

Oral statement from IDF Europe to agenda item 8: A healthy start for a healthy life: a strategy for child and adolescent health and well-being in the WHO European Region, 2026–2030

Seventy-fifth Regional Committee for Europe: Copenhagen, 28–30 October 2025

Chair, distinguished delegates,

The International Diabetes Federation Europe, representing the voice of people living with diabetes, supports the strategy for child and adolescent health and well-being.

Across our Region, type 2 diabetes is increasingly diagnosed among children, adolescents and young adults, driven in part due to rising rates of overweight and obesity. This worrying trend reflects the environments in which children grow, shaped by harmful commercial marketing, limited access to nutritious and healthier food and conditions for physical activity. Addressing these structural factors requires coordinated action and investment to ensure every child has a healthy start and can avoid developing chronic conditions later in life.

Early-onset type 2 diabetes greatly increases the risk of premature cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, and vision loss, often developing more aggressively than in adults. It also leads to longer lifetime exposure to high blood glucose, causing earlier complications. In addition, young people living with T2D often experience stigma, which can worsen management and outcomes.

To ensure that all children and adolescents, including those living with diabetes, can live healthy and full lives, we call for:

- Strong action on commercial determinants of health, including stricter regulation of the marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks to children;
- Health-promoting schools and community settings that empower children and adolescents to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours throughout their life course; and
- Equitable access to education, medicines, multidisciplinary care teams and psychological support tailored to the needs of children and adolescents living with diabetes — whether facing the stigma linked to overweight and type 2 diabetes, or the relentless psychological burden of managing the condition around the clock.