

OVERVIEW CHOICES ACTIONS 2014

18 March 2015

In general, it can be concluded that the Choices identity as a multi-stakeholder platform with identifiable and well respected roles for industry, science and governments, has been acknowledged in the international arena. The strengthening of the Choices reputation in international networks has increased the interest of countries and companies when it comes to participation and collaboration.

1 International stakeholder management

The presence and visibility of Choices was strengthened by organizing 3 international meetings or side events during conferences, and presenting itself or actively participating in another 5.

Choices has initiated a discussion within WTO on health standards and free trade that was well received. We invited a leading expert of WHO to speak at that occasion.

Choices had a positive first meeting with the World Heart Federation. We concluded to explore possibilities for cooperation.

As the WHO Europe Food & Nutrition Action plan 2015-2020 explicitly referred to front-of-pack labelling, we initiated a discussion on cooperation in practice. We will follow-up on this with a joint conference in October 2015. By means of the Choices stakeholder meeting in the European Parliament, hosted by MEP and former Choices chairman Pavel Telička, we enforced our reputation in the EU as an effective multi-stakeholder platform. During the event we gave the floor to a senior speaker from the WHO. In a meeting with the heads of DG SANTE, we concluded that practical cooperation is possible and should be further explored.

With the Dutch Ministry of Health discussions have been initiated on how to cooperate within the realm of the Dutch EU Presidency in 2016, regarding food reformulation and labelling.

Choices participated in the Consumer Goods Forum Summit and seeks to participate more closely in their Health & Wellness pillar activities.

2 Science

In addition to the organization of a side event during the 3rd World Conference on Public Health & Nutrition, Choices invested in a strengthening of its scientific structure. Both the International and the European Scientific Committee met in person during the year and were challenged to be more active in advocacy and impact research. The Latin American Scientific Committee met twice by Skype and concluded that although many positive developments take place with respect to reformulation and consumer friendly labelling, the opportunities for new Choices initiatives in the region are limited due to a political climate that is against processed foods.

The Young Choices Scientists Network was initiated and will take shape in 2015. In addition, the start of national scientific committees in Poland, Belgium and Czech Republic were prepared and will start their activities in 2015.

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The third round of criteria revision was executed in both the Netherlands and internationally, and will be finalized in 2015.

As a consequence of the Choices participation in the CLYMBOL research consortium (EU funded), data collection has started to evaluate the effects of a social media campaign in The Netherlands. Also a contribution has been made to the comparison of different health symbols in the EU, and in cooperation with Copenhagen University the impact of the logo on household purchases will be investigated in both Denmark and the Netherlands. Results will be available at the end of 2015.

Study proposals on various impact studies have been submitted by the Dutch secretary for funding to the Dutch science funding mechanism NWO.

3 Growth in countries

Based on the EU notification of the Dutch Choices logo, the positive attitude of WHO, and increasing interest from retailers, we were able to make steps towards realizing national Choices programmes in Belgium, Portugal and Turkey.

Much effort has been invested in the re-start of the programme in Belgium by means of 10 meetings with stakeholders (governments, NGOs and business) and the formation of a new and more French/Flemish balanced Scientific Committee.

Poland has been visited twice to temporarily take over the leadership of the programme from Unilever and boost new developments. In this context the serious interest of the fast growing Polish retailer Biedronka, member of the Jeronimo Martins Group, represents a promising sign. In 2015 the start of the scientific committee and a new Polish Choices organisation is foreseen.

Based on the interest of the Portuguese retailer Jeronimo Martins, two missions to Portugal have taken place to explore possibilities to re-start the Choices Programme. The programme has been presented to health officials of different ministries and we were successful in reactivating the ongoing commitment of academia.

In addition, based on a second meeting with government representatives from Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and China, studies and discussions are initiated in preparation of a positive front-of-pack labelling programme in Thailand and Malaysia in 2015. Hosted by the Thai FDA, a follow-up of the Shanghai meeting took place in Bangkok on 16 February 2015.

New contacts have been established with Indonesia and Vietnam to see if they can join this group of countries in 2015.

4 Growth in companies

Choices has been represented at the Consumer Goods Forum Summit.

The promising contacts with international retailer Jeronimo Martins (incl. Biedronka) have been mentioned before. A study among 14 international retailers investigating the reasons why these companies could be interested in the programme, was executed and finalized in 2014. The main finding is that most retailers see Choices as a pre-competitive platform, in which cooperation with other companies (brands and retail) strongly contributes to its success and impact.

