smoothie with payment per hectare
3	NO_B1	Healthy, but good	Free healthy but good food in the school canteen
4		Lower price on healthy food	Providing a discount on a healthy lunch

5		Make healthier food an easier choice	Better accessibility of healthy food
6		Increase the sugar tax	More expensive candy, soda and fast food
7		Change attitudes, not just forbid food	Provide facts about calories in products
8		Offers on healthy products	Special offers on healthy products in stores to counter offers on unhealthy products
9	NO_C1	Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children	Limiting marketing of unhealthy product aimed at children under the age of 18
10		Reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes	Serving food in smaller portion sizes and introduce a maximum plate size for food to be served on
11		Placement of food in stores	A law on healthy food being placed with easy access in stores and unhealthy food being less accessible
12		Advertisement on healthy food	Focus in stores on advertising to sell healthy food
13		Active dietary advice	More active dietary advice and create a teaching plan about this
14		Changes in price on food	Cheaper healthy food and more expensive unhealthy food
15		Sugar tax	A working sugar tax
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>			
16	NO_A1	Access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools	Allowing students to use gyms, exercise equipment, and weightlifting rooms at upper secondary schools after school
17	NO_B1	Pokemon Go	Playing pokemon go as a form of physical activity
18		Lower price at gyms	More advertisement and more offers on personal trainer and membership with more access to gyms and free organized training
19		Bicycle points	An app giving money or offers based on how far you have cycled
20		Focus on training and diet	Including and focusing on training and diet early in the school curriculum
21		Time for physical activity at work	Paying employees to train for 2 hours per week
22		Offer more physical activity in different districts	Better accessibility to different kinds of physical activity in all districts in Norway

23	NO_C1	Make gyms accessible to everyone	Allowing everyone to have access regardless of disabilities and having several free opportunities and equipment outdoors
<b>STRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA</b>			
24	NO_B1	More focus on mental health	Better mental health to address poor eating habit due to poor mental health
25	NO_C1	Reduce stress in school	Make changes at school to reduce stress
<b>HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT</b>			
26	NO_A1	Better bike paths	Better bike paths will make it easier to get to places by bike or by walking
27	NO_B1	Leisure clubs	Free clubs that offer activities that people want to do and serve healthy food
28		"Take a 15min break" campaign	A campaign to decrease mobile phone use during meals, as you may eat more while watching a screen
29	NO_C1	Better bike path and footpath	Bettering the condition and safety of bike paths and footpaths
30		Meeting places for youth/young people	Having meeting places for young people on young people's premises and offering youth houses in the municipalities
<b>HEALTHY LIFESTYLE</b>			
31	NO_A1	<a href="#">Information on healthy lifestyle for upper secondary school students</a>	<a href="#">Providing more information about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle in upper secondary schools</a>
<b>OTHER POLICY IDEAS</b>			
32	NO_C1	Even out wage differences	Evening out wage differences and social differences

Which activities contributed to the policy ideas?

Based on Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach, young people in CO-CREATE Alliances were empowered to develop policy ideas to address the systemic issue of adolescent excess weight and obesity. Supported by trained CO-CREATE country staff and assisted by cofacilitators from youth organizations, young people received information and training to help them develop and refine their policy proposals.

Across all three Alliances in Norway, the development of their policy ideas was started with a system mapping and model building activity. Young people were introduced to the concept of system mapping to identify factors that influence adolescent obesity. Through using Graph over Time method, the Alliance members were invited to think of factors related to obesity that over time

increased or decreased in its prevalence. For example, consumption of fast food among young people. These factors were collected to then be turned into a network of factors influencing one another. Young people were actively involved in determining in what way the factors identified affected the rest. Having had an understanding what a system map was, the Alliance members were then invited to revisit an obesity system map that was previously created by their Norwegian peers who took part in CO-CREATE system mapping exercise earlier in the year. They could then add or edit the factors featured in the map, including changing and adjusting how those factors influence one another.

Throughout this process, the Alliance members drew closely from their own experience, knowledge, and perspective on the challenge of obesity among young people in Norway. How specifically this was done will be explored in more detail in the next section on experiential knowledge. The resulting system map was therefore contextualized and was fitting to the life of young people in CO-CREATE Alliances in Norway and the life of young people in the country in general. Based on the system map, the Alliance members individually brainstormed policy ideas they would like to develop to address the challenge of adolescent's obesity in their surrounding or in Norway. Their ideas tackled a particular area of the map, informed by a systemic understanding of the challenge and bearing in mind different factors involved. These preliminary ideas, called action ideas at this stage, were then discussed in small groups and then presented to the big group to be voted on. The policy ideas that received the most votes were then to be further developed.

The NO\_A1 Alliance decided to take an additional step before deciding on which policy ideas they would like to prioritize for further development. The members compiled a survey to find out what people thought caused overweight and obesity. They then asked their friends and family to complete it. They used the results to find out what factors might be influencing the development of obesity and to better understand the problem. Based on the survey, they selected the top proposals to be further developed into policy ideas.

Due to COVID-19 situation, the NO\_B1 Alliance was only able to meet up until the members were developing their action ideas. Despite not being able to continue with developing those initial ideas into full policy ideas, young Alliance members in NO\_B1 came up with perceptive insights and noteworthy ideas to address the challenge of adolescents' obesity as was documented in the previous section of this report. Each idea was discussed among themselves and was closely informed by their lived experience, knowledge, and perspective on the issue. The section after this one explores this further. Both the NO\_A1 and the NO\_C1 Alliance met online after the restrictions of COVID-19 were introduced. The NO\_A1 Alliance that started earlier than the NO\_C1 Alliance had several meetings in person first after the creation of policy ideas. The NO\_C1 Alliance had always met online due to its start that was already after the restriction was introduced in Norway.

In both the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliance, group discussions, either in small groups or as a unified big group, on the ideas being developed as well as their exchanges with the facilitators provided support in the progression of their policy idea. Throughout the process, both Alliances made use of a policy form, standardized across CO-CREATE Alliances and introduced by the facilitators. As their policy idea progressed and refined, young people in the Alliances completed different section of the forms to record the result of their discussions and decision making on the policy ideas being developed. When certain information or knowledge was needed to refine their idea, youth members consulted the

facilitators as well as conducted information gathering themselves to be better informed. This often took the form of an internet search which resulted on them consulting on different professional websites, reading up scientific and news articles, and looking up certain guidelines, policies, laws, and regulations relevant to the ideas they were developing. What they found informed the direction of the development of their policy ideas.

The NO\_A1 Alliance group that worked on the policy idea about providing more information on healthy lifestyles in school specifically collected information on the education system in Norway. They also searched for contact information on people in the education committee in the Parliament. An e-mail was then sent to the committee. However, they never received a response. A different NO\_A1 Alliance group, working on reducing the price of healthy food used the result of their information gathering to further specify their policy idea. After reading articles related to their topic, they ultimately decided to reduce/increase prices by 10 NOK (appx. 0.93 EUR), to use it as a test or benchmark to see whether it would have any effect. As a part of gathering more information about their policy idea, the NO\_A1 Alliance group which worked on access to exercise facilities policy idea drew up a questionnaire to learn more about whether or not students at upper secondary schools were engaged in physical exercise, whether they were able to exercise at their schools and whether they were happy about it. The same group also contacted schools in their county to assess their current situation and needs. The Alliance members considered it important to find out how many schools already offered their students the opportunity to use the school gym after school hours and what the schools thought about introducing the idea to all upper secondary schools in the county.

The NO\_C1 Alliance group that was working on limiting advertisement to children specifically looked for examples of unhealthy food ads targeted towards children, both online and in their local environment. Based on what the members found and learned, the group decided to focus on limiting advertising on the internet/social media. The NO\_C1 Alliance group that worked on portion sizes researched online and read articles related to their policy idea. They accessed relevant websites such as those of a Norwegian health website to find specific information on calories in food. They also read specific articles such as one from the WHO on limiting portion sizes for children.

To get more expert inputs on their policy ideas, the NO\_C1 Alliance held a meeting with some specialists to learn more about different aspects relevant to their policy idea. The two experts invited included a researcher who was knowledgeable on the issue of marketing to children and a consultant who had worked on portion sizes in Norway. The Alliance members adjusted their policy ideas based on the knowledge they learned from these two experts. After working on their policy ideas in several meetings, the policy ideas were turned into a policy brief. The finalization of the brief included a feedback round with some of the 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. The Alliance members who developed the policy idea on marketing to children participated in a dialogue forum with relevant stakeholders; here, Alliance members met with policymakers and business leaders where they discussed their policy ideas and translate them into possible action, follow-up measures or practical steps. Policy ideas were also then refined based on the knowledge gained at these forums.

How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas?

## NO\_A1

When first discussing about the challenge of obesity among young people in Norway, the Alliance members of NO\_A1 drew from their own life experience which they considered to be relevant.

*NO\_A1\_01 said, "You had to walk or bicycle to leisure activities, but now your parents bring you by car," while NO\_A1\_02 remarked based on her own experience that "We are more and more spoiled". NO\_A1\_03 shared that "It is cheaper to buy unhealthy food. Fast food restaurants get you food fast and for little money".*

The Alliance members also referred to knowledge they gained from different sources, including scientifically, as well as their perceptions and observations of the situation. NO\_A1\_03 noted, *"It is scientifically proven that sleep and intake of fast food is connected," and later remarked, "If the parents have a poor diet their kids will also have a poor diet".* She also talked about the vision and explained that people eat with their eyes and that it has been proven that one can eat more based on colors of the plate.

Social media was one of the sources the Alliance members referred to for different information on healthy lifestyle and lifestyle in general. The group talked about children's role models and they agreed that "Stinablogger" (a Norwegian blogger) was not a good role model for young people. They discussed that children believed everything their idols said. NO\_A1\_11 said, *"The bloggers have credibility"* to which NO\_A1\_06 replied that the blogger posted a video saying, *"If you are overweight you will die before you are 40 years old"*. NO\_A1\_01 found the video and the group watched the first minute where blogger said the statement. NO\_A1\_06 remarked, *"[There] should be an age limit on videos on YouTube on sensitive/important themes, like weight, [that] everyone has to respect"*. The others were in agreement with her.

At one point, the Alliance members also noted how they often felt uncomfortable talking about weight. NO\_A1\_06 said, *"I am afraid of talking about overweight and obesity if I talk to people with overweight or obesity. It is offensive and it is taboo. One cannot go to a person and say to them that they are obese"*. NO\_A1\_09 added, *"I do not go to friends and ask them about overweight"* to which NO\_A1\_06 replied, *"I get uncomfortable because I do not like the feeling that others will think that they are not good enough"*. NO\_A1\_09 remarked, *"If people with overweight think they are perfect and someone ask them about overweight they could get another impression of themselves"*. NO\_A1\_06 responded, *"It is not important if you have some excess fat if you have a healthy body. The media should have the blame because they portray that the perfect body is not about having a healthy body, but a skinny body"*. NO\_A1\_09 agreed to this and added, *"Body weight pressure has always been present"*.

The Alliance members then decided to develop three policy ideas based on these initial discussions:

1. Change the price and placement of food products in shops
2. Easy and affordable access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools in Innlandet county
3. More information about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle in upper secondary schools

The next sections will look at how different types of knowledge were used by the young Alliance members in developing each of these policy ideas.

#### Policy idea 1: Change the price and placement of food products in shops

This policy idea came from the members' noticing that the relatively cheaper price of unhealthy food and its prominent and visible placement in shops resulted in people buying more unhealthy products than healthy products. NO\_A1\_04 noted *"The shops should have healthier alternatives for students that buy food outside of school."*

NO\_A1\_07 shared some examples from her observation and her own experience, *"For instance the candy next to the cashier. Where there are healthy food, fruits and vegetables, it is not very tempting to buy. Therefore, we should do something about it. It is too expensive for youth. We want them to do something with the pricing of the products"* She continued, *"For instance the buns (skolebrød) cost maximum 15 NOK. Salad/fruit (1 banana/orange) and a readymade salad cost probably about 70-100 NOK. That is too much when you buy food 3 times per week – 300 NOK. Students should get a discount for instance. Well, the cantina offers healthy food, so this is more relevant for students on lower secondary school because they do not have any school cantina. All students have to go to the grocery store. I used to be one of them."*

NO\_A1\_06 also shared her experience in relation to buying food. NO\_A1\_06: *"I also believe that price per kilograms make us a trick. I feel it should be more focus on unhealthy foods often have a higher price per kilograms. For example, a bag of candy for 14 NOK and a package of meatballs for 80 NOK it is a chance that you get more food for the money if you buy the meatballs even though it is more expensive, because it has a higher weight. I do not feel people are thinking about that."* She then added, *"I am tired of people expects to get food when they are at my place, because it is so expensive. I feel they do not understand it, because the money is not taken from their bank account. They say they understand, but I also feel that they think it is not cool that they do not get food at my place. In the end of the month, when I only have 500 NOK left on the visa card, I think it is scary, because then I am very close to zero"*.

For the exact change of pricing, the members used their knowledge of products they were familiar with. NO\_A1\_07 said, *"For example Red Bull costs about 20 NOK, it should be changed to 30 or 35 NOK."* She then suggested that unhealthy food could be 10 NOK more expensive and the healthy food could be 10 NOK cheaper.

The members' discussion while developing this idea also included their exploration of people's behaviour on reading and understanding of food labels detailing the food's nutrients and properties. The following conversation illustrated this.

*NO\_A1\_06: "I am not sure people are reading the nutritional content. I do, but I do not know what others are thinking."*

*Facilitator 1: "Today I read about a labelling system labelling food products with information about how much you must exercise to burn the calories in the food product. What do you think about that?"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "Many people think that if they eat a chocolate it is just to exercise to get rid of the excess calories. They think you get rid of the calories much faster than you actually do. When*

*you are being physical active it is easier to lose weight in the beginning, but after a while you get muscles and it becomes much harder. Are snacks bars as healthy as people say they are?"*

*Facilitator 1: "They often contain a lot of sugars."*

*NO\_A1\_06: "Yes, and I fell I do not get full after eating them."*

## Policy idea 2: Easy and affordable access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools in Innlandet county

NO\_A1\_03 and NO\_A1\_10 shared their knowledge about the accessibility of sport facilities for upper secondary students. They said there was already some reduced price for gyms for students in universities, but not for upper secondary school students. They came up with the idea of "[g]yms in schools or cheaper prices for students [still] in schools [to access gyms outside]".

Throughout the development of this idea, the Alliance members shared with each other their knowledge informed by their experience, their opinions, as well as their perspectives relevant to the idea. NO\_A1\_11 and NO\_A1\_09 wondered what the current situation really looked like: "Are there student discount on gyms?" asked NO\_A1\_11 to which NO\_A1\_09 replied "I don't know. Some have." He then mentioned some gyms that he knew who did offer student discounts.

The group that developed this policy talked about exercising. They noted that there was a room at the school where they could exercise for free. It was open for all students and staff, but almost no one used it. NO\_A1\_06, NO\_A1\_09 and NO\_A1\_11 talked about that they were almost the only ones using it. NO\_A1\_01 shared, "The reason why I don't exercise is because I don't like that people are watching me". NO\_A1\_06 agreed with him, "It is not comfortable being at the gym because I am afraid of making mistakes". NO\_A1\_11 added, "It is important to think that most people are not looking at you".

When developing the idea, it was not uncommon for the members to disagree with one another because of their different experiences and point of views. At one point, NO\_A1\_11 shared his observation, "There are nobody at the school who are using the gym at the school". NO\_A1\_06 replied, "No, there are not anyone there". NO\_A1\_01 asked, "Is that because no one knows about it?" to which NO\_A1\_06 responded, "There is information about it on Fronter (the intranet at the school)". NO\_A1\_09 and NO\_A1\_11 then started talking about the possibility to exercise after school. "There are not many that has such a possibility," remarked NO\_A1\_06 which was agreed to by NO\_A1\_11, "It is only us that have that possibility," although NO\_A1\_09 disagreed, "No, everybody has it."

On a different occasion, NO\_A1\_12 commented "We should have physical education without grades". NO\_A1\_12 and NO\_A1\_05 then talked about how grades in physical education makes people just focus on getting good grades rather than learning about physical activity and enjoying it. They said that it would be more sustainable to focus on different activities that were fun and could be done after school so people continue to be physically active. NO\_A1\_07 added, "If we could choose the activities in physical education more people might want to participate".

## Policy idea 3: More information about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle in upper secondary schools

The Alliance members felt there was a need for more information of healthy lifestyles to be provided for students. NO\_A1\_06 talked about that it was difficult to understand how the food affected us. She pointed to the pictures of the lungs of smokers in front of the cigarette packages that made it easier for people to see the negative effect of smoking. NO\_A1\_06 said she wanted the same things to happen with food. She said she wanted to show the inside of bodies of people that have eaten unhealthy or too much.

When developing policy ideas, sometimes, the members realized that they did not possess a particular knowledge that could be helpful for the process. This often resulted in them researching for the information which then informed the direction of the policy idea. The following exchange between one of the facilitators and one of the members illustrates this.

*Facilitator 1: "Have you looked at what already is included in the curriculum about health? For instance, in science and physical education?"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "No. There are basically nothing in physically education. Nobody teaches us about what actually happens with the body. The physical education teacher only tells us that the body becomes tired, nothing more."*

*Facilitator 1: "Which subject [do you think] this should be included in?"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "Science, but it is already packed with other stuff. I think it is difficult, because it is just if you are taking the health class, you learn about what fat [is] doing to your body. [This] should be introduced earlier than upper secondary school. I feel it is too late to learn about this in upper secondary school."*

*Facilitator 1: "Have you checked the curriculum in science class?"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "No" She was searching on her computer and reading something out loud from a web page about learning goals in the science class. "I cannot remember at all that I learned about this in science class two years ago. Maybe we should focus more on highlight[ing] this information here?"*

*Facilitator 1: "Yes. From 2020 they start to implement the new curriculum in upper secondary high school."*

*Facilitator 1: "This is what I found." Facilitator 1 then started reading the learning goals of science classes from her own computer.*

*NO\_A1\_06: "Yes, I also found that, but those are from the old curriculum. I cannot find anything from the new curriculum."*

*Facilitator 1: "Maybe a new textbook in science class has to be developed?"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "Yes..."*

However, later on NO\_A1\_06 thought of a different way to provide the information. "[A]fter a while [the textbook will] be old and it is expensive to make textbooks all the time. It is too much to ask for and difficult to demand. Maybe it could have been a website?" She continued, "We already have the NDLA." The NDLA (nasjonal digital læringsarena) is a national digital learning platform, a webpage aiming to make good, open digital learning tools for every subject at the upper secondary school to help students and teachers. NO\_A1\_06 reasoned that the information about food could also be included in the webpage.

NO\_A1\_06 then spent some time looking at the NDLA. She found a page about nutrition and found some advice but she considered them not specific enough. For example, "Use oil instead of butter,"

which she was not certain about when that was important. Another example: *“Be careful with salt”*. She said that the information should be easy to understand and relate to. She also said that the nutrition calculator already existed and that the problem was that all the information was not collected at the same site. With all information located in the same site, young people could easily use it and would not need to spend a lot of time looking for it.

Throughout the process, the facilitators also provided young people in the Alliances with some information relevant to obesity and overweight among adolescents, particularly in Norway. This included relevant information on existing policies. For example, the facilitators provided some examples of policy on smoking. The Alliance members then used this example as their reference to develop the idea on food labelling and information, which they saw as similar to the information of harm provided in cigarette packaging.

## NO\_B1

As was mentioned in the section before, due to the COVID-19 situation, Alliance NO\_B1 was not able to continue when the national lockdown was implemented in Norway. Despite that, the members of this Alliance had had a chance to brainstorm some policy ideas along the way. The following sections will look at how different types of knowledge were used by the youth members Alliance members during their policy idea development.

Since the first meeting, the Alliance members of NO\_B1 shared openly with the facilitators and each other knowledge that they had on obesity and factors influencing it in the context of Norway. NO\_B1\_01 asked during a discussion about the percentage of people with obesity in the country, *“Do you mean the percentage or the actual number of people? Because the number of people is growing”*. The facilitators informed her it was both. When discussing why the number was growing, some members volunteered answers based on their own experience, observation, and knowledge they received from different sources. NO\_B1\_05 shared *“I heard on the radio that the Christmas coffee at Starbucks has 26 teaspoons with sugar”*.

Some of the Alliance members' answers were based on specific experiences as a young person. For example, NO\_B1\_01 said *“McDonalds because they have easy and cheap food for young people”*. NO\_B1\_04 remarked *“People have busy weeks. We are “Generation Perfectionism” and that takes a lot of time”*.

They also talked about information they received from social media. For example, NO\_B1\_05 commented *“Social media promotes detox and cleansing, which are not proven to be good for you. [T]he[s]e are trendy diets that actually are not necessarily healthy”*. NO\_B1\_01 talked about the trend of body positivity in social media as something positive, but an over acceptance can be negative. The members discussed culturally informed habit and changing daily routine. NO\_B1\_02 said *“Maybe not in the cities, but in the rural areas you can see that it is more common to do other things, it is part of the culture”*. NO\_B1\_05: *“people are not getting together when they eat dinner anymore, and that leads to young people eating wrong because they cannot be bothered to make proper dinner or because they do not have time”*.

The members' experiential and personal knowledge came to the fore when they were doing the system mapping activity as they relied on these knowledges to make connection between the

identified obesity factors. NO\_B1\_06 said *“Social media leads to body weight pressure, but you could be motivated to be more physical[ly] active. Like Funkygine (a Norwegian Instagrammer who is a personal trainer and post pictures of being physically active) she motivates people to be physically active. When Sophie Elise (a controversial Norwegian blogger who posts blogs about her look and cosmetic surgeries) takes butt lift surgery I do not want to do that. But someone might want to do it, other people could be more influenced by it”* NO\_B1\_05 replied *“Yes. And eating for entertainment. If you are at a party you would probably eat some cake even though you do not want to”*. NO\_B1\_06 laughed *“Yes, because you are served the cake”*.

Their discussion was often informed by unique life experiences they had as a young person. NO\_B1\_08 said *“I wrote that people are sitting inside. That people spend a lot of time inside, not so much outside. They are playing video games, sitting on their butts. People are sedentary, just to run or be physical active is good on its own”*. NO\_B1\_09 joined the discussion *“Mine is about Fortnite. It is very popular, it is the world’s most played computer game, but its popularity is decreasing. I do not think it will stay so popular much longer”*. NO\_B1\_08 did not agree that Fortnite soon would be less popular. They then discussed it back and forth.

These unique experiential knowledges often translated to specific policy ideas they would like to develop.

NO\_B1\_09 said *“We had a lot of ideas! Healthy food in the cantina. Like pasta salad, I don’t know if that is healthy though. And we want it to be free, because young people cannot be bothered to buy it. We don’t want to spend money on healthy food so it has to be free. And there should be more free youth clubs for young people - offering fun activities. Exercising does not need to be boring, but it could be fun! Like Quidditch (the game from Harry Potter) and sports like that are fun! And it should be healthy food at the activities. And my last idea is to make Pokémon Go popular again. Because I was out walking when I was playing it. That will make people more physical active.”*

When discussing about policy ideas to develop, it was not uncommon for the focus of discussion to be a deliberation on a specific knowledge that they had in relation to overweight and obesity. For example, at one point, NO\_B1\_06 were whispering to NO\_B1\_05 *“That was what I told you earlier. Marketing to children is not allowed”* NO\_B1\_06 then addressed the group *“Is it allowed to do marketing to children? I have a subject marketing and leadership in school and we learnt that it is not allowed to advertise to children. What about Kinder egg and Happy Meal?”* Facilitator 1 answered *“Yes, the big companies are good at getting around the law and guidelines”* Facilitator 2 followed the statement with a question to the group *“Is it marketing when the advertisement is part of the product?”* This started a small discussion. NO\_B1\_07, NO\_B1\_05 and NO\_B1\_06 were participating, NO\_B1\_01 were nodding.

Young people also brought in specific experiences they had in their immediate surrounding to inform their policy ideas. NO\_B1\_13 talked about different opportunities to join different clubs for doing physical activities in the local area. Clubs that are doing football, cross-country skiing and gymnastics. NO\_B1\_08 and NO\_B1\_09 mentioned that students in their school were allowed to use a room that was dedicated for exercising whenever they wanted to do sport. During these discussions, the members also relied on their knowledge of current policy implementation. In the conversations, they brought in their own observation and experience to further refine their ideas. The following exchange exemplifies it.

*NO\_B1\_07: "Yes, doesn't Rødt (a very left wing political party) want free fruit in school?"*

*NO\_B1\_01: "We are going to have free fruit in our school. But the offers for different diets are very poor in our canteen"*

*NO\_B1\_05: "Will it prevent overweight and obesity?"*

*NO\_B1\_07: "Maybe, what the Labour party and Rødt have done might lead to less differences between people when everyone has to eat the same"*

*Facilitator 1: "Yes, then people will get to eat fruit independently of whether they are from high or low socioeconomic background"*

They then discussed about different pricing of food where unhealthy food were often discounted which boosted sale. They entertained the idea of having a discount on fruits, vegetables and other healthy food as well particularly in school canteen.

*NO\_B1\_01: "Yes, it is good to focus on the school cantina, because they sell a lot of unhealthy food there. It is good to be able to choose between different food products and be free to eat what people want, but it should be more healthy alternatives. I also thought of another thing, the shelves where they have candy in the stores are very low and children get easy access to the candy, but the fruit and vegetables are placed higher and it is more difficult for children to reach and see"*

*NO\_B1\_07: "Yes, the shops have decided to have candy at the end of the shop so that people buy more"*

*NO\_B1\_01: "Yes, it should be in the back of the room in a separate room so you would have to go in to the room to buy candy. Less available and a little bit embarrassing to go there, but you can when you want candy"*

From the overall discussions, it could be gleaned where young people gained their knowledge about obesity. In addition to one's own experience, observation, and perception, the Alliance members also received information from different sources. Social media was one of the common ones and traditional media such as televisions and radios were mentioned as well. The Alliance members also talked about relevant knowledge they gained from school. NO\_B1\_05 said *"We learnt a little bit in science class about that the body needs carbohydrates, proteins and like that, but not what you should have, how much and when"*. However, they reasoned that it might not be enough for a young person to mainly receive their knowledge of healthy living from school. They made a case for having the information given through social media but also at workplace and more importantly at home, even before a child was of school age.

*NO\_B1\_01: "Eat when you are hungry and strive to stay at a stable weight. This foundation is sat in childhood so this is our parents' responsibility"*

*Facilitator 1: "Yes, and the parents are influenced by the society..."*

*NO\_B1\_01: "Parents that are talking negatively about their own body in front of their children, this has changed now, today parents are more aware of what they are saying in front of their children"*

*NO\_B1\_07: "Before the mothers made more food from scratch. I think I saw a documentary about this, but when the fast food chains came it got easier for the mothers to go to work because they did not need to make all the food"*

The Alliance meetings themselves were sources of information for the Alliance members. The facilitators shared with the Alliance members since the first meeting different specific knowledge related to overweight and obesity. This ranges from statistical information to policy examples. The members also felt comfortable to ask questions to the facilitators when they wanted to learn more about certain factors related to obesity as the below example showed.

*NO\_B1\_09: "What is the difference between overweight and obesity?"*

*Facilitator 1: "Have you heard about BMI (body mass index)?"*

*NO\_B1\_13: "Yes"*

*NO\_B1\_09: "No"*

*Facilitator 1 then told them about BMI and how it was used to classify overweight and obesity.*

*NO\_B1\_09: "Ah, so obesity is more than overweight?"*

*Facilitator 1: "Yes"*

*NO\_B1\_13: "How do you estimate BMI?"*

*Facilitator 3 and facilitator 1 then explained how to estimate the BMI.*

## NO\_C1

When discussing about different factors that were relevant to the challenge of obesity among young people in Norway, the Alliance members referred to their own experience and observation as well as knowledges they gathered from different sources.

NO\_C1\_05 noted, *"Healthy products are more expensive. Meny (a grocery chain in Norway) use to have a price market campaign when it is cheap to buy food, especially unhealthy food, for example advertisement for cheaper chocolate."* NO\_C1\_06 mentioned a factor he considered to be important, *"Traditions. I think it has become a tradition to eat unhealthy food as comfort food. Taco and pizza for example."* He also brought his own experience as an example, *"[S]chool do not teach about healthy diet. When I went to the lower secondary school, we had a lecture from nutritionists."*

Stress was one of the factors the members considered relevant based on their own lived experience. NO\_C1\_04 shared her thoughts, *"I think about the society as a whole. We live in a stressful world. It is easier to find unhealthy food when there is little time. For example, it is much easier to make a pizza. Promoting unhealthy products. It could be a solution to promote healthy food in a new way."*

NO\_C1\_05 added, *"A lot of stress. I have recognized that I am more physical active when I do not have too much to do. Some places, it is also dependent on the availability of options to be physical active. And price is important."*

The members then talked about the connection between stress, mental health, and eating.

NO\_C1\_06 suggested as a form of peer support, *"Maybe we can connect it to start youth clubs?"* to which NO\_C1\_10 responded *"We have tried that out in [home city]. It is important to have a good process when starting a youth club. In [home city] it went wrong, because it is run by old, awkward ladies."* This discussion was then turned into a policy idea however the members decided not to further develop it as they focused on two different ideas instead.

The two ideas that were then chosen by the Alliance members were:

- Policy 1: Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products aimed at children under the age of 18

- Policy 2: Reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes

The following sections will look at the different types of knowledge the Alliance members used when developing the ideas.

#### Policy 1: Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products aimed at children under the age of 18

The group was aware of a law in Norway about marketing to children. However, NO\_C1\_011 wondered whether the law was addressing marketing reaching all children or just children under a certain age. Facilitator 1 answered that this is something we should look into. NO\_C1\_03 agreed and questioned if there were ways for companies to avoid the law. The group agreed that these were important questions and stated that they wanted to look into it more as it was important to know about this information to continue the development the idea. They then spent five to ten minutes to do an online search.

After about five minutes, NO\_C1\_03 made a surprise sound. She said that she found a web page saying that there only were recommendations on marketing practices towards children but there were not any regulations on commercials in the law. She said that this was not enough. NO\_C1\_11 added that she had found a paragraph in the Norwegian laws about marketing, but that these were not specific for unhealthy food.

Facilitator 2 informed the group about Matbransjens Faglige Utvalg (MFU), a group consisting of representatives of food producing companies, who have developed guides on good marketing practices and consider if commercials are in line with these. She sent a link to the MFU's website to the whole group in the chat function on Zoom. The group agreed that we could place MFU in the policy form as an already existing policy.

NO\_C1\_11 then started to talk about that in her hometown the grocery stores had placed the candy next to the cash register and that these are very visible, making it easier to buy these products. NO\_C1\_10 replied to this, saying that the stores often place healthy food at the start of the store, not making these products visible to the customers. NO\_C1\_11 answered that she thought that this was a conscious choice that the grocery stores had made, to sell their products. Facilitator 1 replied that she had a good point, but that the policy idea was centered around commercials. The group then discussed briefly how these two topics were connected and agreed that the idea should cover commercials in the stores as well as outside and online.

NO\_C1\_11 added that children rarely know what food items contain and that they had less life experience than adults. NO\_C1\_10 then brought an example from her own family, and said that one of her relatives have a child that was almost addicted to sugar and that the parents often fed her candy and had a hard time saying no to her. She also raised a point about commercials and information about healthy food and how they were often directed towards adults. She had an idea to use cartoon characters to promote healthy foods. NO\_C1\_03 commented that the policy idea was important because the child rights convention article 17 says that children have the right to be protected from information that could be harmful to them.

Related to this, NO\_C1\_03 and NO\_C1\_10 started to discuss the food that is served in their school cafeterias, and it seemed that they thought it was unhealthy. They agreed that a lot of youth are

drinking soda and energy drinks, even though it is unhealthy. They started talking about some boys from their school who always were drinking coke and spending a lot of money on unhealthy food. They mentioned one boy that had made a point out of that he had to drink coke once every school day.

NO\_C1\_02 said she has looked into how advertising for food was done. She watched a video by (the region's largest retailer of electronics) of both healthy and unhealthy food. The hamburgers in the video looked extremely good and this showed that commercials or advertisements could be found everywhere, even in an advertisement of electronic products. NO\_C1\_07 mentioned that advertisement often popped up on her mobile phone which meant that young people did not even need to go out of the house to be exposed to advertisement.

In one of the latter meetings, experts were invited to talk to the members about some aspects of their policy idea. One expert talked about the importance of measures to limit marketing and advertisement towards children and he also talked about the Food and Drink Industry Professional Practices Committee (MFU). He mentioned that the government wanted to create legislation and guidelines for how marketing should be. After the talk, the group had the following conversation which resulted in them adjusting their policy idea:

*Facilitator 3: "What do you think about this in relation to what [the expert] said? He focused on that we should narrow it down, and that we should focus on digital marketing or aim it at MFU."*

*NO\_C1\_02: "I think we could have really divided this into several proposals."*

*Facilitator 3: "That is very true, but what should we do to cut and sharpen it. Are you interested in working with digital marketing?"*

*NO\_C1\_02: "Yes, he thinks it is important."*

*NO\_C1\_02: "I have an idea that we could take this with an age limit up at the national meeting in the youth organization, and then we can work with digital marketing here."*

*Facilitator 3: "So, you think that we can work with digital marketing here and then the youth organization can via statements or political platforms work for an age limit?"*

*NO\_C1\_02: "Yes."*

*NO\_C1\_03: "I just think it is stupid that the industry decides, it is a subjective assessment."*

*Facilitator 3: "But what do you think, NO\_C1\_03, you want digital marketing? Or what do you think?"*

*NO\_C1\_03: "Yes, I think it is smart."*

*Facilitator 3: "What about you NO\_C1\_10?"*

*NO\_C1\_10: "Yes, I am in."*

*Facilitator 3: "Shall we make the changes [to the policy form] then? Let us do this."*

## Policy 2: Reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes

The Alliance members shared their knowledge and experience which became the foundation of this policy idea. NO\_C1\_06 said "[W]e [we]re raised to finish the plate." Facilitator 4 remarked that there was a big difference in the size of plates across the year in Norway. NO\_C1\_08 responded "We need an international standard size on the plate."

In between meetings, the Alliance members also collected information on knowledge that would be relevant to their policy idea. They shared what they found when they met again. In meeting 2, NO\_C1\_12 said she had read an article on *“Larger plate sizes make us fatter”* from a Norwegian health website which she shared the link to the rest of the group. She singled out a fact from the article that a muffin nowadays contained 500 kcal instead of 210 kcal like it did 30 years ago.

NO\_C1\_08 found an article from WHO on *“Limiting portion sizes to reduce the risk of childhood overweight and obesity”* which he also shared with the group. NO\_C1\_08 mentioned, *“WHO says that portion sizes are important to establish good habits among children to prevent overweight and obesity”*.

The group then discussed the actual size of plates and NO\_C1\_08 found out that they had increased by 9 cm and that this could equal 1100 kcal more in consumption.

NO\_C1\_08 then expressed concerns and doubts about his information sources for the plate sizes. Facilitator 1 then gave the group a name of a food sociologist who has just published a book about the development of the Norwegian food culture and remarked that this professor might know something about plate size. NO\_C1\_08 suggested to invite the professor to one of their meetings.

As they continued to develop their policy ideas across several meetings, the members noticed how their own experience with food now was influenced by their policy ideas and some new knowledge they gathered in the process. NO\_C1\_12 stated, *“[I have] been more aware of it at home. Like, I am quite fond of food, but now I have kind of become a little more like started to think about it.”* NO\_C1\_06 added, *“I [n]otice it a little at home, the plate size I use kind of adjusts how I eat, so I see that the size actually affects it.”*

The group also had a meeting with an expert who talked about portion size. The expert talked about research on plate sizes which found that smaller sizes led to people serving themselves with less and throwing away less. Research had also showed that the number of sizes to choose from also matters, e.g. four versus three cup sizes. She also provided specific findings from Norway and pointed to collaborations between the government and the retail business about the issue. She suggested that the group join forces with some of existing initiatives to reduce plate sizes such as the unions (NHO Mat & Drikke) as well as some companies who deliver to canteens (ASKO, Nordic Choice).

After the talk, NO\_C1\_08 wondered whether it would be a good idea to contact the companies that were mentioned in the discussions. NO\_C1\_02 was entertaining the idea to introduce an EU-standard for plate sizes, enlarging the scope of her thinking that was previously only on Norway.

Throughout the process, the Alliance members often consulted the facilitators about different information or knowledge they were not sure about. For example, NO\_C1\_07 was curious about the BMI, *“Is it only BMI that counts in the classification of overweight?”* Facilitator 1 replied, *“Yes, mainly. It is important to remember that BMI is a measure on a group level, it is not good enough on an individual level”* to which NO\_C1\_07 responded, *“Yes, because if I use it for myself, even I am classified as overweight.”* Facilitator 4 then added, *“If you look at the BMI on a group level, with a higher BMI the risk for illnesses rise, but on an individual level it is important to look at the BMI together with information from the doctor”*

*NO\_C1\_06 was wondering about the sugar tax.*

*NO\_C1\_06: "I was thinking about the sugar tax and if it really works?"*

*Facilitator 4: "That is a very good question"*

*NO\_C1\_06: "Even though it costs more to buy the food in the store, it does not mean the sugar tax works as intended"*

*Facilitator 4: "There has been done research about this in other countries, but I am not sure if the research is transferable in the Norwegian setting."*

The facilitators also offered to help with collecting some relevant information for the youth members. For example, NO\_C1\_12 had originally added the aspect of the size of bags for buying candy as part of the portion size policy idea. But she did not really know what the bags were like in the past so facilitator 1 offered that she could check out the past size while NO\_C1\_12 could find the size of the current ones.

### *Readiness for action and obesity perception*

#### [NO\\_A1](#)

In the NO\_A1 Alliance, a clear increase over time in youth's readiness to take political action could be detected, which occurred in different phases and in tandem with different forms of engagement. At the start, the atmosphere was characterized by insecurity and Alliance members being shy. Apart from Alliance member NO\_A1\_02 - who was *"very eager to take actions to change"*, but nevertheless stopped attending after the first meeting - policy ideas were not yet discussed and no clear signs of readiness to take political action were noted.

In the first three meetings however, the Alliance members worked actively and engaged with the system mapping exercises, which resulted in a number of policy ideas. Within this process, the group showed an initial readiness for action in meeting 3 by initiating a further and wider investigation into potential causes for, and actions to prevent, overweight and obesity: *"the group developed a questionnaire in Google Forms to have people come up with reasons for overweight/obesity in Norway and come up with what the society can do to prevent overweight/obesity in Norway. They wanted to share the questionnaire with their friends and family and on social media."*

Moreover, one of the Alliance members, NO\_A1\_06, "contacted the local newspaper in the meeting, because she knew people working there. *"The Alliance members wanted the local newspaper to write an article about the Alliance and the project."* NO\_A1\_06 got a reply a couple of minutes later saying that they will look at it. NO\_A1\_11 suggested that the local newspaper could make an article online and provide the link to the questionnaire they just had made." The (co-)facilitators noted that the young people in the Alliance were *"very eager about the project"* and *"really took the ownership of the Alliance"*.

Even though the (co-) facilitators noted that the young people were *"quieter and not as active"* in the subsequent meeting, the young people did manage to talk to the journalist from the local newspaper who attended that meeting as a response to their request, and they discussed the 72 responses they had received to their questionnaire. The young people wanted *"to continue to share it with more*

*friends and family, and Alliance member NO\_A1\_06 suggested to “group the comments and find out what people wrote the most”.*

In meeting 5, the policy form was introduced and the (co) facilitators initiated to vote for, and thereby prioritize, the policy ideas the young people had come up with so far. The facilitator suggested to work with the two policy ideas that got the most votes. However, one of the participants, NO\_A1\_06, argued instead to go with three policy ideas, thereby anticipating an upcoming momentum for the third policy idea, which had her interest: *“I feel that the policy idea about teaching in school is part of a subject that will start up next year. I feel it is important”. The others were agreeing to her comment. First, I [the facilitator] told them that we could include it in case there turned out to be more people joining later, but they wanted it to be included anyway.”*

When the Alliance members were introduced to the policy form in this meeting, and worked *“very focused and engaged”* with the policy form in the next two meetings, they started to express and discuss their plans to collaborate and engage with particular stakeholders, in order to develop their policy ideas and to bring them into practice. *“All the three groups talked about how they want to take actions with their policy idea: NO\_A1\_09 and NO\_A1\_11 told the group that they want to talk to the school principal tomorrow; NO\_A1\_01 and NO\_A1\_06 will make a draft for an email/send an email to the education committee at the Parliament; NO\_A1\_05 and NO\_A1\_12 will find some shops managers they can talk to.”*

While progressing with their policy ideas and filling in the policy forms, the Alliance members also took next steps in approaching the stakeholders they had in mind, and thinking their strategy through. The co-facilitator noted for instance after meeting 6 that the young people in one of the sub-groups, NO\_A1\_05 and NO\_A1\_07, worked *“strategic and reflexive”*: *“They talked about who could help them, what they could help them with and who should be on their side. They want to be well prepared in the meeting with stakeholders. They talked about that it is important to think about when the stakeholders will have time to join a meeting. Some things they want to find out was who is setting the prices, is it the local grocery store or is it common for all grocery stores in the chain or is it the supplier. They also talked about who are deciding where the products are placed in the store.”* The (co) facilitators also noted that in meeting 7, NO\_A1\_11 *“was productive and showed a lot of readiness for action. He was developing a questionnaire for students at upper secondary school to ask if they are exercising; if there is opportunity to exercise at the school they are attending, and if so if they are pleased with the opportunity.”*

At the same time, everyday constraints came to the fore. In meeting 6, Alliance member NO\_A1\_01 had forgotten about his policy idea and needed to be reminded of what he was working on. During the meeting, he did respond to the (co) facilitators questions and looked up politicians to approach, but when the co-facilitators walked away *“he turned to his mobile phone”*. The Alliance members NO\_A1\_09 and NO\_A1\_11 had approached the school principal to arrange a meeting, but they were not successful in making an appointment yet. In meeting 7, they told the facilitator that they forgot to approach her again. NO\_A1\_09: *“We have forgotten to do it because there has been so much going on at school lately. There is a lot going on when taking media and communication subjects”* NO\_A1\_11: *“Yes, there is a lot to do at school, many tests”*. One of the young people, NO\_A1\_06, who had previously been active in approaching the local newspaper, expressed an increasing uncertainty over the weeks to write an email to the Education and Research Committee at the Parliament. In week 7

the facilitator noted that *“she was concerned about writing wrong and nervous about sending this email”*, and in week 8, NO-A1\_06 expressed: *“I did not dare to send the email. Honestly, I think it is scary. I was thinking about doing it, but I have put it aside, I thought I was going to do it another time. I am scared for doing stuff like that. I am afraid of writing something wrong”*. She did want to send the email in meeting 8 however, and asked the (co) facilitators to check her email draft. It was noted that NO\_A1\_06 was visibly proud when she had finally sent the email. In the following weeks, she did not receive any response though. NO\_A1\_11 managed to call three schools and learned that these schools did not offer an opportunity to exercise after school. The facilitator replied in line with the Alliance members’ plan: *“how many schools are yet to be contacted? Around 20?”*, which was perceived as a lot by NO\_A1\_11, who then said: *“Oh my, that many?”*

The (co) facilitators also noted that while the Alliance members worked very well with the policy form at first, they started to use the form less in the subsequent meetings. In some cases, they did not think about details, and in other cases Alliance members did develop their action plans into further detail, but they did not find the policy form of much value and therefore did not incorporate their progress in the policy forms. Moreover, it was noted by the (co) facilitators that it was a challenge to get the Alliance members to work on their ideas in between the meetings, and that the young people needed a lot of help and support to fill in the forms and to develop their ideas further. In this phase, the facilitator reported: *“I learned that we probably have managed to reach a group of youth that does not have a strong voice in society yet; the group of youth we want to reach in CO-CREATE. The participants are not yet organized in youth politics organizations, and they are from middle or lower socioeconomic status families”*.

When the schools closed due to COVID-19 regulations, the Alliance meetings continued online. In the fieldnotes, challenges were reported about online communication (meeting without cameras, while Alliance members needing more probing) and the limited number of participants, which made it challenging to support the young people in their ownership without taking too much of the lead as (co) facilitators. One of the Alliance members stopped participating because he was very worried about his health due to the COVID-19 virus. Nevertheless, the Alliance members who continued were able to benefit from the meetings and from the (co) facilitators’ support and moved on to work out their policy ideas and action strategies into great detail. Already in the first online meeting, NO\_A1\_11 *“started to think practical about things despite of the corona situation”*, for instance asking whether *“the information centres at the schools would still be open now that everything is closed?”* He also indicated that he wanted to work on the project in his spare time. The facilitators wrote that *“NO\_A1\_06 needed a lot of support to write into the policy form, but with the support from one of the facilitators, she managed to add some information in the policy form”*. Alliance members NO\_A1\_07 and NO\_A1\_05 had not been able to talk to owners of grocery stores due to COVID-19 regulations, but NO\_A1\_07 planned to send an email to politicians with agendas similar to theirs, saying: *“we have to be good at communication with those we are talking to, that is important for us”*.

Working online also had its advantages. One of the facilitators mentioned: *“I have now transferred the paper versions of their policy forms to a word document that I have uploaded in the team in Teams, so the policy form is more accessible to work on between meetings now than before when they handed the paper policy forms to me after the meetings.”* It was reported in the fieldnotes that all sub-groups, one or two Alliance members for each policy idea, were closely guided by a facilitator

or co-facilitator to think their plans through, come up with next steps, and fill in the policy form while using a shared screen. Alliance member NO\_A1\_06 asked for instance in meeting 11: *“I am not sure about things, because I cannot know too much about this. I do not get if it is me that is supposed to find out about these things, or if I could just suggest things? About what should be into the [school] curriculum; how much and how specific should I be?”* In this case and in the other cases, the Alliance members were able to refine their ideas, pose questions and answer questions in breakout room sessions with a (co) facilitator, in which a readiness for political action clearly came to the fore. Alliance members NO\_A1\_05 and NO\_A1\_07 were reported to *“discuss their policy idea today in a way that showed a lot of readiness for action. They were talking about what they should do and in which order.”* When discussing the grocery stores they planned to approach, NO\_A1\_05 said: *“personally, I think we have to begin with small steps. We should not rush it”*, and NO\_A1\_07 added: *“I agree. I think it is good to begin in the municipality and then expand to the county. Would that be smart?”*. Facilitator: *“Yes. Do you want to go big and include Norway in the end?”* NO\_A1\_07: *“Yes”*. When the facilitator introduced a scientific article about changing food prices in order to decrease overweight and obesity, NO\_A1\_05 (supported by NO\_A1\_07) responded with *“could we contact the researcher and tell him we are working on the same thing?”* They then went on to include this as one of their next steps. Accordingly, a number of the Alliance members were willing to participate in a dialogue forum after the summer. The dialogue forum tool was introduced in a more concrete way in meeting 11 and 12. The Alliance members responded with interest, while there was also some uncertainty about what it would look like, and some were unsure whether they would still be available in the fall in relation to their school and living situation.

## NO\_B1

In the NO\_B1 Alliance, the Alliance members showed a strong drive and eagerness to participate in developing policy ideas from the start. The facilitator noted: *“It is interesting to see already how this group is different from the other Alliance we have started (NO\_A1 Alliance). This group is very focused and it seems like they are used to working hard, also at school. In this group, I did not need to work for the group’s attention once. They were all very polite and focused”*. In meeting 2, despite of a slight shift in Alliance members participating (some new members, some members of the first meeting who could not make it), the facilitator reported *“this group is so dedicated and committed to the tasks. They were taking the tasks very seriously and they were not even checking their phones, even when they got notifications. They seemed interested in doing something for the community and talked about that they want to make a change.”*

In the first two meetings, the young Alliance members worked hard on the system mapping exercises and writing down action ideas. *“[The facilitator] encouraged them to come up with action ideas based on the map they have developed and action ideas that can either stop negative feedback loops or enhance positive feedback loops. Everyone was working individually coming up with factors. Firstly, they were talking a bit to each other, but after a few minutes, they were focusing on making action ideas. They used the maps they had in front of them. It looked like they thought the task was challenging.”* When the facilitator asked why the project focused on policies and politics, Alliance member NO\_B1\_05 replied: *“Because we can present it for politicians – people that could do something about it”*. Moreover, Alliance member NO\_B1\_06 asked for instance how they would be able to reach politicians. When the facilitator talked about the dialogue forum and the collaboration

with EAT, *“everyone seemed very interested”*. NO\_B1\_06 inquired when the dialogue forums would take place.

A bit unexpectedly, there also turned out to be a downside to the strong motivation and work attitude of the Alliance members. After the first and second meeting and in the subsequent weeks, all Alliance members who participated in these meetings notified the (co) facilitators with great regret that they could no longer attend due to school, work and political obligations.

Following recruitment attempts, and by inviting young people who happened to be present at that time in the school building, a third Alliance meeting took place entirely with new Alliance members who started again with the system mapping exercises. In this group as well, interest was shown, action ideas were written down, and one of the young people for instance started to think about asking the local grocery store about their placement and pricing of food. When the meetings moved to the online environment due to COVID-19 regulations, the (co) facilitators did not manage to keep the Alliance members who had been engaged so far on board, and no one of the young people showed up at the online meetings. Hence, within these circumstances, the strong readiness to take political action that came to the fore within this Alliance, from the start and in relation to system mapping activities, did not develop further or turn into actual proposals and actions within the CO-CREATE project. The facilitators noted that the young people in the NO\_B1 Alliance (as had to some extent also been the case for a number of the participants in in the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances) were not able or willing to prioritize the CO-CREATE meetings within their busy schedules. In the feedback meeting, the facilitators mentioned that the large amount of competing and accessible activities and opportunities for youth is particular to the urban context of the city.

## NO\_C1

As in the NO\_B1 Alliance, the Alliance members in the NO\_C1 Alliance also showed strong readiness for political action from the start, which is not surprising given that all participants were already active in a youth organization. The co-facilitator reported that *“almost all of [the participants] were interested in participating in a new workshop and in the dialogue forum”*. The active participation in the first workshop activities was perceived as a sign of readiness for action by the co-facilitator. The Alliance members took part in a half day workshop in which they worked with system maps and during this session, they came up with several policy ideas. *“The co-facilitator wrote in her PAR-minutes that there were some participants that were more actively participating in the workshop than others. She also wrote that she could see a difference between this group of young people that is already engaged in an organization compared to the participants in the NO\_B1 Alliance. She thought there were more creative ideas for policies that seemed more effective compared to the ideas that were brainstormed in the NO\_B1 Alliance.”*

In meeting 2, the session was focused on filling in the policy form. *“Several participants said they found it fun”*, when being asked whether they thought it was difficult. Two main policy ideas came out of the first two meetings and the group decided to plan informal in-between meetings with the smaller sub-groups in which they continued to work out and develop their policy ideas. One of the Alliance members, NO\_C1\_06, demonstrated strategic political thinking by saying: *“I do not mean to be negative, but I do not know how easy it is to continue working on the project, because there will be*

*too many people that will be against our idea. I think it will be smart to modify rather than regulate because it sounds more positive”.*

In the in-between meeting of the group that focused on plate sizes, Alliance member “NO\_C1\_08 wanted to know whether we would present the policy idea to the European parliament [...], “indicating he was thinking about the big picture”. NO\_C1\_06 thought about the feasibility of regulating plate size for private households. In the in-between meeting of the group that focused on marketing, the facilitator asked where the Alliance members could find more information. Alliance member NO\_C1\_11 suggested to look at “research about how children are affected by commercials”. While showing some hesitation due to the things she already had to do, NO\_C1\_11 agreed to take responsibility for this herself. Alliance member NO\_C1\_10 wanted to look into research on the dietary habits of children and youth using a national survey in Norway.

In meeting 3, the dialogue forum was mentioned. The (co) facilitators had tried “to tempt the participants to join the dialogue forum” but noticed that there was no response among the Alliance members. “Maybe it has not been successful yet? The presentation of the dialogue forum is interesting and with important subjects, but you have to make sure it is not too long, as it can be difficult to keep up the concentration, especially when it is digital. Some participants turned their cameras off during the presentation and it might be a sign of participants starting to think about other thing.” Not so many of the Alliance members felt comfortable yet to present their ideas to the rest of the group, because they needed more time to develop their ideas. When the two groups split up to work on their ideas in breakout rooms, they were reported to seem motivated and knowledgeable (in particular the group focusing on marketing, whereas the group focusing on portion sizes were less talkative and needed more probing).

