



EVALUATION REPORT

European Economic and Social Committee

Evaluation of the EU school scheme

Evaluation of the EU school scheme

NAT/855

Rapporteur: **Arnold PUECH d'ALISSAC**

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Referral	European Commission, 01/10/2021
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
Adopted in section	24/11/2022
Adopted at plenary	15/12/2022
Plenary session No	574
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	129/5/2

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This evaluation report on the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme (hereinafter referred to as the "EU school scheme" or "the scheme") is the EESC's contribution to the ongoing evaluation process carried out by the European Commission. The EESC report focuses on collecting and analysing the views of organised civil society on the implementation of the scheme in some EU Member States.
- 1.2 Revamped in 2017, the scheme supports the distribution of fruit, vegetables, milk and dairy products to children with the aim of increasing their consumption of these products in the short and long term, as well as educational activities aimed at reconnecting children with agriculture and teaching them about healthy eating habits. The scheme also contributes to the general objective of the common agricultural policy of strengthening sustainable food production. Therefore, unless otherwise indicated, the conclusions and recommendations of this report relate to the period from 2017 to the present.
- 1.3 In line with the EESC's evaluation methodology, this report was carried out on the basis of online missions and surveys in five countries: Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania and Romania. In addition to the opinions of the social partners and civil society organisations (CSOs), which are reflected in the recommendations, public authorities, school and mass catering authorities and parents' associations were also consulted. Further technical information can be found in the technical annex.
- 1.4 To begin, the EESC highlights the specific context caused by the COVID-19 crisis, which began in 2019 and led to complications in implementing the scheme, which had only been introduced two years earlier. Successive lockdowns, spikes in the cost of raw materials, worsened by the impact of the war in Ukraine, the demands of different national public policies, (sometimes pre-existing) budgetary problems and increasing take-up of teleworking are all difficulties this sector is facing in several Member States.
- 1.5 The assessments and opinions expressed in this report are only those of a representative set of CSOs from the five above-mentioned Member States. The recommendations are a summary of the views shared by a majority of the stakeholders consulted.

2. Conclusions

- 2.1 The EESC welcomes the introduction of the EU school scheme, which has a total budget¹ of EUR 250 million per school year for the 2017-2023 period, up to EUR 150 million for fruit and vegetables and up to EUR 100 million for milk.
- 2.2 In response to the European Commission's request, the EESC has identified the main measures to be used at national and European level to make the scheme more effective and relevant and better include civil society:

¹ https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/school-scheme-explained_en.

- 2.2.1 improve the promotion and communication of the scheme to relevant stakeholders, strengthen links between stakeholders and public authorities and integrate the scheme into regional or national food policies; set up national monitoring and evaluation committees in conjunction with the European Commission. Responsibility for all of this lies with both the European Commission and the Member States;
- 2.2.2 the Member States must significantly simplify administrative procedures, enable them to be digitalised, ensure greater uniformity, centralise public procurement and administrative documents, and mobilise existing systems to simplify the management of the scheme;
- 2.2.3 create a guide to best practice, overseen by the European Commission, to help set up the scheme. It would also be useful for the Commission to provide specific support for school staff responsible for its implementation. The Member States should carry out a SWOT² analysis and analyse the scheme's development at national level;
- 2.2.4 call on the Member States' health authorities to allow the addition of certain sweet products (honey, maple syrup, etc.), fruit in the case of yoghurts, and fats (olive oil, vinaigrettes, etc.) for raw vegetables, introduce products containing a set rate of sugar (such as yoghurt containing 4% sugar) combat food waste and promote more environmentally-friendly packaging;
- 2.2.5 increase the possibilities for spending the allocated funds, especially on education for safe and sustainable healthy eating, increase the target audience, evaluate teaching materials, boost the funds dedicated to the scheme and give Member States more flexibility;
- 2.2.6 include social factors in the scheme more to improve support for disadvantaged children, particularly through enhanced coordination with charities in the Member States;
- 2.2.7 considerably strengthen support for producers (administrative arrangements, support, payment, etc.) so that they can access the programme more easily, in particular through the following measures to be put in place at national level:
- ensure that there is a correlation between the production cost and the price paid to the producer and reassess prices so they reflect the realities of production, especially in the current inflationary context³;
 - ensure that producers are paid swiftly and fairly and strengthen the supply of local products in schools by including origin, short supply chain and quality criteria in calls to tender, and disseminate these best practices in the Member States;
 - promote associations of producer groups to make farmers more competitive and better able to respond to calls for tender;

² SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

³ EESC exploratory opinion requested by the French presidency of the Council on Food security and sustainable food systems [OJ C 194, 12.5.2022, p. 72](#).

