



Meeting on 20 September 2016

Adoption by the Board

CA 38/2016

APEEE Food policy paper and implementation mechanisms

General introduction

The objective of this paper is two-fold:

- to set out the general principles that should apply to the planning of menus, as well as the preparation of the lunch meals in the school canteen; and
- to establish concrete mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of this food policy and for measuring the satisfaction of pupils and teachers.

The ultimate aim is to ensure that the school canteen provided for by the APEEE enables pupils to eat well and to eat healthily.

This paper consolidates current practice in the school canteen and aims at introducing concrete, practicable measures to respond to the main concerns that have been raised by parents and pupils.

The principles and guidelines set out in this policy paper for the school canteen should apply, as appropriate, to the school cafeteria, as well as to the snacks offered to the after-school garderies and the extracurricular activities.

Background: At its meeting of 19 April 2016, the APEEE Management Board gave a direct mandate to its Working Group Canteen to prepare a comprehensive food policy paper for the school canteen. The WG Canteen submitted its original proposal to internal consultation and integrated comments from the APEEE nutritionist (Ms Thienpont) and APEEE Board Members. The final version of this paper has been examined and approved by the Canteen Manager (Mr Delhoux).

Part I - APEEE Food policy paper

1. Lunch meals should be adapted to children

The menu should correspond to the requirements of a school canteen. It should comprise meals that are adjusted to the needs of children of different ages and cater, particularly, for the needs of younger children. Meals should not be perceived to be too complex, and young children should easily identify exactly what they are eating. While ensuring a certain variety that reflects the different dietary habits in an international school, the menu should mainly include meals that are appealing for the majority of pupils.

Guidelines:

- Propose simpler, non-sophisticated meals.
- Separation of components of each lunch meal. It is preferable to separate ingredients and place them on different sides of each dish (meat / potatoes / vegetables). This is deemed to be particularly important for younger children (nursery, primary). This recommendation should not exclude the possibility to offer on occasion popular dishes that are appreciated by children (e.g. Flemish stew).
- Promote on a regular basis traditional foods and recipes from the sections represented in the school. Opt for simple recipes also in this context.
- Avoid “exotic” dishes and very intense flavours by using too many spices.



- Detect the most successful lunch meals (which should be healthy and popular at the time) and ensure that they appear regularly in the menu (once every 3 weeks).
- Monitor the food waste on a daily basis, if possible in the form of statistics, in order to determine and register which dishes were not appreciated by the children (and of which age group). Food waste should be used as a key indicator to measure clients' satisfaction and the appropriateness of the dishes proposed.

2. Lunch meals should be prepared in a healthy way

Lunch meals should not be very heavy. They should seek to avoid fried dishes and thick sauces (sauce béarnaise, à l'ail, tartare). The use of margarine in preparing meals, including the cooking of vegetables, should be limited.

Guidelines:

- Promote the use of oil to replace cooking margarine or butter in the preparation of meals. Opt for unsaturated fats, for instance extra virgin olive oil, wherever possible for cooking or salad dressings.
- Promote the use of bio and organic food, as much as possible.
- Limit the presence of deep fried food in the menu to maximum once every two weeks (including French fries).
- Food should be prepared in a way that helps to reduce the amount of added fat: steaming, baking, boiling should be the preferred modes of cooking.
- Avoid that thick sauces are served with the main course, in order not to render the lunch meals too heavy and less healthy. In the event that a sauce is deemed to be indispensable, it should be served separately, on the side and not on top of the proposed meal.
- Limit the amount of salt, as appropriate, during cooking and food preparation, given that salt is already contained in bread and other processed foods. If necessary, herbs and soft spices (e.g. oregano, thyme) can also flavour the food. Avoid the use of sodium glutamate (MSG), a common flavor enhancer.
- Reinforce the role of the nutritionist. The nutritionist should also supervise on occasion the process of preparing / cooking the lunch meals and not just in the planning of menus. The physical presence of the nutritionist on occasion during the cooking stage of lunch meals is deemed necessary (change of contractual obligations if required).