The groups continued to work actively in one more informal meeting with each smaller group. The group that focused on marketing had invited an expert to talk about their topic and potential action. They were engaged during the session and had a good discussion after the presentation. The group focused on portion sizes also listened to an expert presentation, and worked towards contacting companies, also in the light of an upcoming dialogue forum.

In all three Alliances, the problem of obesity was mainly discussed explicitly in the first (two to four) meetings. While brainstorming and building on experiences, Alliance members typically went back and forth between systemic factors and individual factors as important causes of obesity (but less so in the NO\_C1 Alliance, in which the systemic focus was stronger). The form of engagement that seemed to have a strong influence on youth’s perception of obesity was system mapping, which triggered the Alliance members to think and discuss the problem of obesity repetitively on a system level.

As an introduction to system mapping, the Alliance members were provided with an overview of statistics in meeting 1 and they responded with surprise and discussion. In the NO\_A1 Alliance, the facilitator presented the prevalence of overweight and obesity amongst children, youth and adults in Norway and in the world. When she asked the Alliance members what they thought about the numbers, NO\_A1\_02 responded by saying: “I did not believe that at all”. In the NO\_B1 Alliance, Alliance member NO\_B1\_08 considered the numbers “Pretty high” and NO\_B1\_09 asked: “What is that number? People who are dying?” The facilitator confirmed and continued to tell them about the percentages in Norway. NO\_B1\_09 responded with: “Wow”, and NO\_B1\_08 replied: “But what are

*you going to do to prevent more people to become overweight?"* When discussing socioeconomic differences in obesity in the NO\_B1 Alliance, perceptions about systemic causes of overweight were still mixed and unsure. The facilitator asked the young people in the NO\_B1 Alliance if they could guess whether the percentage of obesity was higher in relation to having a lower or higher SES background. NO\_B1\_01 thought: *"Those with higher SES because they can afford it"*, whereas NO\_B1\_04 responded: *"What do you mean? I don't think that is correct. It is those with lower SES"*.

In Alliance NO-A1, the reasons for the rise in overweight and obesity that Alliance members mentioned were rather individualistic at first: NO\_A1\_06: *"The older you get the more stuck you become to your job"*, and NO\_A1\_03: *"The older you get the more responsible you get about your own diet"*. At the same time, individual causes of overweight and obesity were mixed with systemic causes in the brainstorm session: *"It is scientifically proven that sleep and intake of fast food is connected"* (NO\_A1\_03); *"You had to walk or bicycle to leisure activities, but now your parents bring you by car"* (NO\_A1\_01); *"We are more and more spoiled"*(NO\_A1\_02, claiming this is her own experience); *"Physical activity and the economy in the family"* (NO\_A1\_04); *"Obesity amongst parents. If the parents have a poor diet their kids will also have a poor diet"* (NO\_A1\_03). *"It is cheaper to buy unhealthy food. Fast food restaurants get you food fast and for little money"* (NO\_A1\_03), and also *"Advertisement of unhealthy food in social media and commercials"* (NO\_A1\_02).

In the NO\_B1 Alliance, the first potential causes of a rise in overweight and obesity were also on the side of individual responsibility. Alliance member NO\_B1\_04 mentioned *"that people do buy food in line with what they know is healthy food."* According to NO\_B1\_01 *"it is important to start the good habits early on"*. NO\_B1\_04 also came up with a factor that was more on the societal level, pointing out *"that 'Generation Perfectionism' takes a lot of time and energy and therefore the young people do not have the energy to be physically active"*.

In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the initial causes the Alliance members provided had a more coherent and immediate systemic and activist focus, with NO\_C1\_05 for instance pointing to *"Marketing. Lower prices on unhealthy products. Healthy products are more expensive. Meny (a grocery chain in Norway) used to have a price market campaign when it is cheap to buy food, especially unhealthy food, for example advertisement for cheaper chocolate. [...] I feel that it has become more marketing on unhealthy food now than before"*. NO\_C1\_06 added: *"Traditions. I think it has become a tradition to eat unhealthy food as comfort food. Taco and pizza for example"*. While inserting a focus on action and what is modifiable, NO\_C1\_02 replied: *"I guess it is difficult to do something about [traditions]"*.

During the system mapping activity, the Alliance members of the NO\_A1 Alliance touched upon several factors they saw as causes of the rise in overweight and obesity among young people. One of their main themes was the sensitivity of obesity as a topic, the difficulty to talk about this theme, and the responsibility of the media and social media, including influencers, in making people feel unhappy about their body. Alliance member NO\_A1\_06: *"I am afraid of talking about overweight and obesity if I talk to people with overweight or obesity. It is offensive and it is taboo. [...] I do not like the feeling that others will think that they are not good enough"*. Alliance member NO\_A1\_09, who self-identified as being overweight and talked about this openly in the meetings: *"I do not go to friends and ask them about overweight. If people with overweight think they are perfect and someone asks them about overweight they could get another impression of themselves."* NO\_A1\_06 replied: *"It is*

*not important if you have some excess fat if you have a healthy body. [...] The media should have the blame because they portray that the perfect body is not about having a healthy body, but a skinny body". NO\_A1\_09 confirmed: "Body weight pressure has always been present". At the same time, the Alliance members were critical about 'body positivity' messages in social media. They believed it would be more helpful to "be honest about that [overweight] is unhealthy, instead of [saying] "love your body". It doesn't help learning to love an unhealthy body and then die." They also talked about an influencer who provided incorrect information, saying "if you are overweight you will die before you are 40 years old". The Alliance members discussed that it was a bad thing for children to have this blogger as their role model, because children "believe everything their idols say". Other themes discussed in this Alliance concerned exercising and access to healthy food. In the end, the list of factors causing a rise in overweight and obesity that the NO\_A1 Alliance came up with included: "Fast food is cheaper than the regular food; Food prices, instead of looking at overweight as a problem we have normalized it; Shame and body; Mental illnesses, laziness, little knowledge about food, negative body pressure (afraid of exercising in public); Depression, genes, little availability to be physical active; Culture; Pepsi Max; Computer games; Poor food habits from home; How parents are raising their children where they have a different view than they should; Too much fast food, people don't have time to make dinner; Fast food chains; Intake of sugar containing food products, laziness and alcohol use; Wealth and poor diet; Shops, high calorie intake and little exercising/physical work; Individuals; We are sitting too much (school, bus, mobile phone) and fatty food; Bad self-control".*

When making the system map, the Alliance members in the NO\_B1 Alliance also talked about the role of social media in terms of factors leading to obesity. Alliance member NO\_B1\_05 mentioned that *"the social media are promoting trendy detox and cleansing diets that are not proven, but make people use it because they are vulnerable"*. NO\_B1\_01 added that *"social media and technology make people have a sedentary lifestyle"*. NO\_B1\_02 mentioned that *"we do not need to be physical active anymore because we do not actually need to go outside of the house because we can buy things online and get everything delivered"*. NO\_B1\_04 pointed to *"the easy access to sweets and sugar sweetened beverages"*, and NO\_B1\_05 added that *"the cost of food in the sense that healthier food is more expensive and that many people tend to choose food that costs less rather than food that is good for the health"*. NO\_B1\_05 also claimed that fast food was easily available and that it is difficult to find healthy food. In meeting 2 (with a slightly altered group), the Alliance members discussed the problem of marketing to children with the facilitators, and how big companies were good at getting around laws and guidelines.

During the system mapping session in the NO\_C1 Alliance, one of the Alliance members, NO\_C1\_07, grouped the factors into different categories: *"[The factors I have] can be divided into social, biological and psychological factors"* NO\_C1\_04 said: *"I think about the society as a whole. We live in a stressful world. It is easier to find unhealthy food when there is little time. For example, it is much easier to make a pizza. Promoting unhealthy products. It could be a solution to promote healthy food in a new way"*. When the facilitator stated that these were a lot of factors, NO\_C1\_04 replied: *"Yes, I guess. But they are connected in a way"*.

NO\_C1\_05 linked the same theme to personal experiences: *"I had mostly the same factors that have been mentioned. A lot of stress. I have recognized that I am more physical active when I do not have too much to do. Some places, it is also dependent on the availability of options to be physical active. And price is important"*.

Within the other sub-group in this Alliance, factors were also brought up structured by categories, and at times illustrated by personal experiences. NO\_C1\_06: *"I think there are psychological [factors], like schools for example. The pressure from the society, or that the school does not teach about a healthy diet. When I went to the lower secondary school we had a lecture from nutritionists"*.

NO\_C1\_01 added: *"Economy. And like the first one, marketing is important. The use of strong colors"*.

NO\_C1\_02 moved on saying: *"Sedentary jobs. We are a society that are not as active as before"*, which was confirmed by NO\_C1\_01 who said: *"What is bad in Alta is that there are poor walking and cycling paths"*. Then NO\_C1\_02 came up with another category: *"Entertainment. It is easier to be entertained at home now – with TV and screens"*.

Hence, young people in the NO\_C1 Alliance, who already participated in youth organizations, seemed quite comfortable in looking at societal levels more structurally and systematically when talking about factors causing a rise in overweight and obesity, and in connecting more abstract thoughts to more personal experiences. Interestingly, the facilitator reported that this was more challenging in the NO\_A1 Alliance: *"I tried to help them talk about obesity on a structural level rather than on an individual level when they talked about policy ideas. It killed their discussions, and they all said that it was very challenging."* This indicates that it was hard(er) for the young people in this Alliance to keep thinking productively when they could not include individual-level factors and thoughts in relation to obesity.

What stood out in the fieldnotes was that discussions about and explicit references to obesity were rare in the subsequent meetings. In these meetings, the focus was much more on concrete action ideas and the problem of overweight and obesity was implied as an aim, but no longer discussed. In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the facilitator reported for instance that in an informal in-between meeting (after the system mapping sessions) when talking about commercials for children about physical activity, Alliance member NO\_C1\_10 mentioned *"a child in her family that she described as almost addicted to sugar. She also said that the parents feed the girl a lot of sugary items and that they did not manage to say no to her."* The facilitator added: *[NO\_C1\_10] did not directly tie her statement to obesity."*

Moreover, while many action ideas touched on local or national system levels and the facilitators reported frequent system level discussions about action ideas, references to individual choices and responsibilities in health behaviour were also still made, up until the final meetings. Similar to the excerpt above, in meeting 10, NO\_A1\_06 mentioned (in relation to providing warnings on unhealthy products) that *"people have to find a balance with food, and that it is more difficult than quitting with smoking"*. She said this is *"the individual's choice and it takes willpower to make a healthy choice"*. The facilitator replied that it has been proven that our choices are affected by politics and policies, not just willpower. She reported in the notes however that it seemed like NO\_A1\_06 *"understood what [the facilitator] was talking about, but she also pointed out again that food is different from smoking"*.

## *Process, decision making, and ownership*

### Decision making about activities and process

#### NO\_A1

In Alliance meeting 1, the facilitators, co-facilitator and the young people discussed what would be the preferred means for communication, and the young people came up with chat and Google Drive. This was picked up by the team. At the end of the meeting, the (co-) facilitators and young people agreed to continue with their system mapping activity and action ideas for the next week: the facilitator checked this and the young people confirmed. The energy of the young people, and thereby their capacity to take the lead at that moment could have been affected by the timing of the Alliance meeting: at the end of the school day. In general, the young people live far away from school and need to take a bus home when they are done with their activities at school. On the other hand, the young people had to wait for the bus anyway, so this could also have strengthened the opportunity to participate in the Alliance.

In Alliance meeting 2, the young people came up with the idea to develop a survey about causes of overweight, and the research team facilitated them in doing so. The young people also expressed their desire to start the meeting earlier, directly after their school tasks ended, so they would not need to wait. The (co-) facilitators agreed to start next meeting earlier. The youth were eager to provide their input for the recruitment flyer. The facilitator ended the meeting by asking the young people for reflection and comments, to systematically collect their input rather than ending “*a bit rushed*” (as was the case in the previous meeting). In meeting 3, the young people continued to follow their own ideas. The group finished the survey they wanted to distribute in their network about obesity factors and action plans. One of the young people decided to ask her friends about possible factors, instead of doing a survey, and she brought the answers on paper to the Alliance meeting. A young Alliance member reached out to local newspaper and got response, meaning that a journalist was present in meeting 4, doing interviews with some of the young people, and in meeting 6, the facilitator was able to show the young people the article, with some of them being pictured at work during the CO-CREATE project. The facilitators decided to do a photo voice activity in meeting 4, to raise energy and engagement in the last meeting before the Christmas break. To their surprise, the youth were a bit less engaged in meeting 4, while the young people were highly committed to working on the policy form when it was offered to them in meeting 5.

Meeting 5 was scheduled after the Christmas break in a joint decision between the (co-) facilitators and young people, due to a movie project at school. Other decisions were also made in agreement, such as look at the photo voice pictures as a next activity and working on the policy idea until next meeting. The (co-) facilitators and group also decided to talk more about the policy ideas next time and to come up with activities to test their idea. In meeting 7 and 8, the young people and (co) facilitators decided jointly about approaching stakeholders and further developing their policy ideas while using the policy forms.

After COVID-19 regulations, the research team and young people decided to continue their work online in 4 additional (Microsoft Teams and Zoom) meetings, where the young people could continue to work collaboratively on their policy proposals in Teams, during and in between meetings. They also agreed together on breaking up in smaller groups and the input by the co-facilitator and

facilitators on the policy ideas was discussed jointly. The atmosphere seemed safe and the young people felt free to disagree with particular suggestions, while coming up with alternatives.

## NO\_B1

In NO\_B1, many of the young people who participated in meetings 1 and 2 stood out to the facilitator as focused on and used to working hard. They appeared to be dedicated and very seriously committed to tasks and they seemed very interested in the community and talked about making a change. The team did not have to do much to raise interest or attention, and it stood out for instance that the young people did not check their phones during the meeting. Different group members participated almost equally, most had strong inputs and they were very supportive to each other. The facilitator noted in the fieldnotes that this could easily be girls with *“high grades in school”*, since they *“seemed academically strong”*. The (co-) facilitators therefore supported their input and process, and also followed up on their suggestions when compatible with the Alliance process.

In meeting 1, the research team for instance agreed to quit earlier due to the young people’s plans to attend the theatre that day. The young people in turn agreed that the facilitator would finish the revised map. One of the members had asked whether it was possible to schedule the meeting an hour earlier because it was already scheduled at the end of the day. The facilitator made a poll in the group where they could vote, and all the young people voted for the earlier time slot. Meeting 1 was therefore planned at the desired time slot. However, for the subsequent meetings, the team was not able to book the room where the meetings were held, and therefore the group could only start a little earlier than the original time slot in the next meetings. After meeting 2, it was a challenge to plan a meeting with the young people being available, because of their other (school) tasks and duties. The facilitator noted that it was a challenge that some young people are so busy with school that they do not prioritize CO-CREATE.

The young people recruited in addition to the existing group therefore attended meeting 3 alone, without their peers who already attended meeting 1 and 2. The new group was perceived as working well and wanting to collaborate, but *“more diverse”* and *“less academically strong”* (facilitators’ words). At the end of meeting 3, when the new young people were introduced to CO-CREATE and system mapping and they *“did the tasks that were suggested”* by the (co-) facilitators, the young people agreed to the proposal of the research team to look at the maps and action ideas in the next meeting, and come up with policy ideas they want to focus on.

With the school closing however due to COVID-19 regulations, the research team invited the young people to continue their activities online, but none of the young people showed up in the scheduled meeting online, and the Alliance work was not pursued.

## NO\_C1

The meetings and activities with the NO\_C1 Alliance all took place online, using online means to engage young people and co-decide with them about the Alliance progress. The young people could first respond to an invitation for a Facebook event, meaning a 1 x 4-hour workshop. The content and activities of the first workshop were suggested and prepared by the research team. The first online meeting was an organizational challenge for the facilitators. In their evaluation, the co-facilitator and facilitators decided to allow participants more time and space to think individually, rather than

facilitators filling in an answer. In the second part of the meeting (following an in-between evaluation by the team in the break), the facilitators were much better in encouraging and uplifting the young people during the process. At the end of the Zoom meeting, the young people were asked to indicate in Kahoot whether they would be interested to follow-up, and most of the young people said that did. They also agreed to postpone 'voting for to the policies they come up with' to next workshop because of the time limit and because the activity was not successful in meeting 1. In meeting 2, a number of the young people indicated when voting for the top 2 ideas, that they did not want to miss out on a third policy idea, and they wanted to include these three instead of two. The facilitator acknowledged this and suggested to include the third idea in case there was enough time and space. In the end, the young people were assigned to work on one of the top 2 policy ideas. The young people had a larger role in deciding about the upcoming activities, because they discussed in breakout rooms what they wanted to do next meeting. The young people expressed they wanted to join another workshop and the date was set in agreement. The young people were polite and participated in the activities.

In the smaller group meetings in-between workshop 2 and 3, a part of the young people who focused on 'portion sizes' had a more open and informal group meeting to work on their particular policy idea with one of the facilitators. For this meeting, the facilitator described the dynamic as: the facilitator asking questions to the young people; the young people responding, and the facilitator making a summary. During the process, the facilitator noted that she was reminded not to ask "*half of a question or multiple questions*", because these seemed harder to answer for the young people. All the young people talked in the meeting and collaborated well, while their seemed to be trust.

Another part of the young people who focused on 'marketing and advertisement' had a similar meeting about their policy idea. In the meeting, the young people agreed on what the policy is about and what next steps to take; two points were raised by the young people, and one by the facilitator. The facilitator wrote that the three young people participated actively in the meeting, and there was a good and positive tone.

In meeting 3, a workshop with the larger group, the group members again seemed motivated to continue with their ideas. The young people working on 'advertisement' seemed more motivated and inclined to talk, even though some members were more active and others were shyer. The young people who worked on 'portion size' needed more probing, and in that sense, guiding. The atmosphere of the meeting was "*light and positive*", and the team and young people jointly decided about the next meetings. This was also the case in meeting 4a and meeting 4b: the team and young people decided about the number of meetings before the Summer, engaging with (policy and scientific) experts in these meetings, and preparing for dialogue forums after the Summer. The level of discussions of the young people were tailored to the meetings and expert presentations: they were less inclined to have questions and discussions directly with the invited speakers (and not all speakers allowed so much space for this), but in one of the cases the young people engaged in fruitful discussions after the presentation. Eventually, dialogue forums took place after the Summer.

## Group dynamics and involvement in relation to activities

The involvement and engagement of the young people in each meeting are reflected in table 17 (NO\_A1), table 18 (NO\_B1), and table 19 (NO\_C1 Alliance).

### NO\_A1

The young people were a bit shy and more insecure in the beginning, although there was also laughter and fun. Group building activities seemed to have a positive affect sometimes, while the facilitator also noted that it seemed to strengthen discomfort at other times. The co-facilitator and facilitators contributed to encouraging the young people and creating a good atmosphere, and the food and informal talk was in this sense much appreciated by the young people. The young people showed engagement early-on when providing input for the recruitment flyers, and an even stronger engagement when working on the system maps and action ideas in three smaller groups in meeting 2. The group indicated that they found respect in the group important, and the young people also expressed that they liked the atmosphere in the group, that they experienced the facilitator as “a member” and they liked that it was “so free”. The facilitator noted in meeting 3 that there was an excellent group dynamic, collaboration and engagement. Many of the young people stayed longer due to waiting on the bus, while they were at the same time tired after a long day.

When talking about the action ideas of the young people in meeting 3, the facilitators tried to encourage the young people to think on a system level, which was perceived by the Alliance members as difficult to think “so big”. The facilitator also described how system level talk “killed their discussions”. In meeting 4, the young people were also engaged, especially when looking at the survey results, but not as engaged as the previous meeting. They were harder to engage in the photo voice activity in pairs, and they were quickly done. There was also laughter and fun however during the group building game. In meeting 5, the level of engagement was again much higher, the group dynamic was good and the group was very active. The icebreaker was well received, and the young people participated actively in walking through and working on the policy form. The facilitators and co-facilitators also walked around to engage discussions. The atmosphere was also good in meeting 6, where the young people continued with their action ideas and collaborated well. One of the young people was easily distracted by his phone and needed input from the (co-) facilitators. Another young person worked independently. The facilitators noted that this group did not seem to have particular informal leaders, but they relied more in the facilitators. The main challenge for the facilitators throughout the meetings was the group size, which was perceived as vulnerable, since two young people worked on an idea together, but with some of them being absent, they often worked on an idea alone. When moving the meetings online to Microsoft Teams and Zoom from meeting 9 to 12, it was harder for the (co) facilitators to get a sense of the young people, who talked with their cameras off. They also needed more probing and the (co) facilitators talked more. In the final two meetings, this improved, and it was also noted that the group dynamic was better when two young people worked on the same idea with a (co) facilitator, instead of only one young person. It stood out that the young people in the NO\_A1 Alliance became quite a close group in which the youth felt safe enough to share personal issues, even though most of them did not know each other before the project.

### NO\_B1

In the NO\_B1 Alliance, the “vibe” was already good in meeting 1; everyone was polite and kind, paid attention and the young people were active during the exercises. There were two pairs of friends. The co-facilitator knew three of the girls, which were her age, and they connected well. One boy was a bit shy. The facilitator noted to pay more attention to him in meeting 2, but he did not attend anymore after meeting 1. His friend also stopped participating after meeting 1. In the first meeting, the facilitator noted that these two young people looked interested during the system mapping activity, but they were less active. As described in the previous section and as visible in table 17, the young people who attended meeting 2, four girls, “*seemingly high SES*”, and “*academically strong*” (facilitators’ words) were highly engaged, committed and motivated when they participated in the activities.

It appeared to be impossible however to find a new date with these young people due to their many (school) tasks. While it was the plan to recruit new members and merge the two groups, in meeting 3 a new group of boys and girls attended in what was for them a first meeting. These young people were also engaged and collaborated well. The girls were shy and needed more probing, which could be due, according to the facilitator, to the girls being completely new to the project, whereas the boys (who knew each other and were recruited at the table tennis table after which they decided to join) were given a bit of an introduction to the project. The boys were more confident and active in the discussions, and one of them took a leader role. The group was perceived as “*more diverse*” and “*less academically strong*”, but the young people “*wanted to collaborate, worked well and did the tasks that were suggested*”.

A challenge was posed by COVID-19 restrictions. While the Alliance members in NO\_A1, who had been engaged in a number of activities and had been a group for about 8 meetings, moved to online meetings, the NO\_B1 Alliance members did not attend the online meeting, and did not continue with the project.

## NO\_C1

The (co-) facilitators described being stressed for the first online Alliance meeting(s), with a group of young people who do not know each other, being recruited online. Moreover, the online organization asked a new form of multi-tasking in order to facilitate the young people, showing them presentations, organizing breakout rooms for smaller group discussions and responding to incoming remarks and questions via the chat function. The facilitator learned that in online meetings, the teams missed out on small talk and rapid responses to non-verbal signs, with many young people turning their video off. Also, it did not seem to work well to ask questions to everyone, which was often met with silence. Other challenges to engaging in group dynamics concerned the stability of Internet connections and working with particular software (STICKE for system mapping). On the other hand, many of the young people were familiar with Kahoot and the icebreaker quiz at the beginning worked well: there was laughter and “*a jolly atmosphere*”

The facilitator showed in the fieldnotes how the team grew into their role and were able to use the online platform in a supportive way, and the young people appeared to be engaged from the beginning. The atmosphere was good, the young people were polite, gave each other room and participated in the activities, with some being more active than others. The facilitators noted that there were more creative ideas for effective policies in this group compared to the other Alliance groups, and it was clear to them that the young people in this group were already engaged in a youth

organization. Nevertheless, it came to the fore throughout the meetings that the two sub-groups who worked on different ideas appeared to have different styles: one of the groups generally needing more probing, and the other group was more inclined to talk and engage in discussions. The group dynamics remained good and collaborative up until the last meeting.

The facilitators mentioned in the feedback meeting in terms of group dynamics that it is important to note the effect of small groups, and that when some young people are motivated, they engage each other. All the three Alliances in Norway were quite small, and some of the youth were like: why are there not more people; is this lame? The NO\_A1 youth tried to recruit more youth, and some did manage to bring a friend. In NO\_A1, one girl only showed up when her friend was present, illustrating the safety of having a friend.

Which concrete activities might have contributed to empowerment?

CO-CREATE in Norway resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in a number of activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent overweight and obesity among youth, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members present and discuss their policy ideas with stakeholders and how those policy ideas can be turned into action. We may thus wonder: what did the Alliance members learn from their commitment to the Alliances in terms of *power*? According to Kohfeldt and colleagues (2011:29), YPAR projects are likely to be conducive to alterations in power through *shifts in knowledge*; *knowledge production* and *voice* (here understood as a capacity to make use of, or to create, space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, typically among more powerful stakeholders).

**Shifts in knowledge** most clearly came to the fore in relation to the perception of the problem of obesity (see page 61). This is also confirmed in adolescent feedback forms and open questions in the WP7 questionnaire. A member from the NO\_A1 Alliance wrote in the WP questionnaire as a response to the question about changes in their lives after participating in CO-CREATE: *“New way of thinking, know more about obesity and the risk”*. Members from the NO\_C1 Alliance reported: *“I understand better which societal changes are needed to reduce obesity in Norway and the world”*, and *“after having worked on the policy idea on prohibiting marketing targeting children, I get very annoyed every time I see a commercial or poster targeting children. It has made me more aware of influencing”*. In the feedback form, only filled in by members of the NO\_A1 Alliance, one of the young people wrote: *“I have become more aware of what is happening around me. I notice things (such as prices and influences on the food) which I mostly would not have cared about. I have also started to be interested in other societal problems.”* Hence, the activities that related to shifts in knowledge, which have been system mapping (see page x) and discussions in the wider sense, come to the fore as one important part of empowerment of young people in the Alliances in Norway: when young people started to see the world and their role in it differently, this contributed to their empowerment. As a member of the NO\_A1 Alliance wrote in the feedback form: *“I think youth play an important role in preventing obesity. I think youth ought to take part in proposing solutions to how to prevent it, and that they can collaborate, to find solutions, and reflect about the topic”*.

The activities that related to young people's **production of knowledge** appeared to be particularly empowering. In the NO\_A1 Alliance, this concerned for instance developing and distributing questionnaires, and considering the responses that the young people received. In meeting 3, some of the members had developed a questionnaire more informally. The facilitator reported: *"NO\_A1\_06 and NO\_A1\_09 told me that they wanted to make a questionnaire between the meetings, but they did not have time to do it. Instead, NO\_A1\_06 asked friends in another school to ask their friends about "Causative elements for obesity". She wrote the answers on a white paper and gave it proudly to me."* In meeting 4, the results of the digital questionnaire that the group had developed (n=72) were discussed. The facilitator noted: *"I gave them a handout of the results and asked them to discuss the results, mark what they thought was important or had comments to, and what they can/want to do with these results"*.

One of the respondents' comments to the young people was: *"This is a fantastic project. I love that young people get the opportunity to be part of this."*

The young people also produced knowledge by developing their policy proposal and writing down as well as refining their ideas in the policy form. A number of the (NO\_A1) young people mentioned working on the policy forms as the most useful activity in the feedback form: *"When we talk and discuss and fill in the ideas at the same time, because it is more organized and easier to get your thoughts out and find a better solution."* And also: *"I will say that the policy form and the leaders is what I found most useful. I think they helped me and [name other Alliance member] to find a policy idea."* Here, the usefulness of the policy form was connected to the help of the leaders. The fieldnotes also point to empowerment through direct support of the facilitators and co-facilitators along the process of developing a policy, particularly when adolescent expressed uncertainty, or had to perform tasks which were new to them. The (co-facilitators) frequently reported about their challenge to find a balance between providing support in this process without taking over the lead. In this light, the co-facilitator consciously encouraged one of the members in the NO\_A1 Alliance to work on his own for half an hour before getting back to the (co) facilitators, in order to *"free NO\_A1\_11 from the facilitators, which would help him work together with us rather than for us"*. This clearly contributed to NO\_A1\_11's output, ownership and empowerment. The facilitator noted after this exercise *"NO\_A1\_11 did a great job filling in the [policy form] with more details and describe as detailed as possible his idea and how he imagines it to be. He edited the document and he had good inputs and reflections. It was a dialogue between NO\_A1\_11 and me, but he took the lead and responsibility."* The WP7 survey data indicates that for the Alliance members in the NO\_A1 Alliance and the NO\_C1 Alliance 'participation in the youth Alliance enabled them to come up with policy recommendations' (with mean scores between 3.33 and 4.33 on a 5-point scale).

Processes in which the support of the (co) facilitators led to empowerment of the young people were most clear (and coded in the data most frequently) in the NO\_A1 Alliance, with the smaller group of Alliance members who were most consistently present over time. The continuing co-presence in the meetings enabled the (co) facilitators and young people to synchronize, collaborate and improve in the smaller tasks and activities that were a part of knowledge production, which included tackling challenges the young people came across.

Another empowering element in knowledge production in the NO\_A1 Alliance concerned the advocacy training by the co-facilitator. *"[The co-facilitator] had prepared a power point presentation*

*with support from [the facilitator]. He did a great job telling the members of the Alliance about how to advocate. He was nervous in advance when we told him to do it and it was part of a co-facilitator's tasks, but it was nice to see how well it went and how happy/proud he was when he was done."* Thence, the training did not only help the young people to develop skills and a way of thinking in how to bring their ideas forward, but it was also empowering for the co-facilitator himself.

In the NO\_B1 Alliance, the facilitator reported in meeting 2 how empowering the group was towards each other when working on formulating policy ideas. *"The group was supportive with one another when they talk. They were nodding when the others spoke and were saying 'yes, and'-sentences, [which is] very helpful for the group dynamic, because the participant are accepting the others' suggestions by building on them to come up with new suggestions. I think this creates a safe place for them to come up with ideas because the group is so supportive. [...] An example was that NO\_B1\_06 looked at NO\_B1\_05 and said "well done" when she was done talking."* However, because there were only three meetings in this Alliance with an entirely different group in the third meeting, the empowering effect was at the same time limited, because the young people were not able to pursue and continue their development.

In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the facilitator encouraged one of the smaller groups to come up with a name for their group. Initially, *"NO\_C1\_06 said: "The plate experts". Since that did not cover the bags for candy NO\_C1\_06 then said "The portion experts". The group agreed to land the name next time."* Here we can see that the young people perceived themselves as 'experts' while working on developing and producing knowledge in relation to their policy proposal. Moreover, empowerment through knowledge production also took place in meetings with invited experts. In the in-between meetings with the smaller group focusing on marketing, one of the CO-CREATE partners who is a policy expert on marketing gave a presentation and provided feedback to the young people's policy idea. The facilitator reported that *"Everyone seems open to it. There was some discussion about how the youth organization would take this further. It was also mentioned that the members would receive the power point. [The facilitator] pointed out that the young people had ownership of the idea and that [the expert] showed that it was possible. Very good in terms of motivation for further work."*

In all three Alliances, preparing the dialogue forum, and having the opportunity to share the knowledge the young people were producing with stakeholders had an empowering and encouraging effect on the Alliance members. Participants generally *"seemed very interested in the dialogue forum and were excited about it"*. One empowering aspect was the fact that the young people realized that they were the ones that would be sharing and discussing their knowledge and plans. This can be illustrated by a dialogue in the NO\_A1 Alliance field in meeting 6, after the dialogue forum tool was explained:

*NO\_A1\_06: "I was thinking of the youth. Is it like they are going to support or argue for the idea to be how they want it to be?"*

*Facilitator: "Yes, we hope you will be the youth"*

*NO\_A1\_06: "That we are the youth?"*

*Facilitator: "Yes"*

As a preparation to the dialogue forum, the young people received training and were supported by the (co) facilitators to define and approach relevant stakeholders. The facilitators used for instance

an overview of different types of stakeholders and examples, as a source of inspiration. Nevertheless, some of the young people in the NO\_A1 Alliance mentioned in the WP questionnaire that information and support in relation to the dialogue forum could have been clearer. *“The only thing that I experienced as a little bad, was the lack of information about the dialogue forum. I thought that we should talk about our policy idea and hear about the others policy ideas, so that is what I prepared for. What we did was to suggest how we could achieve a policy idea, which was about making teaching about cooking food spread to other countries. And then how we could achieve and implement this policy idea. The dialogue forum in itself was very good, but I think that if we had gotten to know a bit more about it, I could have prepared a bit better.”* Another Alliance member noted down as something that should be changed in the activities: *“Get help to contact co-workers and professionals for interviews.”*

Empowerment of young people in the sense of ‘voice’: ‘developing a capacity to make use of, or to create, space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, typically among more powerful stakeholders’ mainly came to the fore in the data set in relation to the NO\_A1 Alliance, and to a modest degree in the NO\_C1 Alliance. The fact that this was not so much present in the NO\_B1 Alliance data can be understood by the duration of the process: all young people in the NO\_B1 Alliance had participated in one or a maximum of two meetings before the Alliance ended, which is comparatively early in the process of developing a voice, especially among powerful stakeholders. A difference between the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances could be that the NO\_A1 Alliance included more meetings (12 compared to 5), and the fieldnotes (which were more elaborate for the NO\_A1 Alliance) reflected stronger development of the Alliance members, whereas the members in the NO\_C1 Alliance were considered rather capable and knowledgeable about youth organizations and having a voice from the start.

The members in the NO\_A1 Alliance started to create space to express their presence in the CO-CREATE project by approaching the local newspaper, who then came to visit and interview them about CO-CREATE. Here we can see how the young people started to develop their voice in the public debate, and how this empowered them in their project. The facilitator brought a paper copy of the article to the meeting, with the title: *“[Two of the Alliance members names] want for the population to live a healthy life. This is a project that can change the society”*. In the fieldnotes of meeting 6, the facilitator reported: *“The article introduced the CO-CREATE project and what this particular Alliance aims to do. The journalist had asked the two members how they liked to be part of the project and they both said they liked to participate in the project. The article ended with information about what it takes to join the Alliance.”*

The young people also developed their voice by getting in touch with important stakeholders. In our data, which does not include the dialogue forums in itself which were performed at a later stage, this mainly concerned writing and approaching stakeholders. In these moments of preparation, the young people were made aware of the power of their own voices.

*“NO\_A1\_09: “We think that our principal will have a stronger voice than we will, we are just two students at upper secondary school. She could talk to someone that will listen to her because she knows who to talk to”*

*Facilitator: “Do you believe that she has a stronger voice than you?”*

*NO\_A1\_11: “Not really, maybe?”*

*Facilitator: "You could consider to talk to her boss. We would hope that in a society your voice will be as powerful as adults."*

Alliance member NO\_A1\_06 was very nervous about writing an email to a contact person from the Parliament and asked the facilitators for help. The facilitator noted in the fieldnotes of meeting 7: *"NO\_A1\_06 told us what she wanted to write and we helped her to make it more specific or easy to understand for people not familiar with her idea. I think she did a great job. This was the first time she wrote an email like this and she was clearly nervous, but she wanted to do it anyway."* In a similar way in meeting 10, Alliance member *"NO\_A1\_11 then shared his screen and showed the email he had written to [the facilitators]. NO\_A1\_11: "What do you think about the email?" Facilitator: "great!!"* According to the facilitator: *"It was very nice working with NO\_A1\_11, he was very engaged in getting his idea to life and very committed to work on the email and write more details in the policy form. It seemed like he appreciated the support he received from both [the co-facilitator] and me and at the same time proud of what he had done. NO\_A1\_11 said he wanted to send the email to the schools after the meeting today".*

Along this process, the Alliance members were also developing their voice when experts within the CO-CREATE project looked at their policy proposals and provided them with feedback.

*Facilitator: "Those who have given feedback on your policy form are working at the Norwegian Public Health Institute (NIPH). You have probably heard they talk about corona in the media lately? They also work with preventing overweight and obesity and they were so happy about reading your ideas"*

*NO\_A1\_07: "Cool"*

*NO\_A1\_05: "That is good!"*

The responses of two of the young people show that the positive evaluation may have had an empowering effect. The follow-up WP7 questionnaires indicate that the young people in the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliance perceived to have a voice in the local area. The mean scores on the items 'The youth Alliance can help our local area to become a better place for being physically active and/or eating healthily', and 'The youth Alliance can influence how people feel about being physically active and/or eating healthily' were 4.00 or higher on a 5-point scale. One dialogue forum has taken place by NO\_C1 Alliance members. The topic was marketing of unhealthy food and drinks. The dialogue forum was held at 15th of February 2021.

### *What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5's engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth?*

Two of the Alliances in Norway, the NO\_A1 and the NO\_B1 Alliance, were recruited through schools, and one Alliance was recruited online with the Press youth organization. Based on our data, conditions came to the fore that helped making Alliances suitable and sustainable for youth, as well as circumstances that made participation more challenging, and sustainability of Alliances less likely.

#### Timing and commitment

One conclusion that can be drawn is that young people's time is expensive. One of the facilitators reported: *"We are competing against other activities happening after school, school obligations, side jobs, organizational work and the desire to go home and rest. I have the impression the generation of youth feel they have little spare time and at the same time a lot of things they want to do with their spare time and therefore they are rationing their time giving up things they do not like/do not think are fun enough/do not gain anything from."*

Commitment of young people to keep investing their time in the CO-CREATE project and attending the meetings was therefore vulnerable. Some fieldnotes reported about an inspiring meeting in which all potential conditions seemed to be met, the Alliance members were very engaged and inspired and the (co) facilitators were energized by the successful experience, and suddenly the next meeting half of the members did not show up or even dropped out. The Alliance members also seemed to affect each other with their absence. Even those Alliance members who were engaged in the project until the end sometimes reported in the feedback form that their peer with whom they collaborated was no longer motivated, or had not shown up for some meetings, which made them more insecure. The facilitators also suspected that one Alliance member's message about not attending affected the presence of the other members. *"When the participants are not able to join the meeting, they are letting me and the group know in the Messenger group. [...] Unfortunately, the last two times one has reported that she is not able to come and it has resulted in everyone in the group telling me they were not able to join."*

What the three Alliances had in common was that the meetings took place outside of school time. It therefore appeared to be important to plan the meeting at a time which was suitable for all the young people. This was sometimes tricky. In the NO\_B1 Alliance for instance, the facilitator reported as a challenge that the Alliance members *"want to start the Alliance meeting one hour earlier. Unfortunately, we are not allowed to rent the room one hour earlier. We will have to sort out a solution before the next meeting."* This problem could not be fully solved, which may have affected the sustainability of the Alliance, whereby the drop-out appeared to be especially high in this group. At the same time, it did not always help to adapt and postpone, because this could come at the cost of having a clear and fixed time and frequency of the meetings. The fieldnotes also reported that in cases in which a meeting was postponed due to adolescence being unavailable, the Alliance members started to send messages again an hour before the newly arranged meeting that they could not make it due to school exams, work, being ill or other reasons. The facilitator noted: *"I have learnt that there is a fine line between being strict about a meeting date and being willing to move the meeting. In CO-CREATE we want the youth to be involved in the planning of the Alliances meeting. It looks like the members in this group are comfortable letting us know when they will not be able to attend meeting. This is good, but it is not so good if our meetings become something they feel they easily could postpone. If they know there will be a meeting every other Tuesday, they might be able to plan for it in terms of school obligations. It would probably be best to have a specific date, but because they are so few members this group is especially vulnerable for postponing meeting because it is no point arranging a meeting with only one person."*

The facilitators repeatedly reported that a lower number of participants attending the meetings made the Alliance work vulnerable, because this often meant that Alliance members were working alone on a policy idea, which also posed a stronger challenge to the (co) facilitators to provide adequate support. Attempts were made to keep recruiting new Alliance members and adding them

to the group. In the NO\_B1 Alliance, it was reported in the fieldnotes that this meant that three groups started with introduction and system mapping all over again in three different meetings. In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the facilitators *“offered new participants the opportunity to participate in a pre-meeting to give them an introduction to the project. First, we invited them to a pre-meeting the day before this workshop, but no one participated. We invited them to join a pre-meeting one hour before the workshop instead. There were 3 participants that participated in the pre-meeting.”* This appeared to be a productive way to include new members, while also facilitating the ongoing process of the wider group.

All in all, effective timing of activities and engaging young people to commit themselves to the project aside of their other tasks and responsibilities turned out to be sensitive, especially outside of school hours, as was the case in the Alliances in Norway.

### Atmosphere

Another element that consistently came to the fore in the fieldnotes was the importance of the atmosphere during the meetings. In all physical meetings in NO\_A1 and NO\_B1, food contributed to a relaxed and social atmosphere. The young people also tended to be hungry at the end of their school day.

*“I put food (bread, ham, cheese, vegetables, fruit, and biscuits) in the middle of the tables. The food was available from the beginning. I bought more food this time because I thought we were going to be more people. Even though they were only four, we ate almost everything. They like the food and they are hungry at this time of the day. [...] The co-facilitator also suggested that I should buy more food. [...] We bought a new spread (Kavli Mager Ost Jalapeño) that was very popular and they asked us to buy it again for the next meeting.”*

Group dynamics also contributed greatly to the atmosphere in the meetings. The (co) facilitators frequently anticipated a social atmosphere by group building activities and playing games, which were generally effective. *“[The facilitator] led a group building activity. ... One can make the game more complicated by introducing a new rule: when there is a free spot to one’s right, one has to jump to the side. It was a very good atmosphere during the game. The chemistry was good and they laughed and had fun.”*

The (co) facilitators were sensitive to the “vibe” in the group and tried to turn this into a constructive condition of the meetings. They also gave young people a responsibility in establishing a fun as well as productive environment.

*“The vibe in the group is good. They are at times unfocused and talk about other things. I do not want to be strict, because this is not a school class. On the other hand, it is annoying for those that want to focus on the task. I think it is difficult to know when I should tell them to focus on the task, because they are also supposed to build relationships in the group and have fun. I am also a bit afraid of losing them if I am too strict. I think we should have a talk about it in the next meeting.”*

*“When they started to work in the groups it was very quiet. NO\_A1\_05: “Can we turn on some music? It is too quiet!” I put on a playlist with low beat songs on a low volume. Suddenly, all the groups started to talk and work on their task”.*

It also appeared to work well when friends participated in the Alliances. It was repeatedly mentioned in the fieldnotes that Alliance members who were friends often collaborated very well and contributed to a good atmosphere.

These kinds of informal elements were easily missed in the online meetings. *“Normally, we serve food in the Alliance meeting. The members appreciate the food and while they are eating they are talking about what happened that school day or what is going on in their lives, mostly school related. Having an online Alliance meeting, we lost this nice part of the meeting where they are talking freely together with each other. I have not thought of this part of the meeting as important before, but now when we are losing it, it is obvious that it has been a positive part of the meeting in terms of building the group.”*

In the NO\_C1 Alliance, the (co) facilitators knew from the start that the meetings would be organized as online seminars, and therefore also anticipated an online environment for instance by including a Kahoot quiz as a group building activity at the beginning of the first meeting. The facilitator reported:

*“Except for NO\_C1\_05 and NO\_C1\_06 who are in the same NO\_C1 group, I do not think the participants knew each other from before. We were nervous about hosting a meeting digitally, for four hours, for a group of young people that did not know each other. That in mind, I think the workshop went beyond all expectations. The atmosphere was good, especially in the beginning of the meeting. The participants were polite and did not speak at the same time but gave each other room to speak. They were participating in the activities we had planned for the workshop and some participants were especially actively participating.”*

As this excerpt shows, even though the atmosphere in these meetings was described as very different from physical meetings, it appeared to be possible at the same time to support a positive atmosphere online.

#### Role facilitators and co-facilitators in creating a supportive, inspiring and creative environment

The role of the facilitators and co-facilitators turned out to be highly important and the fieldnotes resembled constant reflections that the (co) facilitators expressed about their own roles in the Alliance meetings. They mentioned the several elements they needed to balance and the challenges they needed to address, while facilitating the young people and providing inspiring, productive and helpful meetings and creative environments for the Alliances, existing out of several sub-groups and individuals with different needs.

One of the facilitators mentioned for instance: *“I started to help one girl to read the information letter because she had to leave early and she told me that she has dyslexia. When the others came into the room, I was busy helping the girl so I felt I was not as present as I wanted to be when they entered the room.”*

Another lesson learned by the (co) facilitators was that *“it is important to be prepared for the Alliance meetings, but also be able to improvise the meeting content during the meeting. It always happens something that we have not foreseen”*. It appeared to be very helpful to work in a team with two facilitators and a co-facilitator in a not too big and not too small, group of Alliance members. For the (co) facilitators, it worked well when they could divide tasks and attend to different Alliance

members individually or in smaller groups. At the same time, it was perceived as a challenge to support a single Alliance member in a creative process without being too leading. This was especially difficult when an Alliance member was working alone, rather than collaborating with a peer. Nevertheless, by being aware of this, the (co) facilitators often managed to find a way.

The (co) facilitators invested in creating an inspiring environment, by seeking a balance between providing knowledge and engaging in conversations with the young people. *“As I have recognized before they tend to zone out when I speak for a long time so I try to avoid that. Even though the presentation lasted for a while, they asked questions throughout and we talked about the dialogue forum we were going to arrange that seemed to engage them.”*

The CO-CREATE activities, such as system mapping, photo voice, working on the policy form, engaging with experts and preparing the dialogue forum were particularly used to create an inspiring environment for the Alliance members. This also meant trying things out, which sometimes turned out differently than planned, as discussed here by the facilitator: *“I have learnt that I should be very careful guessing what the members think are fun and not fun to do. I had a photo voice session with them before Christmas because I thought they would think it would be funnier and more engaging than introducing the policy form. I experienced the opposite. I have never seen the group as focused and engaged as this meeting when they worked with the policy form.”*

Finding a balance between providing input and giving the young people space appeared to be a different, and even harder, task in online meetings using online forms of communication. *“Another thing that I was aware of as the facilitator and the one who wrote the youths ideas into the policy form, was that I might have taken a bit too much place in the meeting. In a digital meeting, it is harder to “just take the word” and the youth might have needed there to be silence for them to talk without being probed. I tried to think about this. At the same time, the silence could be a bit awkward. I also wanted to make sure that they agreed to what I had written into the policy form, and therefore spend some time to repeat what I had written, asking them what they thought. I thought it was hard to find a balance but tried to be aware of this during the meeting.”*

These challenges also arose in meetings in which experts were invited to share their knowledge: *“The invited speaker was very talkative so there was not much room for discussion, but I asked some clarifying questions and tried to invite the youth to ask questions, but only two questions were asked.”*

In the feedback forms and WP7 questionnaire, the young people in the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances provided positive evaluations of the (co) facilitators and the “exciting” and “rich learning” environment with “nice” and “knowledgeable people” in which they “get to work independently without being distracted”.

### Technical support

In the physical meetings, working in google drive in which documents and presentations could be shared appeared to work well, as well as using Messenger groups “to have a platform to reach each other”.

In the online meetings, technical support appeared to be even more important. While sharing the screen with the Alliance members enabled a focused form of communication, the collaborative process was hampered when documents could for instance not be edited in Teams. Teams was used in the NO\_A1 Alliance because the young people also used it at school and were familiar with the program. The (co) facilitators reported on the other hand that they were much more confident using Zoom, which helped them to facilitate the online meetings with Press where Zoom was used.

Nevertheless, multi-tasking when guiding a Zoom meeting (chairing, making notes, presenting, organizing Break-out rooms, engaging in conversations) was also experienced as challenging, and it appeared to be important that all technical services and devices would work well. It worked well for instance to work in STICKE digitally and to have reflections in smaller groups, whereas voting on a policy idea appeared to be much more difficult to do digitally.

### Meeting online instead of in person

Meeting online posed several challenges compared to meeting in real life, as was reported for each online meeting by the (co) facilitators. *“I felt we had to probe them more to get the members to speak. It was less talk about other things in the meeting and less talk to each other. They did not have their camera on, so I felt we lost the feeling of having a group meeting. Since only [facilitator, co-facilitator] and I had our cameras on, it felt a bit like the gap between them as participants and us as facilitators became bigger. Since they talked less, we felt we had to talk more and take more responsibility of driving the meeting.”* *“In physical meetings, we can more smoothly help the members when we see they need help or when they ask, but still being available for everyone. At this online meeting, we had to divide the group in separate video calls when they were working on filling in the policy form to be most effective. Therefore, I felt it was more like a school teaching situation rather than group work.”*

Moreover, the online meetings took place during lockdowns because of COVID-19 restrictions. While the (co) facilitators had hoped that the young people would be at home with not much to do, *“it turns out they feel they have more school obligations now and my impression is that they are maybe more stressed about the school now than before the corona virus outbreak.”* It also appeared to be even more difficult to encourage the young people to work between the meetings, and they took a more passive attitude in which they “waited” for the (co) facilitators. However, over time the online meetings tended to go better.

Even for the NO\_C1 Alliance meetings, which took place online from the start as planned, the facilitator reported that they lost the “small talk” in this type of set-up, which was important for the “group dynamics”, and also the “rapid comments” based on quick non-verbal assessments of each other. The (co) facilitators learned that it worked less well to ask questions to the complete group online, which was often met with silence. It worked much better however to ask a question directly to a particular Alliance member.

### *Potential effects on attrition*

Our data set indicates that attrition could have been mitigated by 1) the meetings and activities that were met with interest and engagement by the young people, such as group building activities, the system maps and working on the ideas with the policy form; 2) trust processes developed between the young people and the facilitators and co-facilitators seemed to have played an important role in keeping the young people engaged; 3) the young people who stayed involved until the end expressed to be motivated by the possibility to make a change and by the progress they made in that direction with their policy ideas and surveys, and 4) young people's experience with youth organizations and working online could have helped them to progress quickly and therefore keep their motivation high.

Attrition could have been caused on the other hand by 1) having too busy schedules with many (school) duties, jobs and organizational work to prioritize CO-CREATE meetings; 2) limitations to match the conditions (e.g. about the meeting time, or about which policy idea to focus on) to the schedules and preferences of the young people, 3) some people being shy or less active than other group members, and/ or 4) being less inspired by the Alliance activities. As a reason 5) COVID-19 regulations and switching from face-to-face meetings to online meetings, meaning less concrete communication and support and increasing concerns about school and health, seemed to have been a reason for some of the young people to stop their participation (whereas the research team was able to turn the situation into an opportunity for others). Here too, busy schedules of the young people also played a role in their ability (and priority) to keep attending or not.

### *Conclusion*

Recruitment in Norway succeeded but did not go as easily and fast as was hoped for. The Norwegian (UiO) team faced challenges to recruit young people in a more deprived area in the city, despite of their persistent attempts to reach out to gatekeepers and young people in youth clubs and schools. The young people they met seemed too occupied with other challenges, such as a neighbourhood conflict and succeeding in their education, to show an interest in the CO-CREATE project. Moreover, when recruitment was more successful, the UiO team noticed a trade-off; with youth organizations being rather well established in Norway and many young people being engaged in school work, jobs and/ or organizational work it also appeared to be more difficult to recruit, engage and commit young people to the CO-CREATE project especially in their spare time, even though these young people could be interested or find the project relevant. Due to the persistence, creativity and efforts of the UiO team, together with the Alliance members once they were recruited, three Alliances were organized and took place in the period from fall 2019 until the summer 2020, and one Alliance (NO\_C1) continuing until the spring 2021. There were clear commonalities between the three Alliances in terms of the approach of the facilitators and co-facilitators and the activities that were offered. Across all three Alliances, decisions were typically made jointly between the (co) facilitators and young people, whereby the young people seemed at ease to voice their opinions and preferences, and to leave suggestions of the (co) facilitators aside when they had alternative ideas themselves. The atmosphere was usually very collaborative, the Alliances did not have clear group leaders, and the young people often worked in smaller groups or individually on a policy idea. In terms of recruitment, composition and process, the three Alliances were at the same time different from one another and had their own dynamics.

The first Alliance took place in a rural area, where young people were recruited when the Norway team visited the school. Twelve meetings took place; eight at the young people's school after school time, and four meetings online. The group of 12 young people (with about 6 of them attending the first eight meetings in varying combinations, and about 4 of them attending the final online meetings) was diverse in terms of their gender, birth country of the parents, experience with political organizations, and their socio-economic background. The WP7 questionnaire as well as the facilitator's observations indicate that at least a part of the young people who participated came from families with lower SES backgrounds and most of the young people had no experience with political organizations. The young people appeared to be shyer at the start, but especially those who stayed until the end showed clear development, in terms of their engagement, empowerment, the policy ideas that were developed, and thinking systematically about obesity and societal changes (next to maintaining some ideas about individual responsibility). The (co) facilitators noticed that the young people needed a lot of support and were often uncertain about what they needed to do, how to do it, and what the outcome would be. With the limited group size and a few young people working on each policy idea, the (co) facilitators worked hard to support the young people in concrete and in-depth ways, while also facilitating their ownership and level of independence. The data shows that this worked out on several occasions and that this process strengthened the development of the Alliance members in terms of their knowledge, skills and policy idea outcomes. Activities that turned out to work well in engaging and empowering the young people to develop policy ideas included group building activities, producing and revising system maps, developing questionnaires and using the policy form to develop policy ideas and work towards the dialogue forums. Within this Alliance, the policy ideas that were worked out are: change the price and placement of food products in shops; access to exercise facilities in upper secondary schools, and information on healthy lifestyle for upper secondary school students.