2.2.8 in each Member State, identify representative CSOs and the social partners and provide them with all the necessary elements and information related to the scheme in order to motivate them and improve their participation;

2.2.9 at school level, set up regular meetings to inform and consult parents about this scheme and the major challenges it has to address.

3. **Measures to make this scheme more effective**

3.1 Making the scheme more effective will require considerable simplification of the general procedure, which is discouraging for stakeholders.

3.2 The scheme is applied differently across Member States in terms of frequency and method of distribution, the nature and portions, quality, origin and cost coverage of these products. Each Member State must create a national plan for a period of six years which sets out the strategies, measures and the list of products eligible for funding under the scheme. Member States are responsible for the annual monitoring of the implementation of the activities.

3.3 The significant administrative complexity, in relation to requests to participate but also to operational set-up, is a problem in almost all Member States. Those impacted include schools and food suppliers, especially smaller ones. The most cited difficulties include:

- the distribution of eligible products, which is sometimes not allowed during snack time but only during meals, and the need to count every child present and benefiting from the scheme on a daily basis;
- eligible portions are not always suitable (e.g. how can you make a 120g yoghurt – the standard portion – eligible, when only those of 100g are eligible?);
- products with the SIQO⁴ designation are sometimes cut from supplies due to budgetary constraints and calls for tenders lack clarity;
- the separation of the budget required by the scheme is sometimes impossible for some small establishments, in particular where the catering service also serves other institutions;
- collection and preservation of records is time-consuming and the requirement for paper archiving of delivery notes and invoices raises environmental and organisational concerns;
- in terms of logistics, sometimes there is not enough storage, which means products need to be sent back. It is also necessary to carry out a (very time-consuming) sorting process as not all products are subsidised;
- penalties may be applied, sometimes too easily, if certain information is missing in the documents;
- reporting procedures are considered too complex and accreditations, which cannot be changed during a given year, are perceived as being too inflexible. Certain situations give rise to difficulties, in particular where a school has a single SIRET number but several distribution locations.

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Official quality and origin indicator.

- 3.4 However, some bureaucratic barriers can be overcome, as is the case in Ireland, where the scheme is highly centralised: the fact that it is managed nationally and that there is only one contractor makes it possible to achieve an efficient system, with payments to suppliers being simplified (the contracting company pays directly against the delivery of the food products).
- 3.5 From an educational and nutritional point of view, while some recognise the scheme as useful – as reflected in the increase in the consumption of eligible products, as is the case for organic milk in Finland, where sales to the public sector have risen from one million to three million litres due to the scheme – others consider it necessary to improve children's knowledge about food, agriculture, the environment, how the food supply chain functions and about the value of the food products.
- 3.6 The scheme is generally not well known among parents (and sometimes even the producers) who, when familiar with the main measures, view it as involving merely the distribution of eligible products, without associating it with other educational measures (farm visits or class hours dedicated to nutrition education).
- 3.7 Some Member States also stressed the importance of ensuring decent working conditions for mass catering companies. Similarly, institutions having insufficient budgets, thus preventing the mobilisation of sufficient human and logistical resources, is one of the frequently cited problems.
- 3.8 Based on the information shared by the Member States, the EESC identifies the following measures to make the EU school scheme more effective:
- 3.8.1 improve the promotion of the scheme and communication thereof to all relevant stakeholders, including by dedicating a specific share of dedicated funds to this objective, strengthen the links between stakeholders and public authorities and integrate this scheme into regional or national food policies. It is not always clear or known that this scheme comes from the EU, and it is worth pointing out: in Ireland it was suggested to make use of a "European label". Such an initiative could raise awareness of the European nature of the scheme and make it easier to communicate. In each Member State, a monitoring committee bringing together all stakeholders (schools, pupils, parents, governments, producers, interbranch organisations, suppliers, distributors, etc.) would ensure a link between the national entities and the European services responsible for the scheme, thus facilitating coordination between the parties;
- 3.8.2 simplify, digitalise and standardise administrative procedures and centralise public procurement and administrative documents. Furthermore, the EESC noted that some national operational management software could be useful for implementing and monitoring the scheme. The Committee recommends mobilising all types of existing systems in the Member States;
- 3.8.3 widen the scope for spending the allocated funds and the target audience (to children under the age of 12), as proposed by stakeholders in France and Romania – the EESC also notes that a maximum number of beneficiary pupils limits the programme's value – and ensuring that the programme matches the needs of schools and pupils, by implementing a targeted approach, in order to avoid the risk of the dedicated budget not being used;