3. Lunch meals should be nutritious and include many vegetables

A well-balanced, healthy diet for children needs to be ensured, following norms and scientific recommendations in the field. This includes the widest possible consumption of vegetables. To that effect, the lunch meals should be prepared on the spot, in the kitchen of the school.

Guidelines:

- Pre-prepared, processed meat or fish that is purchased in the market (e.g. sausages, fish sticks) and not prepared in the school canteen should be proposed as main course maximum once a month.
- Favour the use of legumes and dried pulses (lentils, dried giant white beans, lima beans etc.) as a healthier option.
- Introduction of at least one vegetarian meal per week.
- Promote the use of seasonal vegetables.
- Sliced / cut fresh vegetables should not be served the following day.
- The salad bar should include a wide variety of vegetables, pulses and healthy side dishes. The variety proposed should be reviewed and renewed weekly, on the basis of seasonal requirements, students' preferences and the occasional introduction of less common food. The salad bar is meant to provide a complement and not to substitute the main course offered.



4. Lunch meals should be served in a correct, clever way

The timing of serving the different courses, as well as the quantity of food proposed, are of paramount importance to ensure that children eat calmly and well and without any unnecessary stress. The provision of baguettes on the table before the main course should be avoided, as it cuts the appetite of children, who are often “full” just with bread. Instead, sliced vegetables should be offered.

Guidelines:

- Pre-cut raw vegetables should be served as the first thing on the tables (e.g. sliced carrots or cucumbers) instead of bread/baguette. The vegetables should be served in a visually attractive manner, using different colours and shapes. A test phase for the younger pupils (MAT, P1, P2), not having access to the salad bar, should be launched as soon as possible.
- Bread/baguette should be served only with the main course, and not be available on the tables from the outset. The use of wholemeal bread should be encouraged.
- No extra salt should be available on the tables to add to food after cooking.
- All components of the main course should be served without delay. Younger pupils (MAT, P1, P2) should first be served vegetables. The dessert should be served in time, in order to avoid any stress to the pupils.
- The quantity of food served to pupils (e.g. MAT, P1-P2) should correspond to their needs.

5. Lunch meals should include healthy desserts

Detailed information should be provided on the APEEE website as regards the dessert offered with lunch meals, instead of a general reference of “dairy” or “daily dessert”. The wider offer of fruits should also be ensured. A healthy dessert is an integral part of every lunch meal in the school canteen.

Guidelines:

- Provide detailed information on the proposed desserts. The “culinary vocabulary” should be further developed for this section.
- Limit the dairy desserts with added sugars and other additives and the purchased ice creams to maximum once a week.
- Introduce natural yoghurts or curd cheese desserts in the menu on other days, their nutritional value is superior.
- Examine the possibility of preparing desserts in the canteen (home-made, low sugar cream or curd cheese desserts, ice creams, cakes), instead of purchasing everything in the market.
- Desserts must not contain any confectionery (sweets, candies).
- Propose fruits in the menu at least 3 times a week. Fruits can be proposed either as the main dessert or an alternative to other desserts. Opt for seasonal and ripe fruits to the extent possible, and ensure that a variety is provided, enabling the choice for pupils.
- Fruits should be presented in a visually attractive way. They can be pre-cut only for the younger children (MAT, P1, P2), if this facilitates their consumption (e.g. not for bananas).

6. A new approach on allergens

The school canteen cannot provide any special meals that take account of specific dietary needs, allergies or intolerances of pupils. Such cases cannot be accommodated. However, every effort should be made to ensure that allergens are presented in a detailed, clear way that specifies which food contains which allergen. This information can enable parents, whose children are intolerant to one allergen, to advise them on what to avoid. Further improvements on the timely and direct communication on this matter should be ensured.



Guidelines:

- Improve the presentation of allergens on the APEEE website. Identify with the greatest precision which food contains which allergen.
- Differentiate between the allergens that are actually included in the lunch meal and those that are registered only because of the possibility of contamination (“traces de...”).
- Establish a list of emails of those parents that are interested in acquiring information on allergens, in order to improve communication and provide them also by email the existence of new allergens (meaning those that can only be observed when food products have been received in the school) in the menu.
- Provide information as early as possible on new allergens (preferably on Friday for the following week).
- Examine the feasibility of providing an allergen-free meal (even by an external provider).