The second Alliance took place in an urban and upper-SES area in the city, where young people were also recruited when the Norwegian team visited the schools in the area. A total of three meetings took place, with rather different compositions of Alliance members, and only newly recruited members who participated in the third and final meeting. The group of 12 members showed diversity in terms of their gender, and some diversity in terms of the birth country of their parents, experience in organizational work (which most of the Alliance members did not have) and their socio-economic background. The WP7 questionnaire and facilitator's notes indicate that none of the young people came from families with lower SES-backgrounds, and a majority had higher-SES backgrounds. What was striking in this Alliance is the capacity and eagerness of the young people that were involved in developing their thoughts, working together in an excellent way, and coming up with action ideas following system mapping activities (which was done three times, with new young people joining the Alliance each time). It was in a way surprising that in this group, young people only participated once or twice in the meetings, even though the meetings had a very positive and effective character. At the same time, the data indicates that these young people (even more than those in the other Alliances) turned out to have a lot on their plate in terms of school duties, side jobs and organizational work, with little spare time to rest at home. The (co) facilitators felt they had to compete with all these activities and that it was hard for the Alliance members to prioritize the meetings and CO-CREATE project. Moreover, some of the young people indicated a preference for a different meeting time, which was not possible to arrange with the room at the school location. In a situation of high attrition and other activities going on, it appeared to be difficult for the Alliance

members to develop a longer time commitment, and to continue meeting face-to-face, or shortly thereafter, online due to COVID-19 measurements. Although several initial policy ideas were formulated, these ideas were not developed further due to the limited number of meetings.

The third Alliance was planned and organized online together with youth non-governmental organization Press, a formal CO-CREATE partner, based on youth organization membership; youth organization members were recruited from all over the country by organizing a Facebook event, after which they could sign up for subsequent meetings via Kahoot. Three meetings were organized with the complete group (the first meeting being a 4-hour workshop), and both sub-groups who were working on a policy idea had two additional in-between meetings. The group consisted of 11 members, and half of them developed their policy ideas until the last meeting. After the summer, a part (3-6 young people) of the Alliance continued to meet monthly from August 2020 until May 2021, and a dialogue forum took place in February 2021. The NO\_C1 Alliance was seemingly most homogeneous, with all Alliance members being active members of a political organization and showing limited variety in terms of SES-background (with a majority coming from higher-SES families, according to the WP7 survey), birth country of the parents (with a majority of the parents being born in Norway), and gender (8 girls, 3 boys). The Alliance members showed eagerness and engagement from the start, and they were familiar with system thinking, societal changes and youth engagement in politics. It stood out to the co-facilitator that these young people were capable and creative in developing their policy ideas. The most important activities that helped the Alliance members to gain knowledge about the problem of obesity and to produce and voice knowledge themselves in relation to their action ideas concerned: producing and revising system maps, working on the policy form and organizing expert meetings. These activities were used to prepare dialogue forums with stakeholders. In break-out rooms and in-between meetings, the smaller groups of Alliance members worked closely with the (co) facilitators and invited experts to develop their policy ideas into a great level of detail. The policy ideas included: limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children, and reduce obesity by reducing portion sizes.

Hence, the Norwegian Alliances succeeded in ‘promoting and supporting adolescent participation in political efficacy complementary to the formulation of policies for upstream obesity prevention’ **(O5.1)**, and ‘tapped into means and modalities suitable to and identified by adolescents themselves’, which ‘empowered adolescents and contributed to capacity development’. Moreover, the Norwegian Alliance members developed policy options that can be seen as ‘transferable, novel and context-specific and informed by science and experience’, which can be a useful contribution to ‘upstream overweight prevention’ **(O5.3)**.

The Norwegian Alliance members drew closely from their own experience, knowledge, and perspective on the challenge of obesity among young people in Norway when coming up with policy ideas, in particular during system mapping activities. In the NO\_A1 Alliance, the young people wanted to develop questionnaires and were facilitated in doing so, which influenced their policy ideas. In the NO\_C1 Alliance on the other hand, the Alliance members organized meetings with experts, supported by the UiO team, which influenced their policy ideas. The Alliance members also referred to scientific knowledge and to social media in their discussions, as a source of information about healthy lifestyle.

The Alliance members gathered new knowledge and used this to develop their policy ideas further. They were for instance confronted with existing policies and they looked up information on the Internet. In this process, they were helped by the facilitators and co-facilitators, who engaged closely with the Alliance members and with their work and ideas. Hence, the youth Alliances that were established allowed ‘exchanges of knowledge and learning to happen among and between adolescents and scientific researchers, integrating adolescents’ experiential knowledge, scientific knowledge and political knowledge for upstream overweight prevention’ **(O5.2)**. The ‘continuous recruitment of peers’ turned out to be difficult: in the first meetings some Alliance members in NO\_A1 and NO\_B1 recruited one peer, but they found it challenging to recruit more peers over the course of the meetings, despite of their involvement in and ideas about peer recruitment. Furthermore, the NO\_C1 Alliance appeared to be most ‘sustainable and transferable’, since part of the members continued their participation and eventually organized a Dialogue Forum. The NO\_A1 and NO\_B1 Alliances were difficult to continue online instead of at school due to COVID-19 regulations (although it worked out rather well in NO\_A1), but both these school-based Alliances did not proceed after summer, and hence ended when the school year had ended. It was possible to collaborate across CO-CREATE work packages, since the WP2 and WP3 studies on existing and evidence-based policies, especially the Nourishing and Movement overviews, and the WP4 system maps served as valuable input for the Alliance work, and a number of the adolescents were able to participate in WP6 dialogue forums, while some policy proposals were chosen as input for WP7 policy implementation **(O.5.4)**.

In all three Alliances, the problem of obesity was mainly discussed explicitly in the first (two to four) meetings. While brainstorming and building on experiences, Alliance members typically went back and forth between systemic factors and individual factors as important causes of obesity (but less so in the NO\_C1 Alliance, in which the systemic focus was stronger). The form of engagement that seemed to have a strong influence on youth’s perception of obesity was system mapping, which triggered the Alliance members to think and discuss the problem of obesity repetitively on a system level. In a more implicit way, perceptions about the problem of obesity also came to the fore when developing the policy form and action ideas. Along the process, the Alliance members in all three Alliances developed knowledge about the problem of obesity and gained a more systemic perspective, even though some members sometimes switched to individual responsibilities as well.

All in all, CO-CREATE in Norway resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in, and empowered through, several activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent overweight and obesity among youth, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members present and discuss their policy ideas with stakeholders and how those policy ideas can be turned into action. Activities that worked particularly well according to the (co) facilitators and young people in the feedback forms and WP7 questionnaire included group building activities, system mapping and working on the policy form to develop the own action ideas. Throughout the data, the following conditions came to the fore that made the Alliances suitable and sustainable for the youth:

- Good planning and timing, to enable young people’s commitment
- A good atmosphere in the meetings (e.g. group building and providing food)
- A supportive role of the facilitators and co-facilitators to facilitate an inspiring and creative environment and helpful activities

- Technical support (especially in online meetings, and when working in shared documents)

The main challenge in the Alliances in Norway concerned the smaller groups of young people in the Alliances, which made it vulnerable to develop a policy idea with only a few people, alongside the many activities and commitments the young people needed to attend to outside of CO-CREATE. Even though online meetings appeared to be successful in the NO\_A1 and NO\_C1 Alliances, the (co) facilitators also experienced difficulties in the group interaction process and missed out on informal talk, non-verbal communication and sharing food as a social activity in these online meetings.

## Chapter 3: Poland

### *Summary Poland*

#### Alliance Introduction and recruitment

The recruitment of the Alliance members in Poland was done in three stages: (1) choosing the geographical areas where the Alliances were to be established, (2) selecting the schools within the chosen areas, and (3) using teachers and students' recommendations at the selected schools to recruit young people for the Alliances. The three locations that were eventually chosen were selected to diversify the areas' characteristics in terms of their economic, social, and geographical aspects. Within each area, one commune each was chosen to be the location for the Alliance: the two rural-urban communes (PL\_A2 and PL\_B2) are locations representing the lowest SES (G index below 75%) and the urban area (PL\_C1) is representing the highest SES (G index above 125%).

The diversity across all three Alliances was presented mostly as socio-economic status level (SES). Regarding ethnic diversity, the Alliances were representing primarily Polish national identity (all participants were white Caucasian) and none of the participants who filled in the WP7 survey, neither any of their parents, were born outside of Poland according to the survey results, which reflects the demographic make-up of Polish society overall. Regarding gender, among participants who volunteered to the project, boys were underrepresented (6 boys initially volunteered to participate). This is partly due to the chosen schools having mostly female students, as was mentioned by the co-facilitators in the feedback session.

The three Alliances met monthly from November 2019 to April 2020 with one Alliance, PL\_B1, having their last meeting in May 2020. All Alliances started with meeting in person and transitioned to meeting online after the quarantine measures due to COVID-19 were introduced in Poland in March 2020. Attendance dropped to a quarter in PL\_A1, to half in PL\_C1 and to a third in PL\_B1 after the quarantine. Before that period, only one member from each Alliance dropped out, which was mainly due wanting to prioritize schoolwork and university preparation.

#### Policy Ideas

Policy ideas were developed in the Polish Alliances through several activities including system mapping, Photovoice, SMART budgeting and dialog forums with policy makers and community leaders. Along the way, public engagement through social media, continuous communication between the members and assistance provided by the facilitators and co-facilitators, particularly through providing examples of existing policies and a completed policy form, supported the entire policy making process.

The Polish Alliances came up with a total of 25 policy ideas in which 6 were fully developed into policy proposals. These include:

1. Fit, Fresh, and Fast: regular meetings with a dietitian at school
2. Healthy Shelves: changing products visibility in stores
3. Healthier nutrition, healthier us: food truck for healthy meals

4. Gym passes for youth: discounted gym passes and sport centre passes for secondary school students
5. Fitket mobile application: promoting physical activity through a phone app
6. Saturday awareness: events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles

In coming up with policy ideas, the Polish Alliance members drew from their personal experience and investigated their cultural and lifestyle habits. Alliance members also drew from a general knowledge and personal observations that they have about obesity to inform their policy ideas including opinions and perceptions formed from the knowledge and observations. Social media are a common source of the knowledge and the members' experience with social media also informed their policy ideas. Members of Alliances in smaller cities compared their situation with situations they observed in bigger cities in Poland to identify what might be lacking in their area that might contribute to the challenge of adolescents' obesity.

In the process of developing their ideas, the Alliance members gained new knowledge that they then used to further refine their policy ideas. This knowledge included, among others, existing policies and relevant ongoing initiatives or campaigns that gave them further ideas to develop their policies. The new knowledge was gained through research and information collection that they did to further understand their topics. This included conducting Photovoice, doing Internet research and administering surveys to their peers and the general public.

#### Readiness for Action and Obesity Perception

At the start of the Polish Alliances, many members indicated wanting to affect change in relation to the challenge of adolescents' obesity as their main motivation to join the CO-CREATE project. In the process of the development of the policy proposals, the facilitators took note of how at the beginning the members' ideas tended to look more like social actions or activism rather than policies. Later, as the Alliance members started to become more knowledgeable of what policies were and began to develop their policy proposals, they included enacting particular actions or changes to the environment as part of the ideas.

Throughout participating in CO-CREATE project, members' willingness to take action particularly manifested in their eagerness to gain more information about their ideas and in them promoting their ideas to peers and other relevant stakeholders. Willingness to take action was also especially apparent when the members were discussing ways to test out their policy ideas. Establishing social media accounts to promote their ideas and reach out to the wider public was another example of the members' willingness to take action.

In the feedback form collected after the end of the regular meetings and completed by 17 members, 10 of the members indicated that it was important for young people to be actively addressing the challenge of adolescents' obesity. Some young people even specifically mentioned that the fact that CO-CREATE encouraged them to take real actions and to make real changes were the reasons why they continued on with the project.

In the early meetings of the Alliances, members equally pointed out how they perceived obesity as related to individual's habits while at the same time being influenced by environmental and

structural factors. Some of the important systemic and structural factors highlighted were particularly relevant to young people. This included school because young people spent so much time at school that they became tired afterwards and did not have the energy to do sports or prepare healthy meals. Lack of information on healthy lifestyles, high technology usage and the ubiquity of social media are the other common factors the members identified to be influencing the way young people live their lives.

As the members started to develop their policy proposals and collected more information to refine their ideas, their thinking in terms of what significant factors needed to be addressed for people to live more healthily began to include more and more systemic aspects of the problem. The members started to address different stakeholders relevant to their ideas, think of the financial aspect of their ideas as well as the notion of responsibility which made them reflect on their own limitation to enact a policy idea.

The members' notion of 'who is responsible?' gradually changed as they started to consider the role of more powerful stakeholders shaping a system that contributed to the prevalence of obesity among young people. The members specifically addressed the government who had one of the strongest powers to enact change through creating regulations and laws.

In the feedback forms, the members indicated that they came to recognize that changes embedded in a system to be more sustainable and impactful. The notion of individual changing their lifestyle to be healthier came across strongly still as what the Alliance members wanted to see as a pathway to reducing adolescents' obesity. However, the discussions during the meetings showed that their views of what could contribute to the changing of the lifestyles became very much informed by system thinking. Through developing their policy ideas, the Alliance members recognized that the lacks that people have that made it difficult to live healthily were results of systemic factors.

#### Process, Decision Making and Ownership

Throughout the Alliance process, the Polish Alliance members have been taking leads in decision making particularly in relation to developing the policy ideas. Both in deciding which policies to further develop and in dropping any ideas they have worked on but also in deciding the direction of the development of the ideas. This included their requests to have more Alliance meetings than what was originally planned by the facilitators. Some members raised up organically into leadership positions. They became the de facto leaders of their policy idea group and the members then made decisions among themselves in their group, usually using online communication means such as a Facebook group.

In the early meetings of the Alliances, the facilitators still provided a close guidance on how the meeting should go and decision makings were often initiated by the facilitators. Starting meeting 3, the Polish Alliance members started to take the lead in decision making including in deciding how to divide themselves into groups working on different policy ideas. They also took the lead in deciding how to engage the public through social media and how they would want to test out their policy ideas.

The Alliance members were generally engaged in the meetings with some participating more eagerly and a minority being a bit shyer, particularly in the early meetings. Members' online engagement with the facilitators conducted between meetings were originally low but increased after this fact was addressed. The following activities were observed by the facilitators to be more engaging for the Polish Alliance members as well as empowering for them:

- Making a group contract/agreement and respecting rules made together for the Alliance
- A presentation about obesity and making policy on obesity
- Discussion about factors influencing obesity during system mapping
- Presentation of specific examples for topics that were unfamiliar to the Alliance members
- Photovoice activity/homework
- Advocacy training
- Vlogging, especially for PL\_A1
- Testing out policy ideas
- Working on the policy ideas in small groups
- Filling in the policy form
- Social media engagement
- Making and administering survey
- Dialog forum

Challenges in participations were identified by the facilitators to include the following; meetings can sometimes conflict with exams or classes; the Alliance members did not seem to be willing to put much effort into the project, this was particularly illustrated by their low engagement with the facilitators between meetings although it was much improved in the later meetings and when members organically took the lead in developing particular policy ideas; COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the low response and attendance of meetings conducted online after quarantine measures were introduced in Poland. COVID-19 also made testing policy ideas difficult which was a factor that lowered the motivation of the members to continue developing their policy ideas.

In the feedback forms, the Alliance members indicated how participating in the Alliance activities and meetings helped them grow, empowered them, and that they learned more about the challenge of obesity from participating in the project. They specified how being involved in CO-CREATE reshaped the way they see their environment and motivated them to be part of the solution to the obesity problem.

### Conclusion

CO-CREATE in Poland resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in a number of activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent childhood obesity, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members presented and discussed their policy ideas with outsiders (including policy makers), and in particular how those policy ideas can be turned into action.

The CO-CREATE approach that was built from the principles of YPAR provided activities since the early Alliance meetings that allowed the members to take the lead in decision making. It was often challenging at the beginning for the facilitators to find the balance between providing supports and

guidance to the members while at the same time encouraging active leadership. As the Alliance progressed, the members became more proactive, took lead in decision making more and some organically became leaders of their policy idea groups.

CO-CREATE's engagement and capacity building activities provided during the Alliance meetings have shown to help Alliance members in Poland to gain new skills and improved their existing ones. The activities were empowering and some of the modalities of empowerment were identified by the Alliance members themselves, which included designing and administering surveys, logo making and branding through merchandising and the use of social media to reach out to a wider audience. The Polish Alliances gradually evolved into the form that allowed them to continue activities beyond CO-CREATE's formal engagement period with the Alliance members, in which the adolescents established online presence to build engagement through posts, merchandising and surveys with their peers and the wider public, receiving support for their policy ideas.

## *Alliance Introduction and Recruitment Strategy*

Youth recruitment in Poland: Identifying political units, gatekeepers and co-facilitators

The recruitment of the Alliance members in Poland for WP5 (which followed on WP4 system mapping activities and preceded WP6 dialogue forum activities) was done in three stages: (1) choosing the geographical areas where the Alliances were to be established, (2) selecting the schools within the chosen areas, and (3) using teachers and students' recommendations at the selected schools to recruit young people for the Alliances. The three locations that were eventually chosen were selected to diversify the areas' characteristics in terms of their economic, social, and geographical aspects. Some factors that were taken into account when deciding the three areas are: a) family income on average, some locations were of higher family income brackets while the others were of the lower end; b) access to transportation, some locations experienced some level of social exclusion due to the lack of infrastructures and/or public transport facilitating mobility to communes with more social, economic, employment, and educational opportunities.

Within the areas, one commune each was chosen to be the location for the Alliance. The communes were selected using the G-index of Social Economic Status (SES) which grades each commune in Poland based on the personal income per capita. The two rural-urban communes, Alliances PL\_A1 and PL\_C1, represent the lowest SES with a G-index below 75% of the national average. These communes have small populations, higher distance from the cities, and poor or moderate public transport system. In the Alliance PL\_C1 area specifically, there was only one high school which was attended by students from all SES. One of the CO-CREATE Alliances was established in this school.

### PL\_A1

Before meeting 1: The youth talked with their peers who were absent during the recruitment. Those who were present believed that some absentees might be interested in taking part in the Alliance. The absentees received recruitment documents (information about the projects and consent documents) that were given at the recruitment meeting.

Meeting 2: 3 Alliance members who were absent in meeting 1 but were there during the recruitment day joined meeting 2. One person joined between the meetings, because she was interested in the project (PL\_A1\_23 (f)). She had written to one of the facilitators and asked about the possibility of joining the project as she heard about the project from her friend who was a member of the Alliance. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted that they only planned to recruit new participants only in the case of participants withdrawing and they were aiming to have 20-25 members per Alliance.

### PL\_B1

5 new members joined in meeting 2, through facilitator's recruitment with a Physical Education teacher's help.

### PL\_C1

The facilitators and co-facilitators encouraged the Alliance members in meeting 1 to invite friends who might be interested in participating to join the next meeting after one of the Alliance members asked if more people can join. The facilitators and co-facilitators were thinking of adding 2 to 3 more

members to the Alliance. 1 person joined in meeting 2 because she heard of the project from her friend. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted in meeting 3 that they have closed the recruitment for members due to the sufficient number of members at that point (21 members). PL\_C1\_18(f) told them that she had a friend who really wanted to participate. He was informed that the Alliance has an adequate number already, but he might be able to join in the case of attrition. He did not join the Alliance at the end.

Alliance meetings and attendance

Start date and finish date Alliance

- PL\_A1: 14.11.2019 - 30.04.2020
- PL\_B1: 18.11.2019 – 25.04.2020
- PL\_C1: 25.11.2019 - 20.05.2020

Number of sessions

- PL\_A1: 7 meetings (there are 2 parts of meeting 5 due to meeting 5 part 1 being lengthy in duration. The Alliance members requested the facilitators to continue the meeting in a different time.)
- PL\_B1: 6 meetings
- PL\_C1: 8 meetings (there are 2 parts of meeting 6. Alliance members who worked on the mobile application idea had a separate meeting only with their group.)

**Table 21. Attendance youth Alliance in PL\_A1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

Meetings Participants	1	2	3	4	5 online	6 online	7 online
PL_A1_1 (f)	█	█	█	█			
PL_A1_2 (f)	█	█		█			
PL_A1_3 (f)	█	█	█	█			█
PL_A1_4 (m)	█	█	█	█			
PL_A1_5 (m)	█	█		█			
PL_A1_6 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
PL_A1_7 (f)	█	█	█				
PL_A1_8 (f)	█	█	█	█			
PL_A1_9 (f)	█	█	█				█
PL_A1_10 (f)	█	█	█	█			█
PL_A1_11 (f)	█	█		█	█	█	
PL_A1_12 (m)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
PL_A1_13 (m)	█	█	█				
PL_A1_14 (f)	█	█	█	█			█

<i>PL_A1_15 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_16 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_17 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_18 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_19 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_20 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_21 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_22 (f)</i>							
<i>PL_A1_23 (f)</i>							

One member resigned in meeting citing university preparation for the reason. Meeting 5 is the first meeting after the quarantine due to COVID-19 situation was introduced. Attendance dropped to a quarter of the previous attendance number.

**Table 22. Attendance youth Alliance in PL\_B1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

<i>Meetings Participants</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5 online</i>	<i>6 online</i>
<i>PL_A1_1 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_2 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_3 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_4 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_5 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_6 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_7 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_8 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_9 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_10 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_11 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_12 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_13 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_14 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_15 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_B1_16 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_A1_17 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_A1_18 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_A1_19 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_A1_20 (f)</i>						
<i>PL_A1_21 (f)</i>						

One member withdrawn in meeting 4 due to her wish to prioritize schoolwork. Attendance dropped in meeting 5 which was the first meeting held online due to the COVID-19 restriction. Three more Alliance members withdrawn from the project. They wrote a message to the co-facilitators that they had too many school responsibilities and were unable to get involved in the CO-CREATE project as much as they wanted to anymore.

**Table 23. Attendance youth Alliance in PL\_C1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

<i>Meetings Participants</i>	1	2	3	4	5 <i>online</i>	6 <i>online</i>	7 <i>online</i>	8 <i>online</i>
<i>PL_A1_1 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█	█	█		
<i>PL_A1_2 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█		█	█	█
<i>PL_A1_3 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
<i>PL_A1_4 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_5 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_6 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█	█	█		█
<i>PL_A1_7 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█		█		
<i>PL_A1_8 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_9 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█		█		
<i>PL_A1_10 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_11 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█		█		█
<i>PL_A1_12 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█	█	█		█
<i>PL_A1_13 (f)</i>	█		█	█				
<i>PL_A1_14 (f)</i>	█		█	█	█	█		█
<i>PL_A1_15 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_16 (m)</i>	█		█					
<i>PL_A1_17 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_18 (f)</i>	█	█	█	█	█		█	
<i>PL_A1_19 (f)</i>		█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_20 (f)</i>		█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_21 (f)</i>		█	█	█				
<i>PL_A1_22 (m)</i>		█		█	█	█		█
<i>PL_A1_23 (f)</i>		█	█	█				

One member dropped out in meeting 2. Meeting 5 was the first meeting held online due to the COVID-19 restriction. Attendance dropped to a third and 2 members dropped out of the Alliance citing preparation for final exams as the reason. One more member resigned in meeting 6 part 1. Meeting 6 part 2 was only attended by the members who were working on the smartphone app policy idea.

## Composition/diversity

The diversity across all three Alliances was presented mostly on socio-economic status level (SES). The Alliances were established in three locations differing in the average income per family, as well as in terms of the geographic isolation. The Alliances took place in two rural-urban communes (Polish: gmina), PL\_A1 and PL\_C1 and one urban commune, PL\_B1. The three locations allowed for accounting for inequalities in terms of economic, social, geographic aspects (e.g. low family income on average, social exclusion related to the transportation due to a lack of infrastructure and/or public transport facilitating mobility to wealthier communes with more social, economic, employment, and educational opportunities). The WP7 survey showed that 16 percent of the Polish youth who filled in the survey (n=58) was categorized as having 'low' family affluency, compared to 36 per cent who was categorized as 'medium' and 48 per cent as 'high' on this scale (see table 1, page 18).

In particular, the communes were selected using G-index of SES, which qualifies each commune in Poland based on personal income per capita in a commune. The G index refers to taxable income per capita in a commune. The G-index, therefore, allows determining the communes in Poland that are in the lowest SES areas and thus require social and educational subsidies from the national government. The Alliance PL\_C1 and PL\_A1 areas are locations representing the lowest SES (G index below 75%) and the Alliance PL\_B1 area is representing the highest SES (G index above 125%). The rural-urban area for Alliance PL\_C1 is a location where young people (not owning or/and driving a car) have a limited accessibility to health promotion programs, after-school education programs, built physical activity facilities (e.g. there is no swimming pool, one cycling path); such facilities and programs are much easier to access and much more diverse in the area of Alliance PL\_B1; public communication from the PL\_C1 area to the closest town (buses only) is very limited in the afternoons, limiting young people's ability to access more diverse options of sport, education, and social participation.

Regarding ethnical diversity, the Alliances were representing primarily Polish national identity (all participants were white Caucasian), as was also reflected in the WP7 survey. Among the inhabitants of Poland, the dominant population is the homogeneous Polish national identity (approx. 95 per cent according to the Polish Statistical Office). Regarding gender, among participants who volunteered to the project, boys were underrepresented (6 boys initially volunteered to participate). This is partly due to the chosen schools having mostly female students as well.

## Diversity per Alliance

PL\_A1: 23 girls and 4 boys. "Youth also compared their own city to other cities (in Poland in general, they didn't indicate a particular city; it can be assumed that they were thinking of bigger/wealthier cities) and concluded that their local environment is less advantaged than other local environments in terms of availability of knowledge about obesity prevention e.g., free lectures, distribution of free facilities in the city e.g., free water dispensers in public places, organization of physical education at school."

The Alliance members also used their experience of lack of existing policy solutions to inform policy idea e.g. having a bicycle path or having dietitian in schools as the Alliance members pointed out that it is easier to access nutritionist service in bigger cities. PL\_B1: “Only girls were participating in the meeting. The school is located in a high SES area.” PL\_C1: 18 girls and 2 boys. They represent low SES, according to G-index of the area. In PL\_C1, disadvantages being in a rural area were raised during photo voice discussion (e.g., concerning access to sport facilities in bigger cities or well-kept infrastructure, such as bike paths or city bikes) and at the last online meetings (e.g. lack of opportunities to take part in projects such as CO-CREATE).

### Diversity talk among Alliance members

Alliance members sometimes talked about how obesity and overweight affect people differently. They mentioned that there is a tendency to perceive overweight and obesity as a “new norm” and that older people have lower physical activity levels. According to the Alliance members, this is due to their lower access to places where than can be active as well as having a general notion that they do not have to be physically active anymore.

### Types of activities

#### PL\_A1

Meeting 1: organizational meeting, getting acquainted with the idea and goals of CO-CREATE workshops, introduction to overweight and obesity issue and policy definition, presenting an overall plan of meetings and project assumptions, meeting workshop participants, self-introduction by youth, expectation for the project, co-creation of group agreement, introduction to system mapping and co-creation of maps.

Meeting 2: working with the map of factors favourable for obesity and overweight, awareness of the role of the policies in the system of factors (system thinking), developing policy ideas, voting and choosing the best policy ideas.

Meeting 3: Introducing Photovoice, introduction to the working on policy ideas in groups, working on policy ideas and discussing the policy form in groups, presenting the summary of ideas, advocacy training, advocacy training exercise, wrap-up.

Meeting 4: vlogging, Photovoice analysis

Meeting 5-part 1: working with policy forms and creating ideas for actions in order to refine the policy ideas (using SMART and budget proposals)

Meeting 5-part 2: creating ideas for actions in order to refine the policy ideas (using SMART method)

Meeting 6: working with policy forms and creating ideas for actions in order to refine the policy ideas (using SMART and budget proposals), discussion about what has been already done within the planned with SMART actions

#### PL\_B1

Meeting 1: Project introduction, participant introduction, presentation on overweight and obesity prevalence, policy definition, co-creation of group agreement, introduction to system mapping.

Meeting 2: Aggregated maps and providing examples of policy, coming up with and choosing policy ideas.

Meeting 3: Filling out policy forms, discussing ideas in groups, introduction to Photovoice, advocacy training by co-facilitators, presentation about vlogging by co-facilitators, creating 30-seconds vlogs.

Meeting 4: Looking back to the previous meeting, talking about increasing social media activity and responsiveness to our messages, Photovoice, presenting policy ideas and discussion, discussing what the group will do next time

Meeting 5: Discussing the budget for testing policy ideas, voting for the best idea, filling out the SMART form, distribution of tasks

Meeting 6: Discussing the budget for testing policy ideas, becoming acquainted with politicians and introducing changes by young people, summary of work WP5, a round of thank you for the work

#### PL\_C1

Meeting 1: Introduction of CO-CREATE project objectives, the round of introduction, creating group agreement, explaining policy definition, system mapping training

Meeting 2: working with the aggregated map of factors contributing to overweight and obesity prevalence, identifying connections between factors, creating policy ideas, choosing the best policy ideas.

Meeting 3: Working on policy forms, introduction to the Photovoice method, advocacy training and vlogging training

Meeting 4: a short discussion about raising awareness of the importance of fulfilling in between meetings tasks/activities and low responsiveness to our messages, Photovoice analysis and discussion, presentation of policy ideas/discussion

Meeting 5: analysing all four policy ideas in terms of what kind of actions could be carried out in order to refine or to get feedback on the policy idea, Voting for the best action ideas, Using SMART method to plan carrying out the chosen actions

Meeting 6-part 1: working on policy forms: discussing facilitators' comments and suggestions to the two policy forms: "Gym passes" and "Mobile application", summary of 6 months of work, showing participants what they have created within the project (system maps, Photovoice photos, policy

forms, SMART sheets), presenting plans for the upcoming months (dialogue fora, meetings with stakeholders, conference in the city)

Meeting 6-part 2: working on policy forms: discussing facilitators' comments and suggestions to the policy form "Smartphone application", explain to the group the facilitators' suggestions and remarks to the policy form and answering any potential questions/doubts

Meeting 7: summary of the project and thanking the participants for their commitment and hard work, discussion of actions taken to promote the policy idea of the smartphone app "Fitket", presenting further actions to be undertaken, i.e. Feedback Alliance Form, Dialogue Fora, handing certificates for participation, feedback on the project from participants and facilitators.

## *Policy Ideas*

What policy ideas do youth come up with?

The Alliance members in Poland came up with several policy ideas in the early meetings of their Alliance. Each Alliance then decided to focus on developing two or three ideas that were voted the most by the members. The following table provides the complete list of ideas, including which Alliance proposed it and a brief summary of the idea. The ideas are clustered under four main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, healthy environment, and healthy lifestyle. The policy ideas that were fully developed and were included in the policy brief from the Alliances in Poland are in blue font.

**Table 24. Policy Ideas in Poland**

No	Alliance	Name of Policy Idea	A Brief Summary of the Idea
<b>FOOD AND NUTRITION</b>			
1	PL_A1	Fit, Fresh, and Fast	Regular meetings with a dietitian at school
2		Healthy Shelves	Changing products visibility in stores
3	PL_B1	Healthier nutrition, healthier us	Food truck for healthy meals
4		Providing nutritional and calorie information in restaurants	Table with nutrition values for example kcal, fat, sugar in the restaurants' menus
5		Free healthy snacks	Free healthy snacks at school during breaks and higher prices for unhealthy food, lower prices for healthy products offered in the school store
6	PL_C1	Prescription for a healthy diet	Monthly meetings with nutrition specialists or a dietitian about a healthy diet

7		Healthy discounts	Healthy recipes leaflets at grocery stores with the ingredients offered at reduced price
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>			
8	PL_A1	New form of PE classes at schools	Policy focused on developing an idea about the choice of physical activity in P.E. classes in high schools
9	PL_B1	Free gym membership for high school students	High school students receive a monthly gym membership and once a month they can train with a personal trainer
10		Physical education classes with personal trainer	Meetings with the personal trainer once a month as a part of physical education classes
11		Active trips for young people	Organizing trips, for example to the mountains, in order to show young people how to spend time actively
12		Free access twice a month for young people to sports facilities, e.g. parks with trampolines	In each Primary School and High School in the Alliance's home city, twice a month, there would be organized trips to places where various sports are practiced, e.g. gyms, climbing walls or clubs, where less popular sports are organized, in order to interest teenagers in this particular sports.
13		PL_C1	Gym passes for youth
14	Fitket mobile application		Promoting physical activity through a phone app
15	Good start in sport		Subsidies to buy sport equipment for school students
16	Swimming discounts		50% discount for entrance to the swimming pool if you will come with a minimum of 6 people
17	Kindness comes back		Free gym passes by helping others
18	Simple bicycle		Putting bicycles at the beginning, in the middle and in the end of the bicycle path connecting smaller towns

19		Personalized lessons of Physical Education	Personalize PE classes where each student could choose his or her favorite sport or physical activity to do
20		Trampolines in front of the shops	Discounts for healthy food if buyers use trampoline for a certain amount of time
<b>HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT</b>			
21	PL_A1	Water taps in public places	Creating public places with free drinking water
<b>HEALTHY LIFESTYLE</b>			
22	PL_A1	Phone application for healthy lifestyle	A smartphone application to enable access to knowledge and monitoring of health behaviors
23		Free of charge lectures in places open to the public	Free lectures about health issues
24		Posters and banners for healthy tips	Placing posters and banners with some tips for healthy diet and physical activity in the city center and at bus stops
25	PL_B1	<a href="#">Saturday awareness</a>	<a href="#">Events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles</a>

Which activities contribute to the policy ideas?

Based on Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach, young people in CO-CREATE Alliances were empowered to develop policy ideas to address the systemic issue of adolescent excess weight and obesity. Supported by trained CO-CREATE country staff and assisted by cofacilitators from youth organizations, young people received information and training to help them develop and refine their policy proposals.

In the first meetings, the Alliance members in Poland were introduced by their facilitators to the issue of overweight and obesity among young people. They were also informed of the definition of policy. Across all three Alliances in Poland, the development of their policy ideas was then started with a system mapping and model building activity. Young people were introduced to the concept of system mapping to identify factors that influence adolescent obesity. Through using Graph over Time method, the Alliance members were invited to think of factors that in their opinion are related to obesity prevalence. For example, consumption of fast food among young people. These factors were collected to then be turned into a network of factors influencing one another. Young people were actively involved in determining in what way the factors identified affected the rest.

Having had an understanding what a system map was, in meeting 2, the Alliance members were then invited to revisit an obesity system map that was previously created by their peers. They could then add or edit the factors featured in the map, including changing and adjusting how those factors influence one another. At this point, the facilitators also provided the members with some examples

of policies (e.g. health star rating<sup>1</sup>) on obesity to help young people start thinking of the issue in a systemic way.

Throughout this process, the Alliance members drew closely from their own experience, knowledge, and perspective on the challenge of obesity among young people in Poland. How specifically this was done will be explored in more detail in the next section on experiential knowledge. The resulting system map was therefore contextualized and was fitting to the life of young people in CO-CREATE Alliances in Poland and the life of young people in the country in general.

Based on the system map, the Alliance members individually brainstormed policy ideas they would like to develop to address the challenge of adolescent's obesity in their county, region, or at the national level. Their ideas tackled a particular area of the map, informed by a systemic understanding of the challenge and bearing in mind different factors involved. These preliminary ideas, called action ideas at this stage, were then discussed in small groups and then presented to the big group to be voted on. The policy ideas that received the most votes were then to be further developed.

In meeting 3, the facilitators presented the policy form to the members and an example of a filled in policy form. This was helpful for the members as it provides them with a good idea about how the form is meant to be completed. The facilitators also pointed out that providing different examples of what a policy looks like was also helpful for the members as for many, this was the first time they ever had to work to develop a policy idea. Each Alliance then worked in small groups in having the first go at filling in the form to provide details into their policy ideas. In all Alliances, group discussions, either in small groups or as a unified big group, on the ideas being developed as well as their exchanges with the facilitators provided support in the progression of their policy idea. As their policy idea progressed and refined, young people in the Alliances completed different section of the forms to record the result of their discussions and decision making on the policy ideas being developed.

The members were then introduced to the Photovoice method where photographs were used to collect information and to have deeper understanding of a certain issue. They were then encouraged by the facilitators to take pictures in between meetings of the implementations of policy related to obesity that they could find in their surroundings. The results of the Photovoice were discussed in meeting 4 in which the discussions helped the members to further think about the challenge of obesity in a systemic manner rather than focusing on individual responsibility. One group, Alliance PL\_C1, working on the policy idea of gym passes for students, particularly benefitted from the Photovoice activity. The group took photos which revealed that there were only a few places where they could go to be active for free, such as open-air gyms and cycle paths. These helped them to think even more critically about their policy ideas and assured them that they were on the right path.

To further promote their policy ideas, the Alliance members in Poland set up social media accounts and used them to reach out to others to gain support and inputs to further develop their ideas. The PL\_A1 Alliance working on the idea of regular meeting with dietitians, created Facebook and Instagram accounts with 'Fit, Fresh and Fast' as their policy idea name, complete with a logo. A second group in the same Alliance also established a social media presence with the name Healthy Shelves and a logo. Both groups regularly published posts in their accounts and organised live

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/content/home>

cooking lessons online to increase engagement on social media to promote their policy idea. These two groups also created promotional materials such as lunch boxes, t-shirts and sweatshirts to be given out to the ‘ambassadors’ of their policy idea, those who agreed to promote the idea on social media such as a number of influencers<sup>2</sup>. The smartphone application group from Alliance PL\_C1 did something similar. They created a Facebook profile to promote their policy idea with the name FITKET and an accompanying logo. The group ran this Facebook profile for several weeks, adding posts about their idea and about COCREATE project in general.

The Polish Alliances were then introduced to the SMART budget form in meeting 5. As part of CO-CREATE’s commitment of active youth participation in developing policy ideas, the project allocated a budget for the young people in the Alliances to test out their policy ideas. Each group that planned to make use of the budget needed to put in a proposal of the testing activity they wanted to do using the SMART form. In this form, they specified the activity, clarified the measurement, and indicated the timeline of their actions. However, due to the COVID-19 situation in Poland, some of activities proposed by the Alliance members were no longer possible to be held. Understanding this situation, some groups switched strategy and decided to do a survey among their peers instead as a way to test out their policy ideas. The results of the survey were then used by the Alliance members to refine the policy idea they were developing and to further complete their policy form.

Finally, during the online dialogue forum the groups had the opportunity to discuss their project with relevant stakeholders to get inputs to their policy idea. These stakeholders included the governor of the district, the vice president of the city, a representative from the local Health and Social Affairs department, representatives from the departments of Health and Social Affairs and Economic Development the city council, a local district authority representative, an expert in the field of physical activity, an expert in digital product development, an expert in health promotion, dieticians, and a school principal. From these stakeholders, the Alliances’ members received various offers of support to realize their policy ideas. They also received inputs to further refine their proposals which the members then incorporated into the Alliances’ final policy forms.

How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas?

#### PL\_A1

Youth in PL\_A1 drew from their own personal experience in coming up with the preliminary policy ideas they would like to work on. They pointed to the absence of classes on healthy diet in school as well as how easy it is to get exemption from physical education classes as some factors that might have contributed to adolescents’ obesity in Poland. They mentioned a cultural habit they were familiar as an important factor. They called the habit the grandmother syndrome, referring to how

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<sup>2</sup> These included <https://www.instagram.com/praktykulinarni/>  
<https://www.instagram.com/annascooking/> / <https://www.instagram.com/w3ronikv/> /?hl=pl  
<https://www.instagram.com/fizjodancer/?hl=pl>

Polish grandmothers like to spoil their grandchildren by giving them sweets and treats in huge quantities.

Youth members discussed the fact that people often do not check the properties of the products that they bought, including the amounts of calories, the food composition, etc. They also pointed out how they observed that unhealthy products were more often displayed on the stores' shelves than healthy products. They noted how unhealthy products tend to be cheaper and therefore preferred by buyers especially by those who have less money. Healthy products on the other hand tended to be expensive making them unaffordable to many.

Alliance members also drew from a general knowledge that they have about obesity to inform their policy ideas. This includes how people with low earnings and lack of time have bigger challenges in leading a healthy lifestyle. They specifically underlined their knowledge on how healthy products often could only be accessed through an online sale. Some people might not find this option preferable. The members then noted how it would be important to have healthy products easily available in stationary shops from where most people in Poland buy food products. They mentioned how at the moment the stationary shops tended to have a lot of unhealthy products on sale instead.

The Alliance members sometimes used the general knowledge that they have to form an opinion or a perception. For example, they specifically mentioned how they perceived older people to be more likely to be overweight or obese. They said that older people do not have access to information as easily as youths or adults. Older people rarely use mobile phones or the Internet which in their understanding results in not much information about a healthy lifestyle for the elders.

In figuring out what policy ideas might be useful to be developed, the Alliance members compared the situation of their town with other bigger cities in Poland in order to see what might be lacking that could contribute to the challenge of overweight and obesity among young people in their area. They concluded that their local environment is less advantaged compared to other cities, particularly in terms of availability of knowledge about obesity prevention. They pointed to the lack of free lectures on healthy lifestyles and the scarcity of free facilities in the city to support healthier lifestyle such as free water dispensers in public places. They also noted that promotional activities on healthy lifestyle, healthy food, and physical activity was also not popular in their local areas.

PL\_A1 Alliance members then decided to focus on three policy ideas to further develop:

- Fit, Fresh, and Fast—regular meetings with a dietitian at school
- Healthy Shelves—changing products visibility in stores
- New form of PE classes at school

The first two were developed into a policy brief while the third one was dropped due to the limitation of COVID-19 which made it impossible for them to try out the idea the way they wanted to. Below is how different types of knowledge were used in the development of the first two.

#### [Policy idea 1: Fit, Fresh, and Fast—regular meetings with a dietitian at school](#)

*“First of all, it is the problem of lack of universal access to a dietitian. There are no healthy eating classes for high school students in Poland. There are only programs for primary school students. Obesity and overweight among adolescents is increasing. It brings many unpleasant consequences*

*(e.g. depression, low self-esteem, circulatory system disease, diabetes, etc.). Young people are often unaware of this problem.” PL\_A1\_06 (m)*

The Alliance members in Alliance PL\_A1 pointed out how they do not have any classes in school that taught healthy eating and considered this an important factor in youths' lack of understanding of it as well as in the lack of skills on how to prepare healthy meals. They also pointed to the fact that there is no particular promotion of healthy eating in their town, such as free lectures that they observed to be available in bigger cities in Poland (e.g., as was the case for Alliance PL\_B1), which made the need for the class even more important. Their own experience of certain cultural habit, such as how grandmothers reward their grandchildren with sweets, also contributed to their idea of the need for regular meetings with dietitian in school to counter the bad eating habits young people might already developed.

The members who worked on this idea drew on their general knowledge and personal experience in coming up with the way the meetings with the dietitians were to be conducted. They decided that the meeting will take the form of regular theoretical and practical workshops about healthy nutrition. In addition to the workshop, there is a possibility to have individual consultation with a qualified dietitian in order to adapt to the advice to individual needs. Even though the individual meeting needed to be held directly with qualified dietitian, the Alliance members emphasized that the workshops should be led by students who have the appropriate knowledge and skills in dietetics, psychology, and/or physical education to lead such classes. They reasoned that if a dietitian was the one who led the workshop, there was a risk that adolescents would be ashamed or afraid to go for some advice.

The members saw this policy idea as a way to combat the unreliable knowledge about healthy nutrition that young people could easily find in the internet. *“[O]n the Internet you can find such nonsense [such as ...] you will lose 30 kg if you only drink water,”* said one of the group members. In their policy idea discussion, the youth members also expressed disappointment of the lack of policy on healthy nutrition. They discussed the program that gave away free milk cartons and fresh carrots in schools. They pointed out how the milk contained a high amount of fat and were sweetened as they tend to be either chocolate milk or strawberry milk. They also noted that the carrots were of unknown origin.

This particular idea was also partially based on an existing program called “Health - Not difficult” that was implemented through a collaboration between KUPIEC (a food company) and big Polish medical publishing house. The program consists of a series of workshops by dietitians and cooks for primary school students. The subjects of the meetings were based on healthy eating guidelines and healthy lifestyle habits. Youth members drew on their knowledge about this project to develop their own policy idea of healthy eating workshops in schools.

Later, the members of this group conducted a survey about their ideas. The result supported their thinking and provided them with a support to continue developing the idea. *“In our survey, over 70% of people indicated that they had never used the advice of a dietitian. Even when we talk to our peers, people do not talk about it, because a dietitian is commonly associated with obesity or setting a particular diet [when, for example] someone practices a specific sport, [but] not with healthy habits.*

[...] People also do not have access to reliable knowledge about healthy eating. There are plenty of blogs and information about different diets on the Internet, but not all are reliable and from good sources." PL\_A1\_06 (m).

### Policy idea 2: Healthy Shelves—changing products visibility in stores

Based on their own observation and experience, the youth Alliance members pointed out how stores' shelves tend to display on eye level unhealthy products more than healthy products. They pointed out how it then became easy for buyers to have a quick access to unhealthy foods. They also pointed out how the price for the unhealthy food tended to be cheap while healthy food tended to be expensive, making buyers to be more likely to buy the unhealthy choices.

The idea for this policy also came from the result of the Photovoice activities that the Alliance members did. Some of them took pictures of how unhealthy products were prominently displayed in stores and others took pictures of stores that did display fruits and vegetables in a more visible way. They took the former as an example of what they would like to reduce while the second as a good result of the policy they wanted to develop.

The members who were working on this idea also cited the European Parliament's decision to ban advertising for products high in fat and sugar, however, in Poland this provision was not implemented. They condemned this government's decision. *"Apparently, money is more important than health in this country [Poland],"* said them during their discussion.

Through collecting more information throughout the Alliances activities, the group gained new knowledge about their policy idea and decided to modify it accordingly. *"We decided to modify our idea. We decided to focus on the shelves at the cash registers and the need to display healthy products near the entrance to the store. Changing the entire organization of the store would not be possible, because stores often need to follow imposed methods of placing products."* PL\_A1\_22 (f)

*"We definitely would like to consult this with specialists, because we do not have the knowledge to state that something is more or less healthy."* PL\_A1\_16 (m).

### Overall

Youth drew from the knowledge they gained from peers as well as what they encountered from social media in their understanding of the challenges of obesity. For example, youth in PL\_A1 pointed to how social media promoted an acceptance of different body images which they considered to be good, but they also underlined the importance to differentiate such acceptance with promotion of unhealthy lifestyle.

Youth experiential knowledge is particularly apparent when they were discussing the result of their Photovoice activity in pair. For example, one pair was talking about a photo depicting a pedestrian path/bicycle path in the city. They noted that path is secured by railings and illuminated. People and families spent time there for a walk, to walk their dogs or riding bikes, roller skates, or skateboards. They pointed to the fact that the path is safe and tidy which they argued encouraged residents to do physical activity there. They mentioned how some people have moved away from using cars to work

and chose to walk or cycle instead. PL\_A1\_21 (f) raised the point that there is a lack of such infrastructure in the city. Some bike paths were too far away from the city centre. She also noted that roads and unsecured paths could be dangerous for biking or walking which she said resulted in people avoiding them by choosing public transport or cars instead.

A similar conversation was happening with all the pairs discussing the photos they took in the Photovoice activity. Some of the issues they were discussing include availability sport facilities in the city centre, such as a swimming pool and an outdoor facility; how the school shops often only offered sweets; how unhealthy snacks tend to be displayed at eye level contrasted with stores that did display fruits and vegetables more prominently; and how food labels were incomprehensible for some people. For each of these discussions, youth heavily drew on their own personal experience as well as perception, such as their experiences using the sport facilities themselves or their view of the difficulty of information provided in food labels.

### PL\_B1

The Alliance members in PL\_B1 since the first meeting have been sharing their understanding of the problem of adolescents' obesity informed by their own experience and some scientific knowledge they have come to learn. They said there was a lack of education about healthy living and nutrition in their city. They noted how people think they were buying a diet fitness bar but the bar actually had a lot of calories and sugar in it. PL\_B1\_05 referred to research about sedentary behaviour that she once read.

The members shared with each other knowledge they gained from their own experience and lifestyles. PL\_B1\_01[F] and PL\_B1\_05[F] were vegetarians and shared their opinion on this subject with the rest of the members. *"Knowledge about vegetarian diet is very small. A lot of people can't get full-fledged meals on a vegetarian diet because they don't know how to replace meat. That is why they often eat french fries or processed foods,"* they remarked.

The youth members also noticed that the activities undertaken by various institutions in Poland were not effective enough to combat obesity among young people. They noted the lack of healthy products in schools and poor social campaigns about healthy lifestyle. One of the participants shared their experience with unhealthy catering in boarding school specifically.

Social media is another source of knowledge the Alliance members referred to that shaped their understanding of adolescent's obesity. They pointed to the trend of body positivity which encourages people to accept their body. The Alliance members discussed how the trend might also encouraged young people who were dealing with obesity or being overweight to do nothing to better their health situation.

Related to this trend, the Alliance members discussed several lifestyle campaigns that they were aware of and what they thought of them. One of the campaigns they discussed at length was a global campaign called "Real Beauty" conducted by the company "Dove", whose main aim was to break stereotypes about female beauty and strive to strengthen self-esteem to build self-acceptance among women. The members noted that these types of activities, apart from the positive effects, could also cause negative effects such as people who were obese might misinterpret the message

and came to the conclusion that they did not have to change their lives, did not have to lose any weight or do any sport because their body was beautiful the way it was.

Another campaign that the members talked quite lengthy about is a controversial Polish street campaign called "Żryj" (a vulgar way of saying "eat it" which can also be translated to "wolf up"). The campaign consisted of posters hanging at bus and tram stops that strengthened the stereotypical image of obesity and contributed to the discrimination and stigmatization of people dealing with the condition. For example, there was an illustration of an obese person sitting on a small stool. The Alliance members expressed their dislike for the campaign, and they concluded that people with obesity might feel offended and hurt.

The knowledge and the experience that they have, informed the members of the first ideas of policies on adolescents' obesity that was developed. For example, they shared of their experience in eating at fast food restaurants such as McDonald or KFC. *"This kind of restaurant gives us the opportunity to meet with our friends in such places at any time of the day. These places have amenities like wifi, warm space to sit down and talk; free bathroom,"* noted them, explaining why these fast-food restaurants were attractive to young people. They mentioned the calorie tables that are present at the McDonald's restaurant. These tables are located at the back of the advertisement cards on the trays where the food is served. Every McDonald's customer has access to it and can see how many calories their meals contain. However, the young Alliance members observed, that many people still visit this restaurant even if they were aware of a large number of calories meals such as cheeseburger or chips contained. With the goal to lower the consumption of unhealthy fast food, the Alliance members then entertained the idea of creating a campaign to turn off fast food app notification on their mobile phone which would limit the advertising of unhealthy meals. To better inform people on the calories they are consuming in fast food restaurants, they thought of a better solution than putting the information at the back of the advertisement card. They came up with the idea of putting the caloric content information of the meals on the menu, next to the dishes, to make it more prominent for people to see.

Among all of the different ideas they came up with, the Alliance members finally decided on three to further develop:

- Healthier nutrition, healthier us—food truck for healthy meals
- Saturday awareness—events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles

The rest of the section will now look at how the Alliance members' different types of knowledge were used in the development of their policy ideas and which of the knowledge brought up during the Alliances meetings were relevant to the ideas they were developing.

#### Policy idea 1: Healthier nutrition, healthier us—food truck for healthy meals

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 the Alliance's home city, such as in market squares or on universities campuses.