- 3.8.4 create a guide to best practices, established and managed by the European Commission, following feedback from Member States in this regard, to support the operational and administrative implementation of the scheme and provide specific support to school staff (cooks, teachers, etc.) who are responsible for implementing it, for example by organising training;
- 3.8.5 conduct a SWOT⁵ analysis of the scheme in order to establish measures for improvement, carry out qualitative and quantitative studies, analyse the evolution of the scheme in each Member State and carry out a business survey;
- 3.8.6 several Member States call for a relaxation of national rules on portions and for the possibility to add fats, sweetening products and fruit. Indeed, the children do not always appreciate certain products such as natural yoghurt and berries, which are sometimes too acidic, which has a threefold negative effect: introducing time-consuming logistics, the products not being consumed, less involvement of children and food waste. The EESC believes that it is important to maintain variety in the distributed products and therefore that the European Commission should call on the Member States to allow certain sweet products (honey, maple syrup, etc.), fruit and fats (olive oil, rapeseed oil, etc.) of high nutritional and organoleptic quality. Engaging pupils and including their views in the scheme could help achieve the objective and raise awareness of the importance of a balanced diet;
- 3.8.7 for the European Commission, evaluate the teaching materials of each Member State (while giving them more freedom), improve food education measures with class time devoted to food and the origin of products, and organise visits to farms and agri-food businesses, as some Member States already do. The EESC recommends at the national level involving dietitians/nutritionists in schools and adapting the relevant approaches and messages by age group. This requires valuing and supporting teachers by providing them with a specific scheme that they could customise in line with their chosen methodology;
- 3.8.8 strengthening the mainstreaming of social factors into the scheme at national level to further support disadvantaged children. involving charities and food aid organisations as part of the scheme could be a way to make it more effective, as could ensuring better coordination with national programmes that support children from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- 3.8.9 supporting and guiding Member States in implementing actions to reduce food waste, a problem encountered in all the countries surveyed, and encourage the use of more environmentally friendly packaging.

4. Measures to make the EU school scheme more relevant and that aim to facilitate the involvement of local producers

- 4.1 The EESC notes that there is a clear desire across the board to involve local producers, but the highly complex and sometimes economically disadvantageous system hinders their motivation and involvement. While territorial specificities mean that supplies cannot always be provided by

⁵ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

local producers, the lack of possibility to select a geographical origin in calls for tender is an additional constraint on one of the main objectives of the scheme. In general, the lowest price prevails in calls for tender.

