

**Address by Mrs Giovanna DEBONO (EPP) Malta**

**on the report: "Safeguarding children and young people from obesity and type 2 diabetes" presented by Mr Hancock on behalf of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee, Document 12559.**

Mrs DEBONO (*Malta*) – I am also a newcomer to the Council of Europe. I did not intend to speak but when I heard Mr Hancock presenting his report, I thought that I should share with you my experience as a Minister responsible for the island of Gozo, which is Malta's sister island. At the moment, we have a particular mission to transform the island into an eco-island. That does not mean that we focus only on the environment or alternative sources of energy. One of our objectives is a better quality of life. That means focusing on health issues and we concentrate mainly on school children. We are also currently addressing obesity. In schools, we have introduced the concept of organising breakfast for all the children. We invite all the students to have breakfast at school together. Of course, we sponsor the breakfasts and healthy eating. We do that mainly to teach children what is best to eat in the morning and to pass on that message to their parents and siblings. We show children how they can do better at school through eating a good healthy breakfast. That is only one example.

We also ask the Agriculture Minister to provide fruit for every school on particular occasions so that children start to enjoy eating it. As well as all that, there is another important pillar for addressing obesity. We encourage and motivate our children to do more physical exercise. Lately, in our reforms to the national curriculum, Malta and Gozo have made physical education a compulsory subject in all the compulsory school years.

When we consider children's education, we sometimes think that only teachers are responsible for making children aware of healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise. However, we must realise that it is also the responsibility of parents and, of course, of us as politicians. So an education campaign focusing on how to bring up children, and including healthy eating, is necessary for all those responsible for children. An education campaign that is linked to parenting is an objective that we should all encourage.

However, as well as teachers and parents, politicians have a duty. We must ensure that we give the problem of obesity priority in the Ministries of Health and Education. Schemes and courses that promote a better quality of life should continue to increase. Healthy children are an asset to the family and, of course, the country.

THE PRESIDENT (Translation) – There are only two more speakers. The list is closed, and I ask the speakers to respect the timetable.

Mrs ANDERSEN (*Norway*) – I support the report, which is important. I commend Mrs Debono for the action that has been taken on creating a eco-society. That was useful information and good work.