In the discussion that lead to this policy idea, PL\_B1\_16 (f) remarked, *"In many places in our city there are no restaurants with healthy food, which means that people do not have access to this type*

*of food. In many places there are no restaurants at all. In my opinion this idea is really interesting and I think it would be nice if such a truck would appear in the city. I would definitely visit this place and take my friends there".* This idea also came up on the back of the discussion about how young people were attracted to socialize at fast food restaurants and eat unhealthy fast food while they were at it.

Some of the members of the Alliance live in detached houses in small villages just behind the border of the area. They shared that there were no indoor places for young people to meet in their free time that would encourage them to be active and eat healthily. PL\_B1\_14 (f), while discussing the photos she took as a part of the Photovoice, mentioned that when it is cold (between October and April) she and her friends spent most of their time in McDonald's because cheap drinks and food is available there. She admitted that she was aware of the fact that this is not the perfect place to spend time and eat or drink but she said that this was a systemic issue. If they had a choice, they would rather spend time more actively eating healthier foods but there is a lack of such places in the area they live.

PL\_B1\_17 (f) said: *"People choose fast foods because it is more convenient for them to go to a place where they will quickly get a tasty meal prepared by somebody else than to devote their own time for it".* The food truck was an alternative, they thought, to have a quick ready meal that was also healthy and also for a place to hang out for young people.

As the policy was being developed, the group members working on this idea realized that there was some specific knowledge they needed to gather to strengthen their policy proposal. They were particularly curious of the cost to set up a food truck. Initially, the cofacilitator supporting the group proposed to do an estimation of the price of the truck, the cooking utensils needed, and the marketing costs. The youth then took it upon themselves to do some research on the internet to get more information on these costs.

In subsequent meetings, the members who were working on this idea learned more about specific knowledge of obesity, including those informed scientifically, that was relevant to their policy proposal. PL\_B1\_17 (f) framed the rationale of the policy idea in meeting 4 as follows: *"Currently, a lot of people don't want to waste time preparing healthy meals, which is why they choose publicly available fast food, which leads to overweight and obesity in society. This is a burning issue- as the research has shown, over 25% of the population is obese. Therefore, we want people to eat less unhealthy food. In our opinion, food trucks with healthy food would be more accessible than healthy restaurants. People would have a wide selection of meals which would be displayed on the shelves. An additional advantage of our food trucks would be that meals would be adapted to various diets."*

They also collected information on different aspects that might help their policy idea to be realized. For example, PL\_B1\_10 (f) mentioned several organizations which could be helpful to establish cooperation with to support the policy idea. Some of the organizations mentioned included 'Fundacja - Odchudzamy' ('Foundation- let's make the area thinner') and 'Centrum Rozwoju Społecznego' ('Center for Social Development').

#### [Policy idea 2: Saturday awareness—events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles](#)

This policy idea encourages people to be more physically active and eat healthily by organising events every Saturday at shopping centres 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 idea for this policy came from the members' experiences and their knowledge of lifestyles in Poland. One participant noted in the early discussion about this policy that traditional Polish cuisines mostly consisted of high-calorie meals. *"In my opinion, at least in our country, older people who are accustomed to this type of meal have a big problem with changing their diet to a healthier one,"* she remarked. She also added that because of this, young people do not have good role models to follow in terms of healthy eating.

PL\_B1\_09 (f) noted, *"Many eating habits are shaped in early childhood. My little brother can only find buns, sweet rolls, sweet drinks and unhealthy candy bars in his school shop. This is important to change the system by providing true, scientific knowledge about a healthy lifestyle and to completely ban sweet and unhealthy products at schools and in vending machines at work"*. Therefore, the members then thought that it was worth to educate both younger and older people regarding healthy lifestyle and healthy eating. This way good habits of the whole family could be developed.

The Alliance members noticed that people in Poland are generally not aware of the importance of a balanced and healthy diet. They remarked that most people do not even know what the healthy products are. They pointed out that this is exactly the reason why social awareness and systemic changes are urgently needed. The Alliance members also drew attention to the fact that many people do not exercise, not because they are lazy, but because they do not know how to find a sport that they would really enjoy. They reasoned that this is why it is important to make people aware that sport is not limited to football, basketball or running and that there are a variety of activities to choose from.

As they developed their policy idea, the members of this group also identified organizations that they could collaborate with, particularly because the organizations have had similar initiative in the past. PL\_B1\_07 [F] proposed to connect to a social project called "POZDRO" which fought obesity among young people and also promoted physical activity through screening research. The "POZDRO" project also organized meetings where specialists talked to people who were at risk of obesity.

## Overall

Throughout the process, the Alliance members not only utilized their previous knowledge and their own experience to inform the development of policy ideas, but they became motivated to learn more about the challenge of adolescents' obesity. One member said in meeting 3, *"[A]fter our last meeting I read a bit about the problem of obesity, currently as much as 44 percent boys and 25 percent girls in Poland are overweight, and respectively 13 percent and 5 percent of them are obese. I knew that such a problem exists, but I was rather thinking about obesity being a big problem for example in the United States. However, looking at these results, we are dealing with an alarming situation in our country. ... people should be better informed about it"*.

As a part of completing the policy form, young people also took it upon themselves to learn more about the problems related to the policy idea they were proposing. They looked up scientific data concerning the health effects of obesity. They indicated in their form that obesity increased risks of

major chronic diseases such as fatal and non-fatal cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome or type 2 diabetes.

The Photovoice activity was particularly useful to bring forth the Alliance members' knowledge of obesity and factors related to it. In some occasions, they had a discussion of their different understanding or knowledge of the situation at hand. For example, PL\_B1\_16 (f) presented a photo from the Photovoice task that showed the campus of the University of Technology. She said that there was no restaurant or cafe at the campus where one could eat a healthy meal. During the presentation of the photo, PL\_B1\_17 [F] disagreed with this opinion claiming that there were some restaurants near the campus offering healthy meals. PL\_B1\_17 [F] said, "*I cannot agree here because there is a student area with healthy food available. Literally few hundred meters from this building.*" PL\_B1\_16 [F] responded that she would gladly look into the student area and see if such meals were served there.

### PL\_C1

The Alliance members in PL\_C1 talked about their experience of different lifestyles and cultural traditions in Poland when discussing the challenge of adolescents' obesity in the country. They mentioned that they do not have good role models because their grandmas and parents cook in a very traditional way, which means meals with lots of fat and fried food. They connected family habits with a lack of healthy food in the house and the risk of obesity. Some of the members followed the vegetarian diet and used their experience leading that lifestyle in thinking about obesity among youth.

The Alliance members marked that unhealthy food is easy to buy, being available everywhere and cheap, while healthy food is expensive and difficult to access. They noticed that local vendors enhance the price of healthy products because of the products' low accessibility. They explained that this is the reason why they and their peers chose cheap unhealthy snack instead as they cannot afford a healthy diet.

They also noted that technology accessibility and usage, such as smartphones, televisions, and laptops, is so common and attractive to them and young people in general. This cause them to spend time at home watching TV and playing games instead of going outside, hanging out with friends. They admitted that they use to chat through messenger or WhatsApp instead of having in person or verbal conversation. This makes their life more sedentary than active.

Some of the members mentioned 'laziness' as a factor of sedentary life and of youth obesity, drawing from their own experience and tendencies. They discussed that it is often easier to watch TV or play games than to go to the gym. PL\_C1\_20 (f) admitted that she did not go to the gym or do any sports because she preferred to sleep or watch something on Netflix. The discussion on this topic also included admissions that young people spent a considerable amount of time at school that they became too tired to do sports or prepare healthy meals afterward. After school students still has exams and homework, which takes up most of the day. PL\_C1\_17 (f) admitted that she did not go to the gym or any sports classes because she will not have time after school.

When talking about social media, the Alliance members also noted some trends related to being overweight among youth. They noticed that there was a tendency in social media and in public

discussion that one should accept being overweight or obese and should not fight it. The members thought that such idea should not be supported because simply accepting the situation might mean that people are not noticing that they are at health risk. They also pointed to the phenomenon of social media influencers advertising what they called “healthy products” when in actuality the products were unhealthy as they were high in fat or sugar.

There was also an observation made by PL\_C1\_02 (f) that the media created a vision of a very slim figure as an ideal body type. Brands such as Nike or Adidas show perfect bodies in their advertisement. This, she explained, causes social pressure where young people feel ashamed and reluctant to go to the gym because they are fearful of others’ appraisal of their imperfect body.

The members discussed a number of policy ideas they find interesting to develop. They then focused on working on three ideas:

- Gym passes for youth
- Personalized physical education classes in school
- Putting sport equipment next to shops

Due to the COVID-19 situation, the Alliance members decided to drop policy idea no. 2 and 3 and came up with a new one which they could develop and test through online mean. That policy idea was:

Fitket-promoting physical activity through a phone app

The following sections will look at the first three policy ideas and how different types of knowledge were used by young people to develop the ideas further.

### Policy idea 1: Gym passes for youth

The members of the group who worked on this policy idea wanted to give secondary school students a discount on access to gyms and sport centres in the Polish region where their city was. Classes/activities for young people would be run by people employed at these centres and they would be funded by the municipality.

This idea first came from PL\_C1\_10 (f) who shared her observation that young people in Poland often could not afford gym classes. They would like the city authorities to fund passes for the gym for the school-age youth. This would eliminate the financial problem and increase physical activity levels among young people.

PL\_C1\_07 (f) noted how the idea was uniquely designed to help young people. She explained that young people are yet to earn money regularly, mainly because of their age and also because they were still pursuing education. However, they are mature enough not to ask their parents for funds for additional pleasures or activities such as going to the gym. So they often do not have money in order to take advantage of the gym equipment to be more active.

PL\_C1\_12(f) emphasized that their policies outline the need to co-finance physical activities for young people and promote a healthy lifestyle. PL\_C1\_07(f) pointed out that there are no youth organizations in Poland that deal with the problem of health, physical activity or diet. Young people

do not have their own representatives among authorities who could support their activities and promote a healthy lifestyle. PL\_C1\_07(f) suggested that as part of their policy, a website should be created that would describe their policy idea. The website would also allow visitors to apply for participation in the project. She stressed that there are more places like her town where there is a lack of such policies and funding for young people.

#### Policy idea 2: Personalized physical education classes in school

The personalized physical education classes idea was first brought up by PL\_C1\_18 (f). She noticed that many young people gave up physical education (PE) classes because taking part in PE often means being imposed with uninteresting and monotonous activities. She proposed to personalize PE classes where each student could choose his or her favourite sport or physical activities, from yoga to volleyball to dancing.

However, after meeting 4, the Alliance members decided to drop this idea in favour of developing policy idea no. 4, a mobile phone application to promote physical activities called FITKET.

#### Policy idea 3: Putting sport equipment next to shops

The sport equipment being located next to shops idea first came from PL\_C1\_19(f). She and the other members who were interested in developing this idea reasoned that people like to have promotions in shops, such as the ones where buyers needed to do something in order to buy something cheaper or with a discount. With this in mind, the group thought to encourage people to be more active by putting a trampoline in front of a large market. If one would jump long enough, he or she would get discount coupons to buy healthy food in the stores.

After considerable discussions about the idea across several meetings, the group decided that it would be necessary to replace the trampoline with other sport equipment instead. This decision was based on their concerns regarding the health safety of using this particular equipment as they noted that the trampoline put a strain on the joints. The group then decided to replace it with a treadmill and a stationary bicycle. They stated that it would be possible to regulate the pace and speed of such equipment and it would be suitable and safe for any age group or health condition, including for older people.

#### Policy idea 4: Fitket-promoting physical activity through a phone app

PL\_C1\_18(f) together with PL\_C1\_16(f) came up with an idea to create a smartphone application to monitor a person's daily activity (e.g., number of steps, running, rollerblading or cycling). A given amount of physical activity would allow the user of the application to exchange it for discounts in given shops (e.g., groceries) and services. PL\_C1\_18(f) pointed out that the aim was to create a policy that could have a wide impact and use the steps that mobile devices have already recorded daily. Attractive discounts would encourage people to be more physically active and thus reduce the number of overweight/obese people. The idea was presented to the rest of the participants at meeting number 5 and gained considerable approval.

Throughout the Alliance meetings, the facilitators shared some information and knowledge, including scientific, relevant to the challenge of adolescents' obesity to the Alliance members. In meeting 1,

the facilitators gave a presentation about overweight and obesity problems among young people and some examples of health policies from all over the world to address the problems. In meeting 4, the facilitators presented the Alliance members with a filled in policy form based on actual governmental plans of introducing sugar tax in Poland. This was done to provide an example on how to fill in the policy form as the facilitators noticed that the Alliance members were struggling with completing some parts of the form. In meeting 6, the facilitators provided the members with an example of similar ideas being implemented in Canada to help them fill in their policy form. All the scientific articles and reports presented by the facilitators at the meeting were made available to the participants, including in the online chat room the Alliance members used to stay in contact between themselves meetings.

The facilitators specifically noted the members' lack of knowledge of different types of advocacy activity in relation to promoting a policy idea. They noticed that 'advocacy' was a new term for the Alliance and they were also unfamiliar with the term 'stakeholder' and 'lobbying'. Most forms of activism were also new to the group. The youth did not know the terms such as 'stand' or 'flash mob'. The most well-known forms of activism for the Alliance members were protests and social media activity.

The Photovoice activity especially brought forward the Alliance members knowledge of their surroundings and own experiences related to factors influencing adolescents' obesity. Youth members took pictures of sport facilities, bicycle paths, and product placement in stores, among others. In the fourth Alliance meeting, they discussed their own experience and thinking related to the photos they have taken. They noted which ones they considered to be good examples of policy implantation to address the challenge of adolescents' obesity and which they considered to be bad examples.

The facilitators reflected that the policy ideas from the PL\_C1 Alliance tend to focus on physical activity precisely because access to it, particularly access to sport facilities, is limited in their area, especially when compared to the situation in other cities. The result of the Photovoice activity further informed the members of the lack of possibility to do physical activities for young people in their area which confirmed their original ideas for policy development.

Young people often reflected on their own previous behaviour when discussing policy ideas or the result of the Photovoice activity. PL\_C1\_12(f) said she often uses unhealthy snacks because she often forgets to prepare healthier alternatives at home. Others said that they reach for juices and sweets because these products are close to the cash register or near the entrance to the store and it is easy to reach them.

During the discussion on the photo presenting a popular fast-food company, young people admitted that they use their services despite the knowledge that the company's products were unhealthy, highly processed, and caused obesity. PL\_C1\_07(f) said that they often went to these types of fast food with their friends; telling themselves that it was not that harmful to their health.

Young people in the Alliance also referred to their own experience in making decisions during the meetings. When discussing about vlogging, PL\_C1\_13 (f) noted that no members were willing to do vlogging because vlogging was not common for them. She said that for many young people Instagram was the main form of communication. She then suggested that instead of making vlogs,

they could use Instagram to reach out to other young people and to communicate their activities in the Alliance.

### *Readiness for Action and Obesity Perception*

Since the start of the Polish Alliances, the facilitators noted that the members indicated to them of their willingness to change health policies that would have a greater impact on society. Several of them had already started to introduce some changes regarding the physical activity or a healthy diet among their family or friends. Wanting to affect changes in relation to adolescents' obesity was also one of the more common reasons the members gave the facilitators when asked why they joined the Alliance in the first place. In outlining their expectations, the members clearly stated that they would like the project to have a real impact on the surrounding environment.

Throughout the Alliance process, the facilitators took note on when the Alliance members were showing proactiveness in taking actions or when they were being active during the meetings. The members were mostly participative, particularly in creating the system map, volunteering action ideas, during the Photovoice discussions, as well as the advocacy training role playing. The members were noted by the facilitators to also speak up quite frequently during small group discussions with only one or two members were a bit shy in sharing their thoughts.

Despite being a bit quiet online in the early process of the Alliances, the members later became more active in discussing their policy ideas in their online group. The facilitators noted that the members agreed to working in between meetings to develop their policy proposals better and to fill in the policy forms. Some even took it upon themselves in being proactive and deciding to do certain activities outside of the official CO-CREATE meeting time. PL\_B1\_01 (f) sent a vlog to one of the co-facilitators. She worked on the vlog herself and the vlog was very professionally made. She was then asked about the consent to share her video on CO-CREATE social media account and on Healthy Voices website to which she agreed. Others worked on the policy forms personally to ensure that their group policy ideas were recorded in detail. In the later meetings of the Alliance, leaders emerged organically from each group. These leaders kept up the communications in their own group and helped other members to continue to actively participate.

In the process of the development of the policy proposals, the facilitators took note of how at the beginning the members' ideas tended to look more like social actions rather than policies. Later on, as the Alliance members started to become more knowledgeable of what policies were and began to develop their policy proposals, they included enacting particular actions or changes to the environment as part of the ideas. For example, the PL\_A1 group that worked on placement of products in stores proposed to place the healthiest products at the front of the stores and the least healthy ones at the back. They suggested marking the alleys in the stores with coloured signages to indicate healthiness of the products shown. The members also recommended to place healthy snacks and water at eye-level and initiating self-service cash registers to avoid the temptation of buying some sweet stuff while waiting in line.

Specific actions included under the members' policy proposals also often linked to the members willingness to change their own lifestyles and to take actions to be healthier. The PL\_A1 group that

developed the idea of better physical education (PE) classes in school looked upon themselves in including changes to the PE class which would motivate them to exercise more. Some of their comments included “We play volleyball all month, I do not like this,” “Sometimes the teacher just throws us a ball and that is all,” “We cannot choose the physical activity we want to do,” “We get some marks, although not everyone is a volleyball or running champion” and “I got F because I could not run so fast to reach a time set by the teacher”. Through the policy ideas, the members wanted to promote positive attitudes towards sport and physical activities. They also wanted to create opportunities to develop their interests and passion in the disciplines they liked.

The facilitators also observed the members’ willingness to take action to gain more information about their ideas or to promote their ideas to peers and other relevant stakeholders. The PL\_B1 group who worked on the idea of healthy food truck, for example, decided that they need to reach out to the mayor to make sure that their food truck can be located in a place where people regularly visited. They also did some internet research on the cost of starting a food truck which led to their decision to let go of the idea of handing out free food. PL\_B1\_16 (f) stated, “Considering all these costs, it seems to me that we would have to give up handing out free food, maybe it would be better to sell healthy meals at low prices, which could be a competitive offer to unhealthy food, so that the income would cover the costs of maintaining the entire project [...]. The missing funds could be paid by the city council or CRS [Center for Social Development] organization, if they agree of course”.

The facilitators especially observed the Alliance members’ willingness to take action when they were discussing ways to test out their policy ideas. Originally, the Alliance members were planning to test out their ideas in person and implemented some actions in order to do so. For example, the PL\_B1 group who developed the idea of event in the malls to promote healthy lifestyles wanted to organize a try-out event in a smaller scale where a nutritionist would give lectures to people on healthy eating and a second lecture would be given by a personal trainer. The members also thought of opening a stand to hand out healthy snacks to the people visiting the mall accompanied by surveys and quizzes to learn more about people’s knowledge of healthy lifestyles.

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the testing of the policy ideas needed to be taken online. However, the Alliance members were still motivated to proceed with their policy ideas and to take actions to promote them. After establishing the social media accounts, the members actively managed the accounts by posting regularly, which included meals preparation and healthy recipes, by creating merchandises using their policy idea logo, and by maintaining their engagement with people who followed and supported their policy ideas and social media accounts. The members also used the social media account to post surveys as a way to receive inputs for their policy ideas and those who filled the survey in received a small gift as a token of appreciation.

Afterwards, some of the groups who established the social media account indicated to the facilitators that they wanted to continue to maintain the account and worked towards the possibility of realizing their policy ideas even when the regular meetings of CO-CREATE project have been concluded. For example, The PL\_C1 group who developed an idea about a healthy lifestyle mobile application called FITKET shared with the facilitators that they had already plans for future posts on their social media account which went beyond the official CO-CREATE meetings period.

In the feedback form collected after the end of the regular meetings and completed by 17 members, 10 of the members indicated that it was important for young people to be actively addressing the

challenge of adolescents' obesity. They mentioned how peer encouragement usually worked well with people their age and that young people understood each other better, which helped in encouraging each other to change or to take up certain actions. They saw themselves as part of the young people who were willing to act to address the problem of obesity among youth.

Overall, the facilitators noted that the Alliance members have been active throughout the CO-CREATE meeting process and their involvement had shown their willingness to take actions to change their environment to address the challenge of adolescents' obesity. Statements made by young people throughout the meetings confirmed this. One member of Alliance PL\_B1 during the Alliance third meeting stated, "Personally, I think this is a very big and complicated problem, it would be nice if we could achieve something that would really have an impact on the fight against obesity. "

Some young people even specifically mentioned that the fact that CO-CREATE encouraged them to take real actions and to make real changes were the reasons why they continued on with the project. PL\_C1\_22 (m) said that most projects in Poland did not translate into "real life actions" and did not include attempts of the implementation of the ideas. He mentioned he liked the format of CO-CREATE project especially because it did allow him to take actions as a form of change.

The facilitators particularly reflected that they were pleasantly surprised by how willing the members were to engage in action and that they were interested in doing so much more than the facilitators had predicted. Similar to what the members have written in the feedback form, the facilitators recognized there was limited opportunity for young people to be involved in an 'active' project in Poland, which the facilitators hypothesized is due to the need for parental consent for young people to be involved in projects. Alliance members became motivated to take part and continue with CO-CREATE because the project allowed them to make immediate and tangible changes which they rarely had a chance to do.

The Polish Alliance members' perspectives of factors that influence adolescents' obesity were observable when the young members were building their own obesity system map and coming up with preliminary policy ideas to address the problem. During these activities, the members equally pointed out how they perceived obesity as related to individual's habits while at the same time being influenced by environmental and structural factors.

Bad time management, as pointed out by PL\_B1 Alliance members, was one of the individuals' habits they considered to contribute to the rise of obesity among youth. Bad time management, as the members explained, caused people to not have time to prepare meals for school which resulted in a quick solution of reaching for the vending machines to get candy bars to quell hunger.

The members also mentioned lack of motivation as well as laziness as a personal factor related to obesity. Although PL\_A1 members later on agreed that the term laziness to be a form of stigmatization of obese people, labelling them as 'being lazy' and responsible for their obesity.

Despite remarking how personal habit and responsibility were, in their opinion, central to the reasons why one lived unhealthily, the Polish Alliance members also brought up structural and systemic factors that they considered significantly influenced and shaped people's habits. One of the factors they highlighted was what they called 'the grandmother syndrome' which refers to Polish grandmothers' tendency to spoil their grandchildren with sweets and treats in large quantities

making children habituated to consuming sugar. They also mentioned how grandmothers and parents in Poland tended to cook in what they called 'a very traditional way', meaning preferring meals that were fried and high in fat. This resulted in a lack of healthy food in the house since young age.

As to 'being lazy', the Alliance members pointed out that school could be very taxing for young people. They said that young people spent so much time at school that they became tired afterwards and did not have the energy to do sports or prepare healthy meals. After school, they still had exams and homework which took up most of the day, leaving no time for being physically active. PL\_C1\_17 (f), for example, shared during the discussion that she did not go to the gym or any sports classes because she did not have time left after school.

The members then specifically emphasized on the lack of information on healthy lifestyles as a factor that influence young people's habits including that there were no classes in schools addressing the topic. They brought attention to how it was difficult to get healthy food in schools' environment and how some schools' canteen food was unhealthy. They pointed out how physical education (PE) classes were organized in Poland made it hard for young people to get motivated to exercise. The mentioned factors such as lack of choice of activities, favouring students who were talented, comparisons between peers, lack of suitable equipment, poor condition of the gym, and lack of adequate bathrooms to take a shower after PE classes to be some of the reasons why young people often asked for exemptions from PE classes.

PL\_C1 members factored in technology accessibility and usages of smartphones, tv, laptops as shaping young people's habit. They noted how common and attractive the technologies were that it caused young people to prefer spending time at home watching TV and playing games instead of going outside to be with friends. They admitted that they themselves would rather chat through messenger or WhatsApp instead of having an in-person conversation.

All three Alliances specifically pointed to social media as a significant influencing force in young people's idea of obesity and body image. The members discussed the body positivity movement which they considered good as it embraced diverse body shape and promoted acceptance of one's own body. However, they also highlighted how the movement can be problematic as it might normalize obesity and resulted in people not wanting to change their unhealthy lifestyles related to obesity.

The members were also aware of how the challenge of healthy lifestyle might be more difficult to some people compared to others. They brought up financial difficulty as one of the factors that might influence this. They reasoned that if people did not earn enough money, they might opt cheaper food products that were often unhealthy. They might also often eat fast food due to the lack of time to prepare meals. The limited budget prevented them from using the gym or joining fitness classes. Because of all of these factors, the risk of being overweight and obesity increased.

Overall, even in the early meetings of the Alliances, the members were already bringing up systemic and structural factors affecting adolescents' obesity. They stated clearly that, in their opinion, the society was individually and socially responsible for the increasing number of obese people.

The facilitators however noted that when coming up with ideas to address the challenge of adolescents' obesity young people still focused on changing individual habit and did so directly without really addressing the systemic factors that might shape that habit. For example, in PL\_A1 young people originally came up with an idea of a mobile application to help individuals plan for healthy meals and physical activity. The idea was later abandoned as technicalities in making the application turned out to be quite an obstacle.

As the members started to develop their policy proposals and collected more information to refine their ideas, their thinking in terms of what significant factors needed to be addressed in order for people to live more healthily began to include more and more systemic aspects of the problem. For example, the PL\_A1 group that worked on the placement of healthy product in stores gradually started to not only addressing more and more relevant stakeholders in their policy ideas, they also began to understand the perspectives of those stakeholders better. When discussing about the store owners or the manufacturers of the unhealthy products, the group addressed the topic of profits and losses. Understanding this as a motivating factor for their stakeholders, the group concluded that instead of formulating their policy as to hide unhealthy products in stores, it was preferable to frame it as promotion and increasing visibility of healthy products. In the words of one of the group members, "This policy is a good idea, but it will be safer to promote healthy food products without demonizing the unhealthy ones".

The group were also aware of the financial challenges in producing healthy products. They also talked about a way of messaging that would be more welcomed or acceptable by others. The group ended up proposing to cooperate with eco-focus company to create eco-packaging to reduce the cost to realize their policy idea. In their opinion, not only does this idea address the financial challenge, it is also a messaging that resonates better with the general public, i.e. promotion of healthy products coupled with supporting the environment.

In the process of developing their ideas, Polish Alliance members became aware of the limit of their ability in enacting change. They recognized that regulations were one of the better ways to ensure certain ideas or policies were actually effectively implemented. They discussed the challenges in doing so as they learned that it would take at least 100,000 signatures to even introduce their ideas to the Polish parliament to be considered. Young people regretted that they did not have their own representatives among the authorities, who could support their activities and promote a healthy lifestyle.

The Polish Alliance members also addressed the notion of responsibility when exploring different factors that influenced obesity. The Photovoice discussion highlighted their views that people did have a responsibility for their own health, particularly because the members looked to their own experience in making lifestyle choices and would like to take up responsibility for their own action. For example, in a discussion of consumption of unhealthy products in PL\_C1 the members admitted that they frequented fast food restaurants despite knowing that food served there was unhealthy, highly processed, and caused obesity. PL\_C1\_07(f) said that they often go to fast food restaurants with their friends, telling themselves that it was not that harmful to their health.

The facilitators noted that this notion of 'who is responsible?' gradually changed to the Alliance members considering the role of more powerful stakeholders shaping a system that contributed to

the prevalence of obesity among young people. The members specifically addressed the government who had one of the strongest powers to enact change through creating regulations and laws. For example, when discussing about people's lack of preference for biking or walking, the PL\_A1 members brought up road safety and bad conditions of cycling paths as one of the contributing factors. They then raised an opinion that city authorities should be the ones to ensure the safety of residents and such infrastructure.

The youth were also disappointed when they learned about the Polish government's decision to remove the ban on advertising junk food. They said that healthy food should be the ones being promoted instead. They also discussed the project of free milk and carrots in schools. They pointed out that the milk contained a high amount of fat and was sweetened while the carrots were of unknown origin. Related to this, they then talked of the need of policy ideas to be implemented in schools to benefit future Polish young generations.

In the feedback forms, filled in by 17 Alliance members across three Polish Alliances, the notion of individual changing their lifestyle to be healthier came across strongly still as what they wanted to see as a pathway to reducing adolescents' obesity. About a third of the respondents stressed on individuals' habits need to change as a solution to the problem. Only one person said it was the environment that needed to change. However, the discussions during the meetings showed that their views of what could contribute to the changing of the lifestyles became very much informed by system thinking. They pointed out that people tended to live unhealthily because they lack something. This lack could be related to motivation, time, money, access, skills, or knowledge. In the early meetings, the members contributed this lack to personal responsibility, e.g. because people were lazy or that young people should have the knowledge of how to eat healthily. Through developing their policy ideas, the Alliance members recognized that these lacks were results of systemic factors, ranging from schools not providing information about healthy living to unhealthy food being easily accessible to sport facilities being too expensive for a young person to afford. Their policy ideas specifically addressed these factors to reduce the lacks experienced by individuals.

Throughout the entire process, as also noted by the facilitators, the members did not only realize that the challenge of adolescents' obesity were systemic challenges, but they also came to recognize that changes embedded in a system to be more sustainable and impactful. This then translated to the Alliance members wanting to talk with stakeholders about policy ideas because they agreed that the system needs to be changed and only through a change of system could the society address the obesity prevalence among youths. Overall, the facilitators reflected that the process of going through the development of policy idea as a whole really helped the Alliance members to gradually see the challenge of adolescent obesity being influenced by structural and systemic aspects rather than just strictly individual.

### *Process, Decision Making and Ownership*

Decision making about activities and process

PL\_A1

The facilitators and co-facilitators since meeting 1 have emphasized to the Alliance members that they were the ones who ultimately decide what to do as part of the Alliances. They were specifically informed that they could focus on policy ideas that they considered relevant to them. In meeting 5, the Alliance members made several important decisions in relation to their policy ideas including dropping certain activity and deciding to not work on policy ideas that “*they don’t believe in*”. They also proposed to do additional activities, such as conducting a survey, particularly on the idea of changing the distribution of products in grocery stores, they suggested different actions to refine the policy ideas, such as creating a Facebook promotion, and they requested to hold additional Alliance meetings to work further on their proposals.

The policy idea that was dropped was the one on Physical Education class as the Alliance members doubted the feasibility of this specific proposed class to be implemented in their local high schools. Between meeting 5 part 1 and meeting 5 part 2, PL\_A1\_06 (m) contacted one of the facilitators and informed her that after talking to one another on their plan to test their idea through organizing a school event, they decided to not go ahead with it and to instead create a social media account to promote the policy idea and to do online surveys. This was in line with what the rest of the group decided in meeting 5 part 1 that due to the COVID-19 situation, the best and safest option to test out their ideas was by online means. This included contacting stakeholders online or by phone which was the way preferred by the Alliance members as compared to the suggested way offered by the facilitators and co-facilitators which was to contact the stakeholders through an official meeting or an organized team meeting.

In meeting 5 part 2, the attending Alliance members reiterated again their preference of focusing on online activities due to the pandemic. At this meeting, it was made clear that three people have stepped up to be the leaders of each of the policy idea group. They declared that they were willing to lead the groups and that they represent the group members who could not come to the online meeting due to a competing schedule with the online school classes. The leaders communicated how each group has self-organized their work among themselves outside of the Alliance meetings with the facilitators and co-facilitators. They also fully took on the task of regularly updating and monitoring their respective policy idea Facebook account. They decided that they would do weekly statistical analyses of the Facebook groups, such as tracking the number of likes, reviews, comments, reactions, and messages, to have a full picture how their policy idea online promotion was going and to collect opinions from their viewers.

Since taking leadership of their activities online to promote and receive inputs on their policy ideas, the facilitators and co-facilitators has noted that the Alliance members, through their group leaders, were eager to be constantly in touch with the facilitators and co-facilitators. They had questions about feasibilities of conducting certain activities and they also clarified several things on the budget needed to carry the online promotions. They also expressed their preference to conduct more meetings online with the facilitators and co-facilitators to receive support. This request was accommodated by the facilitators and co-facilitators although they noted that it was challenging due to the length of the meeting that were longer than the previous meetings as the Alliance members were enthusiastic and have quite a number of questions for the facilitators and co-facilitators.

Meeting 6 was the additional meeting that was held based on the Alliance members’ request. In this meeting they summarized the results of the online actions they have taken, such as giving out

merchandise as both gifts and promotional materials to their followers. They also talked about what examples they could bring to the discussion in the dialog forum with the stakeholders as some of the attending members expressed their willingness to participate in it. The Alliance members further expressed their willingness to meet again on their own after meeting 6 and to continue to take actions to further realize their policy ideas. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted that this willingness really showed the members commitment for action however they also expressed concerns that independent work without the facilitators and co-facilitators' mentoring could prove to be challenging for the Alliance members.

Activities conducted in the Alliance, informed by CO-CREATE engagement protocols, provided space for the Alliance members to make decisions since early on. This included voting on which policy ideas to further develop (meeting 2) which was replicated during meeting 5 part 1 when the Alliance members chose which steps of testing out the ideas they liked to carry out.

### [PL\\_B1](#)

In the early meetings (meeting 1 and 2), decision makings were still first initiated by the facilitators and co-facilitators. Alliance members were asked of their thoughts and opinions of the proposed activities for the meeting and whether they would agree to continue with it. Starting meeting 3, the Alliance members started to initiate decision making. This can be seen, for example, on the decision they made about policy idea no. 4: organizing trips for young people to do various sport activities. This policy idea was voted in meeting 2 as one of the policy ideas to be further developed. However, the Alliance members decided in meeting 3 that they no longer wanted to work on it and dropped the idea from the list of policy recommendations to be further developed. At meeting 5 when the members were discussing on activities to do to test out their policy ideas this policy idea again did not receive any support in the voting. Also in meeting 3, the Alliance members also made a decision in relation to the advocacy training they just received. They expressed that they wanted to revisit the topic when they are at the stage of preparing for talks with stakeholders or when they started to prepare some social actions related to their policies.

Meeting 4 saw the Alliance members discussing whether or not to cooperate with a vlogger from YouTube in promoting their policy ideas. This vlogger was chosen by the Alliance members through a poll in the Alliance Facebook group. In meeting 5, the Alliance members individually came up with ideas on how to test out their policy proposals. They then divided among themselves which activity specifically they as individuals wanted to take on during the testing.

However, due to the COVID-19 limitation, the Alliance members were not able to test out their policy idea according to their original plans. The facilitators offered the Alliance members to do the testing online. However, none of the attending members wanted to take up that idea. In the same meeting, the Alliance members decided that they would rather have the dialog forum, where they meet with stakeholders to discuss about their policy ideas, in June or July. They specifically expressed that they would not like for the forum to take place in September.

Following the CO-CREATE protocol, activities in the meeting provided space for the Alliance members to make decisions for themselves even in the early meetings. In meeting 1, all three Alliances agreed on a group contract, detailing a code of conduct during Alliance meetings. In meeting 2 and 5, the Alliance members did a vote to choose which policy ideas to further develop. The members of all

Polish Alliances were informed about an existing budget which they could decide on how to use to support the development of their policy idea.

## PL\_C1

In the early meetings (meeting 1 to 3), it was more common for the facilitators to suggest or come up with a plan of activities first which was then agreed on by the Alliance members. This included, for example, having homework to do between meetings, having a group agreement at the beginning or when the date of the next meeting is going to be. In the later meetings, the Alliance members take more leadership in deciding what to do, both in and out of the meeting, including what actions to take in relation to their policy ideas.

An early change of lead in decision making can be seen in relation to how the Alliance members divide themselves into smaller groups. In meeting 2, the facilitators and the co-facilitators suggested a way to divide the Alliance members into groups (i.e. by counting to 4) while in meeting 3, the Alliance members decided by themselves already which group they want to be a part of based on the policy idea they are interested to work on. In meeting 6 part 2, two Alliance members expressed willingness and interest in working on the smartphone application policy. They were not involved in coming up with the idea originally and were working on a different policy idea. The two original members of the smartphone application group happily welcomed them to the group.

After the first three meetings, we see more examples of the Alliance members making suggestions, taking charge, and deciding what to do. In meeting 4, PL\_C1\_13 suggested to use Instagram more than vlogging to communicate about their ideas to peers because the Alliance members are more comfortable using Instagram than doing vlogging. Between meeting 4 and meeting 5, a new policy idea was created. PL\_C1\_18(f) together with PL\_C1\_16(f) came up with an idea to create a smartphone application to monitor a person's daily activity and to exchange the points gained through these daily activities for discounts in given shops and services. In between meeting 5 and meeting 6 part 1, the group working on this policy idea invented the name "Fitket" as a result of doing the SMART method outlined in CO-CREATE engagement protocol, designed the logo, prepared the initial version of the first post on their policy idea's Facebook page, and prepared questions for a potential survey.

In meeting 5, the Alliance members had active discussion to decide how they want to test out their policy ideas. In this meeting, the Alliance members also voted on which policy idea test they would like to carry out. *"The winner was the idea of designing a website with an evaluation questionnaire/feedback survey, for filling in which potential recipients would receive a small gift. The participants decided that the gift would be a healthy bar or a promo bag. We were impressed because the participants combined three small ideas into one. They combined the creation of a website with a feedback survey to evaluate the idea and an incentive for those who would fill out the survey."* After this meeting, Alliance members decided individually which part of the test that they would like to carry out, e.g., creating Facebook profile of the policy idea or developing a survey.

Later meetings also showed Alliance members' self-led decisions on the meetings themselves, particularly whether or not to hold the meeting or whether more meetings were preferred. Meeting

5 was an hour longer as the Alliance members felt the need to stay longer to finish working on the SMART method on their ideas. Meeting 6 was split into two parts because of this. Since most participants responsible for the "Mobile Application" policy idea could not participate in the meeting, a decision was made together with the Alliance members who were present to hold an additional meeting in the first week of May for that group only (meeting 6, part 1).

There was one occasion where in the later meetings, the Alliance members asked the facilitators and co-facilitators to help them in making decisions. This pertained the Mobile Application group that asked the facilitators and co-facilitators to assign them a leader (meeting 6 part 2). Three leaders were later proposed by the facilitators and co-facilitators. One for the 'gym entries' policy idea and two for the 'mobile app' idea. This proposal was accepted by the Alliance members.

Due to the way the activities were designed, informed by the CO-CREATE protocol, the Alliance members had some decision-making opportunities that were directly led by themselves, even in the early meetings. This included, among others, choosing which policy idea to further develop through voting (meeting 2), deciding how to use the provided PLN 12,000 budget to test out their policy ideas (meeting 4), and voting for actions in order to refine their policy ideas (meeting 5).

The facilitators and the co-facilitators have also since the early meetings directly asked participants for their inputs for some decisions regarding their Alliance, such as their preference to work individually or in a group for their homework (meeting 2) which was asked through a Facebook poll. A Facebook survey was later used to help young people communicate which steps of policy idea testing they individually liked to carry out (meeting 5). They also continued to suggest ideas in the later meetings even though the Alliance members were the ones who were mostly taking the lead in decision making. For example, this can be seen from them suggesting that *"using a leaflet to present a policy idea might not be very attractive to potential recipients. The participants admitted that they themselves are reluctant to read and use leaflets distributed, e.g. in shopping malls as part of promotional campaigns. [Because of] this, the idea of attaching small gifts to the leaflets was developed, e.g. healthy bars, pens or cups with the CO-CREATE logo."*

Meeting 7 was the last Alliance meeting before the dialog forums. However, the facilitators and the co-facilitators assured the participants that *"if they wanted to meet again in the meantime, it would be possible to arrange an additional meeting."* Some decisions were made in relation to the continuation of activities related to the policy idea they were developing. The Facebook page dedicated to the "Fitket" application will be continued to be run by the Alliance members. PL\_C1\_14 (f) as the leader of the group declared that a survey post to learn the public's opinion on the policy idea will appear later this week. It was also decided that the participants will try to buy gifts for people filling in the survey. PL\_C1\_06 (f) declared willingness to buy sports bags as a gift.

Group dynamics and involvement in relation to activities

PL\_A1

Most of the Alliance members stated at the beginning that the reason they wanted to take part in CO-CREATE was because they want to gain knowledge and experience in the field of health prevention through the project. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted that they also seemed to be motivated to make changes in their environment and have a particular interest in the topic of dietetics, physical activity and a healthy lifestyle. Some of the young people who signed up to be part of the Alliance were those who had taken part in the system mapping exercise done previously with the school. They said that they enjoyed the mapping activity and wanted to continue to the next step of the project.

Attendance dropped to 1/3 during the online meeting done during the COVID-19 quarantine. The Alliance members who attended the meetings said that they were in communication through Messenger with the other members who could not make it to the meetings. The group leaders, such as PL\_A1\_06 (m) also took it upon themselves to talk to their group members who did not attend and shared information via private message. The facilitators and co-facilitators also noted that the online communication during the COVID-19 period was also a good opportunity to see who among the members were the most engaged with the process.

The Messenger/Facebook group was used to establish communication outside of the Alliance meetings. The facilitators and co-facilitators encouraged members who were shier in speaking up during meetings to really make use of this online platform. The facilitators and co-facilitators particularly used the Messenger group to check whether anyone has any challenges to participate in the next meeting. However, the Alliance members were not always responsive to posts by the facilitators and co-facilitators to this group. The Alliance members tended to 'like' the post but did not respond further. They were, however, more responsive to one-to-one messaging. There was a discussion in meeting 2 to address this and the members started to use the Messenger more after meeting 3. The Messenger group was also used to quickly integrate newcomers. The facilitators shared information with the 4 newcomers before meeting 2 via Messenger to keep them up to speed. Later on, when the policy ideas were being further developed, the Alliance members used the Messenger group to communicate among themselves to work on policy ideas and fill in the policy forms.

In meeting 1, a group contract was agreed on with the Alliance members as a code of conduct for the group. They were also given a gift in the form of a water bottle. Homework was then introduced but the facilitators and co-facilitators were unsure how much the Alliance members actually worked on homework due to their non-responsiveness to online communication between meetings. The facilitators and co-facilitators did note that however on the Photovoice homework, only 5 people did not complete the tasks and they joined others who did during the meeting when discussing the result. Those who did the Photovoice homework did so quite thoroughly as they also filled in the analysis form and brought it to the meeting. The Alliance members also completed a number of short vlogs between meeting 3 and 4.

“In meeting 5 part 1, the Alliance members shown more initiative in taking actions on their own. Examples of these included them searching for information that 100,000 signatures of citizens are needed to introduce a project of law solution to the parliament. They also considered inviting some famous people, influencers, and celebrities to cooperate under their policy idea. PL\_A1\_06

(m) and PL\_A1\_11 (f) shared with the group that they came up with the logo and name for their policy.”

The members also mentioned that they have also organized their work under policy ideas by themselves outside the meetings. They contacted each other to talk about how to test a policy idea in order to gain more information to refine and revise it.

The three members who participated in the meeting 5 part 2 were leaders of the groups. They were PL\_A1\_06 (m), PL\_A1\_12 (f), and PL\_A1\_20 (f). In the meeting they shared what they have been able to accomplish outside of the meeting with the other Alliance members. They shared with the facilitators and co-facilitators that they have been in contact with their group members to further develop their policy ideas. For example, PL\_A1\_20 (f) said that she already created a social media account for her group’s policy idea which she did with some support from the members of her policy idea group. There seemed to be an agreement among themselves that the leaders will join the online meeting with the facilitators and co-facilitators in order to share the progress that they have been managed to do so far. However, despite being able to work together with their group members outside of the meeting, the leaders expressed that they did have problems contacting some group members. PL\_A1\_12 (f) specifically expressed this during the meeting. Yet, she also mentioned to the facilitators and co-facilitators that she strongly believed that other members, even though not being present at the meeting, would be engaged in carrying out the actions to further refine the policy ideas. The facilitators and co-facilitators did notice that some members did communicate with the leaders, yet some others were not taking part at all.

Meeting 6 started with the presentation by the Alliance members on the progress they have made in between meetings on their policy ideas. Both the Fit, Fresh, and Fast (FFF) and the Healthy Shelves groups did the presentation which in total lasted for an hour. They shared what they have been able to accomplish on social media where most of the activities were done due to the COVID-19 restriction. Apart from publishing posts on social media, the Alliance members created an online survey. 111 people (70 women and 41 men) responded to the FFF group’s survey. 60 per cent of these respondents were high school students. The members learned from the survey that 65 per cent of respondents have never had a contact with a dietitian. Out of 111 respondents, 75 people rated the idea with a 5 (the highest possible rating) and 5 people rated it with a 4. The average rating of the policy idea according to the respondents was 4.61.

On top of doing online engagement, the FFF group sent several messages to people and companies dealing with healthy eating. Although they did not manage to establish any cooperation with these stakeholders, the members did receive a significant number of positive comments. In addition, the members also reached out to several influencers to help promote their policy ideas. Some influencers that the FFF group has reached and who agreed to support the initiative were asked to make photos wearing sweatshirt with the policy logo, participants then created a section at Ig called “ambassadors” (of the initiative) with these photos. Also see:

<https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17882038207631601/>

The facilitators and co-facilitators noticed since the first meeting that there were several outspoken members with one member being particularly shy in speaking up but no tension was detected among the group. In meeting 2, the facilitators and co-facilitators observed that the ice was broken between

the members as they observed young people started to sit next to those who they did not yet know well personally.

In meeting 6, the facilitators and co-facilitators learned that only around half of the numbers of the Alliance members actively participated in developing the policy ideas, particularly in testing their ideas through online means. The youth stated that those who really cared about the project stayed till the end of the meetings and worked on the idea development. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted that the leaders of the groups remained the most active during online Alliance meetings, but they also observed those who were rather shy at the start of the Alliance were becoming more active. They especially noted PL\_A1\_17(f), who was very shy in the early meetings. In the later meetings, she decided to join one of the groups, worked on the policy, even took the floor during one of the online meetings. She also decided to participate in the dialog forum which the facilitators and co-facilitators were particularly delighted by.

By meeting 6, the facilitators and co-facilitators considered those who did not answer their messages or posts online to be no longer interested to take part in the Alliance. This is about 50% of the total members (11 young people). The members who attended the meetings shared the same thoughts. For example, PL\_A1\_06 (m) said *"I asked all participants if they wanted to take an action and what steps of the action could they take, but some people didn't answer at all"*.

In order to support good engagement of the members throughout the project, the facilitators and co-facilitators attempted different ways. They thought of tasks that might be more engaging for the members such as Photovoice or vlogging. The facilitators and the co-facilitators also endeavoured to provide support constantly by being active in the Facebook group, sharing information surrounding the policy ideas or obesity in general, and providing tips on how to move forward in certain tasks.

The facilitators and co-facilitators observed that the following activities worked well with the members and kept them engaged:

- The advocacy training, members were working together and roleplaying during the activity. The facilitators and co-facilitators observed that this made the members felt more comfortable with one another and they were more willing to be assigned to random groups to work with those they might not be close friends with.
- Working on the policy ideas in small groups. The facilitators and co-facilitators noted that the Alliance members were more active and engaged when working in small groups and they often used the support of the co-facilitators who were assigned to each group.
- Vlogging. The Alliance members responded well to vlogging and took it upon themselves to make vlogs in between meeting 3 and 4.

The facilitators and co-facilitators also noted some challenges throughout the engagement process:

- Meetings can sometimes conflict with exams or classes. Particularly in meeting 1 and 2, some members had to take some time away from the meeting in order to take part in an exam that was scheduled at the same time with the Alliance meeting.
- The facilitators and co-facilitators observed that the Alliance members did not seem to be willing to put much effort into the project. The facilitators and co-facilitators hypothesized that the members might find being part of a prestigious research project to be appealing but they do not necessarily want to put in the work.

- The facilitators and co-facilitators also think that the COVID-19 epidemic contributed to the low response and attendance of meetings. Youth were having lessons online which was a new and demanding task to fulfil, they were unable to see each other on a daily basis at school, and some of them were struggling with access to IT equipment or internet connection. Some also had extra obligations such as caring for younger siblings' online schooling and other additional chores.

## PL\_B1

In meeting 1, group contracts were established with the Alliance members which contains rules of conduct agreed together. Homework was introduced by the facilitators and co-facilitators to continue engagement between meetings. Water bottles were offered as gifts in meeting 1. Gifts were also offered in meeting 2, 4, and 6. Those who participated in the last online meetings were given an additional gift. The gifts were also offered in the other two Alliances. They had an option to choose between a lunchbox, a folding cup, a collapsible mug or resistance bands for exercising. They chose the folding cup as their gift. Healthy snacks such as salads, tortillas, sandwiches, and water were served on the tables at the back of the room. The healthy snacks were also provided for the other two Alliances in Poland.

All Alliance members were involved since the beginning, particularly in discussion, sharing their own understanding of the problems and experience. There was one or two members who were more active than others. They raised their hands before speaking. However, the facilitators and co-facilitators did note that there was some shyness among participants to speak up. This was especially noted on meeting 2 when looking at different policy ideas. In meeting 3, Alliance members spoke up more particularly in identifying important elements that could support a successful policy idea including some action such as asking *"the Mayor of the area to put the food-truck in regularly visited places."*

The facilitators and co-facilitators noticed in meeting 4 that the group who worked on "Free access to sport facilities" seemed to have a clear division of tasks. They noted that the members had a close friendship among them which might help them in working together. Meeting 4 also saw informal leaders started to rise up such as PL\_B1\_17 (F) who was part of the group that worked on the food truck policy. She spoke up often and the rest of the members of the group listened carefully to what she was saying. PL\_B1\_17 (f) also sent a filled-out policy form to one of the co-facilitators before the meeting. She decided to fill in the policy form by herself since she was not present at the last meeting even though the facilitators did not express such a need.

Meeting 5 was the first to be held online due to the COVID-19 quarantine requirement. At the beginning of the meeting, the facilitators and co-facilitators and the Alliance members established the rules of communication: *"1. we switch off the microphone when we don't speak to avoid unnecessary noises 2. we don't speak while another person is already speaking. 3. we don't interrupt each other."* In the meeting, only some participants spoke while the rest used the chat function to answer questions or for discussion.

Another informal leader arose at the end of the meeting 5. PL\_B1\_03 (f) proposed to share the steps of the planned action from the SMART form to their Facebook group. She reasoned that this would

allow other members who did not join the meeting to participate and to choose which steps of the action to take on themselves. This proposal was agreed on by the rest of the group.

In meeting 6, the facilitators and co-facilitators observed that the group was less active compared to the fifth meeting. They spoke less than usual and most people used the chat function to participate. Realizing that most participants did not want to speak up, the co-facilitator then asked them to send "likes" on Skype's chat which worked well to facilitate the discussion. Only the de facto leaders of the group, PL\_B1\_17 (f), PL\_B1\_07 (f), PL\_B1\_11 (f), and PL\_B1\_06 (f) spoke frequently. They gave suggestions for changes in the policy forms and directly addressed suggestions from the other participants. The facilitators and co-facilitators observed that because of this, members who were not very active during the meeting finally spoke up about their ideas.

Several activities were observed by the facilitators and co-facilitators to be working well with the Alliance members:

- Vlogging training. "They listened very carefully to what the co-facilitator was talking about. Participants were having a great time shooting vlogs and were strongly involved in this task."
- Filling out the policy form together. "Co-facilitators and facilitators had an opportunity to get to know the participants better and establish a closer relationship with them."

The facilitators and co-facilitators reflected early that the group size might be slightly too big for the members to feel comfortable to speak up. They also thought by meeting 6 that having icebreakers at the beginning might have helped to make people feel more comfortable in speaking up. Throughout the engagement period, the facilitators and co-facilitators put effort into building trust to make sure that the Alliance members felt comfortable communicating with them. One way the facilitators and co-facilitators did this was through answering questions and helping to solve problems during meetings. One occasion illustrated this in meeting 3 when the four members of "Healthy Food Truck" policy idea seemed to be stressed and worked quite reluctantly. After one of the co-facilitators came over and supported the work of the group, the members began to relax and discuss their policy idea.

Social media was used to stay in touch in between meetings as this was seen as the biggest challenge by the facilitators and co-facilitators. Most Alliance members did not respond to the posts in the Facebook group established for the Alliance to stay in touch. The members were also unresponsive to WhatsApp messages. The facilitators and co-facilitators tried to contact each member individually after meeting 2 and found that the Alliance members were more responsive to them this way. However, in meeting 4, the facilitators and co-facilitators still felt the need to address the group as a whole about the lack of communication between meetings, particularly the low response to the posts on the Alliance's social media group account. The facilitators and co-facilitators then proposed to create 3 separate Messenger groups, each dedicated to one of the three policies the members were working on. All the participants accepted the proposed solution. Unfortunately, between meeting 4 and meeting 5, the facilitators and co-facilitators did not see much improvement in the online communication. A large proportion of the participants still did not reply to private messages and they also did not respond to the posts that were published at their Facebook group. The facilitators and co-facilitators also noticed that the same group of people who was not active online in between the meetings was also not active during the meetings.