- 4.2 From an economic point of view, several stakeholders agree that price policy is no longer viable for producers and that rising production costs risk stopping schools from purchasing local and high quality products. In Romania, the prices were last updated in 2017 and no longer correspond to market reality, all the more so in the current inflationary context. It was suggested that prices be revised and updated, taking production costs into account. The deadlines for paying producers (sometimes six to nine months after the products are delivered to schools) need to be reviewed.
- 4.3 In addition to these difficulties in supplying schools with local and good quality products, certain territorial features of the Member States mean a smaller variety of products is distributed. Additionally, the nutritional and taste quality of the products (also taking into account damage occurring during transport and storage) is not always satisfactory. Moreover, these supplies represent a move away from the philosophy of the scheme, which is supposed to support local economies.
- 4.4 Based on the information shared by the Member States, the EESC proposes several measures to make the EU school scheme more relevant:
 - 4.4.1 significantly increase support for producers so they can access the scheme more easily (registration and administrative processes, communication, support – particularly for IT, quick payment at a fair price⁶, etc.). State farm advisory services can help achieve this objective. It is also essential to ensure producers are paid swiftly and fairly. For the Member States concerned, it is important that the European Commission can provide them with specific solutions;
 - 4.4.2 ensure a correlation between the production cost and the price paid to the producer and reassess prices so that they reflect the realities of production, especially in the current inflationary context, which is causing a real surge in upstream production costs. In addition, it would be appropriate to promote producer groups, as they enable production, storage, deliveries and distribution to be pooled and make producers more competitive;
 - 4.4.3 implement simple and workable solutions to increase the supply of local (where available), conventional and high-quality products in schools by including European-level criteria relating to the geographical origin of products and short supply chains in calls for tender. This would help to prioritise local producers, especially small ones, within the scheme. These good practices could be disseminated in the Member States by the European Commission as part of the scheme.

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In particular, where they exist, national rules prohibiting the resale of a product in its unaltered state below its actual purchase price (which determines the threshold for resale at a loss) should be respected.

5. **Measures to improve civil society participation by ensuring more effective communication regarding the system and between stakeholders**

- 5.1 The EESC notes that the participation of civil society, including parents and families, is generally insufficient, which proves the need to improve communication about the scheme. The lack of centralisation at national level limits the scheme's implementation at local level. In addition, it seems difficult to involve parents and pupils in the activities. In this regard, Member States point out the need to train teachers so that they can persuade them.
- 5.2 Based on the information shared by the Member States, the EESC proposes several measures to improve the involvement of civil society in the scheme:
- 5.2.1 identify representative CSOs in each Member State and communicate elements of the scheme to them in order to motivate them to get involved. In schools, set up meetings to inform parents about this scheme and the major challenges it has to address. These meetings could take place with local stakeholders (mass catering companies, farmers, state services, etc.);
- 5.2.2 provide a guide drawn up by the European Commission on technical tools for teachers and school staff responsible for the scheme, enabling them to get parents involved.

Brussels, 15 December 2022

Christa Schweng

The president of the European Economic and Social Committee

APPENDIX

EVALUATION OF THE EU SCHOOL SCHEME

Technical annex

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0. Introduction

The European Economic and Social Committee has drawn up an evaluation report assessing the **implementation of the aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables and of milk and milk products** in educational establishments (henceforth referred to as the **EU school scheme**), set out in Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 and for which the EU budget is fixed in Regulation (EU) No 1370/2013 in selected EU Member States (Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania and Romania) as of the school year 2017/2018. The report reflects the views of the social partners and civil society organisations, including the public authorities, on the effectiveness, relevance and added value of civil society involvement in the implementation of this scheme.

Based on findings collected during physical and virtual meetings in selected EU Member States and expert online questionnaire replies, this technical annex **gathers, analyses and summarises the views of civil society organisations, as well as of public authorities, on the implementation of the EU school scheme in the selected countries**. In particular, stakeholders were invited to present their views on the overall *effectiveness* of the EU school scheme, especially in terms of increasing children's fruit/vegetable/milk/milk product intake and improving food education for children and their general knowledge of food and agriculture; *relevance* in terms of the results achieved, as well as in terms of the opportunities provided to local producers, suppliers and distributors; and the added value of civil society, i.e. the *level of inclusion* of civil society organisations in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the scheme in the selected countries was assessed, together with exploring ways on how to improve the involvement of social partners and CSOs in these processes in the future.

The evaluation report and the present annex aim at **informing policymakers on the views of civil society organisations as well as public authorities regarding the implementation of the EU school scheme** in selected Member States since 2017, **and assess their experience and role in the implementation of this scheme**, aiming to bring the highest added value to the EC's evaluation. These documents will be shared with the European Commission and other concerned stakeholders.

1. Methodology and Sampling

The members of the EESC study group collected the views of civil society organisations as well as of public authorities through two channels: five physical or virtual fact-finding visits in the selected countries and a targeted online questionnaire.

Additionally, secondary data collection on the EESC's past work on the subject was also analysed.