7. Information and education

Children should learn to appreciate the value of a healthy and nutritious diet and understand the positive impact on their lives. The educational dimension should be reinforced by involving both the school and the parents in this process.

Guidelines:

- Include general dietary information on different components of the proposed menus and communicate them visibly both to students and parents (including the preparation of information posters). Highlight ingredients with high nutritional value in the menu.
- Provide additional interesting information about the food provided and its origin.
- Pupils and students should be involved, as appropriate, in setting and cleaning the tables.
- Promote through the teachers the communication on different canteen issues (e.g. quantity of the food waste) for educational purposes.

Part II - APEEE Mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of the food policy and measurement of satisfaction

- 1. Publication of the food policy on the APEEE website.** After approval by the Board, the food policy will be published on the APEEE website and all pupils and parents will have access to this document.
- 2. Review of the canteen menus by the nutritionist and the APEEE canteen Working Group.** The canteen menus will be reviewed by the nutritionist, whose comments will be communicated both to the canteen manager and the WG Canteen. The WG will also ensure that the APEEE food policy is properly reflected in the proposed menus, and can suggest changes to that effect. Changes proposed by both the nutritionist and the WG Canteen should be first discussed with the canteen manager and introduced in the revised menus, unless there are sound reasons that prevent their implementation.
- 3. Review of the sample of recipes by the nutritionist.** The canteen manager keeps a list of recipes for the lunch meals served to the students. The WG Canteen selects on a quarterly basis a sample of the recipes to be sent to the nutritionist for review and suggestions. A report should be prepared on a quarterly basis by the nutritionist providing information also on the recipes used and the preparation of the meals.
- 4. Visits to the canteen by the nutritionist or the WG Canteen members.** The nutritionist in cooperation with the WG Canteen will carry out announced and un-announced visits at the canteen (at least three visits during the school year). The objective of these visits is to monitor the implementation of the food policy, including the



specific recipes and recommendations for the preparation of lunch meals. A report will be drafted after each visit that may include recommendations for improvement. The working group will carry out follow-up of these measures.

- 5. Review of the food invoices** – the WG Canteen will analyse at least twice during the school year the food invoices of the canteen with the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the policy.

Mechanisms for measurement of the satisfactions

- 1. Feedback from the teachers** – According to the job description of the Supervisor in the pupil's canteen, the supervisors shall provide the feedback to the APEEE representatives concerning the quality of the food. The WG Canteen in cooperation with the representatives of the school will develop a formal procedure on how this feedback will be brought together. Based on this feedback, and if required, the WG Canteen in cooperation with the canteen manager will agree on the measures to be taken to improve the operation of the canteen. Follow-up of these measures will be carried out by the WG Canteen.
- 2. Feedback from the parents.** A functional mailbox will be made available for the parents to give their feedback. Suggestions and complaints will be assessed and an answer will be provided in all cases. If the current access limitations for parents to school are softened, parents that come occasionally to eat with their children in the canteen will be asked to answer a small questionnaire.
- 3. Feedback from the pupils** – Several IT options to collect feedback on a daily basis from pupils should be explored, including the possibility to install the “happy or not” devices for a specific time. The pupils are the clients of the school canteen and special focus should be given to their remarks and overall feedback.
- 4. Global satisfaction survey** – The WG Canteen will organize every 2 years a global satisfaction survey concerning all areas of the HORECA sector in the school (students' canteen, cafeteria, teachers' canteen, vending machines, etc.). The results of the survey, including proposals for measures to be taken, will be submitted to the Board for approval 2 months after the survey is closed.
- 5. Assessment of feedback by the nutritionist** – The nutritionist should be involved in assessing the feedback collected via the different channels and mechanisms in place. The results of this assessment, including the position on the specific complaints received, should be communicated in the form of a report to the WG Canteen.

Assessment of the APEEE food policy. A review of the implementation of the new APEEE food policy should be conducted by the end of March 2017.