Before meeting 6, the facilitators and co-facilitators decided to verify the motivation and willingness to participate in the project. The members received a private message through messenger asking if they wanted to continue participating in the project. If they answered yes, they were asked to try to be more engaged, if they answered no, they were informed again that they could withdraw from the project with no consequences. As a result, three people resigned: PL\_B1\_13 (f), PL\_B1\_15 (f), and PL\_B1\_20 (f). They wrote that they had too many school duties and were unable to be further involved in the project.

The facilitators and co-facilitators also reflected on the online meetings done due to the COVID-19 situation. Due to the large number of online school classes Alliance members needed to participate in, the facilitators and co-facilitators decided that the Alliance meetings should take place on Saturdays. The turnout to the online meeting was quite low (less than half of the in-person meeting) and only 9 people overall were observed to actively participate in the discussions. The online meetings were also longer in duration, lasting on average about 2 hours compared to 1.5 hours of the in-person meeting, mainly due to technical problems. Most of the time the participants had their cameras turned off, which made it difficult for the facilitators and co-facilitators to assess their non-verbal reactions. The Alliance members were also shier and less willing to take part in discussions.

#### PL\_C1

Most of the participants mentioned at the beginning that they joined CO-CREATE Alliance because they want to find out more about the topic of adolescents' obesity and healthy lifestyle. They said they were not provided with the knowledge surrounding health and obesity in school.

The level of engagement of the Alliance members varied from meetings to meetings. In meeting 1, the facilitators and co-facilitators observed that the Alliance members were active throughout the whole meeting, sharing factors related to overweight and obesity and connections between the factors while doing the system map activity. A few stayed behind after to ask further details of the project. In meeting 2, the Alliance members were more active and spoke up more in the discussions. Facilitators and co-facilitators noticed that the use of small groups helped as those who were usually shy also contributed in small groups. Facilitators and co-facilitators thought this might be due to young people in Poland generally do not have many opportunities to share their opinions in school and therefore might not be comfortable when need to do so in a larger group. In meeting 3, the Alliance members were generally quiet during the advocacy training although after some encouragement, those who were usually shy did speak up. In meeting 4, the Alliance members were also actively engaged in the discussion, which the facilitators and co-facilitators attributed to the discussion at the beginning about needing the Alliance members to be more responsive online.

Meeting 5 was the first meeting held online due to the COVID-19 restrictions and quarantine. Only 1/3 of the participants showed up to the meeting but the facilitators and co-facilitators noticed that the dynamic of the group was very good with everyone involved being engaged in discussions. Facilitators and co-facilitators reflected on this and listed out several possibilities of the reasons:

- Only committed and willing to act participants joined the online meeting. It required more effort (e.g. scheduling) and no gifts were provided in joining the meeting; unlike how it was usually for in person meetings.

- Increased security and comfort from joining the meeting from home. The Alliance members also had a choice not to turn on their video.
- The meeting was the fifth meeting which might mean that the Alliance members were by that time more comfortable in speaking up.

Despite having more members attending the meeting (10 people), facilitators and co-facilitators observed meeting 6 part 1 to have a similar group dynamic with previous in-person meetings, particularly noticing that only three members were actively involved in discussions. This led them to think that smaller group size might be more conducive for the Alliance members to speak up. *"There were two people who dominated the discussion. PL\_C1\_07(f) and PL\_C1\_12(f) were the most active in the discussion and shared their opinions. It is clear that they are leaders in their group and speak on its behalf. However, they do not impose their opinions on the rest of the group and give others space to speak."*

Meeting 6 part 2 was specifically for the Fitket group with 3 people out of 4 members attending. The facilitators and co-facilitators noticed that one member was more active in answering questions while the other two were rather quiet. The facilitators and co-facilitators hypothesized that this might be due to them being tired since they just finished a math lesson directly before the meeting. A slight tension happened when the leader of the group expressed her dissatisfaction about additional members joining the group, thinking she was not informed but found out she missed the information in the Facebook group. At the end the tension was resolved and the leader as well as the two new members agreed to cooperate.

Meeting 7 was the last meeting before the dialog forums. It was held early in the morning at 8.30 am and the facilitators and co-facilitators noticed that the members were rather passive at the beginning, likely because they just woke up. The three leaders of the policy idea groups were the ones the most active during the meeting. This meeting was used as a reflection meeting and the members expressed their happiness and satisfaction with the entire project. PL\_C1\_06(f) felt so free that she emphasized that the facilitators are *"cool girls, not stiff"*. PL\_C1\_03 (f) added that *"the atmosphere of the meetings was very nice and she liked that we all worked as a group."* PL\_C1\_14 (f) thanked one of the co-facilitators *"that she could always count on our help and quick response to her questions on the messenger"*. PL\_C1\_12 (f) thanked the group *"for the fact that they managed to achieve so much together and 'did it'"*. She emphasized that *"I am proud of myself and the group" ..*

In meeting 7, PL\_C1\_06 (f) stated the following *"I got involved in this project because I heard about some gifts, but with time I forgot about them at all. Time flew by quickly and the form of the workshops was so interesting and cool that I just wanted to participate. Gifts were no longer important to me."* The facilitators and co-facilitators considered this an important quote as it shows a change in the motivation of joining and staying with the project.

The facilitators were responsive to the needs of the Alliance members, either expressed directly or as they observed through the groups' dynamic. Informed by Alliance members' desire to learn more about adolescents' obesity the facilitators prepared an extra presentation about diet and physical activity guidelines. Materials and brochures about healthy diet and recommended physical activity forms and levels were then made available to the Alliance members and can be accessed through their Facebook group. When the facilitators and co-facilitators noticed that the members were quiet in the third meeting, they planned to do an icebreaking game in the next meeting although due to

time constraint, this was eventually not done. The facilitators and co-facilitators also asked the two older participants who stayed for a few minutes longer after meeting 3 their opinion of the possible cause of low engagement in the discussions. The two young women said that *“if somebody signed up to be a part of the Alliance it definitely means that she or he wants to participate and [...] in general this is how they behave most of the time during such lessons.”*

In meeting 3, the facilitators observed that the Alliance members were willing to use Instagram or Snapchat to share photos with friends and others but they were unfamiliar with vlogging. Based on this observation, the facilitators and co-facilitators considered replacing vlogging with a form of online communication that the Alliance members were more familiar with, e.g. photos and short videos on Instagram or Snapchat. Although at the end, the Alliance members did make vlogs and shared them with the facilitators. After meeting 3, realizing that the Alliance members had difficulties in preparing the budget section of the policy form, the facilitators and co-facilitators prepared an example of a completed policy form using sugar tax policy idea as the basis. Realizing before meeting 6 that working on the policy form seemed to be difficult for the Alliance members particularly in filling in information about physical activity and overweight and obesity prevalence, the facilitators and co-facilitators shared with them some reliable reports and scientific articles where they can find data on statistics regarding physical activity and obesity rates among adolescents in Poland. Additionally, facilitators and co-facilitators provided the Alliance members with an example of similar idea implemented in Canada, suggested how the section budget could look like, and proposed some potential stakeholders that the idea could be consulted with.

To further facilitate easier and closer communication among Alliance members and with the facilitators and the co-facilitators, the facilitators and the co-facilitators used additional means when the need arose. After meeting 1, the facilitators and co-facilitators established a Facebook group for the Alliance as a means to communicate between meetings. In meeting 5, The facilitators and the co-facilitators created messenger groups for participants who volunteered to carry out a particular step of policy testing. This is so that the Alliance members can communicate easily among themselves and with the facilitators and co-facilitators. *“However, it turned out that this did not increase participants’ activity. They did not use the chats/conversations to coordinate the tasks. They addressed their questions directly to co-facilitators in private messages.”*

When it comes to engaging the Alliance members and increasing their level of engagement and participation, the facilitators and co-facilitators had the following reflections: *“We also noticed that assigning tasks to several people is more efficient than when the whole group is working on it. Perhaps fewer people feel more responsible for the final result. Additionally, we noticed that writing to participants privately to check their progress motivates them more than general Facebook posts, addressed to the whole group.”*

Homework was introduced as an effort to keep the Alliance members engaged between meetings that took place monthly. A Facebook group was established as a means to communicate between meetings. However, both did not seem to yield the responses the facilitators and co-facilitators expected from the Alliance members, at least in the early meetings. In meeting 2, the facilitators and the co-facilitators had a discussion with the Alliance members about the low online engagement which was responded by the Alliance members that that time of the year (December) was a busy time at school with a lot of exams. Following this discussion, all groups completed their homework

between meeting 2 and meeting 3 which was to fill in the policy form based on their chosen ideas. Another discussion about low response on online platforms was held in meeting 4. The facilitators and co-facilitators did not receive the homework assigned on Photovoice and did not receive replies from the private messenger messages. *“Most of the reasons mentioned by youth were the following: “they didn’t have time”, “didn’t manage to take all six pictures”, “lack of ideas for all 6 photos”, “struggling with the electronic version of Photovoice analysis sheet (lack of skills to fill in the sheet in Word Office)”.* After the discussion the facilitators and co-facilitators felt that most of the participants understood that they needed to be more responsive to online communications with the facilitators and co-facilitators.

Keeping up the Alliance members’ motivation was specifically mentioned by the facilitators and co-facilitators to be their biggest challenge during the spring 2020 COVID-19 quarantine period. School classes online made the Alliance members had less time to focus on the CO-CREATE project. The following were the attempts made by the facilitators and co-facilitators: *“We try to write to them on Facebook, also privately to constantly monitor their progress. We ask them to perform their tasks and offer our help. We realize that nowadays they need our help more, so we answer all their questions at any time.”*

Some participants were less talkative than others. In the first meeting, the facilitators and co-facilitators attributed this to possible shyness and also to their age because they were younger than those who spoke more (particularly compared to the three oldest girls who were very involved in the discussions).

Holding the Alliance meetings during school hours sometimes meant that the meetings’ time overlapped with other school classes or even exams. In meeting 2, two Alliance members were 45 minutes late as they had an important math exam at the same time. Ten Alliance members had to leave for 10 minutes in the middle of the meeting because they had a short chemistry test.

Activities where the Alliance members were active and/or showed interest, as observed by the facilitators and co-facilitators were: 1) Making a contract and respecting rules proposed by youth; *“We could see their expectations.”* 2) A presentation about obesity and making policy also worked; *“[The Alliance members] were listening with curiosity.”* Discussion about factors influencing obesity during system mapping was also necessary. They could share their ideas and felt listened. *“Even the shiest one[s] were eager to share their thoughts.”* Moreover, providing specific examples for topics that were unfamiliar to the Alliance members turned out to be helpful. In meeting 3, the facilitators and co-facilitators gave examples of different advocacy efforts in Poland the Alliance members might be familiar with such as the “black protest” on abortion law, the flash mob organized in Warsaw to promote the Mazury region and stands made by popular foundations for promoting bone marrow donation. The photovoice/homework activity raised interest as well. *“While taking pictures, young people accidentally discovered new ideas for creating interesting policies or improving current ones.”*

Interestingly, activities where other Alliance members were in fact quiet or found them difficult, as observed by the facilitators and co-facilitators, also concerned photovoice and advocacy training, which was explained by the newness of these activities: *“For the first time, they encountered the method of Photovoice research and also advocacy training.”* Vlogging did not seem to be attractive for everyone. *“[The Alliance members said] that they do not have a good idea for short video or do*

*not want to be recorded.*” Likewise, budgeting did not raise a lot of interest as well. “[The Alliance members] said that they do not have many ideas about what could be helpful or needed to implement the idea and how much [...] this would require.” Some of the Alliance members did not want to be photographed or captured in video. “[Alliance members] don't want the materials (photos or videos) with their appearance to be published anywhere. Lastly, working on the policy form was challenging. “[The Alliance members] admitted that working on the policy form is difficult for them, e.g. searching for reliable information on physical activity among youth.”

Which concrete activities might have contributed to empowerment?

The following is the list of activities the facilitators have identified to be helpful for the Alliance members in developing their policy ideas as well as in group building among themselves:

#### Group agreement

Establishing the group agreement at the start of the Alliance meeting was seen to be a positive factor by the facilitators. The activity allowed the members to start having ownership of their group by volunteering their own ‘code of conduct’ during meetings. This agreement was seen by the group as a contract and by including ‘rules’ proposed by the members themselves, they felt listened to and catered of their expectations.

#### Introduction to policy making an obesity

This activity provided young people in the Polish Alliances a foundational knowledge about policy definition and basic assumptions which helped them in developing their own policy idea.

#### System mapping

In the system mapping activity, the Alliance members shared their thoughts of what factors they considered influence the rate of adolescent obesity in Poland. Accommodating their ideas into the map made the members felt listened to and created ownership of the process. During this activity, even members who tended to be more quiet or shy were eager to participate. The resulting map then became a close representation of the lived experience of the young people in each of the Alliances.

#### Photovoice

The facilitators especially emphasized the usefulness of the Photovoice activity. Through taking pictures of their environment, young people learned first-hand what policy implementations and environmental factors influence the rate of adolescent obesity in their immediate surroundings. Some young people thought that this activity could even made stronger if the result could be used more integrally in the development of their ideas (see next section for quotes from young people on this topic).

#### Vlogging

Especially for PL\_A1, the Alliance members found vlogging energizing and empowering. They took an active lead in shooting the vlog themselves and came up with their own ideas what to be included in the vlog.

#### Advocacy training

Except for young people in PL\_B1 who were knowledgeable of some form of advocacy such as protests and stands, the Alliance members were generally unaware of different types of advocacy activity as well as the various terms related to them. The advocacy training provided them with this knowledge. The facilitators also noted that the activity brought the Alliance members closer together as it allowed them to role play, breaking the ice between them and provided them with the opportunity to work with those they have yet to work together before.

#### Working in small groups

The facilitators noted that working in small groups allowed the members to be more active and engaged. Each member also spoke up more and was able to share their thoughts with their group mates.

#### Filling in the policy form

Working on the policy form helped young people to really understand different aspects of policy and how to further refine their ideas. Working on the form also established a closer relationship between the facilitators and the members as the members often consulted the facilitators on questions or aspects they were not too familiar with or need help with.

#### Social media engagement

Establishing social media accounts and managing them has proven to be motivating to the Alliance members. Through their engagement with the accounts' followers, the Alliance members received support for their policy idea. The accounts also provided them with an avenue to try out ideas such as merchandizing and survey making.

#### Survey

Conducting a survey allowed young people to understand more about their policy idea and to learn how their idea was received by people outside of their Alliances. The result of the survey helped them to refine their policy form and they gained knowledge and experience in using a specific information gathering tool in the process.

#### Dialogue forum

Participating in dialog forums provided the members with an opportunity to directly discuss their idea with relevant stakeholders. Not only that the stakeholders gave them insights to better their policy ideas, the Alliance members also received support in various forms to turn their policy idea into reality.

According to the young people themselves, some activities were more valuable to them while some others they considered to be less useful. These insights were gathered through a feedback form provided to the members at the last regular Alliance meeting before the dialog forums. 17 young people from the three Alliances filled in the feedback form. Some quotes are included below to illustrate what young people thought of the activities.

In the feedback forms, seven of the young people provided positive feedback on the Photovoice active, for instance by saying:

*"[Photovoice] made me realize, that the problem, we were talking about, is real, it is present in the surrounding world and it is not only a repetitive topic existing in an undefined reality that doesn't concern me."*

*"[T]hanks to focusing on finding / lacking policies I could see what is missing / what needs to be changed."*

*"[B]ecause while doing it I realized how many positive and negative policies exist in my environment."*

*"[B]ecause we could see what is really missing in our region."*

Accordingly, system mapping was positively assessed by seven of the young people, who for example mentioned:

*"[S]ystem map showed that the weight problem is related to many other aspects of life, and it is not a separate issue."*

*"The system map showed me how everything connects with each other and how everything is important."*

Three of the young people highlighted developing policies as key to their Alliance work:

*"[...] because we were able to start to implement it later."*

However, what was considered as an important activity by some, was not perceived as helpful by others. Five of the young people mentioned in the feedback form that they did not see much value in Photovoice:

*"[Photovoice] didn't help much, although you could find some inspiration in this way."*

And two participants did not appreciate the System mapping activities:

*"[I]t was quite boring and not very useful."*

Overall, the Alliance members indicated how participating in the Alliance activities and meetings helped them grow, empowered them, and that they learned more about the challenge of obesity from participating in the project.

*"I started to give my own ideas more eagerly."*

*"[...] I have definitely learned a lot: running social media, working in a group, making interest in others with my own ideas."*

*"[T]he opportunity to present my own idea, something from myself. Of course, I have often made presentations in front of my class. However, they have always concerned strictly defined topics, it was impossible to introduce something from myself. At CO-CREATE meetings, all tasks required my own work and creativity."*

They specified how being involved in CO-CREATE reshaped the way they see their environment and motivated them to be part of the solution to the obesity problem.

*"I began to notice many aspects of a social life that I hadn't noticed before, e.g. designing public space that promotes unhealthy eating habits and, as a consequence, obesity."*

*"I started to notice and be more critical about various obesity actions and policies around me, I combine facts better and find solutions to problems."*

*“While creating maps and designing politics, I realized that I could change something, have influence. I only need to put a little effort and it will be really good.”*

*“I was able to learn about the process of policy making, which changed my worldview.”*

### *What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5’s engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth?*

All three Alliances in Poland started out being established through schools. The in-person meetings, before the COVID-19 restriction was introduced, were held in one of the schools’ classrooms. After the restrictions, the Alliance members continued to meet online.

In the early meetings, the facilitators provided more guidance and directions for activities conducted in the meetings. From meeting 3 onwards, the Alliance members started to take over the lead, indicating which focus or which direction they would like the Alliance to take, particularly in developing the policy ideas.

The facilitators also noted that the members were originally a bit shy to speak up in meetings and were relatively unresponsive during online communication between meetings. This improved in the later meetings and especially after individual leaders have emerged organically from each sub-group and after some groups have established a presence online through social media.

All Alliances first started to work as a big group. When the members had chosen which policy ideas were to be developed, they then worked in small groups. Each group focused on developing one policy idea. Around meeting 4, individual leaders started to emerge from each of these groups. The leader was either those who first came up with the policy idea being developed by the group or the one who was the most motivated to progress the idea. When this was the case, the leaders also acted as a bridge between the facilitators and the members. Each group held their own conversation and discussion online, led by the leaders, where they discussed the policy ideas. The leaders then joined meetings with the facilitators to report their progress and decision making.

Some groups established online media accounts and promoted their policy ideas through these channels. Informed by their own previous experience with the media, young people chose Facebook and Instagram as their platforms to connect with their peers and other people outside of the Alliances who were also interested in the policy idea at hand.

This online media presence later on became a form of continuation of the Alliances. Motivated by the engagement they had online, young people requested the facilitators for additional meetings to be held to further develop their policy ideas. After participating in dialogue forums with stakeholders and receiving inputs for their policy proposals, the groups with social media presence indicated that they would like to continue maintaining the engagement they had online and continued to see the feasibility to realize the policy ideas they had developed so far.

In particular, one group working on “Healthy Shelves” policy idea (from Alliance PL\_A1) was motivated to continue with developing the idea. After the dialogue forum with some local authority representatives, as well as a specialist in the field of nutrition and physical activity, they came up with two further activities that they would like to plan and perform. They decided to uptake the

stakeholders' offer of co-creating a sample list of “healthy products” which could be introduced together with their policy idea in the future, e.g., to local store owners willing to participate in the policy idea ‘trial’, as well as to contact the city vice-president. Hence, stakeholder contacts and the opportunities offered to bring policy ideas further into the field clearly helped to sustain the Alliance work and youth engagement.

### *Potential effects on attrition*

For the Polish Alliances, the facilitators assumed non-attendance of Alliance members when they expressed willingness to join an Alliance meeting (especially online meetings). This could be done, for example, by voting on a Facebook post about the preferable time for the meeting. The members who voted sometimes ended up not being able to join the meeting and sometimes they provided the reasons why. Attrition, outside of an actual withdrawal, was assumed when a member was not answering group or personal messages, was not showing at the meetings (especially all online meetings), and not providing reasons for not attending.

**What might have helped retention and engagement in the Alliances** was first that youth who were recruited for Alliances in Poland from the outset expressed their interest in learning more about obesity and healthy living among young people. This specific interest of them was likely a pulling factor resulting in them staying with the project. Moreover, some of the young people recruited also took part in the system map activity done previously as a part of the CO-CREATE project. The system mapping activity piqued their interest which led them to wanting to take part in the Alliance activities.

The facilitators and co-facilitators also noted that in some places such as the area of Alliance PL\_C1, young people did not have many opportunities to take part in an international research project such as CO-CREATE or in projects engaging young people and giving them opportunity to directly express their needs and act towards their own goals. Being part of the Alliance might be seen as prestigious or one of the first actions when they were asked to act towards their own goals and needs.

It appeared to be helpful that the Alliances were established in schools. This is likely a retention factor as the Alliance members were committed to attending the establishment and such commitment might spill over to the Alliance meetings. Importantly, several young people in Alliance PL\_A1 and Alliance PL\_C1 were commuting from smaller villages to reach the school, therefore organizing Alliances during or after school hours increased feasibility (e.g. it is easy to reach the Alliances’ locations). Coming from the same school, some young people already knew one another before participating in the Alliance meetings, making their connection with each other to be well established. Some activities seemed to work well with the Alliance members and helped them to get to know members they were not close with before. The advocacy training was one that the facilitators and co-facilitators particularly noted to have this effect.

Activities in the Alliance meeting that were based on the CO-CREATE engagement protocol provided ample space for decision making led by the Alliance members themselves. A sense of ownership of what they were doing, particularly in the case of policy ideas, seemed to energize the Alliance members to take more charge in the direction that the Alliance was taking. Including meeting with

their groups outside of the 'official' Alliance meetings, being in charge of the online activities for policy ideas promotion and research about the ideas, contacting relevant stakeholders, even deciding to continue beyond the last 'official' Alliance meeting. The organic rise of the leaders of groups seemed to be helpful in retaining members as they took it upon themselves to reach out to others for their inputs in developing the policy ideas and the other members could then decide to participate to an extent that was comfortable for them as the leaders were already taking the significant portion of the work, including liaising with the facilitators and co-facilitators.

The levels of participation and engagement in the project lowered at the start of COVID-19 pandemic which necessitated for the Alliance meetings to be done online. The activity of the group leaders was subsequent to that. The facilitators felt this was particularly important because at this point, they started to plan actions together with the Alliance members to refine the policy ideas. It might be a case, that less committed youth felt that the project is no longer attractive since the lockdown prevented youth to participate in group meetings and conduct potential in-person activities (e.g., introducing the idea to the school principal, organizing meetings, piloting the idea, etc.). On the other hand, the situation enabled the most engaged participants to take over group leadership. The establishment of online messenger group as well as the homework kept up some level of engagement between meetings even though the facilitators and co-facilitators noted that the Alliance members were more responsive when being contacted one on one and discussions needed to be had in the meetings about the low response rate from the Alliance members. The one-on-one online communication to remind the Alliance members about the upcoming meeting was also likely helpful for retention. Although the facilitators felt that some elements of group work and group's responsibility became lost this way.

The co-facilitators also played a role in retaining members. They were contacting youth (group and personal messages) between the Alliance meetings in order to encourage them to participate in the subsequent meetings as well as to maintain engagement between the meetings. The Polish team sees the most important tasks of the co-facilitators were to take care of participants whenever they needed any support with their homework and to make sure that participants met the homework due dates.

The ability to test out their policy ideas and therefore doing tangible actions was proven to be quite motivating for the Alliance members. This was particularly true for PL\_A1 who managed to use social media as their means of testing out their policy ideas. The engagement that they received from the followers of the accounts provided them with confidence and motivation to continue developing their ideas.

**What might have hindered retention and engagement in the Alliances** was that even though the project might be seen as prestigious and therefore attractive, young people who did not have a chance to be part of comparable endeavours beforehand tended to take time to find their bearings and tended to be shy in fully participating or voicing their thoughts, at least at the beginning of the Alliances, as they were not used to these. Moreover, some activities, such as vlogging, seemed to be taken up well in one Alliance but not in another. This might be due to their familiarity of the medium rather than aversion to online engagement as those who were not familiar with vlogging were still keen on using Facebook and Instagram to promote their ideas.

Being held during the school hours, the Alliance meetings sometimes clashed with exam time and some Alliance members had to take some time away from the meeting to take part in the exams. The attendance level dropped to only one third of the usual meetings during the COVID-19 quarantine. The Alliance members seemed to have less time for the CO-CREATE project as they had to deal with school obligations online. Some Alliance members decided to drop out completely citing the need to focus on school and studying.

The facilitators reflected that the effect of COVID-19 measurements was significant to the dynamic of the Alliances. An-in-person meeting was proven to be more conducive in creating motivation among the members. Even though it was possible to continue online, the members tend to find it hard to concentrate after one hour of online meeting. Testing of policy ideas that became impossible to do because of COVID-19 restriction also lower motivations of the members. In PL\_A1, where the testing was quickly shifted into an online form, the Alliance members continued to be motivated to develop and finalize their ideas. In PL\_C1, where the ideas were more on physical activities which made it hard to do a prototyping of idea online, the Alliance members lost some motivation to keep going. This was also the case with PL\_B1 who found it hard to pivot to online means to test out their ideas.

## *Conclusion*

The Polish Alliances were established in schools. This helped to sustain the Alliances as the Alliance members were committed to attending the establishment and such commitment might spill over to the Alliance meetings. Coming from the same school, some young people already knew one another before, making their connection with each other to be well established. The Polish Alliances were held in three locations allowing for accounting for inequalities in terms of economic, social, and geographic aspects (e.g., low family income on average, social exclusion related to the transportation due to a lack of an infrastructure and/or public transport facilitating mobility to wealthier communes with more social, economic, employment, and educational opportunities). Regarding ethnical diversity, the Alliances were representing primarily Polish national identity, as reflected in the indicated birth country (Poland) of the youth who filled in the WP7 survey and of their parents (0 per cent of both were born outside of Poland). Regarding gender, among participants who volunteered to the project, boys were underrepresented (6 boys initially volunteered to participate). The diversity of members across Alliances were sometimes reflected within Alliances activities between the two rural-urban and one urban location. For example, the Photovoice activity showed that availability and accessibility of places where adolescents can be active is very much limited in rural communes compared to more urban regions. In some places, such as the PL\_C1 area, young people did not have many opportunities to take part in an international research project such as CO-CREATE or in projects engaging young people and giving them opportunity to directly express their needs and act towards their own goals.

The three Alliances met monthly from November 2019 to April 2020 with one Alliance, PL\_C1, having their last meeting in May 2020. All Alliances started with meeting in person and transitioned to meeting online after the quarantine measures due to COVID-19 were introduced in Poland in March 2020. Attendance dropped to a quarter in PL\_A1, to half in PL\_B1 and to a third in PL\_C1 during the quarantine. Before that period, only one member from each Alliance dropped out, mainly due wanting to prioritize schoolwork and university preparation.

The Alliance members' initial policy ideas were closely informed by their own experiential knowledge, opinions and general knowledge related to healthy lifestyles among young people. However, in the process of participating in CO-CREATE project, the members gained new knowledge, on policies, on scientific facts and on existing initiatives relevant to their proposal that helped them further develop their idea. Activities that helped young people to think more on the system level such as system mapping and Photovoice were proven to be useful in helping the Alliance members refining and finalizing their ideas. Throughout the process, the members were supported and received inputs from the facilitators and co-facilitators. This made the entire policy ideas development process to be a co-creating process between the members and the facilitators.

Developing policy ideas helped young people to see the challenge of adolescents' obesity as a systemic problem. Their perspectives were particularly apparent in their understanding of the core reason for people not living a healthy lifestyle which due to a particular lack created by the systems and structures in their lives. The members' understanding of responsibility also showed their systemic thinking of the adolescents' obesity challenge as they no longer only saw individuals to be responsible but also other stakeholders. Particularly the government. Their realization that a solution to the challenge of adolescents' obesity needs to be sustainable also showcased their further understanding of systemic role in the problem. Young people have had some motivation to take action to deal with the challenge of adolescents' obesity since the very start of the Alliances and this motivation was continuously shown throughout. The readiness to take action was particularly apparent in their eagerness to gather more information about their policy ideas, in their promotion of the ideas to the general public and in testing out their policy ideas. The reflection section and feedback forms showed that the CO-CREATE approach to focus on action was one of the main reasons why the members stay with the project until the end.

The CO-CREATE approach that was built from the principles of YPAR provided activities since the early Alliance meetings that allowed the members to take the lead in decision making. This was particularly apparent when the Alliance members were deciding which policy ideas they wanted to develop; the core focus of the CO-CREATE project. It was often challenging at the beginning for the facilitators to find the balance between providing supports and guidance to the members while at the same time encouraging active leadership. As the Alliance progressed, the members became more proactive, took lead in decision making more and some organically became leaders of their policy idea groups.

CO-CREATE's engagement and capacity building activities provided during the Alliance meetings have shown to help Alliance members in Poland to gain new skills and improved their existing ones, in line with **Objective 5.1** *"To promote and support adolescent participation and political efficacy complementary to the formulation of policies for upstream obesity prevention, particularly in tapping into means and modalities more suitable to and identified by adolescents themselves"*. Skills that were particularly observed demonstrated by the Alliance members included decision making, group building and group work, system thinking, policy design, online research, observation using photography, vlogging, advocacy and engaging in dialogs with policy makers and relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the aim to *"empower adolescents and contribute to capacity development"* was also met. Some of the modalities of empowerment were identified by the Alliance members themselves, which included designing and administering surveys, logo making and branding through merchandising and the use of social media to reach out to a wider audience.

The Polish Alliances gradually evolved into the form that allowed them to continue activities beyond CO-CREATE's formal engagement period with the Alliance members, thereby addressing **Objective 5.2** *"To establish sustainable and transferable youth Alliances for overweight prevention Policies that allow exchanges of knowledge and learning to happen among and between adolescents and scientific researchers, integrating adolescents' experiential knowledge, scientific knowledge and political knowledge for upstream overweight prevention"*. Started with being formed through schools, the Alliances grew into smaller groups that then established online presence as their form of choice. Using social media accounts, the groups built engagement through posts, merchandising and surveys with their peers and the wider public, receiving support for their policy ideas. Hence, even though the *"aim for adolescents to continuously recruit peers"* did not work out since the Alliance groups were already large from the beginning, the participants' engagement with peers via alternative ways nevertheless served *"as a basis of an ever-growing group of adolescents that is policy aware and active"*.

The Alliance members' initial policy ideas were closely informed by their own experiential knowledge, opinions and general knowledge related to healthy lifestyles among young people. However, in the process of participating in CO-CREATE project, the members gained new knowledge, on policies, on scientific facts and on existing initiatives relevant to their proposal that helped them further develop their idea. This contributed to **Objective 5.3**: *"To develop transferable, novel, context-specific and science and experience informed policy options that will contribute to upstream overweight prevention"*. Policy ideas were developed in the Polish Alliances through several activities including system mapping, Photovoice, SMART budgeting and dialog forums with policy makers and community leaders. Along the way, public engagement through social media, continuous communication between the members and assistance provided by the facilitators and co-facilitators supported the entire policy making process. Moreover, it was fruitful to collaborate across CO-CREATE work packages as stated in **Objective 5.4**: *"To collaborate across the work packages, particularly WP2 for existing policies, WP3 for evidence-based policies, WP4, WP6 and WP7 for novel policies. WP5 will recruit and train adolescents also for WP6. Furthermore, WP5 will collaborate with colleagues across WP2-WP7 to identify sustainable and effective upstream overweight prevention policies and forms of collaboration with adolescents and support dissemination through WP9"*, since the WP2 and WP3 studies on existing and evidence-based policies, especially the Nourishing and Movement overviews, and the WP4 system maps served as valuable input for the Alliance work, and a number of the adolescents were able to participate in WP6 dialogue forums, while some policy proposals were chosen as input for WP7 policy implementation.

## Chapter 4: Portugal

### *Summary Portugal*

#### Alliance introduction and recruitment

The setting of the three Alliances for WP5 (following WP4 system mapping activities and preceding WP6 dialogue forum activities) went quite smoothly in Portugal, building on the intelligent partnership with three local scout groups – which provided both access to sufficient numbers of adolescent participants and to well-trained co-facilitators – and the talented facilitation provided by young but well-prepared nutritionists. In total, 41 adolescents were recruited, 18 of which have stayed up until the end of the Alliance training program, despite the latter having to move to online work in the middle of the process (due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020). Quite a few Alliance members stayed on until the Dialogue forums and some of them have even been enrolled in the Youth Task Force and have played an active role there. The three Alliances have been mixed in terms of gender and remained so, even though there was a majority of girls in Alliances P\_A1 and P\_B1 and a majority of boys in Alliance P\_C1. In contrast, enrolling young people from diverse SES proved difficult. Despite the wide recruitment basis of the scout movement in terms of social-economic diversity and a broad invitation to a large number of scout groups, most recruited adolescents turned out to identify with the middle class and some with the upper class. Very few adolescents identifying with low SES background were recruited in Portugal, as was visible in the WP7 survey. Besides, few adolescents with no or limited experience of youth participation have been recruited. Thanks to the partnership with the scout movement, most of the recruited adolescents have had some experience in extracurricular group work, hence acquainted with extra-curricular group life. Some degree of peer recruitment allowed a couple of outsiders to join but the three Alliance groups largely consisted in segments of existing youth groups.

#### Policy ideas

The three Alliances came up with good numbers of policy ideas (21, out of which 9 were fully developed and 6 were included in the Policy Brief from the Alliances in Portugal). The initial ideas covered a wide range of policy areas – i.e. six main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media, healthy environment, healthy lifestyle, and others. In terms of knowledge distribution, the way the Alliances were implemented in Portugal conveyed varied opportunities to get the adolescents further acquainted with expert knowledge on childhood obesity and overweight. Notwithstanding, the adolescents were provided with ample opportunities to express themselves about their experiential knowledge of the issue, for example by adding to the merged map, which adolescents did in all groups during Meeting 2 and to explore their living environments in subsequent meetings. Overall, despite the strong focus on expert knowledge, the adolescents felt at ease to contribute some information or take part in discussions with experts based on their own examples and experiences (in particular in the Q&A sessions). Some of their experiential views on obesogenic environments translated in some initial policy ideas voted at the same meeting in Alliance P\_A1 and, to a larger extent, in P\_B1. Not in Alliance P\_C1. However, in the latter Alliance, experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments was involved in the later stages of the development of policy ideas. All policy ideas found ground for development in other forms of knowledge brought to the

Alliances (scientific knowledge brought by facilitators building on reviews and their e-book; policy knowledge; map knowledge) and in the knowledge developed by the adolescents (gained from their survey in Alliance P\_A1 and from interviewing experts during the Q&A in particular). A striking fact is that, although a number of initial ideas reflecting experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments vanished under way, some did make it to the end of the process, in particular the three policy ideas born in Alliance P\_B1.

#### Readiness for action and obesity perception

The facilitators made optimal use of the training programme to get the adolescents of the three Alliances to address obesity in a systemic perspective. Right from Meeting 2, system maps helped the participating adolescents engage with multi-level factors and how they are linked with each other and with the dietary pattern or physical activity practice, which, ultimately, relates to obesity. Photovoice and researching system-thinking policies also helped to get the adolescents acquainted with a systemic perspective on childhood obesity. Overall, the adolescents involved in the Portuguese Alliances seemed quite keen to address the topic of obesity at length and the facilitators actively encouraged them to do so. The activities of the work package were designed to gather knowledge from youth's experiences, but also to mutually engage in knowledge exchange with other youth and professionals. Various activities of the project therefore affected the adolescents' perception of obesity. In sum, the activities that (in)directly contributed to alter obesity perception were: (1) the system maps, (2) Photovoice, (3) developing the policy ideas and (4) the engagement with facilitators and professionals. Obesity perception is also reflected in various feedback forms, where the youth mention systematic views on obesity.

#### Process, decision making and ownership

Despite following the training program quite closely, the Portuguese Alliances provided varied opportunities for young people to take part in decision-making regarding the tempo and the organization of the meetings. In the three communities, the young people soon got started to work as productive and balanced groups in terms of participation. Yet, engaging the youth in YPAR work proved somewhat more challenging in the P\_C1 group than in the P\_A1 group and the P\_B1 group, in particular ensuring stable attendance and homework participation. This may seem surprising since there were many similarities between the three Alliances: the facilitation was provided by the same talented and well-prepared facilitators, the adolescents had a rather similar background (individually and as an existing group) and the project was carried out at the same period as for P\_B1 (i.e. started a few months before the COVID-19 outbreak). Our data suggest that this surprising finding might be explained by this scouts group culture and by a preference for interactive programs such as Q&A with experts and other opportunities to discuss their ideas, e.g. building on system maps produced by other adolescents. Regarding empowerment, the Portuguese adolescents, have gained power in terms of knowledge acquisition – especially regarding childhood obesity as a health issue; but also in terms of knowledge production (in particular in P\_A1 where youth surveys were carried out and used for the finalisation of policy ideas) and in terms of voice – i.e. making use of or creating space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them.

## Conclusion

CO-CREATE Portugal thus resulted in three Alliances in which young people have been engaged in a number of activities that helped them a) to come up with policy ideas to prevent childhood obesity, and b) to prepare and work towards dialogue forums in which the Alliance members present and discuss their policy ideas with outsiders – including policy makers and how those policy ideas can be turned into action. Activities that worked particularly well according to the (co) facilitators and young people in the feedback forms and WP7 questionnaire included system mapping and working on the policy form to develop their own action ideas. Throughout the data, the following conditions came to the fore that made the Alliances suitable and sustainable for the youth:

- Good planning and timing, to enable young people’s commitment
- A good atmosphere in the meetings (e.g. providing tasty food)
- A supportive role of the facilitators and co-facilitators to facilitate an inspiring and creative environment and helpful activities

One of the main challenges in CO-CREATE Portugal concerned the P\_C1 Alliance, where participating adolescents struggled more with the expectations in terms of homework and personal commitment. This was mitigated by a reorganization of Alliance work. The other main challenge was the COVID-19 outbreak in the middle of the Alliance process, which caused sizeable dropout in youth membership. However, the coping strategy devised by Team Portugal (online Q&A sessions with experts co-created with participating youth) proved very successful in terms of attendance but also in terms of support to the refinement of the policy proposals.

## *Alliance Introduction and Recruitment Strategy*

Youth recruitment In Portugal: identifying political units, gatekeepers and co-facilitators

In order to recruit for a diversity of youths, the CO-CREATE Team Portugal (CEIDSS) identified a scout organization as most relevant **gatekeeper**. This organization is a non-formal movement of youth education, non-profit, non-political and non-governmental. Currently it counts with over 72.000 scouts in 1.100 local groups on the national territory, the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira. Scouting is based on a “learning by doing” system. Through activities that are designed, developed and implemented by the project method and teamwork, the goal is to have scouts working on the following development areas: character, affective, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual. According to the age range, these activities may involve building, games, exploring, hikes or community service, but above all, are intended to reflect the challenges that young people find during their life cycle, preparing them for an active citizenship, relationships, environmental sustainability and integral personal development. The Catholic Church decided to adopt scouting to pursue its goals, like other religious confessions did, but there are some scouts that doesn't follow the religion way. Young scouts are perceived as “citizens-in-the-making”, learning relevant knowledge, values, and skills while being prepared to exercise their citizenry in the future, when they reach adulthood, in a good way by adopting “a distinct set of responsibilities as active citizens whilst Scouts”. The Scouts are more civically and politically active than non-members. Scout associations are described as a positive connection with socialising and engaging young people into politics as other types of voluntary associations, they constitute contexts for the development of politically relevant skills. The scout organization is the largest Portuguese scout association, as well as the biggest Portuguese youth association, and it offered a potential to reach out not only to youth with high or middle socio-economic status but also youth with a lower socio-economic status or there may also be some young people from other nationalities.

Therefore, CEIDSS team contacted the scout organization at national level. The pedagogical office sent information about CO-CREATE to several Scout groups located around the city to see which ones could be interested and willing to participate in the project. This strategy influenced the way CEIDSS team identified the **three geographical areas/political units**. In selecting the scout groups, CEIDSS team had to consider the distance and time that would be needed to perform the WP5 activities, since CEIDSS' headquarters is located in the city. For this reason, contacts were only established with Scout groups in the city district. Already during WP4, two municipalities in the city area were selected. In addition, CEIDSS has a long experience in working with these municipalities since they have national and international projects taking place in these municipalities, such as COSI Portugal and MUNSI. So, CEIDSS team maintained these two participating municipalities and added a larger city. Five Scout groups showed interest in being part of the project. CEIDSS contacted directly the Scout groups and after this, only three Scout groups were willing to meet in person and move forward with the project, the Scout groups based in the three areas that were selected.

For these three very different municipalities, CEIDSS team were hoping to find the diversity sought on the WP5 Recruitment Protocol within each Scouts Group, which accepts all children from any background.

## P\_A1

The area of Alliance P\_A1 is a coastal town: an urban municipality outside of the urban municipality but located within the urban district. It is cosmopolitan and one of the richest municipalities in Portugal. The population concerns about 200.000 inhabitants, in an area of 100 km<sup>2</sup>. A few years ago, the town was chosen as the European Youth Capital. The underlying idea was to bring together young people not only from Portugal but also from diverse countries and geographic points of Europe. The town is a very dynamic and innovative municipality that develops several projects involving young people. This was one of the reasons Team Portugal chose this area and also because they have a lot of health-related initiatives. In this municipality, the group of Scouts counts with 140 members.

## P\_B1

The area of Alliance P\_B1 is an urban municipality located in the city district with about 170.00 inhabitants. According to Immigration and Borders Service, foreigners represent around 5 per cent of the total population. This city is therefore a diverse municipality, enriched with people from Brazil, Cape-Verde, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, China, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, ST. Tome and Principe, Spain, UK among others. The municipality integrates the Portuguese Healthy Cities Network, an association of municipalities that share the concern for the development of a healthy and balanced urban environment. In this municipality the group of Scouts counts 120 members.

## P\_C1

The area of Alliance P\_C1 concerns a larger city in Portugal, incorporated in a metropolitan region with about 3 million people. The young people are from different nationalities, mostly from Brazil, Africa and other European countries. Here we can find a lot of diversity. In this municipality, the group of Scouts of has 185 members. Young people, families and communities are part of this Scout group, which aims to empower and give children and young people tools to become responsible and active citizens.

The **co-facilitators** were recruited through the local Scout groups because they are used to working with adolescents and they already know the adolescents aged 16 to 18 years old. When the CEIDSS presented the project to the responsible of each Scouts group, they mentioned that they would also need someone to be a co-facilitator, explained the role of a co-facilitator and what it means and asked them if they could help us find or suggest people from their group who would be interested in becoming a co-facilitator. In the Scouts group related to Alliance P\_A1 there were four people interested, in the group related to Alliance P\_B1 one and, in the group related to Alliance P\_C1 three. Then CEIDSS team spoke directly to all of them and they were all selected to be co-facilitators, due to their interest in being part of the Project. 5 co-facilitators attended the (international) co-facilitators' training session held in Lisbon (September 2019). After the Co-facilitator training, CEIDSS team decided to gather all the Portuguese co-facilitators for them to get to know each other, to discuss the activities of the project together and to review the content of the previous training and clarify some questions that they might had. Particularly for some of the co-facilitators, this was also an opportunity for them to get to know the CEIDSS team and to get more information about the project

in person. In this meeting, the facilitators also handed them a document (the Co-facilitator Commitment or “Contract”) which contained detailed information about their roles and responsibilities as co-facilitators, as well as about what they would get from the project, namely the payment conditions and amount. They took the document home in order to carefully read it and returned it signed on 20 November 2019.

In each Alliance the co-facilitators were given the freedom to organize themselves as they wished: they decided, according to their availability, who was going to be present in the session. Communication between facilitators and co-facilitators was maintained through a WhatsApp group (2 facilitators and all the co-facilitators – 4, 3 or 1 depending on the Alliance). The co-facilitators were slightly older (between 20 and 22 years old) than the youth from the Alliance.

#### Alliance level recruitment, collaboration and access

The overall approach to implementing the recruitment of adolescents followed by CEIDSS facilitators was to reach out to scout youth through local groups at the beginning of the school year. Recruitment happened in one go, through gathering the adolescents aged between 15 and 18 years old and their parents (in Portugal, parental consent is required up until 18) in each of the three local groups. Due to some time-conflicts it was only possible to schedule the meetings in November 2019. Facilitators made a presentation for the parents and adolescents where they presented and explained the Project. They informed that every adolescent participant will benefit from the project in many ways, including that they will learn new things, collaborate with researchers and other youth, talk with stakeholders, work to try to make a difference, make new friends, vlog/blog/use social media. In addition, adolescents were informed that they would get a certificate that they could include in the CV after the Project. In this same meeting, it was given an invitation letter to all adolescents as well as a sticker with a QR code for youth to sign up if they were interested. Facilitators also handed the consent form to the parents. Instead of individual thank-you gifts, the CEIDSS team opted to give a present to each scouts' association. They will decide what they do need. It can be a tent or camping material. The recruitment of co-facilitators and of adolescents has been supported by the person responsible for the Scout group: an older member, who takes care of the management of the activities of this group and knows every member of the Scouts. In the P\_A1 group, since there were some adolescents aged 15 years old who were keen on being part of the project, after discussing this possibility with WP5 team, 15 years-old were also allowed to sign up for the Project and to participate.

In P\_A1, peer **recruitment outcomes** were observed [P\_A1\_FN01: FN15]: At the second meeting, three new members were recruited by the Alliance members. There was uncertainty about whether younger participants and non-Scout members could join.

In P\_B1 too, peer recruitment outcomes were observed: at the second meeting, one new member was recruited by an Alliance member and accepted to be a new member [P\_B1\_FN02: FN15 indicates].

In P\_C1 too, peer recruitment outcomes were observed: At Meeting 4, ‘P\_C1\_12 (f) came for the first time. P\_C1\_01 (m) called her at the beginning of the meeting informing that she could join the project despite the fact that she hadn’t come before, so she did.’ [P\_C1\_FN04:FN13]. In addition, P\_C1\_15 (f) joined towards the end of the process (14<sup>th</sup> April), as a result of peer recruitment.

According to facilitator, P\_C1\_01 (m) was the one that reached out to her because they were friends, and he knew that she would probably be interested in being part of the project.

Overall, it seems that the Portuguese Alliances’ membership has been rather stable over time, hence suggesting that initial recruitment (through gatekeeper) was deemed satisfactory for the functioning of the Alliance.

Alliance meetings and attendance over time

In P\_A1, the starting date of the Alliance was 30-10-2019 and the end date 29-04-2020, with a total of 8 Alliance meetings, including 5 face-to-face meetings and 3 online meetings. The first meeting was attended by 14 young people. In the following face-to-face meetings attendance fluctuated, with a total number of 19 young people participating at least once, and 10 to 16 young people participating in each face-to-face meeting. When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their work online. The P\_A1 youth were invited to 3 online Alliance meetings. In addition, five online Q&A meetings with experts were offered to the three Portuguese Alliances, hence gathering the three Alliances together online, independently of the regular Alliance Meetings. As an exception, on the 29th of April, the 8th session gathered the three Alliances together (Advocacy training) and was followed by the last Q&A session. Table 25 shows attendance in P\_A1 youth Alliance up until the 5th meeting in face-to-face and 3 online Alliance meetings (including the P\_A1 youth attending the Q&A sessions).

**Table 25. Attendance youth Alliance in P\_A1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	Q&A1	M6	Q&A2	Q&A3	Q&A4	M7	M8	Q&A5
P_A1_01 (m)		█	█	█	█		█				█		█
P_A1_02 (m)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
P_A1_03 (f)	█	█	█	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	█	█
P_A1_04 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	█
P_A1_05 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	█
P_A1_06 (f)	█	█			█	█	█		█	█	█	█	█
P_A1_07 (f)	█	█	█		█		█				█		
P_A1_08 (f)		█			█	█			█				
P_A1_09 (f)	█		█		█			█					

P_A1_10 (f)	■	■				■							
<b>P_A1_11 (m)</b>	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■
P_A1_12 (f)	■			■	■								
<b>P_A1_13 (f)</b>	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
P_A1_14 (f)	■		■	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■
P_A1_15 (f)	■	■	■		■	■		■	■	■	■		
P_A1_16 (f)	■	■	■				■	■	■	■	■	■	■
P_A1_17 (f)		■	■	■	■		■	■					
P_A1_18 (f)		■	■	■	■		■	■					
P_A1_19 (f)		■											

In P\_B1, the starting date of the Alliance was 15-12-2019 and the end date 29-04-2020, with a total of 8 Alliance meetings, including 4 face-to-face meetings and 4 online meetings. The first meeting was attended by 7 young people. In the following face-to-face meetings attendance fluctuated, with a total number of 9 young people participating at least once, and 3 to 9 young people participating in each face-to-face meeting. When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their work online. The P\_B1 youth were invited to 4 online Alliance meetings. Meetings 6 & 7 were grouped together. In addition, five online Q&A meetings with experts were offered to the three Portuguese Alliances, hence gathering the three Alliances together online, independently of the regular Alliance Meetings. As an exception, on the 29th of April, the 8th session gathered the three Alliances together (Advocacy training) and was followed by the last Q&A session. Table 26 shows attendance in P\_B1 youth Alliance up until the 4th meeting in face-to-face and 4 online Alliance meetings (including the P\_B1 youth attending the Q&A sessions).

**Table 26. Attendance youth Alliance in P\_B1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	Q&A1	Q&A2	Q&A3	Q&A4	M6&7	M8	Q&A5
P_B1_01 (f)		■	■		■					■		
P_B1_02 (f)	■	■	■		■	■	■		■			

P_B1_03 (f)												
P_B1_04 (m)												
P_B1_05 (f)												
P_B1_06 (m)												
P_B1_07 (f)												
P_B1_08 (f)												
P_B1_09 (f)												

In P\_C1, the starting date of the Alliance was 18-12-2019 and the end date 29-04-2020, with a total of 8 Alliance meetings, including 4 face-to-face meetings and 4 online meetings. The first meeting was attended by 7 young people. In the following face-to-face meetings attendance fluctuated, with a total number of 9 young people participating at least once, and 3 to 9 young people participating in each face-to-face meeting. When face-to-face meetings were no longer possible due to COVID-19 regulations, the facilitators reached out to the young people to continue their work online. The P\_C1 youth were invited to 4 online Alliance meetings. Meetings 5 & 6 were grouped together. In addition, five online Q&A meetings with experts were offered to the three Portuguese Alliances, hence gathering the three Alliances together online, independently of the regular Alliance Meetings. As an exception, on the 29th of April, the 8th session gathered the three Alliances together (Advocacy training) and was followed by the last Q&A session. Table 27 shows attendance in P\_C1 youth Alliance up until the 4th meeting in face-to-face and 4 online Alliance meetings (including the P\_C1 youth attending the Q&A sessions).

**Table 27. Attendance youth Alliance in P\_C1 before and after COVID-19 regulations**

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5&6	Q&A1	Q&A2	M7	Q&A3	Q&A4	M8	Q&A5
P_C1_01 (m)												
P_C1_02 (m)												
P_C1_03 (m)												
P_C1_04 (m)												
P_C1_05 (f)												
P_C1_06 (f)												
P_C1_07 (f)												

P_C1_08 (f)												
P_C1_09 (m)												
P_C1_10 (m)												
P_C1_11 (m)												
P_C1_12 (m)												
P_C1_13 (m)												
P_C1_15 (f)												

Attendance at the Q&A sessions was not presented to Alliance youths as mandatory. However, attendance was quite high as indicated in Table 28.