1.1 Fact-finding meetings

The fact-finding meetings included semi-structured interviews with local civil society organisations and representatives of public authorities, generally following the thematic structure of the questionnaire. They took place either physically or via the *Interactio* online platform.

The sample of Member States was selected by the study group based on criteria adopted by the EESC Bureau on 22 January 2019. The European Commission was also informed about the sample. The countries were selected based on:

- *political spread* e.g. high/low level of implementation, application success rates, most/least affected by the legislative proposal/programme, etc.;
- *geographical spread* i.e. by setting up five groups of Member States and choosing one from each group.

The EU Member States selected for this information report where physical or virtual fact-finding meetings took place were the following: **France (20 June 2022), Romania (27 June 2022), Lithuania (1 July 2022), Ireland (11 July 2022) and Finland (15 September 2022).**

1.2 Questionnaire

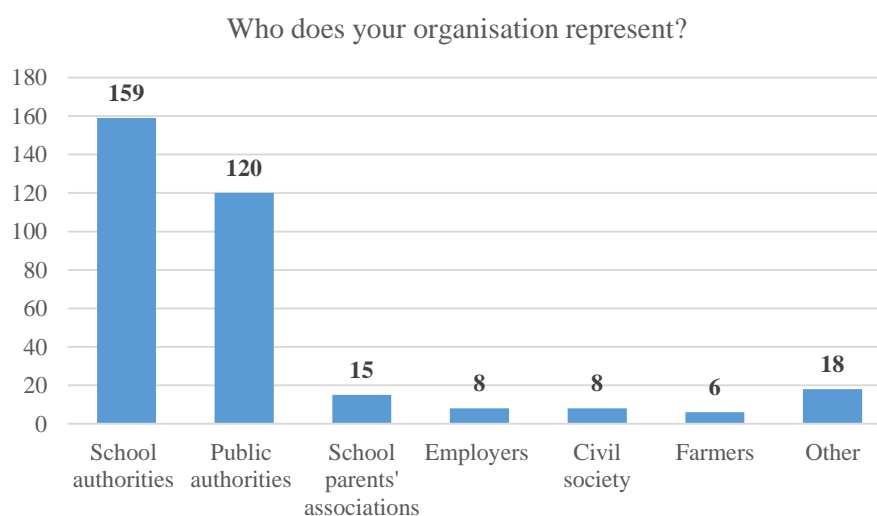
The questionnaire was created on the EU Survey online portal, using a combination of question formats (filter questions, closed and open-ended questions, a grid). The questionnaire consultation was open from 20 June to 22 September 2022.

The aim of the questionnaire was to complement the information obtained from the fact-finding meetings. Composed of 23 questions, the questionnaire was sent to organisations in the Member States selected for the fact-finding meetings (not only to those participating in the physical or virtual meetings, but also to other relevant organisations).

1.3 Respondent breakdown

During the five fact-finding virtual visits, the EESC delegation consulted in total about **63 civil society organisations and public authorities**. It is important to note, however, that the total number of persons interviewed was slightly higher as on many occasions more than one representative of an organisation participated in the meeting.

In addition, **334 contributions** were collected through the online questionnaire, including 159 representatives from school authorities (48%), 120 representatives from public authorities (36%), 15 representatives from school parents' associations (4%), 8 representatives from employers' organisations (2,5%), 8 representatives from civil society organisations (2,5%) and 6 farmers' representatives (2%); 18 respondents (5%) considered themselves as "other".



Regarding the origin of the respondents, more than 70% of the questionnaire respondents came from Romania (out of those almost 2/3 represented school authorities and 1/3 public authorities), 18% from Lithuania (out of those 2/3 represented public authorities), 5% from France, 4% from Ireland and 2% from Finland.

	Number of respondents	Percentage
Finland	7	2,1%
Ireland	15	4,5%
France	16	4,8%
Lithuania	61	18,3%
Romania	235	70,4%
Total	334	100%

The complete list of organisations consulted via the fact-finding meetings and via the questionnaire is available in chapter 5 of this report.

