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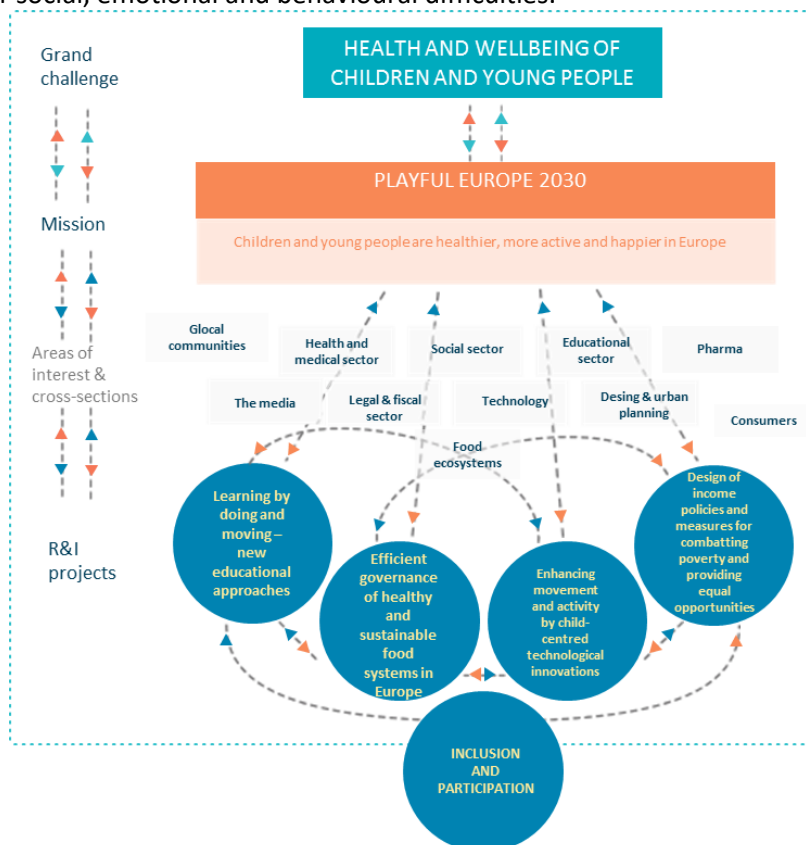
PLAYFUL EUROPE 2030

Proposal by the Academy of Finland for a *Horizon Europe* mission

Children and young people are the future of Europe. This future is endangered by the fact that European children and adolescents increasingly suffer from obesity, a lack of physical activity as well as mental and social problems. To change this vicious circle, the Academy of Finland proposes **Playful Europe 2030** as a *Horizon Europe* mission. The mission is to find new ways to encourage the innate playfulness and creativity in children and young people – and in all of us – and thus support healthy eating, physical mobility and social interaction. Playfulness is a gateway to health and happiness, but it does not have only instrumental value. It is also basic human right of children and young people, and it needs to become a reality. The Playful Europe 2030 mission can be achieved through multidisciplinary research and by innovation actions that include especially children but also people of various age groups, schools and sports associations in their design and implementation. The mission also rests on regulative measures concerning social services, education, the media, etc.

By 2030:

- 1) Learning by doing and moving has replaced sitting at schools, and children's and adolescents' physical activity has increased. Preschool children have 180 minutes and children of primary school age and older have at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity.
- 2) Advertising of unhealthy foods for children and young people is prohibited in all European countries.
- 3) Children and young people have a BMI (Body Mass Index) of under 30.
- 4) Compared to 2018 levels, European children are happier, suffer 30% less from mental problems and have fewer social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.



1. WHY: GRAND CHALLENGE AND SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

Children and young people in Europe suffer from obesity, a lack of physical activity as well as social and mental problems. Mental illness is increasingly recognised as the most significant health concern for children and adolescents and is regarded as the global public health challenge of the 21st century. It has been estimated that every third child in the EU aged 6–9 years old was overweight or obese in 2010. Obesity and too little physical activity (sedentariness) at a young age causes multiple health problems and often leads to diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, for instance, later in life, which also puts a heavy economic burden on European health services. Therefore, Europe needs a systemic and novel approach to health, wellbeing and happiness for children and young people where *the child is the answer*.

2. WHAT: A CHILD-CENTRED AND PLAYFUL EUROPE IS THE SOLUTION

In the Playful Europe 2030 mission, the key target is to support and nourish children's innate playfulness and creativity. We need to find new ways to support children and young people in recognising their bodily and social needs and to offer healthy ways in responding to them. Playfulness entails a change in our mindset from control and measurements into supporting happiness and wellbeing. Children explore the world through play, and play is therefore also the key to a healthier and happier Europe for children and young people.

3. HOW AND WITH WHOM TO MAKE PLAYFUL EUROPE A REALITY

Key areas of interest and cross-sections in this mission are global communities, the medical, social, legal, fiscal and educational sectors, pharma, technology, design and urban planning, food ecosystems and consumers. Measures must be taken in *income policies and combatting poverty*, which is directly linked to nutrition; hobbies and capabilities; *urbanisation and city planning* to enable free and safe places to meet and play close to people and their everyday lives; *fiscal policies and regulation* (taxation, regulation on food industry, the media and advertising); *social policies and education* that foster social cohesion and inclusion; *mental health* and especially the mental resources of parents; *education*; *technological and social innovations*; and *nutrition and sustainable food ecosystems*.

Healthy and happy children and young people by 2030 can be reached through a systemic approach and innovative actions carried out in cooperation with the European Union, EU Member States, businesses, local communities, NGOs, researchers and all other relevant actors. In the mission, public policies and funding are needed to strengthen the equal opportunities of children and young people from different backgrounds and families. New technological innovations are required. Body positivity and cultural diversity need to be embedded also in R&I projects on obesity and children's mental wellbeing and happiness. Participatory development in collaboration with NGOs, local communities and families is the cornerstone of the mission – only people working together can make Playful Europe a reality.