**Table 28. Attendance Q&A sessions**

	Q&A 1	Q&A 2	Q&A 3	Q&A 4	Q&A 5
All Alliances	18 (including 11 from P_A1; 4 from P_B1 and 3 from P_C1)	18 (including 10 from P_A1; 4 from P_B1 and 3 from P_C1)	11 (including 10 from P_A1 and 1 from P_C1)	16 (including 10 from P_A1, 4 from P_B1 and 2 from P_C1)	17 (including 10 from P_A1, 4 from P_B1 and 3 from P_C1)

#### Composition / diversity

To address SES diversity CEIDSS team selected 3 very different municipalities, each one with its own Scout Groups. CEIDSS team were hoping to find diversity within each Scouts Group which accepts all children from any background. All Scouts from 16-18 years old were invited to participate, however, as the project establishes participation on a voluntary basis, the SES diversity expected was not much reflected on the Alliances, as the great majority of the youth who were willing to participate were from a middle to high SES. When meeting with parents and youth to present the project in the recruitment stage, in P\_B1 and P\_A1 there were more girls present (in line with the scout group membership), which was reflected in participation in these two Alliances. In contrast, in P\_C1 more boys attended the info meeting, resulting in a majority of boys participating in the P\_C1 Alliance.

We can sketch a profile of the recruited groups, based on the number of participants and their gender. The young Alliance members in **P\_A1** were diverse in terms of their **gender**: 19 young people participated in the Alliance in P\_A1, including 16 females and 3 males. All the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=9) were **born in** Portugal (100 per cent), while about half of the young

people had a father (40 per cent) and/ or mother (50 per cent) who was born in Portugal, and a majority of them had a mother and/or father who were born in Portugal as well (resp. 86 and 62 per cent). A minority of them had a mother and/or father born elsewhere (resp. 11 and 11 per cent in a country within Europe, and resp. 22 and 11 per cent in a country outside of Europe). A majority of the young people had experience with being an **active member of political or non-political organization** (56 per cent), while 33 per cent had never been an active member of a political or non-political organization, or had been in the past (11 per cent). The **SES background** of the young people varied: 78 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'medium' on the family affluence scale (FAS) and 11 per cent scored 'high'. That the great majority of attendants was from a medium-high SES was confirmed by the co-facilitators 'by talking to them, since they know these adolescents for a long time'. Facilitators reported a girl with African appearance (P1\_A1\_FN1:FN16), who stayed on during the whole duration of the project. Likewise, although a minority, male youths' attendance has been very consistent across the whole duration of the project.

The young Alliance members in **P\_B1** too were diverse in terms of their **gender**: 9 young people participated in the Alliance in P\_B1, including 7 females and 2 males. All of the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=7) were **born in** Portugal, while about half of the young people had a father (43 per cent) who was born in a country outside of Europe. A slight majority of the young people had no **experience with political or non-political organizations** (57 per cent), while the rest (43 per cent) was an active member of a political or non-political organization. The **SES background** of the young people varied but seemed more diverse compared to Alliance P\_A1: 14 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'low' on the family affluence scale (FAS), 43 per cent scored 'medium' and 43 per cent scored 'high'. Although a minority, male youths' attendance seems to be consistent across the whole duration of the project.

12 young people participated in Alliance **P\_C1** and were diverse in terms of **gender**, including 5 females and 7 males. All of the young people who filled in the questionnaire (n=5) were **born in** Portugal, and so were most of their mothers (100 per cent), while two young people had a father who was born in a country outside of Europe. A wide majority of them were **active members of a political or non-political organization** (80 per cent), while the rest had never been an active member. The **SES background** of the young people varied but was seemed more advantaged compared to Alliance P\_B1: 0 per cent of those who filled in the questionnaire scored 'low' on the family affluence scale (FAS), 40 per cent scored 'medium' and 60 per cent scored 'high'. Although a majority of boys first initially registered, a fair balance of boys and girls attended the Alliance meetings.

P\_C1\_FN\_01:FN16 suggests participants are from a high SES: "The co-facilitators mentioned that all the participants live near (walking distance) the facilities of the Scouts Group. This is an expensive neighbourhood." As is also shown in table 1 (page18), the majority of survey participants within the Alliances had a mother and/ or father who was born in Portugal or another European country, and a majority of them (57 per cent) has been involved in a political or non-political organization.

### Types of activities

In Portugal the WP5 training programme was carried out along a similar pattern in the three Alliances and followed the engagement protocol quite closely up until meeting 6. First of all the system maps were introduced and discussed and the adolescents were invited to formulate initial policy ideas

which they voted. Subsequently, the adolescents were introduced to Photovoice; systematic review of policies and research; Conversational interviewing training. When the Alliances had to go online due to the COVID-19 outbreak, CEIDSS conceived and carried-out cross Alliance activities to support the adolescents' efforts to refine their policy ideas, i.e. 5 Q&A sessions with experts identified by adolescents as most relevant to their policy ideas and interviewed by them. Advocacy training was carried out online (provided by the two facilitators while the co-facilitators were taking notes) and offered to the three Alliances at the same time.

**Table 29. Alliance activities and engagement in P\_A1**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	Introduction of WP5 process (20 minutes) including presentation of facilitators and WP7 survey; presentation of the whole project including PAR and dialogue forums, demonstration of the Healthy voices website and Instagram accounts (Portuguese and others) group building (60 minutes) defining goals of the Alliance (20 minutes) expectations and fears; goals and rules of the Alliance; group agreement signed by all, including facilitators and co-facilitators Water bottles offered to youth Food offered by facilitators	Quiet and shy but listening carefully during presentation. All enthusiastic during the group building exercise.
2	10 minutes – brief review of the previous session (group agreement) 60 minutes – Introduction to the WP4 system maps and the merged map of Portugal; (in subgroups) changes and adaptations to the merged map; introduction to the policy ideas (8, out of which 2 were voted/NGT); introduction of policy form (to be explored and filled in accordance to the selected actions ideas, until the next meeting)	Group still a bit shy During subgroup time and while presenting the proposed changes to the large group, the youths were very enthusiastic and interactive and made some questions to the facilitators. While describing the factors and their evolution over time orally, all groups very committed and detailed in their explanation, made lots of changes in the maps
3	- Revision of policy form and identifying information to be collected (25 minutes) – filled in groups (one on “Physical activity for all” and two on School’s courses) - Photovoice training (30 minutes) assignment for next session - ethics and data management training (15 minutes).	A mainly informative meeting, hence less interactive than previous times. The adolescents seemed interested and responsive though. One of the groups less active, a bit slower and less focused but co-facilitator managed to help the adolescents to move forward with focused discussion. When prompted at the end of activity (before break time), no one wanted to share their work.

		Photovoice: The youth seemed interested and curious about this activity; asking detailed questions.
4	Photovoice analysis - SHOWeD Form revision of the policy form introduction to systematic review of policies and research (Healthy Voices, Nourishing and other scientific platforms)	Upon being prompted as to whether they brought any picture to the meeting, adolescents exhibited embarrassment (although four of them did bring pictures). While presenting and discussing the pictures brought by some of them, the attendants seemed interested and actively participating. While in groups to fill the SHOWeD Form with their photos the adolescents all seemed very focused Same while revising the policy Youth also paid attention during the introduction to using scientific platforms for their research
5	Discussion on results of systematic review of policies and research Introduction to dialogue forum (tool, dynamic of discussion, roles, participants) and filling the policy form	While being prompted regarding their research assignment, the attendants seem shy but eventually (one) share their work. Youths seemed sceptical about the dialogue forum (insecurity) Overall the group seemed very active and interested and almost everyone participated
6 (online 30 min)	Discussion about online format (due to COVID-19 outbreak) Conversational interviewing training	While being prompted about their progress in their research the youths seemed shy but interested in the interview training. The Physical Activity for All group and the School Course group both asked the facilitators for feedback about their draft questionnaire. In spite of the switch to the online format (understood by facilitators as challenging for the shy members), the youths were all interested and motivated to continue with the project and the meetings and to engage in interviewing (2 surveys carried out).
7 (online 30 min)	Youth research progress check Additional information about budgeting EAT digital tool test	Physical Activity for All group's survey very successful (179 responses); same for Nutrition and Food Curriculum's (190 responses) The youths got used to the online format (taking a more active part than during the first online meeting)
8 (online 90 min combined with 5 <sup>th</sup> Q&A; common to the 3 Alliances)	Advocacy training (by facilitator and a young person with experience in different youth associations and experienced in youth engagement to provide practical examples of youth-led advocacy) Q&A part: the Alliances exposed their proposals and the guest shared his inputs.	There are some groups more interested and active in developing their ideas and proceeding with the proposals, including "physical activity for all", "cooking classes in schools"

**Table 30. Alliance activities and engagement in P\_B1**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	<p>Introduction of facilitators and agenda for the session, including WP7 questionnaire; presentation of CO-CREATE project and the WP5 process, including demo of Healthy Voices and Instagram page (20 minutes)</p> <p>Group building (40 minutes)</p> <p>Goal setting: hopes, expectations and fears (15 minutes)</p>	<p>During the introduction, the group was quiet and listening carefully.</p> <p>During the group building time, they were all engaged and it allowed the adolescents to actually find out things about each other that they didn't know.</p> <p>All the youth participated naturally, including those regarding themselves as shy.</p>
2	<p>Group agreement</p> <p>Introduction to the system maps, including the Portugal merged map; changes and adaptations to the merged map (in subgroups)</p> <p>Policy ideas formulation and idea selection (Nominal Group Technique), first in subgroups and vote in large group, selecting three ideas (75 minutes)</p>	<p>The group was quiet at start but by the end of the group agreement activity the group seems more interactive and getting started.</p> <p>System maps: As soon as the introduction to the elements of the map, the group immediately started to comment on the map and its factors, especially those misunderstood.</p> <p>Changing map: They were very enthusiastic and eager to share their views but, at the same time, very focused and interested while hearing their colleagues' explanation and thoughts on the map.</p> <p>"In the action ideas, it was possible to perceive their enthusiasm while explaining and defending how their ideas were feasible and the willing of being able to put them in action." (P_B1_FN03@FN21)</p>
3	<p>Ice breaker (10 minutes)</p> <p>Introduction to the policy form (identifying information to be collected); in two subgroups, with a third group coming up (30 minutes)</p> <p>Photovoice training (30 minutes)</p> <p>Ethics and data management training (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Policy ideas and forms filling: The adolescents were very focused on what they were doing and actively discussing within their groups. Some youths suggested they realised that they would need to know more to fill in the forms with accuracy.</p> <p>Photovoice: The group seemed very enthusiastic about this activity</p> <p>Ethics: The whole group was paying attention and following</p>
4	<p>Photovoice analysis - SHOWeD Form</p> <p>revision of the policy form</p> <p>introduction to systematic review of policies and research (Healthy Voices, Nourishing and other scientific platforms)</p>	<p>Although only two of them were present, many of them took pictures and shared them spontaneously.</p> <p>The two attendants were very engaged in group work, although one of them was usually shy.</p>
5	<p>review of the Photovoice analysis</p> <p>presentation of the physical tool of the dialogue forum</p>	

	shift of the meeting to the digital format	
6 (combined with 7)	Dialogue Forum Budgeting revision of the policy forms	
7 (combined with 6)	Dialogue Forum Budgeting revision of the policy forms	
8 (online 90 min combined with 5 <sup>th</sup> Q&A; common to the 3 Alliances)	Advocacy training (by facilitator and a young person with experience in different youth associations and experienced in youth engagement to provide practical examples of youth-led advocacy) Q&A part: the Alliances exposed their proposals, and the guest shared his inputs.	

**Table 31. Alliance activities and engagement in P\_C1**

Meeting	Activities	Engagement
1	Introduction of facilitators and agenda for the session, including WP7 questionnaire; presentation of CO-CREATE project and the WP5 process, including demo of Healthy Voices and Instagram page (20 minutes) Group building (40 minutes) Goal setting: hopes, expectations and fears (15 minutes)	Introduction: The group was quiet and listening carefully. Group building exercise: the youths seemed to struggle a bit, suggesting shyness. Eventually all attendants volunteered to contribute. Sharing hopes and fears: the attendants volunteered spontaneously.
2	Review of the previous meeting and group agreement (15 minutes) Introduction to the system maps, including the Portugal merged map; changes and adaptations to the merged map (in subgroups) Policy ideas formulation and idea prioritization (Nominal Group Technique), first in subgroups and vote in large group, selecting three ideas (60 minutes)	After dealing with the group agreement, the group was still a bit shy but getting more pro-active. System map: The youth were very curious analysing the existing maps and felt more enthusiastic to then complete and change the merged map. Policy ideas: the youths seemed interested and proactive in discussion. "The group has a good dynamic, and everyone was interested and interactive. The majority participate quite often and there is no pressure or discomfort in sharing ideas with the group. They interact a lot with each other and in general the participation is very balanced." [P_C1_FN02:FN22]

3	<p>Review of the previous session</p> <p>Reviewing policy ideas and introduction to the policy form; filling policy forms in three subgroups (20 minutes)</p> <p>Photovoice training</p> <p>Ethics and data management training (15 minutes)</p>	<p>The group is quiet and getting started.</p> <p>Policy form: not very interested in the activity</p> <p>Photovoice: seemed not to be very interested and a bit skeptical about doing it by themselves.</p> <p>Upon being prompted or questioned the youth became more proactive.</p> <p>“Contrary to the second meeting, that we felt the youth more active and enthusiastic, in this meeting they were not paying much attention and not enthusiastic about the content. In that sense, it was harder to facilitate the meeting and keep the discussion “active”.” (P_C1_FN03:FN35)</p>
4	<p>Photovoice analysis - SHOWeD Form</p> <p>revision of the policy form and system map</p> <p>introduction to systematic review of policies and research (Healthy Voices, Nourishing and other scientific platforms)</p>	<p>SHOWeD form: The group was quiet and started to be more interested in this activity and with what a photo and its analysis could bring to the discussion and modify the policy. Only one brought picture (out of 2 present during session 3).</p> <p>System map: The group seemed interested and excited in participating.</p> <p>Research resources talk: the youth were paying attention but didn't seem very motivated with this activity.</p> <p>“This group is harder to motivate, and they don't really talk or explain why they don't come or why they don't reply to our messages. It's always a bit surprising how they will react to the meeting/activity and how many will come. They change the attitude between meetings and it's never clear to us why.” [P_C1_FN04:FN25] This seems to be similar to the regular scout activities in this group.</p>
5 (combined with 6)	<p>Discussion on results of systematic review of policies and research and filling of the policy form</p>	<p>nobody had done any research or updated their policy ideas. However, the very small group of attending youths seemed very engaged in this activity</p>
6 (combined with 5)	<p>Conversational interviewing training</p> <p>Introduction to dialogue fora (WP6)</p>	<p>The youths seemed very excited about the dialogue forum (discussing their ideas)</p>
7	<p>Revision of the policy forms and how to proceed with the work online</p>	
8 (online 90 min combined with 5 <sup>th</sup> Q&A; common to the 3 Alliances)	<p>Advocacy training (by facilitator and a young person with experience in different youth associations and experienced in youth engagement to provide practical examples of youth-led advocacy)</p> <p>Q&amp;A part: the Alliances exposed their proposals and the guest shared his inputs.</p>	

All in all, the setting of the three Alliances went quite smoothly in Portugal, building on the intelligent partnership with three local scout groups – which provided both access to enough adolescent participants and to well-trained co-facilitators – and the talented facilitation provided by young but well-prepared nutritionists. In total, 41 adolescents were recruited, 18 of which have stayed up until the end of the Alliance training programme, despite the latter having to move to online work in the middle of the process (due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020). Quite a few Alliance members stayed on until the Dialogue forums and some of them have even been enrolled in the Youth Task Force and have played an active role there. The three Alliances have been mixed in terms of gender and remained so, despite most girls in P\_A1 and P\_B1 and most boys in P\_C1. In contrast, enrolling young people from diverse SES proved difficult. Despite the wide recruitment basis of the scout movement in terms of social-economic diversity and a broad invitation to many scout groups, most recruited adolescents turned out to belong to the middle-class background and some from the upper class. Very few adolescents identifying with low SES background were recruited in Portugal. Besides, few adolescents with no or limited experience of youth participation have been recruited. Thanks to the partnership with the scout movement, most of the recruited adolescents have had some experience in extracurricular group work, hence acquainted with extra-curricular group life. Some degree of peer recruitment allowed a couple of outsiders to join but the three Alliance groups largely consisted of segments of existing youth groups.

*Policy Ideas*

What policy ideas do youth come up with?

The youth in the three Alliances in Portugal created several initial policy ideas in the second meeting. Subsequently, in the same meeting they voted on which ideas the group found wanted to work on. The following table provides the complete list of ideas, including which Alliance proposed it and a brief summary of the idea. The ideas are clustered under six main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media, healthy environment, healthy lifestyle, and others. The policy ideas that were fully developed and were included in the policy brief from the Alliances in Portugal are in blue font.

**Table 32. Initial and final policy ideas in Portugal**

No	Alliance	Name of Policy Idea	A Brief Summary of the Idea
<b>FOOD AND NUTRITION</b>			
1	P_A1	Cooking classes at schools	Providing cooking classes both at and outside school in order to encourage young people to cook their own food in a healthy way, thereby reducing the likelihood of eating fast food and buying ready-to-eat products
2		Nutrition and Food Curriculum	Incorporate nutrition and cooking themes in the Citizenship and Civic Education curriculum

3	P_B1	Nutritionists in schools	Nutritionists should be at schools to manage the food that the school offers, to develop workshops and sessions with contents youth-friendly and for us just be able to reach out to a nutritionist in a free and easy way.
4		Cooking classes at schools	Many young people don't know how to cook or have little time to cook. This makes them choose for unhealthy options, such as fast food restaurants. That is why it is important to learn how to cook at school.
<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>			
5	P_A1	Physical activity for all	Partnerships between gyms/fitness centres and the schools, as well as between the city halls and the sports clubs in terms of providing transportation, financial support and creating open days for dissemination.
6		Mandatory open days for sport clubs and organizations	To introduce youth to ex curricular physical activity
<b>STRESS AND SOCIAL MEDIA</b>			
7	P_A1	Reduction of the academic load	
8		Pay for access to social media	To reduce social media usage
9		Relaxation class	School classes where the students learn how to relax but also gain knowledge in several topics. To learn how to relax to better cope with stress
10	P_B1	Decreasing the workload	Decrease the workload, both in schools and in the adult jobs, which would give more time to, for example, be more physical active
11	P_C1	Mandatory psychological support in schools	A psychologist in schools to help solving some problems, talk and relieve/let off steam.
<b>HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT</b>			
12	P_A1	School courses in order to teach the adolescents tasks related to housekeeping	To create a healthier environment
13	P_B1	Restrict fast-food restaurants	Apply a law that restricts the number of fast-food restaurants per area and also prohibit these types of restaurants so close to schools

14		Healthy restaurants	Government to create incentives and subsidies to restaurants and companies of healthy food, in order to increase its access
15		Limit the marketing of unhealthy food products	The marketing of unhealthy food constantly influences dietary choices. Nudging strategies that are used in the marketing of unhealthy products, for example, by organising the environment to subtly influence a person's behaviour, restrict freedom of choice and lead to excessive consumption of unhealthy food. This proposal is to limit the marketing of unhealthy food products
16		Create a tax to fat food products	In order to make them more costly and therefore less attractive
17		Marketing of healthy food products	Making alternatives for fast-food restaurants more attractive
<b>HEALTHY LIFESTYLE</b>			
18	P_B1	Awareness of healthy eating habits	Create projects in schools to raise awareness among the students about healthy eating habits
19	P_C1	Radical awareness	In order to improve awareness for unhealthy products (such as the case is with shocking pictures on alcohol and tobacco products)
<b>OTHER POLICY IDEAS</b>			
20	P_A1	Real testimonies	More practical programs/lessons where youth witness real testimonies about various issues; experiences from drug addicts
21	P_C1	School lessons to prepare for adulthood:	As students exploring things that 'would actually happen in a short period of time', such as cooking skills, finances, and social security

Which activities contributed to the policy ideas? How are experiential and scientific knowledge implied in these ideas?

In Portugal the WP5 training programme was carried out along a similar pattern in the three Alliances and followed the engagement protocol quite closely. The three Alliances received training in System Mapping, Photovoice, Data Management and on how they could do research, namely through some websites (like Nourishing, Healthy Voices and the Portuguese National Programme for the Promotion of Healthy Eating website). Regarding the research, the CEIDSS team developed two e-books filled with links towards online resources that could help the adolescents to deepen their knowledge of the issue – one related to national and international policies and the other with marketing restrictions. The three Alliances have also received training in conversational interviewing (slightly practiced in the Q&A sessions with the young professionals) and advocacy training, as well as explored the budgeting for activity. In addition to the engagement programme, Team Portugal organised 5 online “Q&A with Experts”, i.e. “sessions with young professionals (23-30 years-old) with experience in several fields related to the Alliances’ policy ideas. [They] planned these sessions in order to inspire the adolescents and for them to see that young professionals have a relevant role in their activities. [They] also invited these young professionals to create a more informal and comfortable environment, with youth-friendly approach, so that the youth can openly share their questions and ideas.” (CEIDSS Team, June 2020). Thereby significant efforts were paid to facilitate young people’s access to expert knowledge, while also allowing them some freedom to choose to which experts they would talk to and what questions to ask them.

In the three Alliances, the introduction and discussion of the system maps gave a kick-off boost for the adolescents to come up with initial ideas at the end of Meeting 2. In the subsequent meetings, the other activities were rolled out according to plan but their impact differed from an Alliance to another. While Photovoice proved inspiring in P\_A1 and P\_B1, it was less the case in P\_C1. The P\_A1 Alliance seemed more at ease in conducting surveys than the other groups. For the rest, as indicated in the facilitators survey (May 2020):

“The research done [by adolescents] about other policies and initiatives, already in place, was crucial to further develop and strengthen the policy ideas. The Q&A sessions, that helped to put in practice the conversational interview training, were also very important to give new and different insights to the youth Alliance members, helping them to define some aspects of their policy ideas. The Q&As alongside with the test for the dialogue forums really motivated them to refine their policy ideas, as well as the arguments to support it, preparing them for the next phase of the project (WP6).”

On a side note, it is important to highlight that none of the three groups asked to use the allocated Alliance budgets – although the existence of such budget was explicitly introduced to them.

In terms of knowledge distribution, the activity programme sensitized the adolescents to various forms of knowledge (scientific knowledge, policy knowledge, map knowledge, youth research knowledge) but also conveyed a series of **opportunities to express and to explore experiential knowledge** born by the Alliance members (e.g. knowledge acquired through ‘living the life’ in contrast to knowledge acquired through accounts from outsiders building on e.g. scientific knowledge and other forms of ‘expert’ knowledge). These opportunities are sketched hereafter. Subsequently, the ways in which and the extent to which experiential knowledge has been expressed

by adolescents and actually involved in policy idea development amidst other forms of knowledge in each of the three Alliances are discussed, based on WP5 data (chiefly Fieldnotes and Logs) as well as on the Policy Brief.

At Meeting 2, the first part of the session was dedicated to the introduction to and discussion of (existing) system maps (in particular the Portuguese merged map). Immediately, adolescents were invited to **add factors and connections to the merged map**, hence contributing to revise the system map based on their own perception and experience of the childhood obesity issue (experiential knowledge mobilised in a reactive way). Still during the same meeting, the adolescents were invited to **formulate initial policy ideas**, hence with a potential to build on the experiential insights they just had a chance to express and reflect upon.

Additionally, at Meeting 3, **Photovoice** (adapted from Wang & Burris, 1997; Catalani & Minkler, 2010) was introduced to the adolescents as an exercise that may support their action idea development. The introduction of Photovoice by the facilitators was complemented by showing the video "Health in my Hometown - A Youth Photovoice Project".<sup>3</sup> Initially carried out in Minnesota, this project invited adolescents to "document what helps them grow up healthy and what holds them back", hence served as a community needs assessment exercise starting from the formulation of a question to which taking photos in their environment would provide answers. In the three Portuguese Alliances, after being invited to think and discuss "about what would be interesting for them to photograph considering their action ideas" (P\_A1\_FN03:FN17), the adolescents were told that the photographs "could help support the problem, but also find out more about an information and bring new ideas". As a result, Photovoice photographs could be used in potentially different ways, either illustrative or explorative, but within their lifeworld, and to share their pictures with other Alliance members ahead of a discussion of their photos during Session 4.

As for the Q&A sessions, they were chiefly designed as to get some questions of the adolescents to be answered by the guest experts, hence expert knowledge oriented. However, facilitator indicated (28th April 2021) that some "adolescents sometimes also added some information or participated in the discussion. In these cases, the adolescents' contributions were mostly based on their own examples and experiences."

In **P\_A1**, although the adolescents were invited to contribute their knowledge in a reactive fashion (the discussion being based on system maps produced by outsiders and introduced by facilitators/experts), the adolescents were quite active in discussing the merged system map and to add factors and connections. P\_A1\_FN02:FN17:

"In general, the suggestions were related to food availability and quality; socioeconomic status; drugs and its control and knowledge; social media influencers and stress. The youth related these factors with its influence on the purchase and interest for certain products, as well as it has on mental health. One of the topics that stimulated my and the co-facilitators interest was related to the difficulty of accessing psychologists. P\_A1\_06 (f) mentioned that "I already tried to attend one (psychologist) in my school and there is no point in doing so... And sometimes in schools there are only 2 and they are not available. And it's so expensive to go to one....". [co-facilitator] Beatriz also shown some concern regarding the comment of P\_A1\_18 (f) "if we publish a picture on Instagram,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8ISw5Cdi8k> [checked on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021]

we are going to be stressed to know if people will like and comment”, since the importance and attachment to social media is, according to her, a problem in some of the members of the Alliance. In fact, some of the adolescents gave a lot of importance to the factors related to mental health (including drugs and stress) and how, nowadays, it’s so related to the use of electronic devices and social media”.<sup>4</sup>

Among the additions captured in the fieldnotes, systemic factors were quite salient, as well as (presumably or explicitly) experiential knowledge – as a complement to 'map knowledge' (i.e. stemming from the collective reflection of some other Portuguese adolescents).

The highlighted interest for mental health issues was partly reflected in the initial policy ideas young people were invited to formulate (in subgroups) after having discussed the system map -

P\_A1\_FN02:FN17:

“We had 8 policy ideas: “school’s courses in order to teach the adolescents tasks related to housekeeping”, “school class where the students learn how to relax (anti-stress) but also gain knowledge in several topics”, “more practical programs/lessons where youth witness real testimonies about various issues” (they provided the example of inviting a past drug addict to talk about his experience), “campaigns during the school breaks to teach students how to cook, improving the culinary skills and increasing the number of homecooked meals”, “mandatory open days for sports clubs and organizations”, “reduction of the academic load”, “pay for access to social media” and “Physical activity for all! – partnerships between gyms/fitness centres and the schools, as well as between the city halls and the sports clubs in terms of providing transportation, financial support and creating open days for dissemination”

However, the two voted ideas (when being prompted to identify “the idea that they liked the most and that wanted to work and further develop during the Alliances”) didn’t highlight consideration for mental health issues:

- “school’s courses in order to teach the adolescents tasks related to housekeeping.”
- “Physical activity for all! – partnerships between gyms/fitness centres and the schools, as well as between the city halls and the sports clubs in terms of providing transportation, financial support and creating open days for dissemination.”

This doesn’t entail that experiential knowledge was absent from the voted ideas: that the “physical activity for all” idea and the “cooking class idea” connect to their experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments was evidenced during M4, while discussing the outcomes of the Photovoice activities: P\_A1\_FN04:FN17:

“P\_A1\_04 (f) and P\_A1\_05 (f) brought 2 pictures taken in their school, one from a multi-sports synthetic pitch and another from a vending machine. P\_A1\_04 (f) explains that the school has rules that doesn’t allow the students to go to this field during the school breaks and play sports in any other area. P\_A1\_05 (f) arrives from her practice and adds that their school is very “conservative” in this type of rules, and that this results in more sedentary behaviours – “then, everybody goes to the

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<sup>4</sup> Underlined by UvA team

library during the breaks and sits there, addicted, playing on their little screens. People are not active and the library stops being a place made for study.”

“The next picture was a vending machine full of unhealthy snacks and P\_A1\_04 (f) mentioned that “In the morning the machine is completely full and then in the afternoon is completely empty because people don’t bring snacks from home. If there were cooking lessons maybe people would bring homemade snacks.” [the Policy Brief suggests that the policy idea developed in that perspective indeed and P\_A1\_04 (f) and P\_A1\_05 (f) stayed on until M8].”

This data mainly suggest that Photovoice was used to illustrate the point they intended to make with their initial policy idea. As to what they learned from the Photovoice exercise – the P\_A1Policy Brief indicated “they took photos to learn more about young people’s physical activity or lack thereof”, the facilitator’s feedback (28th April 2021) further specified that Photovoice sensitized them to become more aware of their surroundings and to collect examples from their own living environment instead of having to look far or thinking of more abstract examples: “they just realized that they didn’t have to search in different places from the ones they usually go to, from their daily routine, to find examples that could illustrate their point [...] when they first heard about Photovoice they immediately thought of situations from their daily life that could be useful but also thought that they would have to actually look for further examples.” Additionally, the pictures related to food that the young people helped them to gain a better understanding of the challenge of healthy eating among young people. According to the facilitator (28th April 2021): “Given the many examples found, before doing Photovoice they probably didn’t realize the magnitude of the “challenge of healthy eating among young people”, but with Photovoice they acknowledged that, which helped them to figure out their target group and also the setting (youth, schools).” In this sense, exploring their own environment didn’t lead them to gain unknown knowledge but rather to realise how expert knowledge gained through the project connect with what is perceptible while paying special attention to their own living environment.

At M5, the further development of the “Physical activity for all” idea (“doing a pilot-project at local level and then evaluate it to understand if this could be amplified to a national level”) is both informed by the research done by an adolescent (policy knowledge about national projects similar to her group policy idea) - P\_A1\_FN05:FN17:

“P\_A1\_05 (f) mentioned that she did the research and found some initiatives, also in their municipality – “this supports people that already practice sports and does not help the ones that need to and may practice sports. Therefore, the focus of our project should be redirected to those who do not practice sports yet.”

and by the experiential knowledge of one adolescent regarding the outreach limitations of incentive schemes - P\_A1\_FN05:FN17:

“P\_A1\_15 (f) raised the issue that the problem is that the information does not reach everyone, and that for example “I’m in a college (private school) and some initiatives are only promoted in public schools.”

In contrast, the adolescents involved in the “Cooking classes” idea did not bring any research material to the meeting; the only knowledge brought in the development of the idea (“the content of

the classes and how the youth can be taught more than only cooking skills – nutrition, where the food comes from, vegetables’ and fruits’ seasonality and why it is important, the relation between food and sustainability and also teach about financial management in shopping, planning and cooking” – P\_A1\_FN05:FN17) is rather of experiential order (P\_A1\_FN05:FN17):

“One of the things mentioned by this group (especially reinforced by P\_A1\_06 (f)) is that they realize that most of their peers don’t know how to cook and that this bothers them – “Knowing how to cook improves self-esteem”.”

From the later Alliance meetings, it is difficult to appreciate in detail how knowledge distribution was involved in the further development of the policy ideas based on the Fieldnotes. For sure expert knowledge was involved (thanks to the informative answers provided by the various experts involved – 3 nutritionists, one expert on physical activity and one psychologist – as well as youth research knowledge gained over their surveys conducted in the wake of the conversational training during M6 for two policy ideas (“Physical activity for all” idea and “Nutrition and Food Curriculum” idea) as deriving from “questions that the youth decided to include in the [questionnaire] forms [...] based on what each group discussed and wanted to know. These questions aimed to understand the experiences of other youth” – according to facilitator’s feedback 28th April 2021). In contrast, to which extent experiential knowledge was involved as well is difficult to appreciate based on the Fieldnotes. In the recollection of one facilitator however (28th April 2021), given the questions that youth made during the Q&As, they usually provided examples of their own reality or daily life like “in my school the food offer is ....” – thereby testifying the involvement of a degree of experiential knowledge in the further development of the policy ideas. Besides, we can but acknowledge that the “physical activity for all” idea which proved to connect to the experience of young people in the Photovoice step made it to the end, i.e. to the Dialogue Forum.

In P\_B1 too, the adolescents were quite keen on adding to the merged map during Meeting 2. As indicated in P\_B1\_FN02:FN17:

“One of the issues highly discussed was related to food availability and quality, as well as the low prices of fast-food products vs the higher prices of healthy food, and how that influence the choices of young people that “have less money so they rather spend it in cheap food and save money for other things”. Also related to this aspect, was the location of the fast-food restaurants which the group identified as a problem because they are located near schools and even near a hospital in the area. Other issue that the young people addressed was related to the “availability of time”, which was added as a new factor. Availability of time in terms of not having time to cook and, for that reason, there is a higher tendency to use apps to order in food. This was also related to cooking skills as P\_B1\_03 (f) stated “if we and our parents don’t have time to cook, it is way easier to just open a pack of fries”. Other aspect very much discussed was the exposure to marketing as several adolescents mentioned “we are constantly being exposed and bombarded with adverts to unhealthy food” and as P\_B1\_08 (f) pointed “we never get adverts in our mailboxes about healthy food”. This issue was again related to the prices of unhealthy food vs the prices of healthy food that, according to the group, only people with higher socioeconomic status can afford healthy products. The factor “pressure of the influencers on body image” was related to having more “motivation to practice physical activity” (a new factor added by the group), in the sense that some public figures inspire people by having an active lifestyle. This topic raised some discussion, since some members didn’t

agree, but eventually the group came to a consensus. Mental health was related to compulsive eating, where “the worse the mental health, the more people seek for comfort on food” and this was due to the “romantic movies stereotype where a couple breaks up and the girl just lays on the sofa or bed while eating chocolates or ice cream”.

These views, presumably or explicitly inspired by their experiential knowledge, were partly reflected in the policy ideas they came up with while working in subgroups. P\_B1\_FN02:FN17:

“We had a total of 9 policy ideas: “in the same way there are psychologists at schools, nutritionists should also be at schools to manage the school offer, to develop workshops and sessions with contents youth-friendly and for us to just be able to reach out to a nutritionist in a free and easy way”, “implement cooking classes both at school and in the free time activities”, “apply a law that restricts the number of fast food restaurants per area and also to prohibit these type of restaurants so close to schools”, “create projects in schools to raise awareness among the students about healthy eating habits (with flyers, events)”, “government to create incentives and subsidies to restaurants and companies of healthy food, in order to increase its access”, “decrease the marketing of unhealthy food products through a law”, “create a tax to fast food products”, “have incentives on marketing of healthy food products” and “decrease the workload, both in schools and in the adult jobs, which would give more time to, for example, be more physical active”.”

Eventually the three voted ideas were:

- “having nutritionists at schools to manage the school offer, to develop workshops and sessions with contents youth-friendly and for us to just be able to reach out to a nutritionist in a free and easy way”,
- “implement cooking classes both at school and in the free time activities”
- “decrease the marketing of unhealthy food products through a law” - combined with “have incentives to marketing to healthy food products” (because the youth, while discussing in group, found that would be most relevant to not only decrease the marketing of unhealthy foods but at the same time intensify the marketing of healthy products)”

The voted ideas reflect to a great extent the additions the youths made to the maps, presumably or explicitly building on their own experience (availability of nutritionists; exposure to marketing). Later on (Meeting 3), the voted ideas were confirmed to be connected to some “aspects that [the adolescents] themselves recognize in their close environment that should be changed, such as the food availability on the vending machines, the fast-food restaurants right in front of schools or hospitals” P\_B1\_FN03:FN17. In M4, the discussion of the Photovoice activity twinned with the SHOWeD form helped clarify the aim of the “Limit the marketing of unhealthy food products” idea, based on a detailed analysis of the picture taken at a supermarket (taken by a co-facilitator but followed by some adolescents commenting and suggesting that this picture echoed their own experience) – P\_B1\_FN04:FN17 (see also P\_B1\_FN04:FN18) :

“It was possible to perceive that [filling in the SHOWeD form based on the picture of a supermarket’s shelf full of candies and right next to the cashier] made them reflect in the direction they would like to take while developing further their policy idea. They discussed how the products should be displayed in the supermarket’s shelves and argued that certain products perceived as healthy, such as “diet”/“free sugar” cookies or cereals are not that

healthy because they are high in salt and fat. The group also stated that it is not possible to change everything and that it wouldn't make sense to only sell healthy products because that would damage the brands, but rather make supermarkets more accountable in terms of how the products, especially the ones that are less healthy, are displayed to boost its purchase. They also debated if they should focus on the marketing of the unhealthy products, for example concerning the use of images, mascots or other figures that are specifically aimed at children, or on nudge (regarding the display of the products). I could notice that they were having some trouble with the definition of the main goal and specific objectives in the policy form, so I presented and explained the SMART goals approach as an easier way for them to understand what to write and adapt to their idea. The group paid attention and agreed that their main aim was to limit the display of unhealthy products in the supermarkets, more specifically in the entry and exit areas (namely at the cashiers)."

For the rest, the photos taken by adolescents relate to their experience of obesogenic environments which they wanted to illustrate and communicate to their Alliance mates – P\_B1\_FN04:FN17:

"We then showed a picture of a vending machine that was taken by P\_B1\_08 (f) from her school. The vending machine had products such as juices, chocolates, sandwiches and other unhealthy options. Both P\_B1\_04 (m) and P\_B1\_06 (m) mentioned that they were very used to see vending machines like that one in their schools and that they pretty much only have unhealthy food products available or bottled waters. [One of the co-facilitators] said that in her high school (she is now at University) they used to sell healthier options, so it was interesting to see that different schools had also slightly different foods available in the vending machines."

"Thereafter, a picture of a billboard was discussed. The billboard was advertising a credit company and, according to P\_B1\_06 (m) who took that picture, it had nothing to do with food at first sight. However, they were advertising something through a chef holding a beautiful cake which shows how it is possible to turn something appealing just by using a cake. On the contrary, P\_B1\_06 (m) stated that if a healthy food was used, for example a carrot, maybe it wouldn't look so appealing."

"Finally, we looked at a picture of a sandwich which was taken by P\_B1\_08 (f). She was not present in this meeting, but P\_B1\_04 (m) said he could understand why she had taken this picture. A sandwich and a juice are often an option chosen by many students to have for lunch because it is cheaper than going to the canteen. In addition, according to the youth present in this meeting, food in the canteens is also not very tasty."

The first picture discussed as above was later used for the 'nutritionists in schools' idea and the third picture was later used for the cooking class idea.

More photographs were taken and shared (by absent members, hence not discussed at length) – P\_B1\_FN04:FN18:

"Besides the four pictures discussed above, we have also received a few more pictures from youth that didn't attend the fourth meeting. P\_B1\_01 (f) took four pictures of a supermarket aisle full of candies and chocolates. P\_B1\_05 (f) took a picture of one of her friends holding a burger from McDonalds and P\_B1\_07 (f) took a picture of a vending machine in her school and another picture of a sandwich available at that same vending machine."

The use of the Photovoice activity (in particular the pictures “of what their peers ate at school”) to help the adolescents and confirm that nutritionists are needed at school is stressed in the Policy brief regarding the “Nutritionists in schools” idea. This doesn’t appear in the FN04 data since the adolescents involved in this idea weren’t present at M4. However, the facilitator recalls (28th April 2021): “Although they were not present at M4, when they shared the pictures that they took in the WhatsApp group, in some there were reactions from the members of the Alliance particularly with emojis (surprised emoji) and some sentences such as “at 9 am” which accompanied the picture of someone holding a burger.” Besides, the reasons why they took the picture and what was the message they obtained from it were explored in the making of an audio organised by a co-facilitator as part of the preparation of the Policy Brief (to be shared with WP2).

Likewise, the Policy Brief regarding the “Cooking classes at schools” idea highlights the use of the Photovoice activity “to collect more information about their policy idea” by taking pictures “in their school environment and the results helped them to further develop their idea.” Again, this doesn’t appear in the FN04 data since the adolescents involved in this idea weren’t present at M4 but the influence of this picture on the further development of the “cooking classes at schools” idea in off-meetings conversations.

Further on, it seems the Q&A greatly helped the refinement of the three policy ideas, (as evidenced both in the Policy Brief and the Q&A reports), hence rather building on expert knowledge than experiential knowledge or youth research knowledge in the ultimate steps in the P\_B1 Alliance. However, the original focus of the policy idea – building on their additions to the merged map – remained up until the latest steps.

In **P\_C1**, the adolescents also proved quite prone to add factors and connections to the merged map, in Meeting 2 – chiefly about “food price [...] and its relationship with unhealthy dietary patterns”; “body positivity” and “fat shaming”. Likewise, the P\_C1 youth came up with a number of policy ideas – P\_C1\_FN02:FN17:

- “School support – psychologist in schools to help solving some problems, but also just to talk and relieve/let off steam” - P\_C1\_01 (m) mentioned that “even if we don’t have a specific problem it’s good to have someone that we can talk with about our problems” and the importance of normalizing this since there is a big stigma so, in that sense, everyone would have an appointment scheduled in each semester”
- “school lesson that teach important things and prepare for adult life, such as cooking, taxes, how to open a bank account, social security...” (eventually reflected in the Policy Brief).
- “radical awareness” - in order to improve the knowledge and awareness of the population for unhealthy products.

The three ideas were all voted at the end of M2. Judging from the fieldnotes, none of these ideas seems to relate quite closely with the additions the youth made to the merged map.

Further to Meeting 3, the Photovoice exercise inspired one adolescent to take a picture, which was discussed in Meeting 4 - F\_C1\_FN04:FN17:

“a photo with a big menu from McDonalds “I took this picture to show a friend of mine eating such a big quantity of food at once”. The picture included 2 hamburgers, 2 big French fries and

a portion of nuggets. The youth started discussing measures, namely the price and co-facilitator Bernardo stated that “the increase of the prices is not enough because there is always someone willing to pay and with (economic) capacity. It will only work if at the same time the price of healthy food dropped”. This motivated the discussion between all. P\_C1\_02 (m) added that although his friend knew that the food was unhealthy, he didn’t have the clear notion of it and does not consider the consequences.”

In this talk, the concern for food price is perceptible, in line with the additions that the adolescents made to the merged map. However, this discussion based on a picture stemming from the lifeworld of an adolescent didn’t seem to impact the further refinement of their policy idea.

This doesn’t entail that experiential knowledge was completely left aside. In contrast, at Meeting 5, the discussion of policy idea “support by having psychologists at schools” wasn’t informed by policy and/or scientific knowledge but experiential knowledge was involved – P\_C1\_FN05:FN17:

“P\_C1\_04 (m) mentioned that “the problem is that mental health is still seen as a taboo” so the idea of this proposal is not only to fix this taboo but to actually help youth. Students don’t usually look for psychological support because they are afraid of their peers’ opinion, so P\_C1\_01 (m) mentioned the importance of this initiative to be mandatory. P\_C1\_02 (m) shared that in his school the psychologists only work on specific situations, such as on student’s guidance and the other youth Alliance members nodded, showing their agreement.”

This argument proved productive in the debate as to whether or not the visit to a school psychologist should be mandatory. Map knowledge was also involved – P\_C1\_FN05:FN17:

“We found interesting that to help his colleague defining the main goal of this policy idea, P\_C1\_02 (m) looked at the Alliance System Map and the factors that this idea may affect.”

From the later Alliance meetings, it is difficult to appreciate in detail how knowledge distribution was involved in the further development of the policy ideas. For sure expert knowledge was involved (thanks to the informative answers provided by the various experts involved – 3 nutritionists, one expert on physical activity and one psychologist – but to which extent experiential knowledge was involved as well is difficult to appreciate based on FNs. In contrast, the facilitator recalls (28th April 2021): “that given the questions that youth made during the Q&As, they usually provided examples of their own reality or daily life like “in my school the psychologist is only there to tell me what area should I choose.....” Eventually, we can but acknowledge that the ‘psychologists in schools’ idea – which proved to connect to the experience of young people in Meeting 5 – came to be fully developed but didn’t make it to the dialogue forum. As the facilitator recalls (28th April 2021), “there was only one member of this Alliance interested in working on this policy idea, however the contact and his participation became less and less often and his policy form was very incomplete, which made it harder for us to populate the policy brief.” In contrast, the P\_C1 group were more focused on the “School lesson to prepare for adulthood” policy idea, as “the adolescents working on that policy idea, particularly P\_C1\_01 (m) and P\_C1\_15 (f) were the members of this Alliance who were more engaged and responsive” (according to facilitator’s feedback, 28th April 2021). Overall, the facilitator recalls that experiential knowledge was involved in the later development of policy ideas in P\_C1 since “many of their arguments were exemplified by situations of their lives and they tended to stick to their own experiences rather than in information they had collected in the moments of discussion the ideas with the whole Alliance” (28th April 2021).

To conclude, the three Alliances came up with good numbers of policy ideas (21, out of which 9 were fully developed and 6 were included in the Policy Brief from the Alliances in Portugal). The initial ideas covered a wide range of policy areas – i.e. six main categories: food and nutrition, physical activity, stress and social media, healthy environment, healthy lifestyle, and others. In terms of knowledge distribution, the way the Alliances were implemented in Portugal conveyed varied opportunities to get the adolescents further acquainted with expert knowledge on childhood obesity and overweight. Notwithstanding, the adolescents were provided with ample opportunities to express themselves about their experiential knowledge of the issue, for example by adding to the merged map, which adolescents did in all groups during Meeting 2 and to explore their living environments in subsequent meetings. Overall, despite the strong focus on expert knowledge, the adolescents felt at ease to contribute some information or take part in discussions with experts based on their own examples and experiences (in particular in the Q&A sessions). Some of their experiential views on obesogenic environments translated in some initial policy ideas voted at the same meeting in P\_A1 and, to a larger extent, in P\_B1. Not in Alliance P\_C1. However, in the latter Alliance, experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments was involved in the later stages of the development of policy ideas. All policy ideas found ground for development in other forms of knowledge brought to the Alliances (scientific knowledge brought by facilitators building on reviews and their e-book; policy knowledge; map knowledge) and in the knowledge developed by the adolescents (gained from their survey in P\_A1 and from interviewing experts during the Q&A in particular). A striking fact is that, although a number of initial ideas reflecting experiential knowledge of obesogenic environments vanished under way, some did make it to the end of the process, in particular the three policy ideas born in Alliance P\_B1.

## *Readiness for Action and Obesity Perception*

### System maps

The first way in which the WP5 project affected youth's perception of obesity is by the system maps. The system maps provided a way in which the Alliance would define factors and connections that relate to obesity from a system perspective. After the introduction of the system maps, the facilitators of the P\_A1 Alliance asked the group to analyse and reflect on the system maps (P\_A1\_FN\_02). Subsequently, the co-facilitators asked to reflect on the system maps and after that consider new factors and contest existing factors. This primarily led to insights regarding the obesogenic environment and made it possible to 'zoom out' and reflect on factors such as self-esteem, social interaction, fast-food intake, advertisement and physical activity (P\_A1\_FN\_02). However, it is questionable to which extent this led to differences in system-level thinking (P\_A1\_FN\_02).

In the P\_B1 Alliance this led to a group discussion on the unequal access to healthy food for different socio-economic opportunities, as people 'have less money so they rather spend it in cheap food and save money for other things (P\_B1\_FN\_02)'. This method also encouraged youth to give input from their own experiential knowledge which becomes apparent in one of the meetings in P\_B1, both the location of fast-food restaurants, time availability, and the extensive marketing of are brought up as factors that relate to obesity.

### Photovoice

The second form of engagement within the CO-CREATE project is via discussions centred around Photovoice. This provides a way in which the youth and their peers can discuss certain issues regarding obesity and gives the opportunity to talk on such matters from a more systematic perspective.

The Photovoice sessions started with an introduction by the facilitators. In P\_B1, the co-facilitator introduced a photo themselves and highlighted some aspects of each picture. In one of these discussions, an Alliance member mentioned the 'smell of bread' in supermarkets (P\_B1\_04). The co-facilitators would then explain the concept of 'nudging' in which supermarkets and industry try to influence people's behaviour. Such ideas would then be considered as important by the youth to address in their policy ideas, since they form part of a systems perspective on obesity. In P\_A1, the 'When we asked if anybody had brought pictures the group started looking to the floor and everyone was a bit embarrassed. The co-facilitators mentioned on their notes that this activity may not be very attractive to the youth. We brought 2 pictures of billboards promoting unhealthy products in front of school.' [P\_A1\_FN04:FN17]. Likewise in P\_C1, we started the meeting presenting the SHOWeD Form. We brought 2 pictures of billboards promoting unhealthy products in front of school.' [P\_C1\_FN04:FN17].

Another example is the discussion that the P\_C1 Alliance had regarding a picture from a large menu from McDonalds. This evoked a discussion on a proposed measure to higher the price versus lowering the price of (healthier) alternatives. Key to this discussion was the fact that, maybe this is not the only factor that is relevant, but rather also depended upon other factors such as 'peer

influence'. As one Alliance member states: "most of the people consumes fast-food due to the low price, if there was another alternative maybe people would go for it" and then the group also discussed the peer influence on dietary intake" (P\_C1\_FN\_04).

Also, the Photovoice would affect the way in which the adolescent's perception of obesity by 'zooming out'. This was the case in (P\_C1\_FN\_04), where facilitators asked the group to place their interpretations of the Photovoice session in their system map and try to relate it to multiple factors (P\_C1\_FN\_04). One Alliance member stated in return that promoting physical activity could lead to more social interaction, better dietary habits and better sleep patterns. Thereby, the Photovoice sessions contributed to start a discussion on various factors relating to obesity.

#### Policy ideas: youth > youth

Another way in which the WP5 form of engagement affects the youth's perception on obesity is by youth-to-youth discussion in discussion and creating policy ideas. The 'Physical Activity for all' group for example, had an internal discussion in the third meeting in which they would reflect on the definition of obesity. They could not reach consensus on a proper understanding and definition on obesity. (P\_A1\_FN\_03). Thereby, the process of creating policy ideas gives youth the possibility to contest dominant individual-based perspectives on obesity.

*"I could notice that the group started questioning and reflecting on the definition of obesity, mentioning things like "what are the thresholds of an obese person?", "you have body fat and muscles", "if you are an athlete, then you can be heavier". Since they couldn't reach a consensus on their understanding and definition of obesity, instead of focusing so much on obesity, the youth decided to address sedentary behaviors'. (P\_A1\_FN\_03)."*

This is also prevalent in some of the policy ideas in for instance the policy idea of 'Radical Awareness'. The policy idea of 'radical awareness' reflects obesity as a systematic issue. As it is meant to 'improve the knowledge and awareness of the population for unhealthy products' (P\_C1\_FN\_03).

#### Facilitator and professional knowledge & youth understandings

The youth's perception of the problem of obesity is affected by the interaction with the facilitators and professionals. An example can be found in the first session in the P\_A1 Alliance, where the co-facilitators would introduce the term of 'obesogenic environment', and the youth would think about it and give examples from their own experiences. The introduction of this term shaped the way in which the Alliance members would define obesity issues as something that is closely related to this obesogenic environment. Examples of this are factors such as fast-food availability, discouragement of the practice of physical activity (P\_A1\_FN\_02).

The last five sessions were spent on Q&As with professionals in which all the Alliances participated. These Q&As had to be conducted online via Zoom due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. By this time the policy ideas were relatively well developed, but the Q&As gave the chance to review their policy idea and ask for input from professionals, this activity would influence to their obesity perception.

To illustrate, the youth that worked on the policy idea 'Physical activity for all' asked some questions regarding their own queries about obesity, weight gain and loss. The professional answered that *'if they want to lose or gain weight, they should consult a nutritionist, otherwise, there will not be an adequate food strategy (...) it is very common to think that to gain weight people simply need to eat more. In these cases, there are a lot of people who just overfill themselves and that can compromise their health'* (P\_A1\_B1\_C1\_FN\_Q&A\_03). By engaging with a professional in this phase, the youth had a chance to review their own perception on obesity, even after bringing in their own experiential knowledge in earlier phases of the project. The facilitator suggested that *'that the underlying issue is that there is a general and simplistic perception rooted in people that to gain weight you just need to eat more and to lose weight or to feel better about their body image (that society imposes an ideal body image) you just have to eat less'*. This would then relate to a systematic view on obesity because a *'general idea present in society may then lead to inadequate individual choices or behaviours'*

Another relevant example from the Q&As from another session with a psychologist. Contrary to the previous example, the psychologist pointed out that nutritional changes do not necessarily lead to solve eating disorders, as *'There are many studies that demonstrate that the incapacity by youth and adult to lead with their social and personal problems, increase the likelihood to develop eating disorders'* (P\_A1\_B1\_C1\_FN\_Q&A\_04).

According to one of the Alliance members feedback form:

*'Q&As (...) allowed to realize the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, enabling for improvements and analysis of different topics within the same area'*.

Another member said:

*'The sessions with experts (Q&A) were also very useful and positive to support young people in developing critical reasoning and to demystify ideas in a safe and proper environment to the development of their proposals'*.

