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ECIPE PRESS RELEASE – NEW POLICY BRIEF

Europe's Obesity Challenge

by Fredrik Erixon, Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE)

Brussels, Belgium, 6th February 2017 - Europe is confronted by an obesity challenge. Rates of obesity have climbed fast over the past decades and estimates suggest that obesity rates will continue to grow over the next decades. Obesity is a complex disease and a source for many other medical problems like diabetes type 2 and cardiovascular diseases. Therefore, the growing prevalence of obesity also affects healthcare expenditures and labour supply in the economy. On current trend, obesity will in future have a significant impact on healthcare spending and the productivity of Europe's economies.

There is a strong case to be made for policy leaders to give greater attention to obesity. The growth of obesity needs to be addressed and European countries need better prevention policies for that to happen. Furthermore, there also has to be better policies to treat people that already suffer from obesity and associated diseases. As the medical science has rapidly advanced its understanding of obesity, and now agreed on clinical guidelines for surgeries of obese patients with type-2 diabetes, it is time for political leaders to respond to the opportunities created by new innovation.

The EU does not take a leading role in devising healthcare policies in Europe. Still, it has increased its ambitions in helping governments to reduce the growth of obesity. However, the EU can do more – and there is a natural role for it in helping governments to learn from best practices and to evaluate how well, or bad, they are responding to the obesity challenge.

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