5 Global alliance of positive logos

Hosted by WHO Europe, a second meeting with the European positive logo organisations Keyhole, Heart Logo and Choices was organized. There is a strong will to keep in contact and to exchange information, but the opportunities for cooperation are limited.

The cooperation with the Singapore logo programme develops well and forms the basis of the South-East Asia cooperation.

6 Governance

Starting from December 2014 the Board consists of:

- Clémence Ross, independent President
- Angelika de Bree, Unilever
- Werner Buck, FrieslandCampina (treasurer)
- Emma Coles, Ahold (observer)
- Jaap Seidell (scientific advisor, membership will end in 2015)
- Rutger Schilpzand (advisor on behalf of the secretariat).

The Board met 4 times and adopted a new strategy, broadening the scope from the single Choices logo to a broader ambition of health driven reformulation and consumer friendly labelling. The Choices label remains the flag ship of the organisation. An exploration and discussion has been initiated to develop new finance opportunities.

The Advisory Group met 4 times in 2014. Members are:

- Onno Franse (Ahold)
- Carla Nijman (Unilever)
- Petra Dekker (FrieslandCampina global)
- Hendro Poedjono (FrieslandCampina Asia)
- Rutger Schilpzand (Choices secretariat)

7 Communication

In 2014 Choices launched its new website, produced leaflets for marketers and on “nutrition labelling pressure”, and updated its general brochure. This material is distributed at meetings or conferences and in personal meetings. The Choices website counts 400 unique visitors every month, which is satisfactory for a website that is exclusively aimed at a selected group of experts and stakeholders. Visitors remain on the site for almost 2 minutes, which is remarkably long. News items are placed on the website almost on a weekly basis. Tweets are sent out approximately every second day to 200+ followers (number increases slowly but steadily).

The Choices International and European criteria are downloaded appr. 500x annually.

Every two months a Newsletter is issued to the 800+ relations in our database.

A position paper on the traffic light is checked by Monique Raats (ESC) and put on the website.

8 Scientific Committees

As of end of 2014, the following Scientific Committees were active with their members as listed below. In the course of 2015, we prepare a change in composition in ISC, ESC and the Dutch Scientific Committee, and expect the start of a Czech Scientific Committee.

International Scientific Committee

- Prof. J.C. Seidell (chairman), VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Prof. B. Popkin, University of North Carolina, USA
- Prof. R. Uauy, University of Chile
- Prof. A. Kurpad, St. John's Research Institute Bangalore, India

European Scientific Committee

- Prof. J. C. Seidell, VU University Amsterdam, (Chairman)
- Prof. M. Gurinovic, University of Belgrade, Serbia
- Prof. A. G. Pekcan, Hacettepe University, Turkey
- Prof. V. Somoza, University of Vienna, Austria
- Prof. G. Vansant, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium
- Dr. R. Endevelt, Ministry of Health, Tel Aviv, Israel
- Dr. M. Raats, University of Surrey, UK
- Prof. J. Dostálová, Institute of Chemical Technology, Czech Republic

Latin American Scientific Committee

- Prof. R. Uauy, University of Chile
- Prof. M. Tavela, National University of La Plata, Argentina
- Prof. S. Barquera, National Public Health Institute, Mexico
- Prof. Elizabete Wendel de Menezes, University of São Paulo, Brazil
- Prof. Silvia Cozzolino, University of São Paulo, Brazil

Belgian Scientific Committee

- Prof. G. Vansant, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium
- Prof. em. J. Vinck, University of Hasselt
- O. Capot, Institute Paul Lambin, Brussels
- Prof. L. Jacxsens, University of Ghent
- Prof. M. Sandic, University of Liège - Gemgloux
- Prof. W. Verbeke, University of Ghent

Dutch Scientific Committee

- Prof. J. C. Seidell, VU University Amsterdam, (Chairman)
- Prof. E. Feskens, Wageningen University
- Prof. R. Mensink, Maastricht University
- Dr. M. Dekker, Wageningen University.
- Dr. S. Peters, Voedingscentrum
- Prof. H. Verhagen, National Institute for Public Health and the Environment
- Dr. H. van den Berg, retired

Polish Scientific Committee (start May 2015)

- Prof. D. Kołożyn-Krajewska (chair), Warsaw University Of Life Sciences,
- Dr. K. Rejman, Warsaw University Of Life Sciences,
- Prof. A. Gronowska-Senger, Warsaw University Of Life Sciences,
- Prof. M. Olszanecka-Glinianowicz, Medical University of Silesia
- Prof. A. Brzozowska, Warsaw University of Life Sciences
- Prof. J. Czarnocińska, Poznan University of Life Sciences
- Prof. M. Montowska, Poznan University of Life Sciences