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**Dr Jean-Michel Borys** is a medical doctor, endocrinologist and nutritionist. Since 2004, he has been the Director of the EPODE Programme, a childhood obesity prevention programme implemented in 226 towns in France. In 2007, he was also appointed the Director of the EPODE European Network (EEN). Dr Borys is an active member of several national and international scientific societies in the area of nutrition, diabetes and obesity. Dr Borys has published several monographies for the health sector and for the general public. He has also written numerous scientific papers in the area of nutrition, diabetes, lipidology and cardiovascular diseases. Dr Borys is the main author of a medical monography titled *Childhood Obesity (2004)*. Dr Borys obtained his MD in 2004, graduate endocrinology, diabetology in 1987 and Masters in Political Sciences in 2007.

### **ABSTRACT: Community-Capacity Building for Youth Obesity Prevention in France**

#### **Background**

The prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased worldwide during the last twenty years. The changes in lifestyle (diet and lack of physical activity) contribute to explain this major public health concern. The need for concrete and effective policies, plans and programmes aimed at preventing overweight and obesity is urgent.

Over the last ten years, studies have demonstrated that the prevention of overweight and obesity is possible through interventions that are based on lifestyle and environment – particularly as regards diet and physical activity.

However, there is a clear need to bridge the gap that exists between awareness and know-how: it is widely known that people need to be more physically active and have a healthy diet. The concrete way to effectively implement the necessary related lifestyle changes and ensure sustainability is still challenged.

#### **EPODE Purpose**

Initiated in 10 French pilot towns in 2004, EPODE is a coordinated, capacity-building and integrated approach for communities to implement effective and sustainable strategies to prevent childhood obesity. At national level, a coordination team using social marketing and organizational techniques trains and coaches a local project manager nominated in each EPODE town by the local authorities.

The project manager is provided with tools to mobilize local stakeholders through a local steering committee and local networks. This methodology enables the entire community to be empowered and contribute to create a healthier environment facilitating social norms changes and healthier behaviours.

#### **Methods and Social Marketing within EPODE**

In recent years, social marketing techniques have been widespread in community-based obesity prevention programs to promote healthier behaviours. Previous reviews have showed that CBI's using these techniques reach positive results in the obesity risk factors prevention. The EPODE methods and social marketing techniques are summarized here below.

#### **Insight**

The national coordination team – using social marketing, communication and organizational techniques - operates under the supervision of an independent experts committee and in collaboration with professionals in the fields of education, psychology, sociology, sports and nutrition. The insights come from distinct sources such as scientific reviews, official recommendations, field experience collected from EPODE actors (e.g. interviews with local project managers, focus groups with parents). This process enables to identify people's practices and representations as well as barriers and levers for behaviour changes, to analyze target segmentation needs and the feasibility of actions to be implemented.

#### **Strategy**

EPODE determined that children and families are unlikely to respond to cognitive-based strategies, finding that it is better to concentrate on one simple message at a time, in a positive manner, reinforcing it with activities and concrete experience of the benefit, and repeating it over a long time period. On this purpose, biannual or annual campaigns are designed by the National Coordination team under the EPODE brand. Once objectives and priority themes have been defined, key messages and tailored environmental stimuli are elaborated. In order to support the intervention scheme, a set of tools is designed for each campaign to facilitate social mobilization and actions at community level.

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