Given that – due to unforeseeable reasons - 70% of the total responses to the questionnaire were received from the Romanian stakeholders, the small sample size for the other countries should be taken into account when interpreting the results presented below. Also, 4 from the 8 representatives of civil society organisations represented France, the country with the most negative opinion on the scheme, therefore the results from the category of civil society have to be interpreted with caution.

2. Focus of the evaluation report

The EU school scheme, applying since 2017, supports the distribution of fruit, vegetables, milk, and milk products to children attending nurseries, pre-school, primary school, and lower secondary school across the European Union. It is part of a wider initiative to promote education about European agriculture and healthy eating habits.

The ultimate **aim** of the programme is to ensure that future EU citizens will comply with international nutritional recommendations and thus reduce health issues such as overweight and obesity which result from low physical activity and unhealthy diets. To do so the EU school scheme aims at (i) **increasing consumption** of fruit, vegetables and dairy products among children; (ii) **promoting healthier eating habits** also by reconnecting children with agriculture through educational activities. The scheme thus aims to address the trends of a stagnating/declining consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk as well as rising child overweight and obesity in EU member states.

Each school year, the EU school scheme allocates **EUR 250 million** from the EU budget to schools across the Union for the implementation of the programme. Of these, up to €150 million for fruit and vegetables and up to €100 million for milk. The budget is divided by country based on the number of children, the level of regional development and, for milk, on how it was previously used (see detail below, indicative EU budget by country and school year).

The evaluation report will take into consideration the programme's implementation starting from the 2017/2018 school year to the end of 2020. Nevertheless, the programme's running period is 2017-2023.

The EESC evaluation methodology follows the EC's Better Regulation guidelines, where the information reports are structured around the evaluation criteria used by the EC (relevance, effectiveness and added value of civil society involvement).

- **Effectiveness:** considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives.
- **Relevance:** looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the intervention and hence touches on aspects of design. Relevance analysis also requires a consideration of how the objectives of an EU intervention (...) correspond to wider EU policy goals and priorities.
- **Added value of civil society involvement:** assesses the level of involvement of civil society in the design, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the EU legislation in question

With a view to complementing the EC's evaluation, the EESC evaluation has focused in particular on the following issues:

- **Effectiveness** of the scheme in terms of increased consumption of fruit, vegetables and milk along with healthier eating habits and a more positive attitude of children towards those products.
- **Implementation at local/regional level**, looking at the impact on local/ regional producers, suppliers and distributors.
- **Civil society added-value**, reaching out to heads of schools, directors of school restaurants and school parents' associations.

2.1 Overview of the implementation of the EU School scheme in each of the selected Member States

The following section presents a brief overview of the implementation of the EU School Scheme in each of the five selected Member States.

- **Finland:** In Finland, the scheme was used to expand and strengthen the existing free school meals programme. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Agency of Rural Affairs are in charge of the monitoring and assessment of the programme, with the Ministry responsible for the strategy and the Agency responsible for implementation. Municipalities are responsible for organising school meals and decide independently whether to participate in the scheme.

The milk component of the scheme targeted all children from 1 to 18 years of age, and the fruit and vegetable component targeted only those aged 6-16. An average of 802,000 children across 5,300 schools participated in the scheme each year⁷. Of these, a little less than 500,000 were also involved in the educational component. No processed fruits or vegetables were distributed.

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Finland: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/finland_en

The educational component varied between years, generally including farm visits, cooking workshops and lessons.

The scheme involved a total of around **EUR 13.5 million** in the period 2017 - 2020⁸. Unlike other countries which saw the scheme financed through a combination of EU funds and national private and public funds, the totality of Finnish spending on the scheme came from the EU budget. Annual expenditure has increased over this period from EUR 2.8 million in 2017/2018 to EUR 4 million in 2020/2021. Finland was allocated a total of **EUR 32.5 million** from the EU budget for the duration of the whole programme (2017-2023). Milk and dairy products took up more than 70% of the funds allocated to the country in the 2017-2020 period, receiving around EUR 2.3 million yearly. Educational measures had an allocation of around EUR 450,000 per year, and fruit and vegetables ranged from EUR 222,000 in 2017 to more than EUR 800,000 in 2020.