### Youths' perception on obesity in feedback forms

The feedback forms from the Alliance members give insight into their individual perception of obesity after the Alliance sessions and reflect the discussions that were present during the system mapping sessions. One Alliance member in P\_C1 states that young people are highly influenced and are 'tempted' to consume unhealthy products. Despite acknowledging that access to information is important, the Alliance member thinks that *'this challenge depends very much on the environment where we are embedded, on the knowledge we have about the problem, on our financial situation and whether or not we have green spaces and places to practice sports in our area of residence'* (FF\_C1). Furthermore, the Alliance member puts that *'Adolescents play a fundamental role in fighting obesity, as they increasingly have access to information about obesity (causes, harms and associated risks) which makes them more aware when compared to the older population'*. Another Portuguese Alliance member puts that obesity *'is a serious problem and that society judges' people with this problem but does nothing to help them, especially the marketing that further worsen the problem'* (FF\_A1).

Despite the relative lack of socio-economic diversity in the composition of the Alliances, some individual members did put out that ‘individual awareness’ is dependent upon socio-economic context.

The activities of WP5 were designed to gather knowledge from youth’s experiences, but also to mutually engage in knowledge exchange with other youth and professionals. Various activities of the project affected the adolescent’s perception of obesity and confirmed and sharpened their readiness for action in the matter of childhood obesity prevention. In sum, the activities that (in)directly contributed to obesity perception were: (1) the system maps, (2) Photovoice, (3) developing the policy ideas and the (4) engagement with facilitators and professionals. Obesity perception is also reflected in various feedback forms, where the youth mention systematic views on obesity.

### *Process, Decision-Making and Ownership*

#### Decision making about activities and process

The Portuguese team followed the engagement protocol quite closely and held all the training activities as planned, across 8 sessions per Alliance. Since this programme was settled ahead of kicking the Alliances off, the young people were not actively engaged in selecting the training activities. In contrast, the adolescents were invited to contribute to the scheduling of the meetings and to come up with a group agreement (Meetings 1 and/or 2). For example in P\_A1:

P\_A1\_FN01:FN17:

“The next step was to define as a group the goals and “rules” of the Alliance. I asked for a volunteer to write and P\_A1\_05 (f) promptly volunteered.”

Invited to elaborate a bit more on how the group agreement was prepared, a facilitator said (27<sup>th</sup> November 2020):

“I asked the group to think about each “rules” or goals they would envision for the upcoming meetings, and any member was free to participate. Every time someone mentioned something, the group would say if agreed and then P\_A1\_05 (f) would write down.”

For the rest, in the three Alliances, the adolescents were consulted on many aspects of Alliance life. According to facilitator (27<sup>th</sup> November 2020):

“With the lock-down we continued to use Doodle to schedule the meetings. Other than that there was not much room to other joint decisions or suggestions. Nonetheless, the first time we met online we asked them if they were ok with it and that we were going to use Zoom to meet and all agreed.”

And according to the P\_A1 Alliance log:

“The youth have decided the place to hold the meetings. By now all the meetings have taken place in the Scouts facilities. Because the adolescents live close to the Scouts facilities, it doesn’t require much effort from their part to come to the meeting (facilitators are the ones that have to go to the youths). It’s difficult to indicate exactly how often the Alliances meet because a Doodle is usually used, which has different possible dates for the youth to choose the one that is the most suitable and, in that way, it is possible to schedule the meeting.

Sometimes there are 3 weeks, 2 weeks or even 1 week between meetings, so it varies. The youth have given suggestions of the snacks they would like facilitators to prepare and adapt for a healthier version.”

Besides, at Meeting 2 in P\_B1, the adolescents contributed to adjust the sessions format to their taste – P\_B1\_FN02:FN17:

“The youth tried to think of topics to include and the first one to come up was about “respecting and listening to everybody’s opinions”. P\_B1\_06 (m) mentioned that it would be good to have a little break during the session. We told them in the first session of the Project that we would always bring food, so I asked what kind of break were they thinking of: if it was a coffee break, a break to stretch, a break to relax and do some game and they all agreed that it could be a break that would include all of these activities. On that note, P\_B1\_05 (f) mentioned that before the sessions start it would be good to do some kind of activity instead of jumping directly to the content and to Project “mood”. She said: “we arrive here and it’s a Sunday morning, we are still a little bit sleepy so it would be good to do something fun that could help us to wake up and get the right energy to start focusing on the session”. All agreed to include this topic of “ice-breaker” and we said that we could prepare these activities but they would be more than welcome to suggest and carry these ice-breakers themselves. The group seemed enthusiastic about this.”

From Meeting 2, even if generally very respectful and engaging in what the facilitators propose, some youths didn’t bother to turn down some facilitator’s suggestion, i.e as to whether to add mobile phone use in the group agreement (P\_A1\_FN02:FN17), suggesting some degree of agency on the side of adolescents. Besides, at Meeting 3, “Regarding the suggestion from the P\_B1 Alliance of starting the session with a “icebreaker” to help focus and get into the session, I asked the group if they would like to do something similar. The group didn’t show any interest in doing so, so we decided that we wouldn’t do it. However, if they change their mind, we can include this activity at any moment” [P\_A1\_FN03:FN19].

Regarding decision-making, quite strikingly making group decisions about selecting policy ideas, as soon as Meeting 2, didn’t seem to trigger any difficulty in any of the groups.

#### Group dynamics and involvement in relation to activities

The involvement and engagement of the adolescents in each meeting are reflected in Table 30 (P\_A1), Table 31 (P\_B1) and Table 32 (P\_C1).

In the three Alliances, the attending youth seemed shy to begin with, not towards other adolescents or towards co-facilitators (whom most of them already knew, thanks to their respective belonging to the scout movement) but rather towards the facilitators. The ‘distance’ seems to be linked to the fact that the adolescents didn’t know them before and perhaps also because the facilitators introduced themselves as nutritionists by profession, which may have been perceived as impressive, especially since the project was about overweight and obesity prevention [P\_A1\_FN01:FN17]. However, as soon as Meeting 1, group building activities seemed successful in breaking the ice between the youth

and the facilitators in the three Alliances and all adolescents took part in the proposed activities – e.g. in Alliance P\_A1 [P\_A1\_FN01: FN22]:

‘All the youth participated naturally, meaning that we didn’t have to probe anyone in specific to participate.’

Some adolescents were keen on taking on an active role in the group (e.g. making notes) and discussing and endorsing the group agreement.

Similarly, at Meeting 2 (in Alliance P\_A1), [P\_A1\_FN02: FN22]:

“The majority of youth participated naturally, meaning that we didn’t have to probe anyone in specific to participate. P\_A1\_08 (f) maybe was one of the few that did not participate that much, and that caught my attention, but she might get more participative with time. During the system maps activity there was a lot of interaction between the groups and also with us, the facilitators. About 8 adolescents (P\_A1\_01 (m), P\_A1\_02 (m), P\_A1\_06 (f), P\_A1\_11 (m), P\_A1\_13 (f), P\_A1\_17 (f), P\_A1\_05 (f), P\_A1\_15 (f)) often questioned us, the group, and in some cases P\_A1\_01 (m), P\_A1\_06 (f), P\_A1\_11 (m), P\_A1\_13 (f), moved the debate towards an action. P\_A1\_05 (f) and P\_A1\_10 (f) assumed a role of communicators within their groups.”

Also in Alliance P\_B1 and P\_C1, the adolescents were very eager to discuss the system maps and make changes in the merged map. In Alliance P\_C1 [P\_C1\_FN02:FN22]:

“The group has a good dynamic, and everyone was interested and interactive. The majority participates quite often and there is no pressure or discomfort in sharing ideas with the group. They interact a lot with each other and in general the participation is very balanced.”

It was the same for all subsequent activities held in P\_A1 and P\_B1, somewhat less in P\_C1 (we will come back to that below). Shyness, however, remained noticed by facilitators and indicated in many subsequent fieldnotes, in particular when adolescents were asked about their homework, suggesting some unease with admitting they haven’t done it (which happened a few times, e.g. for Photovoice in P\_A1, only few of them made pictures (Meeting 4) and only one did research (Meeting 5) – and in some Feedback Forms and also in a few WP7 surveys questionnaires some adolescents self-reflected that they should ‘participate more’), but also when they have done their homework (e.g. showing the pictures they made for the Photovoice activity), suggesting ‘genuine’ shyness, mixed insecurity or – in the facilitator’s words (28th April 2021) – “mixed with the thought “did I do what it was supposed to? Did the pictures that I took correspond to what is expected for Photovoice?”

Some adolescents remained more at ease with group work than with ‘big group’ talk. At Meeting 3 in Alliance P\_A1 [P\_A1\_FN03: FN23]:

“P\_A1\_16 (f) usually is a bit shy, but on this meeting, she participated more actively in the discussion within her group.”

Reflecting on that case in particular, the facilitator thought that reduced shyness may have had to do with the fact that “the discussion was happening in smaller groups and she was only sharing her

ideas with that group and not at loud with all the Alliance, including facilitators and co-facilitators.” (November 2020).

Engaging the youth in YPAR work proved somewhat more challenging in the P\_C1 group than in the P\_A1 group and the P\_B1 group. For example, in Meeting 3 (P\_C1\_FN03:FN35):

“Contrary to the second meeting, that we felt the youth more active and enthusiastic, in this meeting they were not paying much attention and not enthusiastic about the content. In that sense, it was harder to facilitate the meeting and keep the discussion “active”.”

Why did the P\_C1 group turn out to be more challenging to get on tracks than the P\_A1 and P\_B1 groups, although there were many similarities between the three Alliances? Yet, the facilitation was provided by the same talented and well-prepared facilitators, the adolescents had a rather similar background (individually and as an existing group) and the project was carried out at the same period as for P\_B1 (i.e. started a few months before the C-19 outbreak). After Meeting 4, facilitator reflected [P\_C1\_FN04:FN25]:

“This group is harder to motivate and they don’t really talk or explain why they don’t come or why they don’t reply to our messages. It’s always a bit surprising how they will react to the meeting/activity and how many will come. They change the attitude between meetings and it’s never clear to us why.”

Again after Meeting 5/6, facilitator reflected [P\_C1\_FN05\_06:FN25]:

“As previously mentioned, we scheduled two sessions for the same day according to what was discussed in the previous meeting, where the participants mentioned this would be better for them in terms of availability. However, only four youth were present in this day. We messaged them through WhatsApp several times to remind them about the meeting and even mentioned that we would bring dinner, but we barely got any reply. This group is a bit unpredictable as they don’t really talk or explain why they don’t come or why they don’t reply to our messages. P\_C1\_01 (m) [who attended almost all the Alliance meetings] mentioned that this is just the way they are, including when it comes to Scouts activities, and that has nothing to do with the project. Inês, the co-facilitator, echoed this and mentioned that it is always difficult to schedule activities with this group. Another challenge is that during the meetings the youth seem interested and eager to participate, but when we ask them to do some kind of activity between meetings, such as the Photovoice or research, they don’t do it. We are now more aware of this, so we prepare in advance some materials and activities to be included in the planning of the meeting to overcome this challenge.”

The Fieldnotes reveal that their engagement with Photovoice, policy forms and research was rather limited compared to the other Portuguese Alliances. In contrast, their engagement with the system map and dialogue forums seemed to be substantial as the adolescents appeared to be eager to discuss their ideas. This suggests that their lower engagement has to do with the type of activities offered. This is confirmed by facilitator’s feedback (28th April 2021): “Even though sometimes it was a bit hard to kick-off the discussion, once it started the adolescents naturally participated and got more and more eager to share their thoughts. I think they were excited with the possibility of

discussing their ideas with stakeholders but didn't really feel it was necessary to do some activities before that, such as research or filling the policy forms."

Besides, upon being asked about which activities she considered most relevant, P\_C1\_15 (f) illustrated the worth of interactive programmes for the P\_C1 Alliance members:

"The dialogue forum tests were excellent experiences and a very effective way to have a closer perception of the dimension and the ways in which an activity of this kind is developed. I also found the Q&As very interesting, although I was not able to go to all of them. This because listening to the testimonies and questioning experts in the area was an added value for the research and development of the proposals. The group meetings were also fantastic for consolidating the work and for sharing ideas with the Alliance members."

### Empowerment

As highlighted in Section 2, the quality of participation was very high in the Portuguese Alliances: the three Alliance came up with elaborated policy proposals, building on an incremental development process (from Meeting 2 up until Meeting 8, including additional Q&A sessions) in most of which the adolescents took part consistently and thoroughly, ending up on policy ideas the adolescents were eager to present and discuss with policy stakeholders in Dialogue Forums. However, as said, since most of the engaged adolescents were coming from scout groups, they were, from the outset, acquainted with team participation and group work. As a result, we may wonder: what did the participating adolescents learn from their commitment to the Alliances in terms of power?

According to Kohfeldt and colleagues (2011:29), YPAR projects are likely to be conducive to alterations in power through shifts in knowledge; knowledge production and voice (here understood in the sense of a capacity to make use of or to create space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them, typically among more powerful stakeholders).

The data clearly shows that the adolescents were empowered in terms of **shifts in knowledge** – in particular in terms of obesity-related knowledge acquisition (in general and in a systemic perspective in particular). When asked about what changes resulted from her participation in the Alliance activities, P\_A1\_05(f) replied [P\_A1\_FF\_04]:

Before integrating the CO-CREATE project, I considered that our lifestyle habits (eating habits, physical activity...) were only dependent on each one of us. However, after the debates, I realised that our attitudes and values have an effect on these habits, although they are not the only factor. Society as a whole (financial situation, advertising, supermarkets, green spaces, ...) influence our habits in a certain way. In this way, I realized that obesity is much more complex than I thought and that solutions can have several paths.

Increased awareness about childhood obesity as a health issue encouraged some of them to translate their (scout) commitment to be a role-model for their peers/other young people (highlighted in some FF and in line with their co-facilitator/scout leader's narrative) as to be an example to follow in terms of staying healthy. In P\_A1, upon being asked what is the role of adolescents in fighting obesity in their age group, P\_B1\_05(f) answered [P\_A1\_FF\_04]:

“Our role is fundamental! Not only to be careful of ourselves, but also of those around us, being aware of the dangers and risks associated with it. At an age when we are highly influenced by the behavior of those around us, it is positive that we are surrounded by people with healthy habits who can be examples and role models for us (and so vice versa)”.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of **knowledge production**, the P\_A1 Alliance turned out to be very creative, with two policy proposals partly building on surveys conceived and carried out by Alliance members, as proudly reported in the Policy Brief. In her feedback (28th April 2021) facilitator reflected: “youth-led knowledge production was making youth more comfortable with their idea, meaning that given the information they were able to collect, they used it to sustain and/or adapt their idea.”

As to whether participating adolescents have gained more capacity for **voice** thanks to Alliance activities, the facilitators indicated, while being asked as to what activities may have empowered the young people to project themselves as (political) actors and ready to engage with other (political) actors (policymakers, experts committed to executive bodies, opinion leaders, and so on):

“Especially the Q&As sessions (where they could ask queries but were also questioned about their policy idea by the young professionals invited), as well as the pilot-test of the dialogue forums, were very important to motivate them to get ready for engaging with other actors. The advocacy training was also crucial for the youth to become more confident to communicate with stakeholders and advocate for their ideas.” (facilitators’ survey, May 2020).

This was confirmed in adolescents’ feedback forms. When asked as to whether they would recommend the [Alliance] activities to their friends, P\_A1\_04(f) highlighted the opportunity for developing a consolidated view on issues that matter to them as well as the possibility to express their view (P\_A1\_FF\_05):

“I think it is a very interesting activity. Not only gives a "voice" to young people, but also helps each one of us to reflect a little more on the problems of the society we live in. It also develops our capacity to create and find solutions/ideas.”

That the adolescents were provided with multiple opportunities to meet with experts also helped in that regard, since all experts didn’t provide similar views on matters brought by the adolescents. For example, in Q&A5, the expert advised against aiming for cooking classes during curricular time and suggested going for “an extracurricular activity, rather than a specific subject integrated in the curriculum and schedule of the students. A great way could be developing a Healthy Cooking Club after school hours, for example” – thereby opening a debate between different forms of expert opinions about the matter, since expert invited for Q&A3 approved the curriculum-based format. As

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<sup>5</sup> "In P\_B1, some participants envisioned their role as about changing worldviews of peers - P\_B1\_03(f) answered [P\_B1\_FF\_02]:

In my opinion, the role of teenagers who do not have this problem is to spread the idea that fighting obesity is not a "movement" related to aesthetics but to health, and that it is as necessary as important.

a result, the adolescents had to handle the conflicting experts' views regarding their policy idea. Eventually, the Policy Brief frames P\_A1' "Nutrition and Food Curriculum" as a curricular activity. Upon being asked about how the adolescents in P\_A1 came to a decision about it, the facilitator reflected (28th April 2021):

"The adolescents got indeed conflicting experts views, but when discussing these different views, they opted to keep the nutrition and food contents as part of the school curriculum and not as an extra-curricular activity. They debated that if this was an extra-curricular activity, then there would be a greater risk of not having a lot of participation. Since the group thought that having more knowledge about food, nutrition and cooking was something really important and needed to be explored while they are growing up, the group opted to make it part of the school curriculum. After deciding that this needed to be included in the school curriculum, the debate was whether it should be included in an already existing subject (namely, Citizenship) or if it should be a new subject. They ended up deciding to include these nutrition and food contents on the already existing subject, because they considered that this subject didn't add much to them and they could take advantage of this subject by including the contents that they felt would benefit all the students. This proposal was discussed in a Dialogue Forum and it was interesting because the stakeholders had quite strong opinion that these contents should be part of a new subject, so once again the group had different perspectives and based on what was discussed in the Dialogue Forum, the common vision was the creation of a local pilot project of a new subject under the responsibility of nutritionists."

Along the process, upon debating conflicting inputs from expert while being in charge of finding a way forward, the group perspective further developed and strengthened, building on a rich set of interactions with experts.

This data suggests that in the case of P\_A1 the adolescents were in the drivers' seat to mitigate the diverging views of experts, which proved beneficial for their capacity for voice. This is remarkable since, in the case of P\_A1, the fieldnotes from the first few meetings indicate that many of them were shy on several occasions, despite operating in the familiar surroundings of their scout group.

However, we can wonder: to what extent do the policy ideas build on adolescent inputs? To what extent could the young people construct their own perspective independently, given that the co-facilitators were their scout leaders? Many Fieldnotes indicate that some co-facilitators have been quite present and active in Alliance activities, e.g. in moving idea development forward. In her feedback (28th April 2021), the facilitator reflected: "Particularly in the [P\_A1] and [P\_B1] Alliances, the co-facilitators were very active. In [P\_A1], they acted mostly as supporting force and in [P\_B1] the co-facilitator was more of a participant. In [P\_C1], the co-facilitators helped organizing the meetings and in promoting the discussion several times but were not as active as the ones in [P\_A1] and [P\_B1]."

### *Potential effects on attrition*

In the Portuguese attrition was fairly limited given that, in contrast to Alliances based in schools, adolescents involved in the Portuguese Alliances may have felt 'more free' to withdraw or not to

attend meetings whenever they didn't feel comfortable. As noted above, many adolescents looked shy at a moment or another. Especially when Alliances had to go online due to the COVID-19 outbreak, teamwork became trickier, as indicated in some Feedback Forms – for example P\_A1\_FF06:

“After the beginning of the virtual meetings, I started to contribute a little less to my group because these meetings did not give me the same motivation as the others.”

There may have different reasons why attrition has remained limited.

Some sort of peer pressure creating some sense of motivation and respect. Meaning that they would feel motivated to go if they knew their peers were also going to the meetings and working on the policy ideas. Additionally, since the adolescents were working in groups maybe they didn't want to “let down” the rest of the members and continue working together towards their policy idea.

Facilitators' efforts may also have helped, in particular attention paid to silent/unengaged youths – for example in Alliance P\_A1 [P\_A1\_FN01: FN17]:

“I noticed that P\_A1\_03 (f) wasn't writing anything in any post-it, not because she wasn't interested but more because she was shy. I tried to explain once more this activity but I noticed that she still wasn't writing anything and seemed a bit uncomfortable, so I just said it was ok and that we would then see all together what everybody wrote”

Although being shy and hesitant to begin with, this girl stayed on up until Meeting 8. At Meeting 4, facilitator notes [P\_A1\_FN04: FN22]:

“P\_A1\_03 (f) seemed shy and quiet in the beginning, but throughout the sessions she has been participating more often and showing a lot of interest – both in the discussion, since she coordinates very well the debate in her group (avoiding distractions and parallel conversations) and also in the activities that we ask for their help, such as the photos and videos for healthy voices.”

Facilitators have also enquired about withdrawing adolescents and being explicitly open to re-engagement. For example in Alliance P\_A1, after Meeting 5, P\_A1\_12 (f) was reported as withdrawing. At Meeting 6 the fieldnotes indicate:

“P\_A1\_12 (f) withdrew on 21/03. She texted [a facilitator] on WhatsApp mentioning that she didn't feel that her contribution was being relevant to the project and that she was not feeling as helpful as she would like to be to her group. [The facilitator] insisted that any contribution and participation was very much relevant to the Alliance and emphasised that she could rejoin whenever she would like to.”

Besides, the facilitators offered chances for those missing a meeting or two or joining later to catch up [P\_A1\_FN02: FN17]:

“Since P\_A1\_12 (f) did not attend the previous 2 meetings, I made a brief summary of the system map and the development of the 3 policy proposals. Then she chose the idea ‘physical activity for all’ to work more. “

The facilitators committed themselves to a low threshold for newcomers to feel comfortable to join at a later stage [P\_A1\_FN02: FN17]:

“Since the remaining members of the group of P\_A1\_17 (f) and P\_A1\_18 (f) were not present on this meeting, the two adolescents joined the other group that is also working on the policy idea of the school course. P\_A1\_17 (f) and P\_A1\_18 (f) are also shier, so they felt more comfortable after joining a bigger group. In this group they mentioned that the unhealthy products should be less in the vending machine, but not disappear entirely.”

Hence, despite following the training programme quite closely, the Portuguese Alliances provided varied opportunities for young people to take part in decision-making regarding the tempo and the organization of the meetings. In the three communities, the young people soon got started to work in productive and balanced groups in terms of participation. Yet, engaging the youth in YPAR work proved somewhat more challenging in the P\_C1 group than in the P\_A1 group and the P\_B1 group, in particular ensuring stable attendance and homework participation. This may seem surprising since there were many similarities between the three Alliances: the facilitation was provided by the same talented and well-prepared facilitators; the adolescents had a rather similar background (individually and as an existing group) and the project was carried out at the same period as for P\_B1 (i.e. started a few months before the COVID-19 outbreak). Our data suggest that this surprising finding might be explained by this scouts group culture and by a preference for interactive programmes such as Q&A with experts and other opportunities to discuss their ideas, e.g. building on system maps produced by other adolescents. Regarding empowerment, the Portuguese adolescents, have gained power in terms of knowledge acquisition – especially regarding childhood obesity as a health issue; but also in terms of knowledge production (in particular in P\_A1 where youth surveys were carried out and used for the finalisation of policy ideas) and in terms of voice - i.e. making use of or creating space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them – in particular in the wake of the Q&A sessions, after which the adolescents were in the driver’s seat to deal with a diversity of expert’s views and to find a way forward for the refinement of their policy idea.

## *Conclusion*

As a conclusion we would like to consider the implementation of the CO-CREATE model of the Youth Alliances for Childhood Obesity Prevention in Portugal as a whole and reflect on its value regarding adolescent participation and political efficacy. At this stage it is not yet possible to compare the rolling out of the Alliance model in Portugal with what happened in the other four countries. However, it is possible to take a step aside and look back at the initial challenges in terms of adolescent political empowerment in Portugal and reflect on what the implementation of the Alliances contributed to that regard.

While preparing for the recruitment of Portuguese youth during the fieldwork preparation phase, it appeared that, formally, there is a wealth of opportunities for youth participation in politics (youth councils, youth budgets) and opportunities to take part in youth organizations in Portugal. However, active encouragement of young people to have a voice in politics is very limited and there seems to be no mechanism implemented to encourage youth to join. As a result, adolescent participation in political matters is generally low in Portugal and acquaintance with political issues is limited among

Portuguese adolescents, especially among those with low social-economic status. Therefore, it was to be expected that Portuguese adolescents would be unacquainted with having to get together and come up with policy ideas to prevent childhood obesity, and that much youth empowerment would be needed at the outset.

In a way, partnering with the scout movement helped mitigating this challenge, since scout groups could help reaching out to good numbers of young people with a degree of experience of extra-curricular/voluntary participation (as individuals) and an existing sense of community (heard as the condition of having certain interests and experience in common, i.e. as scouts). This positioned the Portuguese Alliances to be in line with many YPAR experiences, especially in the anglophone world, where the pre-existence of a community is often taken for granted, as scholarly YPAR literature suggests. However, in another way, the extra-curricular format exposed the Portuguese Alliances to a rather higher risk of attrition than school-based Alliances.

Overall, that the adolescents were already acquainted with each other and had previous experience of voluntary participation certainly contributed to the fact that most of them very soon got started with CO-CREATE content work and could go rather far in processing policy ideas, while building on a wide diversity of inputs. Attrition was mostly an issue in one of the groups (Alliance P\_C1) but this did not prevent sustained participation from some members and attrition was slightly mitigated by a degree of peer recruitment. Eventually, one policy idea born in the P\_C1 group was refined and taken up until the end of the process, as such included in the Portuguese Policy Brief.

This also led to some insights regarding motivation. Where it may have been assumed that the youth would develop motivation through the CO-CREATE activities and the opportunity to have an influence, motivation did not turn out to be as self-evident and homogeneous in all Alliances. Where the majority of youth did develop motivation and an increasing level of engagement, a few of the young people were not as interested, either from the start or along the way (especially in P\_C1). In order to keep the unmotivated youth onboard, the facilitators and co-facilitators kept on with the training programme as planned but adjusted their way to present the project to the youth (so that the group members could better understand what the project was about) and the work format: that activities were to take place during the sessions and no longer outside of session through homework helped the P\_C1 group overcome motivational issues. A surprising finding in the Portuguese Alliances was that quite a few participating adolescents looked shy in the first few sessions (not just the first one). It was an unexpected obstacle for engagement since most of the recruited young people were acquainted with group functioning and working on projects and since they were invited to work in a rather familiar environment, among known peers and their very own scout leader as adult ally. However, what was special about the CO-CREATE project was that the facilitators were nutritionists – regarded as experts on the topic – and that the project was meant as an opportunity to make a change in society (beyond their own community). Besides, some of them proved very young and the younger ones were less confident in their voice while more readiness for action was observed among the older ones, as usual among the scout groups. In due course, the nutritionists managed to break the ice and to cope with stereotypes by providing healthy but tasty food during sessions. In the Portuguese Alliances, the system maps activity proved very useful to outline the policy ideas. In P\_A1, the Q&A sessions helped sharpening the policy ideas. Beyond taking photos, Photovoice proved useful to share the policy ideas with friends and stabilize the policy ideas, thanks to peer validation (in particular within the wider scout group). Eventually, compared to the usual

opportunities for youth participation, CO-CREATE proved to provide opportunities to make a change in society through an in-depth contribution, due to the long process and the opportunities for rethinking and this was regarded as an added-value and a success factor, both in the feedback forms filled by adolescent participants and in the feedback session with co-facilitators/adult allies.

Also surprising was the impact of COVID-19 measures on the Portuguese Alliances. Just as in other countries, Portuguese youth was very much affected and disturbed in many respects. However, that the secondary schools closed – while schools in other CO-CREATE countries switched to online work – allowed some participating adolescents some more time for CO-CREATE. In spite of a degree of attrition, the three Alliances could continue and made good use of the Q&A session with expert format, devised by Team Portugal and carried out in close collaboration with the participating adolescents.

Regarding youth empowerment, taking part in the Alliances led the Portuguese adolescents to gain power in three regards. First, in terms of knowledge acquisition. The Portuguese Alliance youths were already quite acquainted with group functioning and were quite open to address policy issues from the outset. However, we observed that over the Alliance process they gained significant knowledge in terms of childhood obesity as a major health issue to be addressed from a systemic perspective. Such gains in knowledge encouraged adolescents to update their (scout) vision of being a role model. Second, in terms of knowledge production, gains were especially perceptible in P\_A1 (where youth surveys were conducted and the outputs of which were included in the refinement process of two policy ideas). The data suggests that it helped adolescents to strengthen their self-confidence regarding the refinement of their policy ideas. Third, in terms of capacity for voice – i.e. making use of or creating space for expressing a specific preference or opinion about issues that affect them – the series of Q&A sessions with a diversity of experts – which were not planned as such in the training programme but added by the Portuguese team as a way to keep momentum in the circumstances of the COVID-19 outbreak – proved to be an opportunity to express their views on issues that matter to them and well as to develop a consolidated view on these issues, building on a diversity of inputs.

This tends to confirm the worth of the Alliance model and also to point areas of further development such as adding opportunities to practice interactions with experts one by one and to reflect as a group on the diversity of views and to be in the driver's seat to find a way forward for the refinement of their own policy idea. Overall, the Portuguese Alliances succeeded in 'promoting and supporting adolescent participation in political efficacy complementary to the formulation of policies for upstream obesity prevention' (**O5.1**), and 'tapped into means and modalities suitable to and identified by adolescents themselves', which 'empowered adolescents and contributed to capacity development'. Moreover, the Portuguese Alliance members developed policy options that can be seen as 'transferable, novel and context-specific and informed by science and experience', which can be a useful contribution to 'upstream overweight prevention' (**O5.3**). 'Youth Alliances for overweight prevention policies' were established that allowed for 'knowledge exchange and learning among and between adolescents and scientific researchers', in which experiential, scientific and political knowledge' were integrated (**O5.2**). These Alliances were sustainable in the sense that a number of the adolescents participated in WP6 dialogue forums and the Youth Task Force, and a few policy ideas were selected as input for WP7 policy implementation activities, while the WP2 and WP3

studies on existing and evidence-based policies, especially the Nourishing and Movement overviews, and the WP4 system maps served as valuable input for the Alliance work **(O.5.4)**.

## PART 2 / Chapter 5: The UK: Evaluation report on the Youth Alliances

This part has a somewhat different structure based on a UK specific approach to data analysis and reporting.

### *Alliance Introduction*

Youth recruitment in the UK: Identifying political units, gatekeepers and co-facilitators

Location of Youth Alliances: The UK Team (LSHTM) established Youth Alliances in three areas within a larger city, building on existing relationships with local authorities.

Gatekeepers: In the first area (Alliance UK\_A1) logistical oversight for the Alliance i.e. organising room bookings for the Alliance meetings, was through a youth work organization. In the two other areas (Alliances UK\_B1 and UK\_B2), the Youth Alliances were set up within a sixth form school (on the border of both boroughs) and logistically organised by the main gatekeeper, the head of sixth form.

Co-facilitators: The UK\_A1 co-facilitator had worked with both the youth work organization and the Children in Care Council, as well as many other civil society organizations locally. For UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances, the UK team interviewed two people who put themselves forward through contacts at the council level; they chose the co-facilitator largely for practical purposes as the other was about to start university in a different city. In December 2019, the contact with the chosen co-facilitator became increasingly limited towards the final stages of Alliance recruitment. For this reason, the UK team made the decision to end the contract with their co-facilitator and ask two research assistants to act as a co-facilitator and facilitator for the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances. These individuals remained until the close of the Youth Alliances.

Recruiting youth: The same recruitment strategy used for WP4 was applied, namely ensuring maximum diversity with regards to protected characteristics. The LSHTM team did not target specific individuals according to these characteristics, but rather chose to recruit with the importance of diversity in mind. Recruitment of co-facilitators for each Alliance was also conducted via local authority contacts and other leading organizations (e.g. youth work organization). The UK\_A1 co-facilitator was key to reaching out to local Alliance participants, drawing on his many connections to existing local organizations. The UK Team attempted to recruit via local schools but without success. For UK\_B1 and UK\_B2, the Youth Commissioning Services, which oversee youth programmes in the council, were most involved in helping the team recruiting Alliance participants. The UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 co-facilitator attended the co-facilitator training in Lisbon [September 2019] and reached out to existing contacts within his former school and local hockey programme he is a part of to help with recruitment. However, neither of these avenues resulted in successfully recruiting any Alliance participants. Although it was written into their ethics protocol that they would provide a £20/hour voucher to Alliance participants to remunerate them for their time in the Alliance, the UK team did not mention this in the recruitment process to encourage genuine interest from Alliance participants. The UK team also did not continue to recruit youth on a rolling basis throughout the Alliance process as they worried it would not be clear whether young people joining at a later stage joined for the

renumeration or out of interest for the project. Alliance members were invited to recruit their peers to join in Alliance activities (e.g., surveys, interviews etc.) but facilitators chose not to share the option to recruit their peers to fully join as Alliance members.

Types of collaborators and kinds of recruitment attempts: In order to increase recruitment, the UK Team held open house meetings at the council in collaboration with Youth Commissioning Services in the area, and at the Town Hall in one of the areas, however no-one attended. Communication about the event will have been insufficient, and in retrospect the UK Team should have done more to harness social media. In UK\_A1, the co-facilitator knew 3 of the 5 Alliance participants personally so the Alliance was largely built around this connection. These Alliance participants then recruited 2 more participants. The Alliance meetings took place at the local Town Hall. In UK\_B1 and UK\_B2, the Alliance participants were recruited through a gatekeeper at school, who attended a number of the Alliance meetings. The Alliance meetings took place on Mondays at 2pm given that all the sixth formers finish school at 1:30pm on Mondays. In January 2020, the Alliance started as one large group of 12 but was split into two smaller Alliance groups based on their local authority of residence and areas of interest in pursuing policy ideas. Although these were in effect two separate Youth Alliances, they began and ended each meeting in a large group to continue building group dynamic and streamline the facilitation process. The UK team communicated with the Alliances using email or WhatsApp as a group and individually where required and appropriate.

Alliance meetings and attendance

In UK\_A1, 6 in-person meetings took place between 08-01-2020 and 02-03-2020. The first meeting was attended by 5 Alliance participants. Attendance was inconsistent throughout the 6 meetings with only one young person attending all meetings. There seemed to be a lot of barriers keeping young people from consistently attending, including conflicts with school events and other private issues. Following school closures and COVID-19 restrictions the youth did not continue their participation in the Alliance. As a result, policy ideas were unable to be fully developed in this Youth Alliance.

**Table 33. Attendance Youth Alliance in UK\_A1 before COVID-19 regulations**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
UK_A_1 (f)	█	█		█		█
UK_A_2 (m)	█	█	█	█		█
UK_A_3 (m)	█	█				
UK_A_4 (f)	█	█	█	█	█	█
UK_A_5 (f)	█					

In UK\_B1 and UK\_B2, 12 meetings (5 in person, 7 online) took place between 12-01-2020 and 22-06-2020. The first meeting was attended by 12 Alliance participants. As noted above the group was separated into two Youth Alliances. Attendance was stable up until the school closure due to COVID; about half of the Alliance participants were engaged to continue with the Alliance meetings online. In spite of the added challenges of communicating virtually, the Youth Alliances continued to develop their policy ideas. Tables 33 and 34 provide details about this information.

**Table 34. Attendance Youth Alliances in UK\_B1 (light blue) and UK\_B2 (dark blue) before and after COVID-19 regulations**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
						Online						
UK_1 (m)	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue		Light Blue							
UK_2 (f)	Dark Blue				Dark Blue			Dark Blue				
UK_3 (f)	Dark Blue											
UK_4 (m)	Dark Blue											
UK_5 (m)	Light Blue		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue							
UK_6 (m)	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue
UK_7 (f)	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue		Light Blue							
UK_8 (f)	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue			Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
UK_9 (m)	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue							
UK_10 (f)	Light Blue											
UK_11 (f)	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue		Light Blue
UK_12 (f)	Light Blue		Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue			Light Blue	Light Blue			

Composition/diversity

The UK\_A1 Youth Alliance comprised 3 girls and 2 boys; UK\_B1 Youth Alliance was made up of 3 girls and 4 boys and UK\_B2 Youth Alliance was made up of 3 girls and 2 boys. It is not possible to report on any other characteristics of the Youth Alliance members given that we did not set out to collect this data as part of recruitment, or at any stage in the process. However, we know from data collected as part of the WP7 surveys (reported in Deliverable 5.2) that 15 individual members of Youth Alliances who responded to the surveys reported low (n=6), medium (n=8), and high (n=1)

scores on the family affluence scale, some prior participation in politics (n=9). Youth that responded to the survey also reported their country of birth and their parents' countries of birth:

**Table 35.**

Birth country	Youth (n=)	Mother (n=)	Father (n=)
England	10	6	6
Country within Europe	4	1	1
Country outside Europe	1	8	8

#### Types of activities

**Table 36. Alliance activities and engagement in UK\_A1**

Meeting	Activities	Notes about engagement and any challenges encountered
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introductions + questionnaire</li> <li>Getting to know the group</li> <li>Overview CO-CREATE and Alliance process</li> <li>System mapping activity</li> <li>Defining goals</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introducing policy form</li> <li>Reviewing amended system maps</li> <li>Identifying areas of interest</li> <li>Prioritizing ideas</li> <li>Filling in policy form</li> </ul>	Youth felt unsure about the policy form
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation by youth council 'Young futures'</li> <li>What is policy?</li> <li>System maps</li> <li>Going through policy forms</li> </ul>	Youth found it hard to envision next steps
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summary last meeting by the youth</li> <li>Brainstorm on survey for policy idea</li> <li>Identifying information to be collected for survey</li> </ul>	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying information to be collected</li> <li>Developing survey</li> </ul>	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussing survey proposal</li> <li>Policy ideas from other Alliances</li> <li>Group discussion policy idea</li> </ul>	

The main Alliance activities concerned:

- 1) developing and discussing a system map and action ideas;
- 2) working on the policy proposal form;
- 3) engaging with local policies and local council members, and
- 4) building a survey.

The integrated UK system map was consistently used to guide these activities. The UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances co-created surveys with the UK team members: Alliance participants designed the topic and key questions, and the UK team contributed to the flow and formulation of the questions. The Youth Alliance members disseminated the surveys to their peers (via school and social media networks). The surveys responses were limited to a few Alliance participants, but nevertheless helped shape the policy ideas, as intended. The activities were in all meetings accompanied by social time, dinner (in case of the face-to-face meetings), and checking in more informally. Throughout the field notes (described activities and the reflections of the facilitators), it comes to the fore that the facilitators were creative in attuning the activities to the Alliance participants and their levels of engagement, struggles and distraction. An important example of this creativity in all Alliances concerned bringing in local council members to the Alliance meeting.

**Table 37. Alliance activities in UK\_B1 and UK\_B2**

Meeting	Activities	Notes about engagement and any challenges encountered
1	Consent form; questionnaire Introduction and getting to know the group Overview CO-CREATE and Alliance process System mapping activity Sharing of goals and priorities	
2	Lunch and catching up Reviewing system maps Prioritizing ideas and areas of action Introducing policy form	Youth struggled with concept of policy
3	Overview of policy; what is a policy? Example; going through policy form Discussion about last meetings' ideas Filling in policy form and next steps (survey) Looking at system map	Youth struggled with how to engage with the policy form
4	Motivation speech school gatekeeper Regrouping Alliances based on boroughs Presentation local council members on obesity prevention, initiatives and programs in each borough	Stepping away from policy form and inviting local council members helped re-engage Alliance participants

Meeting	Activities	Notes about engagement and any challenges encountered
	Youth asked questions, shared their ideas	
5	Collecting information: survey	
6 Zoom	Recap of their ideas and progress: survey Moving forward in these circumstances	the new medium added challenges to engaging youth
7 Zoom	Survey development: share screen Discussion of action points and next steps Discussion of process and difficulty	More discussion between Alliance members and greater levels of comfort with Zoom
8 Zoom	Catch up and timeline Going over and finalizing all four survey Action points and next steps	ppt and zoom functions helped with engagement
9 Zoom	Survey dissemination discussion Survey completion	ppt helped youth to focus
10 Zoom	Reviewing survey results so far; screen sharing; Interpreting and discussing findings Policy form NOURISHMENT and MOVING (screen sharing) Discussing next steps	share screen function helpful in keep group engaged
11 Zoom	Check in and plan for next meetings Policy proposal form (going over one group)	
12 Zoom	Check in and catch up Filling in proposals section by section: share screen; System maps and survey results available Wrapping up and what's next after summer: trainings, dialogue forums, CO-CREATE conference; Thank you and contact after summer	

## *Policy Ideas*

What policy ideas do youth come up with?

### UK\_A1

As a result of COVID-19 restricting the ability to have in person meetings, the UK\_A1 Youth Alliance was not able to produce any fully formed policy ideas. Before ending engagement with the UK\_A1 Youth Alliance, the Alliance participants did have two ideas they were exploring and in the initial

phases of putting together. One of these ideas was focused on increasing the accessibility of and motivation to exercise for young people. This was based on some aspects of the system map that highlighted gyms and recreational spaces being too costly or unwelcoming to the young people as well as one young person's own experience in feeling that gyms are not always welcoming to them and their peers: "the problem is, young people who want to go to the gyms are not going". As of the last Alliance meeting in UK\_A1, one of the ideas they were most interested in was creating sessions dedicated to teens and adolescents within gyms.

Another theme that emerged out of the initial Alliance activities was the impact of time pressure and time management on Alliance participants' and their peers' ability to manage a healthy lifestyle. While this idea was not able to be taken forward, youth in the UK\_A1 Alliance had started putting together a survey to disseminate amongst their peers to find out more about how and why time pressure impacts young people and their ability to keep up with healthy lifestyle behaviours.

### [UK\\_B1 and UK\\_B2](#)

There were two main policy ideas that came out of the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Youth Alliances.

The first is about providing free cooking classes for young people that focus not only on technical cooking skills but also on practical skills like budgeting and meal planning. Young people from the UK\_B2 Alliance want classes to be provided at various local locations (e.g. schools, community centres) and include a 'take home kit' with ingredients and recipes. The goals and objectives of the policy are to have the local council provide free cooking classes including budgeting and meal planning and 'take-home kits' for 14-18-year-olds; to provide the classes in multiple locations across the borough to make them more accessible; and to implement marketing strategies to make classes desirable and appealing to young people. Youth came up with this idea through the following activities while also keeping in mind their own interests and experiences. Youth discussed the obesity system maps and added their own views to the maps with handwritten notes. Youth identified access to healthy food as a key area which led them to come up with a cooking class policy as a means to increase the accessibility of healthy food. Alliance members were presented with the NOURISHING framework policy examples to provide them with information on existing policies pertaining to cooking/nutrition. Youth then consulted the Obesity Public Health officer and learned about the council's local cookery programmes for communities which could be extended to include teenagers, in line with their policy idea. Alliance members, facilitators, and LSHTM researchers co-designed surveys to collect information about cooking habits from their peers and used the results from the survey to help shape their policy idea. This idea was followed through to WP6, where a Dialogue Forum has been held on the subject, leading to several concrete ideas and commitments for taking forward the idea.

The second of the two policy ideas from the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances is about utilising social media as a tool to promote healthy foods and healthy eating. The Youth Alliance members want to create school, local, and/or national level social media accounts that promote healthy foods/eating that are particularly geared towards young people and focused on making content appealing to generate a large following of young people. The goals and objectives of the policy are to have a representation of healthy food on key social media outlets; to have more local groups of young people (school and other council youth groups) running healthy lifestyle social media accounts; and

to create strategies to increase the appeal of social media pages promoting healthy food to increase following. To help come up with this policy idea, youth worked on the obesity system maps and added their own views to the maps with handwritten notes. Youth identified the impact of social media use as an area of focus for their policy idea. They then consulted the Obesity Public Health officers in one of the Alliance meetings and discussed potentials and opportunities for collaboration. Young people also worked with the facilitators and LSHTM researchers to co-design surveys to get a snapshot of social media use amongst their peers and used the results to help shape their policy idea. This idea was also followed through to WP6, where a Dialogue Forum has been held on the subject, leading to several concrete ideas and commitments for taking forward the idea.

#### Which activities contribute to policy ideas?

The Youth Alliance participants, co-facilitators and facilitators have been consulted to understand which activities they felt might have contributed to their feeling empowered and supporting their ideas.

Involving youth as key partners in decision making and incorporating opportunity for youth led activities are key components in fostering a level of empowerment, a key principle driving the formulation of the Youth Alliances as a concept. As a result, facilitators aimed to involve Alliance participants in decision making from the outset of Alliance activities and instil a certain level of autonomy where possible while also honouring the engagement/research protocol. Any scheduling decisions were made jointly with youth with facilitators prioritizing youth's availability and commitments outside of the Alliance. In addition, while facilitators had an outline of the Alliance process and activities, this was consistently reviewed with Alliance participants and open to their suggestions for change.

Facilitators also prioritized opportunities for training and capacity building for the Youth Alliance members as a means to contribute to empowerment. This included organizing meetings with local public health officers where the Alliance participants could learn more about existing health policies and initiatives happening in their communities and the ways in which they could be involved in that. By connecting the Alliance participants with 'real world' stakeholders, actions, and initiatives, the facilitators and research team hoped that this would contribute to the youth feeling empowered with knowledge and information and also as valued stakeholders in their communities. Further training opportunities presented to the Alliance participants were training in Photovoice and vlogging, both of which the research team organized with experts in their respective fields. Though these activities were not able to take place within the scheduled Alliance engagement period due to COVID-19 restrictions, the research team is committed to making them happen as and when is possible.

Experiential and scientific knowledge

UK\_A1

Although the UK\_A1 Youth Alliance was not able to fully form their policy ideas, the work they were able to put together seemed heavily influenced by their own experiential knowledge. For the UK\_A1 Alliance in particular, facilitators found the youth focus on their own experience difficult to balance with their scientific knowledge as researchers. Because the facilitators wanted to avoid imposing too much of their own input and overwhelming the Alliance participants with too much scientific, or unfamiliar, information, their adherence to their own experiential knowledge resulted in policy ideas that were not very systems forward. Specifically, the idea centred around time pressure was derived from one Alliance member's (and her peers) own experience of feeling burdened by her job, schoolwork, and extra-curricular activities to the extent that it impacts the ability to exercise and eat healthily. As a result, her idea was driven by wanting to find solutions that create more time for Alliance participants as individuals.

Having gone through the engagement process, a point of reflection is that more could have been done by the UK team and facilitators to incorporate scientific knowledge more consistently throughout the Alliance process, even if just through the system map by allotting time to develop a deeper understanding of it and how it applies to the systems relevant to the policy areas of interest.

#### UK\_B1 and UK\_B2

Similarly, to the UK\_A1 Youth Alliances, experiential knowledge was at the forefront in influencing the UK\_B1 and UK Alliances' policy ideas. Particularly with the social media policy idea, as the young person who first came up with the idea reported to facilitators that while it was partially influenced by the system mapping activity the initial idea in itself came from her own perception and experience of social media, noting that *"I would like to come up with a way to use social media to promote healthy foods. As there are many popular social media accounts that promote things such as cake, sweets or fast food via tutorials or photoshopped or staged photos that make them appealing. Schools run healthy eating page."*

Regarding scientific knowledge or and how research is reflected in the policy idea, this student further explained that the systems map encouraged her to consider *"the other factors [beyond body image and mental health] that social media influences such as food promotion, influence of influencers etc."* Additionally, when researching and learning about the government's obesity strategy, she noticed there *"wasn't a specific mention of social media and how it can impact the eating habits of younger generations. This has made me consider social media as a kind of 'free for all' outlet with hardly any limitations."*

For the UK\_B2 Alliance's cooking classes policy idea, the students expressed interest in affordable healthy food provision from the start of the Alliance process based on their familiarity with similar programs through their own experiences. When exploring the idea of some sort of cooking class initiative, the Alliance participants felt that based on their experience this is something that is usually only offered in lower years of school or to adults. They drew on their own experiential knowledge and emphasized the importance of cooking classes for older adolescents as many go away to university without having the skills to cook healthy for themselves (based on field notes).

## *Readiness for Action and Obesity Perception*

Based on the Alliance meetings and engagement activities alone, it is difficult to evaluate participants' readiness to take political action and perception of the problem of obesity. Though there were activities outlined in the engagement protocol that aligned with the aims of this research question (e.g. system mapping, policy research, and advocacy training), several aspects of the engagement process made it difficult to carry these activities out to their fullest potential. The UK team prioritized working with youth to develop their policy ideas in collaboration with local council and existing initiatives, which though had benefits of its own, made less time and resources available to dedicate to advocacy training.

In retrospect, this research question would have benefitted from the WP4 system map being more heavily incorporated throughout Alliance activities. This would not only have fostered a deeper understanding and perception of the complexity of obesity as an issue, but also it would have highlighted the systemic nature of the problem in a way that could have encouraged youth to further understand the political and structural nature of the problem and thus realize the power of political action in coming up with policy solutions. Though a modified group model building activity where youth could add to and alter the UK master map that came out of WP4 was included in the Alliance process, it was challenging to build upon this while also striving to meet other Alliance objectives (e.g. collect information for policy ideas and other activities) as facilitators were conscious of being able to meet all of the Alliance objectives within a short period of time (January to May 2020). The UK researchers had the intention to and did refer back to the map when possible while youth were developing their policy ideas, but it was difficult to foster a deep level of understanding of the problem and its political implications with only a basic introductory session to systems thinking. With hindsight, the systems approach could have been more thoroughly embedded in the Alliance process, based on the system map – either through creating a new map within the Alliance, or spending more time establishing the amended map as a constant touchstone for activities. Many of the resulting policies developed across all Alliances are a testament to the low level of integration of systems thinking, given that many are for downstream, individual-based interventions.

## *Process, Decision Making, and Ownership*

Decision making about activities and process

### UK\_A1

The UK\_A1 Youth Alliance was short-lived and characterised by varying levels of attendance and input from a small group of Alliance participants, for reasons that were mostly external to the Youth Alliance activities themselves. Facilitators felt challenged by the aim of balancing the structure of the Alliance protocol with a 'youth led' process where participants were facilitated to share their own ideas and to drive the activities. Meetings were held in an informal meeting room in the town hall and began with informal 'catch-ups' to encourage a more equal power dynamic. The field notes describe that the Alliance participants needed structured facilitation and probing to share their views and prioritise policy ideas. In response to hesitancy and limited engagement, facilitators took the lead on planning the structure and activities of subsequent meetings, though always working to seek

input and confirmation from the participants. The Alliance participants presented great ideas and were supported by the facilitator on how to refine and take forward their ideas. Facilitators found it challenging to balance guiding the Alliance participants through the process, without leading them too much in a certain direction.

#### UK\_B1 and UK\_B2

Facilitators took a similar approach with the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances and started the first meetings by suggesting a plan of activities and then confirmed this with the Alliance participants, opening the conversation for changes and suggestions. The Youth Alliance struggled with the concept of policy and with understanding system level processes, tending to focus more on individual behaviours/responsibility. In an effort to simplify the policy form process, the facilitators led a discussion explaining and providing examples of what makes a policy. Some tensions arose during a policy form activity with Alliance participants reluctant and disinterested to fill it in and the Facilitator noting that it seemed to feel like an assignment for them rather than an opportunity to share their views. In order to address these challenges, the Facilitators invited a member of the local council to encourage engagement and interest by sharing experiences of real policies. This, alongside a talk about motivation and engagement by the school gatekeeper seemed to elicit a positive response from youth. Subsequent meetings continued with the facilitators and co-facilitators taking a more 'hands-off approach' to give space to the youth to work on their research ideas. About half of the Alliance members stayed after school closure due to COVID-19. In these meetings, the facilitators and co-facilitators had their video on, while the Alliance participants communicated via audio only making it difficult for facilitators to assess responses and input from the Alliance participants. Over the course of the subsequent six meetings, it was generally challenging to engage the Alliance participants. Aside of the meetings, the facilitator had one-on-one contacts with all participating Alliance members through WhatsApp.

#### Group dynamics, involvement, and evolution of Alliances

##### UK\_A1

The UK\_A1 Youth Alliance in started as a group of five Alliance participants but ended up as a group of three for the duration of most of the Alliance activities. As noted above, we attribute the small group of the UK\_A1 Alliance to the ways in which we recruited Alliance participants in UK\_A1. Even though the initial guideline suggested different channels for recruitment, it was valued in the first CO-CREATE trainings to form each Alliance from a diverse group of youth recruited from a variety of different sources. Therefore, we ended up recruiting almost entirely through the co-facilitator's network and connections. This resulted in three Alliance participants, two of which were siblings, joining the Alliance based on their relationship to the co-facilitator. Two of these Alliance participants were able to recruit peers to the Alliance, bringing the group total to five. Because the group was such a small size, with meetings taking place in a somewhat small/formal space, and the presence of two researchers and a co-facilitator our view is that it was difficult to foster a balanced collaborative environment. Facilitators felt it was difficult to move beyond an implied power imbalance and to encourage Alliance participants to participate more voluntarily without prompting. As a result, it

made it difficult for the Alliance to evolve and progress through the activities to develop their policy ideas.

