

Committee: WHO (Junior)

Country: Hellenic Republic

Agenda Item(s): Uncontrolled Use of Technology and Digital Obesity

Greece, officially the Hellenic Republic, is a country in Southeast Europe. It is situated on the southern tip of the Balkan Peninsula and is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Greece shares land borders with Albania to the northwest, North Macedonia and Bulgaria to the north and Turkey to the northeast. The Aegean Sea lies to the east of the mainland, the Ionian Sea to the west, and the Sea of Crete and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. Greece has the longest coastline on the Mediterranean Basin, featuring thousands of islands. The country consists of nine traditional geographic regions and has a population of approximately 10.5 million. Athens is the nation's capital and largest city, followed by Thessaloniki and Patras.

A new study conducted by nine European universities in collaboration with the Hellenic Association for the Study of Internet Addiction Disorders reports Greece ranks second in Europe after the United Kingdom for rates of internet addiction among its population, especially amongst children and teenagers. Psychiatrist Dr. Giorgos Floros, citing figures published in the scientific magazine Computers in Human Behaviour in July 2018, noted that symptoms of internet addiction were found in 25 percent of European users and 37.7 percent of Greek users. The typical addicted user is a child or teenager that made extensive use of the internet and played electronic games for several hours each day. Symptoms included depression, a lack of other interests, melancholy moods, ADHD and an inability to adapt to school.

Internet use can be associated with some negative changes in body fat distribution and body weight. Based on previous studies on the association between Internet use and body weight, adolescents with Internet addiction disorder are more likely to be overweight or obese. Studies have shown that being overweight or obese, and even underweight, was associated with heavy Internet use. We estimated the prevalence of overweight and obesity in a representative sample of 11, 13 and 15-year-olds living in Greece and explored the association with diet-related behaviours and habits. Self-reported data on weight, height, diet-related behaviours and habits were used from 3816 students (1898 boys, 1918 girls) participants in the Greek arm of the international Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children study during 2018. Overweight and obesity were defined using the 2007 WHO growth charts classification. Prevalence of overweight was 19.4% in the total sample, 24.1% for boys and 14.7% for girls, and prevalence of obesity was 5.3% in the total sample, 7.3% for boys and 3.4% for girls, respectively.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 38.2 million children under the age of five were overweight or obese in 2019. Global obesity rates nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016. Obesity is becoming inevitable, especially with the use of technology making people lazier.

To address the increasing prevalence of overweight and obesity in children and adolescents in Greece, we developed the ‘National e-Health Program for the Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity in Childhood and Adolescence’, which provides specific and detailed guidance to all primary health care physicians about the personalized management of children and adolescents with overweight or obesity. We believe that with the coordination of all the member states, this problem has to be handled with as soon as possible before being too late for the sake of our next generations.