After the first couple meetings, two Alliance participants did not continue with the Alliance due to other commitments. Covid-19 restrictions made it no longer possible to host face-to-face meetings with the UK\_A1 Alliance, resulting in a need to transition activities online via virtual meetings. The facilitators kept in touch with the Alliance via WhatsApp while working through the uncertainty and implications of the coronavirus. The option to continue with Alliance activities virtually was presented to the Youth Alliance however no one expressed interest to continue engagement. Thus, the Alliance naturally dissolved and did not progress past this stage. This decision not to move forward with the UK\_A1 Youth Alliance was left up to the Alliance participants themselves. In retrospect there could certainly have been prolonged insistence and efforts made by the facilitators, however they were also personally affected by the implications of COVID-19 and therefore the Alliance came to a close.

### [UK\\_B1 and UK\\_B2](#)

Though taking place within the same school, the UK\_B1/B2 Alliance was initially split into two smaller Alliance groups of six based on their policy area of interest (broadly, the areas of interest were healthy food & physical activity). Shortly thereafter the two Alliance groups were reformed based on their borough of residence (the school within which the Alliances were held falls between two neighbouring boroughs); Alliance B1 consisted of seven students from area 1 and Alliance B2 consisted of 5 students from area 2.

Because the Alliance participants in the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances were all students within the same school with some of them being friends, as well as just having a larger group, there was a positive and energetic group dynamic from the start of the Alliances. Facilitators felt that this allowed for the Alliance to evolve and progress much more easily relative to the UK\_A1 Alliance. The larger group size also allowed for Alliance members to work in small groups with their peers, without an immediate presence of the facilitator. Although at times this could lead students to become distracted from the activities at hand, facilitators felt overall that this helped contribute to a sense of ownership and co-creation amongst the Alliance participants.

Conversely, the large group size and group dynamics between the students also presented its own set of challenges, particularly during activities lead by the facilitators. Though facilitators appreciated the dynamic and energy amongst the students, this could be distracting in a whole group setting and take away from the desired environment of co-creation by facilitators needing to be more didactic in their approach. In addition, facilitators perceived the size of the group also made it difficult to generate equal levels of participation from all Alliance members. Because there were some students that were much more active and vocal in their participation, facilitators felt at times that this encouraged the less active students to further disengage since their peers were already contributing at such a high level. This made it difficult for the Alliance to evolve towards fully formed policy ideas as facilitators were often trying to garner interest and participation from the group as a whole before moving forward.

Another distinct factor that contributed to the evolution of the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances was the involvement of the local councils and their public health departments. Both Alliances were able to

meet with local public health officials to learn about local initiatives and the opportunities to align the Alliance policy ideas with them. By aligning the Alliance activities and policy ideas with existing initiatives, facilitators hoped that this would validate and encourage the Alliance members by showing them the potential opportunity for them to be involved in tangible change within their communities. Involving members of local council in each of the Alliances contributed significantly to the evolution of the Alliance as well as their policy ideas, as both sought to align with the existing priorities and initiatives they learned about.

Following Covid-19 restrictions and Alliance activities transitioning to online meetings on 16-04-2020, the Alliances merged back into one group of six students given that the other six students decided to no longer participate.

Online meetings presented a number of challenges in taking the Alliance forward. Not only did they face significant attrition but also lack of face-to-face contact made it even more difficult to facilitate active engagement and participation from the Alliance members, especially those who had been quieter throughout the process already.

Alliance meetings also transitioned online before the Alliance participants were able to carry out planned Photovoice and vlogging activities. This made it to take forward the momentum from the in-person meetings without engaging 'hands on' activities that allowed for the Alliance members to collect information and refine their policy ideas more independently. As a result, facilitators felt the need to take on an even more didactic role to facilitate meaningful engagement and help the Alliance participants progress in developing their policy ideas.

### Empowerment

The Youth Alliance participants, co-facilitators and facilitators have been consulted to understand which activities they felt might have contributed to their feeling empowered and supporting their ideas.

Involving youth as key partners in decision making and incorporating opportunity for youth led activities are key components in fostering a level of empowerment, and this has driven the formulation of the Youth Alliances as a concept. As a result, facilitators aimed to involve Alliance participants in decision making from the outset of Alliance activities and instil a certain level of autonomy where possible while also honouring the engagement/research protocol. Any scheduling decisions were made jointly with youth with facilitators prioritizing youth's availability and commitments outside of the Alliance. In addition, while facilitators had an outline of the Alliance process and activities, this was consistently reviewed with Alliance participants and open to their suggestions for change.

Facilitators also prioritized opportunities for training and capacity building for the Youth Alliance members as a means to contribute to empowerment. This included organizing meetings with local public health officers where the Alliance participants could learn more about existing health policies and initiatives happening in their communities and the ways in which they could be involved in that. By connecting the Alliance participants with 'real world' stakeholders, actions, and initiatives, the facilitators and research team hoped that this would contribute to the youth feeling empowered with knowledge and information and also as valued stakeholders in their communities. Further training opportunities presented to the Alliance participants were training in Photovoice and

vlogging, both of which the research team organized with experts in their respective fields. Though these activities were not able to take place within the scheduled Alliance engagement period due to COVID-19 restrictions, the research team has committed to honouring the opportunities and organizing them with the Alliance participants who signed up when it is possible to do so.

### *Potential effects on attrition*

Attrition was noted across all three Youth Alliances, and this was to be expected, given the challenging subject matter, the busy schedules and competing priorities of participants, the fact that this was a difficult period all around (COVID, pressures with school) and the incentives for continuing were limited.

The biggest point of attrition in all three Alliances occurred when they switched from in-person to digital meetings. Between the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances, only 6 (of the original 12) Alliance participants remained once meetings transitioned online.

None of the Alliance participants in the UK\_A1 Alliance were able to continue with Alliance activities once meetings were no longer able to be held in person. In general, the UK\_A1 Alliance faced more challenges contributing to attrition than those in UK\_B1 and UK\_B2. As noted by the co-facilitator in UK\_A1, this made the sustainability of the Alliance much more difficult. The primary contributing factors to attrition in UK\_A1 were:

1. Members were not recruited from within one collective body or organization (e.g. a school)
2. Meetings took place in the evening, outside of school hour and off school grounds. Thus, Alliance participants had to take time out of their personal schedules to travel to another location for Alliance meetings
3. Confusion around the Alliance process and objectives created less incentive for Alliance members to continue to stay engaged in activities—especially given that they were not in the most convenient time and space (as noted in points 1 and 2).

### *What different forms of Alliance came out of WP5's engagement with youth as most suitable and sustainable for youth?*

This section aims to collate reflections from Alliance participants regarding what types of engagement they found most suitable and sustainable, as well as those from the facilitators and co-facilitators.

In UK\_A1, the facilitator found meetings difficult to sustain with such small numbers, often relying on the attendance of all three Alliance participants in order to make any substantial progress through engagement activities. Though this may not have been an issue in a larger group where those that were absent might have been caught up by their peers, facilitators found it difficult to move forward when there seemed to be a frequent need to recap and redo previous meetings and activities. Facilitators perceived hesitation and a lack of clarity amongst the Alliance participants in regard to participating in Alliance activities. This is also reflected in feedback from the UK\_A1 co-facilitator,

where it was stated that Alliance participants felt as though some Alliance activities and expectations were unclear and that they lacked guidance in some instances. This overall lack of clarity and confusion between both facilitators and Alliance members again highlights the difficulty experienced by facilitators to adhere to the Alliance protocol and objectives outlined in WP5 while also trying to move beyond the implied power imbalance and to encourage Alliance participants to participate more voluntarily without prompting. This all led to a lack of in-depth engagement, which in turn made it difficult to sustain any momentum in the Alliance process.

In UK\_B1 and UK\_B2, the overall context and make-up of the Alliance differed to that of the UK\_A1 Alliance, primarily due to the recruitment via a school. Having been set up within a sixth form school and via a trusted gatekeeper, the Alliance participants were familiar and some of them friends with each other and were also meeting within an environment that was familiar to them. The UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Youth Alliances were also a much larger group of students with 12 participants at face-to-face meetings. As a result, facilitators found the UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances easier to sustain and engage with relative to the UK\_A1 Youth Alliance.

The UK\_B1 and UK\_B2 Alliances also had the benefit of meeting public health departments at the local council. The aim of this was to not only to further validate the Youth Alliance's time and contributions but also to (theoretically) provide an opportunity for their longevity beyond the CO-CREATE project by remaining involved with the council and/or local initiatives.

With Covid-19 and the transition to virtual meeting on Zoom, engagement was much more difficult to sustain overall. The lack of face-to-face contact (Alliance participants only joined meetings via audio) made it difficult to engage the group and garner interest in the activities, especially given that more 'hands-on' activities of the previously scheduled Photovoice and vlogging training/courses were no longer able to take place.

## *Conclusion*

As with the above, this section was informed and validated by Youth Alliance participants themselves as well as the co-facilitators.

### Success factors

- 1) The components of the Youth Alliance organization and implementation that were helpful and worked well included the extensive prior planning conducted by the WP5 leads, as well as the idea to anchor the Youth Alliance work around a central aim to produce 'policy ideas', as this gave purpose and direction.
- 2) The UK Team succeeded in carrying through the important issues raised by Youth Alliances participants (such as mental health, social media, cooking skills and a range of other issues) into opportunities within the next stages of CO-CREATE research, notably as themes for Dialogue Forums with local stakeholders.

- 3) The UK Team sought early on to develop relationships with local public health teams at the Youth Alliance sites to increase every opportunity for the Alliances' ideas to be concretely addressed. The local government partners were crucial partners in taking forward the Youth Alliance ideas, and in making the Dialogue Forums (WP6) as grounded in real policy decisions as possible, and to further inform current (actual) policy priorities.

### Areas for improvement

- 1) Recruitment of Youth Alliance participants:

The components of the Youth Alliances that could have benefitted from a different approach were first and foremost the way in which Alliance participants were recruited. Though the Alliance participants who did sign up to participate in the Youth Alliances produced excellent work on very important topics, the UK team would have benefitted from a more direct route to recruitment, especially in UK\_A1 to maximize the potential for participation and in turn, the sustainability of the Alliance. Much discussion was had about the benefits and risks of recruiting from existing groups such as in youth organizations (would we get overly politicised youth?) or schools (would there be the requisite diversity?); however, upon reflection, the risk of engaged youth would have perhaps been outweighed by a greater number of voices, and there may have been greater opportunity to conduct more activities, had recruitment been a smoother/quicker process. On a similar theme, the timing and location of the meetings appears to need some consideration; conducting the sessions during the school day, on school premises showed to be more consistently easier to optimise attendance.

- 2) Achieving participatory approach with sufficient guidance:

Another reflection has to do with the participatory foundation of this work, and the fact that by the time the Youth Alliances were established, a quite prescriptive approach was suggested for the Alliance activities. This included a set number of meetings following a rigorous agenda to meet a set list of outputs. We acknowledge the challenge of designing the Youth Alliances, the need to compare across Youth Alliances and/or countries, and to have a relatively systematised process. Nevertheless, it was challenging to infuse a sense of ownership among participants, and to truly CO-CREATE ideas when the steps to develop those ideas were pre-set. By far the biggest challenge we had in the UK was with Alliance participants feeling ownership of the process and the Youth Alliance itself, and inviting them to design activities from the start, rather than pre-suggesting them, may have helped. Again, we acknowledge that giving a group of people a blank slate is also quite challenging, and we may have ended up with nothing at all. However, it will be worth further reflection on a process which could instil engagement and ownership of participants from the start, all the while meeting key objectives, as was required for WP5; the right balance was challenging to strike. For example, the co-facilitator in UK\_A1 reported that the Alliance participants often felt they lacked guidance and clarity around Alliance activities and expectations, both when presented with the choice to participate in pre-designed activities and when invited to share their own ideas for engagement activities. As a result, facilitators took the lead in guiding the progress of the Alliance by suggesting next steps and outlining a plan for subsequent meetings but also tried to balance this with not overly

prompting Alliance participants. Young people were always given the opportunity to take up, reject, or modify the suggestion but often agreed with whatever was suggested by the facilitator. Thus having a protocol with pre-designed activities was useful for the UK research team in the sense that it provided a specific set of means to meet the aims of the Alliances. However, in practice this seemed to conflict with the other key priority of the Youth Alliances, to incorporate a collaborative environment of co-creation. Though the UK team made an effort to present the Youth Alliance with opportunities to participate in decision making, it was difficult to provoke any novel suggestions that differed from the protocol that had already been suggested to the Alliance participants. This may have been a result of Alliance participants not being given enough time to become familiar with the process and might have been addressed by involving them in the design of the protocol at an earlier stage.

## PART 3/ Chapter 6: EYP Youth addressing the EU level strategy

### *Introduction*

This chapter reports on the preparation of youth led-policy proposals addressing childhood obesity and overweight at the EU level, in collaboration with the European Youth Parliament (later on: EYP). In this collaboration, the CO-CREATE NIPH and UvA teams were to support EYP in addressing the CO-CREATE topic at one of their International Sessions.

Covering the period starting the early contacts with the EYP (2017) until the EYP International Session in Novi Sad (March 2022), the report draws on correspondence with the EYP, observations at EYP International Session in Rotterdam (November 2018), written material produced ahead of the EYP International Session in Novi Sad, during the International Session (in particular structured fieldnotes prepared by UvA and filled by EYP facilitator and draft resolution) and the written output of the Session (motion for a resolution as submitted to the General Assembly and final voted version). As described in the text, the process of this activity was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Background*

In addition to the recruitment and the training of adolescents through the 15 country-based Alliances, WP5 lead UvA was committed to the recruitment of a group of adolescents to specifically address the EU level strategy regarding childhood obesity. This was done in collaboration with the European Youth Parliament, a Berlin-based non-governmental organization aimed at 'peer-to-peer education [...] that brings together young people from across Europe to debate the pressing issues of our time. [EYP's] mission is to inspire and empower a young generation of informed, open-minded, responsible, and active citizens that shape society and drive impact.'<sup>[1]</sup> In particular, since 1988, the EYP has organised large events named "International Sessions", bringing together about 300 young people for 9 days from around 40 European countries.

Organised 2-3 times every year by the EYP Office, the International Sessions convey a number of thematic committees where certain issues of general interest in the EU are discussed collectively and turned into a resolution/policy proposal. If voted by the General Assembly of delegates, the resolutions are passed on to the EU relevant governmental body. For example, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) sounds close to CO-CREATE. The main goal of the International Sessions is to support the formation of one's own opinion and consensus building. Each international session includes three phases: 1. Team building; 2. Committee work; 3. General assembly (where the outputs of committee work are debated and potentially subjected to amendments). The works of each committee are prepared by a facilitator, typically a more experienced and slightly older EYP member who has had already attended at least one of such EYP Session as a participant before, and supported by inputs from an external expert (typically an expert providing a small talk at one of the first sessions and answering questions of the committee members).

As to how young people are channelled to the EYP, it is typically via school teachers (in particular English teachers) towards national chapters of the EYP. Usually, young people first take part in local

events and may apply to the International Sessions of the EYP as a second step. Each national movement selects on average 4-5 young people to attend the international session (depending on country size, with a maximum of 9 delegates). So the international sessions reflect a diversity of countries (members of the council of Europe). Though the EYP aims to become a socially inclusive movement, the EYP Office acknowledged that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds have been underrepresented in their activities. For example, most of the Dutch youths involved in the EYP sessions are (prospective) bachelor students in political science (including the chair of the Dutch chapter of the EYP and the local organisers of the International Session in Rotterdam 2018).

In sum, addressing the CO-CREATE topic at a EYP International Session appeared valuable in two respects:

- as a participatory action research activity somewhat similar to the general approach of CO-CREATE (in which young people explore and discuss the CO-CREATE topic in depth and intensively and derive policy ideas at the EU-level)
- as a dissemination activity (the CO-CREATE topic being discussed at length, first within a youth group coming, to a large extent, from countries beyond those involved in the country-based CO-CREATE Alliances) and second at the EYP General Assembly, involving 300 young people.

Considering this potential of the EYP International Session, a partnership was set between, the NIPH, the EYP and the UvA so that the CO-CREATE topic would be framed as a topic for one of the thematic committees, namely the ENVI-II. This agreement was prepared through a series of talks with Lukas Fendel, then EYP coordinator, from 2017 onwards, and in-person observation at the EYP International Session held in Rotterdam (November 2018, by Evelyne Baillergeau, UvA, including the opening ceremony, the expert session at the ENVI-II thematic group on Medical Tourism and the General Assembly). The objectives of the collaboration were:

- to develop policy ideas at the European level and turn these ideas into recommendations to be submitted and discussed at the EYP General Assembly
- therefore, to invite EYP youth to critically address the policy agenda in the matter of childhood obesity prevention at the European level (in the spirit of supporting the formation of one's own opinion and consensus building against a European background, as usual in EYP activities).
- a commitment to the overall aim of formulating youth-led system-based obesity prevention policy proposals

Thus, although the activity was to be carried out in EYP settings, there was a connection with what was done in the country-based CO-CREATE alliances, namely with the UvA team providing support to EYP youth to address childhood obesity productively in the perspective of coming up with policy ideas, in particular in the systems approach to childhood obesity. In addition, NIPH was to provide funding for holding the ENVI-II session to cover for the committee work addressing the CO-CREATE topic during the International Session and EAT to provide their dialogue tool to help discussing opportunities and obstacles at the EU level (see WP6 report on regional dialogue forum).

The CO-CREATE topic-focused ENVI-II Session was first scheduled to take place at the International Session in Nicosia, Autumn 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic however, the Session was

postponed several times. Eventually, the CO-CREATE topic-focused ENVI-II session did take place at the first subsequent in-person International Session in Novi Sad (Serbia), March 2022. In January 2022, a facilitator/committee chairperson was appointed by EYP (Filip Konić, Croatia, student computer engineering).

### *Preparation of the ENVI-II Session*

The EYP took a very active role in preparing the ENVI-II Committee work, by gathering preparatory material and reformulating the topic provided by CO-CREATE to fit the EYP format, in particular relating to a EU piece of legislation that the committee can use as starting point for their work. The EYP-proposed question turned out to be somewhat narrower (obesity was chiefly framed as a risk factor for cancer and childhood obesity was mainly highlighted as pandemic related) and not evidently opening to an address of the systemic dimension of childhood obesity. After some talks with CO-CREATE partners (NIPH, UvA, EAT) EYP reformulated the question. The question proposed to EYP membership goes as follows:

*With rates of obesity, as well as insufficient levels of physical activity and healthy diets rising among children post-lockdown, what should the priorities for tackling child obesity in the next EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity be?*

To be noted, this question calls for political action at the EU level. The way that obesity is framed stresses energy-balance related behaviour and does not explicitly mention other parts of the obesogenic system, suggesting that dominant thinking might (re)appear, similar to what happened in the CO-CREATE country-based Alliances.

Likewise, EYP put together the «Academic Preparation Kit» to be sent to prospective participants, a couple of days before the International Session to start. Expectedly, the academic preparation kit was the main tool for the participants to prepare themselves to committee work. In line with EYP guidelines, the preparation tool kit was put together by young people for young people, and covering key figures regarding the key issue; some definitions of the key terms to be discussed (overweight; obesity; BMI; among others); an overview of agencies involved at various levels, from international to local level, including governmental, non-governmental and corporate agencies; an overview of existing policy papers and measures at EU-level as well as WHO and national level; an overview of cultural trends and a list of kick-off questions including some rather pointing to systemic factors and processes and some rather pointing to individual choice. Across the academic preparation kit, CO-CREATE is alluded a couple of times as well as Healthy Voices. In contrast, the systemic approach is not mentioned, albeit obesity is stated as a 'complex' problem.

In line with initial planning, CO-CREATE provided the expert and Knut-Inge Klepp was invited to meet the ENVI-II Committee at midway, thereby giving participants an opportunity to discuss their initial thoughts and learn more about childhood obesity in a systemic perspective.

### *The ENVI-II committee at work*

Meanwhile 10 EYP members were recruited to take part in the ENVI-II session, including 8 females and 2 males; 7 of them aged 16-18 and 3 above 18 (2 aged 18 and 1 aged 22); coming from 10 different European countries (Croatia, Finland, Turkey, Armenia, Serbia, Belgium, Sweden, Romania, Greece, Norway). All high school students.

The ENVI-II Committee work was held on 7-9 March 2022, with the expert talk taking place on the second day (8th) in the afternoon.

Judging from facilitator's structured fieldnotes of the two first sessions, the participants were very engaged from the first session onwards, a couple of them a bit shy but all taking part. All seemed eager to discuss the topic thoroughly. The two first sessions proved longer than initial planning. The third session was dedicated to the expert talk. According to Knut-Inge Klepp:

*"They are extremely committed and knowledgeable. After my 15 min introduction, they spent more than an hour asking me questions and providing comments. Filip had to insist several times that we had to end the session as there were other scheduled program activities, but they were just extremely keen on discussing."*

Judging from the motion for a resolution included in the Resolution Booklet that was submitted to delegates prior to the General Assembly (see Annex 1) suggests that quite a lot has happened all along the three days of Committee Work indeed. In how the problem is analysed, we observe, in addition to the alarming figures of childhood obesity across the global north and south, some attention for the need to fight obesity-related stigma and advertising practices. Besides, the references list has been enlarged, reflecting the research efforts of Committee members. Among the proposed measures, we observe the centrality of health education measures – very much in line with a sizeable number of policy ideas born to the CO-CREATE country-based alliances – where knowledgeable and empowered consumers are assumed to make better choices. However, we note, too, some attention for mental health and stigma and for inequality in access to healthy food and drink (through the funding of school meal programmes). So, whereas the way that obesity was framed in the initial question stressed energy-balance related behaviour and did not explicitly mention other parts of the obesogenic system, other parts of this system were addressed during the EYP session. We seem to see a similar process within the local alliances: dominant policy approaches are also present in youth ideas, but during the process can be expanded or challenged.

### *Output of the General Assembly*

The ENVI-II resolution gave rise to debate at the General Assembly though, as testified by the formulation of amendments (see Annex 2). Eventually, the ENVI-II voting result was 69 in favour, 45 against, with two amendments regarding the proposed measures:

- Article 10.a inviting Member States' ministries of education to make physical activities in the school system more appealing by modifying schools' physical education curriculums so students are evaluated was complemented by "and graded on the basis of performance, but rather motivation and participation".

- Article 14 “Calls upon Member States to mandate that the front-of-pack labelling food products and beverages include information about the energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrates, sugars, protein, and salt contents in order to make the nutritional values more comprehensible” was deleted.

It seems that the debate was quite intense at the General Assembly and it would have been interesting to hear from ENVI-II delegates about their experience of the General Assembly and their opinion on the changes made to their resolution, i.e. the rationales involved in making amendments, in particular the second one: while the amendment complemented Article 10.a contribute to make it more specific, the rationale behind opposing an amendment regarding the food industry practices regarding young consumers isn't self-evident, and even more so that such practices are already implemented in a number of Eu countries. Likewise, it would have been interesting to include their views on the voting result, e.g. a strong opposition despite amendments (69 in favour, 45 against).

### *Conclusion*

Just like the other WP5 (country-based) engagement activities, getting the CO-CREATE topic being addressed at the EU level through a wider diversity of young citizens than in the country-based alliances was heard as both as an opportunity to sensitize European youth and to get them in the driver's seat to propose policy measures towards prevention of childhood obesity. This double ambition was achieved.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the process, first by forcing us to postpone the CO-CREATE-EYP collaboration; then to consider holding the event online with not insignificant changes and potential drawbacks (more limited engagement among EYP members; less depth in group work interactions resulting in less depth in outputs) and eventually to hold the event in person albeit with a reduced number of delegates (200 instead of 300, including 11 for the ENVI-II Committee instead of 15). The EYP turned out to take a very active lead in this process and successfully moved on to open to consider different parts of obesogenic systems in framing of policy proposals. While we remain curious of how the ENVI-II resolution would have looked with more upfront emphasis on the diversity of systemic factors and processes, we can but acknowledge that the collaboration confirms the CO-CREATE assumption that youth can take the lead in thinking and designing preventive responses to childhood obesity.

## Annex 1

# MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, PUBLIC HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY II (ENVI II)

**Food for Action:** With rates of obesity, as well as insufficient levels of physical activity and healthy diets rising among children post-lockdown, what should the priorities for tackling child obesity in the next EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity be?

### Submitted by:

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### *The European Youth Parliament,*

**aims to tackle the epidemic of child obesity through the new EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity. It intends to reduce obesogenic environments<sup>[2]</sup> in schools by providing balanced and healthy meals. It also intends to combat stigma and mental consequences related to child obesity. Furthermore, it wants to reduce the impact of the advertising sector and food industry. Finally, it aims to improve the levels of physical activity among children,**

- Considering one in three children are obese or overweight<sup>[3]</sup>
- Seeing as obesity is one of the leading causes of death and is among the most preventable ones
- Given that obesity is linked to more than 60 chronic diseases such as cardiovascular, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, and cancer<sup>[4]</sup>
- Regretting that the children suffering from obesity are 63% more likely to be bullied and 55% more likely to develop mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, and eating disorders<sup>[5]</sup>
- Observing that 36% of obese children come from low-income countries<sup>[6]</sup>
- Noting with concern that children from low-income families are 10% more likely to be obese than high income families<sup>[7]</sup>
- Further noting the stigma around obesity forms an obstacle in receiving fair and proper diagnosis and medical treatment, leading to 65% of obese people being misdiagnosed<sup>[8]</sup>
- Seeing as the lack of education on obesity leads to children growing up in obesogenic environments
- Alarmed there is an insufficient level of physical activity as 85% of young girls living in the EU countries do not participate in the standard daily exercise<sup>[9]</sup>
- Further considering that the COVID 19 pandemic has led to a greater lack of physical activity among children, making them more prone to obesity and other related health risks
- Disappointed the food industry has little to no ethical and legal restriction, promoting unhealthy lifestyles for profit
- Observing with alarm advertisements manipulating children and young people into unhealthy behaviour by advertisements
- Anxious that schools do not offer sufficiently nutritious meals for children and instead rely on vending machines and fast food which contribute to 50% of calorie intake of processed food<sup>[10]</sup>
- Concerned that inaccurate labelling/description of ultra-processed foods makes them seem healthier

1. Directs the European Commission to prioritise the following areas in the new EU Action Plan for Childhood Obesity:
  - a. mental health,
  - b. physical education,
  - c. restriction of advertising and marketing to children,
  - d. school meal programmes,
  - e. research support,
  - f. education on health lifestyles,
  - g. work against stigmatisation,

- h. reducing sugar and salt intake
- 2. Invites Member States in cooperation with NGOs, such as professional and youth associations, to organise seminars, workshops and expert talks for children, parents and teachers that aim to educate them on:
  - a. causes and consequences of child obesity and prevention measures,
  - b. how to accurately interpret messages from food advertisements,
  - c. how to cautiously use social media in order to prevent low self-esteem and body image problems
- 3. Authorises the European Social Fund (ESF) to financially support a free lunch programme in accordance with the agreements made at the UN “Food systems summit” in 2021, thus making a healthy and balanced diet, accounting for all preferences, more accessible to all socioeconomic groups of the EU
- 4. Calls upon the European Commission to increase funding for the Common Agriculture Policy programme “EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme”, in accordance with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) dietary recommendations<sup>[11]</sup>, to ensure, to a total amount of EUR 350 million per school year: spending up to EUR 250 million for fruit and vegetables and up to EUR 100 million on milk in order to increase the accessibility to fruit, vegetables and milk
- 5. Encourages Member States to provide schools with mental health professionals in order to support children who suffer from obesity and sensibilise other students on the topic, thus creating a safe, stigma-free environment
- 6. Calls upon Member States to encourage and provide free and systematic yearly health check-ups to all students to keep track of their physical state
- 7. Asks Horizon Europe to encourage and further fund scientific initiatives, such as WHO Europe’s Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative, World Obesity Federation, or EAT Forum in order to collect a wide variety of data that can bring light to the factors that contribute to the development of child obesity, its consequences and ways to alleviate it
- 8. Suggests Member States to provide further training to healthcare professionals that will address the inappropriate communication and weight bias in order to prevent misdiagnosing obese patients
- 9. Implores Member States to further invest into creating and maintaining sports infrastructures such as stadiums, courts and fields in order and well as sport events broadcasts on public televisions to encourage physical activity
- 10. Resolves Member States’ ministries of education to make physical activities in the school system more appealing by:
  - a. modifying schools physical education curriculums so students are not evaluated,
  - b. introducing a daily physical activity game which follows EU physical activity guidelines<sup>[12]</sup>
- 11. Encourages Member States to support local or EU-wide campaigns engaging youth in healthy activities such as sports or passive activities that will help to lower the risk of cardiovascular risk and danger of obesity in children and young adults from the age of 7-18, such as HealthyLifestyle4All<sup>[13]</sup>
- 12. Requests Member States implement a regulation on food products and beverages that contain free sugars by banning child-targeted marketing related to the packaging of a product, such as the use of animal characters and cartoons displayed on the package, as well as free collectible toys that come with the product
- 13. Calls upon Member States to implement or increase taxation on food products and beverages that contain free sugars<sup>[14]</sup> in order to meet the goal of limiting children’s daily sugar consumption to 10% of their total energy intake, in accordance with the recommendation provided by the WHO
- 14. Calls upon Member States to mandate that the front-of-pack labelling<sup>[15]</sup> food products and beverages include information about the energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrates, sugars, protein, and salt contents in order to make the nutritional values more comprehensible.

## Annex 2

ENVI II		
OC 10a		
	Original clause	New status (Changed)
1	<p>10. Resolves Member States' ministries of education to make physical activities in the school system more appealing by:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. modifying schools physical education curriculums so students are not evaluated</p>	<p>10. Resolves Member States' ministries of education to make physical activities in the school system more appealing by:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">d. modifying schools physical education curriculums so students are not evaluated <b>and graded on the basis of performance, but rather motivation and participation</b></p>
OC 14		
	Original clause	New status (Deleted)
2	<p>14. Calls upon Member States to mandate that the front-of-pack labelling food products and beverages include information about the energy, fat, saturates, carbohydrates, sugars, protein, and salt contents in order to make the nutritional values more comprehensible.</p>	<i>Deleted</i>

Voting results:  
69 in favor, 45 against.

<sup>[1]</sup> [www.eyp.org](http://www.eyp.org)

<sup>[2]</sup> **Obesogenic environment** is an environment that promotes high energy intake and sedentary behaviour.

<sup>[3]</sup> [WHO Regional Office for Europe: WHO European Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative \(COSI\): report on the fourth round of data collection, 2015–2017. \(2021\)](#)

<sup>[4]</sup> [Prospective Studies Collaboration, Whitlock G, Lewington S, et al., The Lancet, \(2009, 18 Mar\), "Body-mass index and cause-specific mortality in 900 000 adults: collaborative analyses of 57 prospective studies"](#)

<sup>[5]</sup> [Rankin, J et al., Adolescent health, medicine and therapeutics vol. 7 125-146, \(14 Nov. 2016\), "Psychological consequences of childhood obesity: psychiatric comorbidity and prevention."](#)

<sup>[6]</sup> [Abarca-Gómez L., et al., The Lancet, \(16 Dec 2017\), "Worldwide trends in body-mass index, underweight, overweight, and obesity from 1975 to 2016: a pooled analysis of 2416 population-based measurement studies in 128·9 million children, adolescents, and adults."](#)

<sup>[7]</sup> [Kim, T. J., von dem Knesebeck, O., BMJ open vol. 8,1 e019862, \(5 Jan. 2018.\), "Income and obesity: what is the direction of the relationship? A systematic review and meta-analysis."](#)

<sup>[8]</sup> [Phelan, S. M. et al., Obesity reviews: an official journal of the International Association for the Study of Obesity, \(Apr 2015\), "Impact of weight bias and stigma on quality of care and outcomes for patients with obesity."](#)

<sup>[9]</sup> [Guthold, Regina et al. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, Volume 4, Issue 1, \(Jan 2020\), "Global trends in insufficient physical activity among adolescents: a pooled analysis of 298 population-based surveys with 1.6 million participants."](#)

[\[10\]](#) [Marino, M. et al., Nutrients vol 13, \(13 Aug. 2021\), "A Systematic Review of Worldwide Consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods: Findings and Criticisms."](#)

[\[11\]](#) The World Health Organization recommends that a **healthy diet** consist of fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and whole grains, with a minimum of 400 grams of fruit and vegetables.

[\[12\]](#) In accordance with the guidance documents of the World Health Organization, the European Union and its Member States recommend a minimum of 60 minutes of daily moderate-intensity physical activity for children and young people.

[\[13\]](#) **HealthyLifestyle4All** is the European Commission's two-year campaign aiming to promote healthy lifestyles for all, across generations and social groups, by linking sport and active lifestyles with health, food and other policies.

[\[14\]](#) The World Health Organization defines **free sugars** as all monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, as well as the sugars that are naturally found in honey, syrups and fruit juices. Monosaccharides have one sugar molecule and include glucose, galactose and fructose.

[\[15\]](#) **Front-of-pack labelling** is a method of labelling food products in accordance with the EU Regulation No.1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers (EU FIC), identifying energy value, fat, saturated fats, sugars, and salt and their reference intake shares in a portion on the front side of packaging.

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## Appendix 1 Fieldnote codes FNcodes

Table presenting the Number of Fieldnotes per country, The Total number coded quotations with FN codes and the Total number of coded quotations.

	Netherlands	Norway	Poland	Portugal	United Kingdom	Totals
<b>Number of fieldnotes</b>	48	16	21	21	23	<b>129</b>
<b>Total number coded quotations with FN codes</b>	2055	688	903	903	989	<b>5538</b>
<b>Total number of coded quotations</b>	2494	981	1518	1233	1114	<b>8257</b>

Since all FN codes occur exactly as often as the total number of Fieldnotes, due to the structured format of the Field note form,

FN01: Pseudonym of Alliance	FN23: GROUP DYNAMICS: Your own impression
FN02: Number of meeting	FN24: GROUP DYNAMICS: Felt trusted
FN03: Date of meeting	FN25: CHALLENGES
FN04: Time of meeting	FN26: CHALLENGES: other
FN05: Name of facilitators	FN27: CHALLENGES: role (Co-)Facilitator
FN06: Name of co-facilitators	FN28: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY
FN07: Other people present	FN29: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY: systemic
FN08: Authors of this field note	FN30: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY: shifts between individual to systemic
FN09: Content of meeting	FN31: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY: inequality
FN10: Place of the meeting	FN32: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY: stigmatisation
FN11: Duration of the meeting	FN33: TALKS ABOUT OBESITY: reference to knowledge
FN12: Number attending	FN34: OTHER RELEVANT QUOTES
FN13: Number attending first time	FN35: OWN REFLECTION
FN14: Number NOT attending	FN36: OWN REFLECTION: Learned
FN15: Recruitment efforts	FN37: ETHICAL QUESTIONS
FN16: DEMOGRAPHICS AND DIVERSITY	FN38: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: observed breaches
FN17: ACTIVITIES	FN39: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: refusing participation
FN18: RESEARCH DATA	FN40: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: negative impact of participating

FN19: DECISION MAKING	FN41: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: criticism
FN20: POLICY AND POLITICS	FN42: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: other challenges related to participation
FN21: READINESS FOR ACTION	FN43: ETHICAL QUESTIONS: issues regarding health and safety
FN22: GROUP DYNAMICS	

## Appendix 2 Hashtag-codes

Codes-document groups per country, cells show number of quotations (fragments, occurrences) coded with that Hashtag code

	Netherland s	Norwa y	Polan d	Portugal	United Kingdom	Totals
#Action	25	25	85	29	12	176
#Aspiration	1	0	3	0	0	4
#Causality	0	1	0	0	0	1
#Challenge	47	3	124	6	0	180
#Co-facilitation	40	34	137	34	7	252
#Commitment	1	0	0	39	0	40
#Conceptual Definition	11	8	0	6	1	26
#Discussion	17	4	8	30	2	61
#Diversity	27	8	9	1	1	46
#Dynamics	1	0	0	0	0	1
#Engagement	5	0	0	0	0	5
#Ethics	20	9	20	8	4	61
#Experiential Knowledge	19	14	53	6	1	93
#Fora	2	4	18	6	0	30
#Individual Talk	42	28	29	8	13	120
#Interesting	42	6	12	30	0	90
#Maps	17	37	23	28	17	122
#Online	2	9	0	27	1	39
#Other Knowledge	10	14	17	4	1	46
#Ownership	109	85	120	75	34	423
#PAR	57	33	1	68	34	193
#Photovoice	2	0	0	18	0	20
#Policy	73	30	310	98	38	549
#System Talk	71	84	87	38	32	312
#Vlogging	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total number coded quotations with # code</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>1057</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>2891</b>

## Appendix 3 Number of meetings and participants in Alliances

### The Netherlands

- A1: 10 members
  - 17 face-to-face meetings; 6-10 members per meeting
  - (max) 10 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) with sub-groups; 3-8 members per meeting
- B1/ B2: 28 members in total (some youth attended both Alliances and switched along the way)
  - B1: 16 members
    - 16 face-to-face meetings; 6-15 members per meeting
    - (max) 6 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) with sub-groups; 2-5 members per meeting
  - B2: 18 members
    - 16 face-to-face meetings; 13-17 members per meeting
    - (max) 9 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) with sub-groups; 1-3 members per meeting

### Norway

- A1: 12 members
  - 8 face-to-face meetings; 3-8 members per meeting;
  - 4 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 3 members per meeting
- B1: 13 members
  - 3 face-to-face meetings; 4-5 members per meeting
  - 0 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions)
- C1: 12 members
  - 0 face-to-face meetings
  - 3 online group meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 6-8 members per meeting
  - 2 online sub-group meeting; 3 members per meeting

### Portugal

- A1: 19 members
  - 5 face-to-face meetings; 10-16 per meeting
  - 3 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) + 5 online Q&A sessions; 9-11 members per meeting
- B1: 9 members
  - 4 face-to-face meetings; 2-7 members per meeting
  - 4 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) + 5 online Q&A sessions; 3-6 members per meeting
- C1: 14 members
  - 4 face-to-face meetings; 6-9 members per meeting
  - 4 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions) + 5 online Q&A sessions; 2-7 members per meeting

### Poland

- A1: 23 members
  - 4 face-to-face meetings; 18-23 members per meeting
  - 3 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 3-11 members per meeting
- B1: 20 members
  - 4 face-to-face meetings; 16-20 per meeting

- 2 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 8-9 members per meeting
- C1: 22 members
  - 4 face-to-face meetings; 18-21 per meeting
  - 4 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 3-10 members per meeting

### **United Kingdom**

- A1: 5 members
  - 6 face-to-face meetings; 2-5 members per meeting
  - 0 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions)
- B1/ B2: 12 members in total (some youth attended both Alliances and switched along the way)
  - B1: 9 members
    - 5 face-to-face meetings; 4-7 per meeting
    - 7 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 1-3 members per meeting
  - B2: 8 members
    - 5 face-to-face meetings; 5-6 members per meeting
    - 7 online meetings (after COVID-19 restrictions); 3-4 members per meeting

## Appendix 4 Action ideas and policy proposals per Alliance

Country/ Alliance	All action ideas	Policy proposals
The Netherlands NL_A1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free fruit in all secondary school canteens</li> <li>2. Free smoothy truck in front of schools</li> <li>3. Green parks in the city where you can pick fruit or veggies from the gardens</li> <li>4. Cooking classes on all secondary schools; about healthy food and origin of food</li> <li>5. Recycle bins at schools, offices and stations that make it more fun and easier for youth to throw away and separate waste</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free fruit in all secondary school canteens</li> <li>2. Cooking classes on all secondary schools; about healthy food and origin of food</li> <li>3. Recycle bins at schools, offices and stations that make it more fun and easier for youth to throw away and separate waste</li> </ol>
The Netherlands NL_B1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kitchen take-over: fresh, tasty and spicy (culturally rich) warm meals served for low prices in school canteens, with students having a role</li> <li>2. Helping Hand: setting up a peer support system to encourage youth to talk about stress, when they don't want to talk to a professional or adult, to prevent problem eating and drug abuse</li> <li>3. Cooking for parents on information evenings to inspire parents and teachers with tasty and healthy food, so that they could pass this on to their children and students</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kitchen take-over: fresh, tasty and spicy (culturally rich) warm meals served for low prices in school canteens, with students having a role</li> <li>2. Helping Hand: setting up a peer support system to encourage youth to talk about stress, when they don't want to talk to a professional or adult, to prevent problem eating and drug abuse</li> </ol>
The Netherlands NL_B2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free access slots for fitness and swimming (highest votes)/ Free sport equipment for youth to exercise at home</li> <li>2. Women-only sport (highest votes)</li> <li>3. Youth involvement in sport activities at school (highest votes)</li> <li>4. Sugar tax/ Making healthy food more visible and cheaper (and unhealthy food more expensive through tax) in supermarkets</li> <li>5. Fresh fruit and vegetables available and open for choice at food banks</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free access slots for fitness and swimming/ Free sport equipment for youth to exercise at home</li> <li>2. Sugar tax/ Making healthy food more visible and cheaper (and unhealthy food more expensive through tax) in supermarkets</li> <li>3. Classes in secondary schools about nutrition, nutritional value, vitamins and minerals</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Healthy take-away restaurants in the mall</li> <li>7. Classes in secondary schools about nutrition, nutritional value, vitamins and minerals</li> <li>8. Professionals and therapists paying attention to healthy habits in cases of trauma/ Higher sentences to prevent abuse and more attention to healthy habits in trauma therapy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Professionals and therapists paying attention to healthy habits in cases of trauma/ Higher sentences to prevent abuse and more attention to healthy habits in trauma therapy</li> </ol>
Norway NO_A1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allowing students to use gyms, exercise equipment, and weightlifting rooms at upper secondary schools after school</li> <li>2. Better bike paths to get to places by bike or by walking</li> <li>3. Changing the price and placement of food products in shops: healthy foods more visible and cheaper; unhealthy foods more expensive and less visible</li> <li>4. Smoothy stand: making your own trendy healthy smoothie with payment per hectare</li> <li>5. Providing information at secondary schools about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Allowing students to use gyms, exercise equipment, and weightlifting rooms at upper secondary schools after school</li> <li>2. Changing the price and placement of food products in shops: healthy foods more visible and cheaper; unhealthy foods more expensive and less visible</li> <li>3. Providing information at secondary schools about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle</li> </ol>
Norway NO_B1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support Pokémon Go as physical activity</li> <li>2. Advertisement and offers for personal trainer and membership with more access to gyms and free organized trainings</li> <li>3. An app offering rewards (money, offers) based on how far you cycled</li> <li>4. Focus on training and diet early in the school curriculum</li> <li>5. Training at work for 2 hours per week in paid time</li> <li>6. Better accessibility to different kinds of physical activity in all districts in Norway</li> <li>7. Free healthy but good food in the school canteen</li> </ol>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Providing a discount on a healthy lunch</li> <li>9. Special offers on healthy products in stores to counter offers on unhealthy products</li> <li>10. Making healthier food more accessible and an easier choice</li> <li>11. Free leisure clubs that offer activities that people want to do and serve healthy food</li> <li>12. Providing information at secondary schools about healthy eating, healthy food and a healthy lifestyle</li> <li>13. More focus on mental health and addressing poor eating habit due to poor mental health</li> <li>14. A '15 minute break' campaign to decrease mobile phone use during meals</li> <li>15. Increasing sugar tax: more expensive candy, soda and fast food</li> </ol>	
<p>Norway NO_C1</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children under the age of 18</li> <li>2. Serving food in smaller portion sizes and introduce a maximum plate size for food to be served on</li> <li>3. Allowing everyone to have access regardless of disabilities and having several free opportunities and equipment outdoors</li> <li>4. Bettering the condition and safety of bike paths and footpaths</li> <li>5. A law on healthy food being placed with easy access in stores and unhealthy food being less accessible</li> <li>6. Cheaper healthy food and more expensive unhealthy food</li> <li>7. Advertisement on healthy food as the focus in supermarkets</li> <li>8. More active dietary advice and creating a teaching plan about this</li> <li>9. Making changes at school to reduce stress</li> <li>10. Having meeting places for young people on young people's premises</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limit the digital marketing of unhealthy products to children under the age of 18</li> <li>2. Serving food in smaller portion sizes and introduce a maximum plate size for food to be served on</li> </ol>

	and offering youth houses in the municipalities	
Poland PL_A1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy focused on developing an idea about the choice of physical activity in P.E. classes in high schools</li> <li>2. Water taps with free drinking water in public places</li> <li>3. Healthy Shelves: changing products' visibility in supermarkets</li> <li>4. Fit, Fresh and Fast: regular meetings with a dietitian at school</li> <li>5. A smartphone application to enable access to knowledge and monitoring of health behaviours</li> <li>6. Free lectures in public facilities about health issues</li> <li>7. Placing posters and banners with tips for healthy diet and physical activity at the city centre and bus stops</li> <li>8. Having a working sugar tax</li> <li>9. Evening out wage differences and social differences</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fit, Fresh and Fast: regular meetings with a dietitian at school</li> </ol>
Poland PL_B1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High school students receive a monthly gym membership and can train with a personal trainer once a month</li> <li>2. Meetings with personal trainer once a month as part of physical education classes</li> <li>3. Organizing trips (e.g. to the mountains) to show young people how to spend time actively</li> <li>4. Organizing trips twice a month in each primary and secondary school to places where popular and less popular sports are practiced in order to raise interest</li> <li>5. Food truck for healthy meals</li> <li>6. Free healthy snacks at school during breaks and higher prices for unhealthy food, lower prices for healthy products offered in the school store</li> <li>7. Table with nutrition values for example kcal, fat, sugar in the restaurants' menus</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Food truck for healthy meals</li> <li>2. Saturday awareness: events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles</li> </ol>

	8. Saturday awareness: events at the mall to promote healthy lifestyles	
Poland PL_C1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discounted gym passes and sport center passes for secondary school students</li> <li>2. Fitket mobile application: promoting physical activity through a phone app</li> <li>3. Subsidies to buy sport equipment for school students</li> <li>4. 50% discount for entrance to the swimming pool if you will come with a minimum of 6 people</li> <li>5. Free gym passes by helping others</li> <li>6. Putting bicycles at the beginning, in the middle and in the end of the bicycle path connecting smaller towns</li> <li>7. Personalize PE classes where each student could choose his or her favorite sport or physical activity to do</li> <li>8. Trampolines in front of stores: discounts for healthy food if buyers use trampoline for a certain amount of time</li> <li>9. Healthy recipes leaflets at grocery stores with the ingredients offered at reduced price</li> <li>10. Monthly meetings with nutrition specialists or a dietitian about a healthy diet</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discounted gym passes and sport center passes for secondary school students</li> <li>2. Fitket mobile application: promoting physical activity through a phone app</li> <li>3. Healthy recipes leaflets at grocery stores with the ingredients offered at reduced price</li> </ol>
Portugal P_A1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partnerships between gyms/fitness centers and schools, and city halls and sports clubs to provide transportation, financial support and creating open days for dissemination</li> <li>2. Mandatory open days for sports clubs to introduce youth to ex curricular physical activity</li> <li>3. Incorporate nutrition and cooking themes in the Citizenship and Civic Education curriculum</li> <li>4. Reduction of the academic load</li> <li>5. Introducing paid access to social media to reduce social media usage</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partnerships between gyms/fitness centers and schools, and city halls and sports clubs to provide transportation, financial support and creating open days for dissemination</li> <li>2. Incorporate nutrition and cooking themes in the Citizenship and Civic Education curriculum</li> <li>3. Cooking classes in and outside schools to make your own meal and avoid take away meals</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Relaxation class: school classes where students learn how to relax, better cope with stress and gain knowledge in several topics</li> <li>7. More practical programs/lessons where youth witness real testimonies about various issues; experiences from drug addicts</li> <li>8. Cooking classes in and outside schools to make your own meal and avoid take away meals</li> <li>9. Courses at school to teach in housekeeping</li> </ol>	
Portugal P_B1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Government creating incentives and subsidies to restaurants and companies of healthy food, in order to increase its access</li> <li>2. Marketing of healthy food products: making alternatives for fast-food restaurants more attractive</li> <li>3. Nutritionists should be at schools to manage the food that the school offers, to develop workshops and sessions with contents youth-friendly and for us just be able to reach out to a nutritionist in a free and easy way</li> <li>4. Creating projects in schools to raise awareness among the students about healthy eating habits</li> <li>5. Decreasing the workload, both in schools and in the adult jobs, which would give more time to be physically active</li> <li>6. Cooking classes at school: learning how to cook in schools</li> <li>7. Introducing a tax to fat food products</li> <li>8. Limit the marketing of unhealthy food products: stop nudging and thus choice restriction</li> <li>9. Apply a law that restricts the number of fast-food restaurants per area and prohibit these types of restaurants close to schools</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nutritionists should be at schools to manage the food that the school offers, to develop workshops and sessions with contents youth-friendly and for us just be able to reach out to a nutritionist in a free and easy way</li> <li>2. Cooking classes at school: learning how to cook in schools</li> <li>3. Limit the marketing of unhealthy food products: stop nudging and thus choice restriction</li> </ol>
Portugal P_C1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Radical awareness: in order to improve awareness for unhealthy products (example: shocking</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Radical awareness: in order to improve awareness for unhealthy products (example:</li> </ol>

	<p>pictures on alcohol and tobacco products)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Mandatory psychological support in schools: a psychologist in schools to help solving some problems, talk and relieve/let off steam</li> <li>3. School lessons to prepare for adulthood: cooking skills, finances, and social security</li> </ol>	<p>shocking pictures on alcohol and tobacco products)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Mandatory psychological support in schools: a psychologist in schools to help solving some problems, talk and relieve/let off steam</li> <li>3. School lessons to prepare for adulthood: cooking skills, finances, and social security</li> </ol>
<p>United Kingdom UK_A1</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Making gyms more welcoming to young people; youth gym (in collaboration with existing gyms): creating sessions dedicated to teens and adolescents</li> <li>2. Healthy food standards for chicken shops and including healthy/vegetarian menu</li> <li>3. Limit number of children in chicken shops, since the youth saw chicken shops being used as social hubs</li> <li>4. Healthy lunches/ cooking classes at schools as done by Jamie Oliver: learning how to cook</li> <li>5. Healthy lifestyle education in schools</li> <li>6. Understanding and improving the impact of time pressure and time management on youth's ability to manage a healthy lifestyle</li> <li>7. Youth clubs after school as alternatives for chicken shops as places to socialise</li> <li>8. Adverts that promote positive body image and self esteem</li> <li>9. Less intrusive adverts that promote McDonalds, unhealthy eating, fast food. Say if you were on your phone, over 30 minutes you get about 5-6 ads on fast food.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Healthy lifestyle education in schools</li> </ol>
<p>United Kingdom UK_B1 and UK_B2</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Subsidize gym membership for young people</li> <li>2. Creating school, local, and/or national level social media accounts that promote healthy foods/eating that are particularly geared towards young people and focused on making content</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooking classes at various local locations with 'take home kit'; technical and practical skills, such as budgeting and planning</li> </ol>

	<p>appealing to generate a large following of young people</p> <p>3. Cooking classes at various local locations with 'take home kit'; technical and practical skills, such as budgeting and planning</p>	
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Appendix 5 Human resources (facilitators and co-facilitators)  
committed to the setting of the Alliances

	<b>Facilitators (researchers)</b>	<b>Co-facilitators</b>	<b>Main gatekeepers</b>	<b>Supplementary resource</b>
<b>The Netherlands</b>	3	5 (local youth organisation (2); student (1); teachers: (2))	Secondary school teachers	Local youth organisations
<b>Norway</b>	3	3 (local youth organisation)	Local youth organisations	Secondary schools
<b>Poland</b>	4	7 (university students)	Secondary school teachers	
<b>Portugal</b>	2	8 (local youth organisation - scouts)	Local youth organisation (scouts)	
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2	4 (local youth organisation (2); research assistants (2))	Local government	Secondary schools



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