- **France:** In France, the scheme was introduced in the 2017/18 school year. The school scheme program is part of the various public policies promoting access to healthy, safe and quality food, and therefore has links to various ministries and state agencies. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has responsibility for the scheme and *FranceAgriMer*, the national organisation for agricultural produce and seafood, is the program payment operator. The implementation of the scheme in France is coherent with the national guidelines on education on food and health issues, the French national nutrition plan (PNNS) and the "EGAlim 1" law (which mandates 50% of quality product including 20% of organic products in schools).

France was allocated just under **EUR 211 million** for the duration of the scheme (2017 – 2023)⁹. The budget was spent on purchasing fruits and vegetables, purchasing milk and dairy products, and on educational measures in schools. Expenditure on the scheme amounted to **EUR 9.4 million** from 2017 - 2021¹⁰. As in Finland, the totality of French spending on the scheme came from the EU budget and no national private or public funding was used in addition to the EU funds. The majority of funds (81%) went towards the supply and distribution of fruit and vegetables. Purchasing and distributing milk and dairy products accounted for 15%, and educational measures accounted for 5% of funding.

The educational component required a minimum of one activity per year for participating students. The type of activity offered varied across the differing school levels. The Ministry for Agriculture and Food provide educational tools for the scheme, including videos and supporting documents.

The number of students participating was around 600,000 in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 school years, falling to 203,708 in 2019/20 and 316,655 in 2020/21. An average of 4,500 schools participated in the first two years of the scheme, falling to 1,441 in 2019/20 and 2,218 schools

⁸ Data obtained from the Commission summary reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/finland_en

⁹ France: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/france_en

¹⁰ Data obtained from the Commission summary reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/france_en

in 2020/21. Of the students participating in the scheme, between 70-91% partook in the fruit and vegetable component and 35-70% partook in the dairy component.

- **Ireland:** In Ireland, the EU School Scheme is nationally implemented by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine, with Board Bia (Irish Food Board) responsible for the implementation of the fruit and vegetable part and the National Dairy Council responsible for the dairy part. The scheme was implemented from the 2017/2018 school year and works together with the national 'Food Dudes' programme which has been running since 2005. The scheme funding was used to allow this programme to be expanded to all Irish primary schools. The Irish scheme uses only fresh produce, with no processed fruits and vegetables included.

The scheme involved a total of around **EUR 16.6 million** between 2017 and 2020¹¹. Of these funds, roughly **58%** came **from the EU budget** with the remaining 42% from national public and private funds. **Every school year**, around **EUR 2.4 million** were allocated **directly in the form of EU aid** for the purchase of fruits, vegetables, and dairy products as well as to promote educational measures and activities. The budget was spent on purchasing fruits and vegetables, purchasing milk and dairy products, and on educational measures in schools.

An average of 145,000 children in 1,100 schools participated in the scheme annually, with a low of 59,000 children in 533 schools in 2020/2021 due to the pandemic¹². As a result of school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic, the scope of the programme was reduced to disadvantaged children and schools.

National Children's Food Survey results from 2005 and 2019¹³ show that daily consumption of fruit and vegetables among children did not really change over this period. However, while in 2003 the majority of fruit intake came from juices and smoothies (around 38%), in 2019 fresh fruit increased to account for 43% of the daily fruit and vegetables intake while the daily consumption of juices and smoothies more than halved. Milk and dairy consumption among children declined sharply between 2005 and 2019 from 338 grams/day to 261 grams/day. This came mainly from drinking milk. The COSI study of 2016 reported that while the Food Dudes programme was effective in reducing child obesity across the country, it failed to do so for pupils attending disadvantaged schools.¹⁴

- **Lithuania:** In Lithuania, the implementation of the EU school scheme was managed at the national level by the Ministry of Agriculture but has seen the involvement of multiple authorities and stakeholders. The programme has been directly administered by the State Enterprise Lithuanian Agricultural and Food Market Regulation Agency.

¹¹ Data obtained from the Commission summary reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/ireland_en

¹² Ireland: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/ireland_en

¹³ [The National Children's Food Survey II Summary Report May 2020.pdf](https://cdn-websites.com/The-National-Childrens-Food-Survey-II-Summary-Report-May-2020.pdf) (cdn-websites.com)

¹⁴ Ireland: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/ireland_en

The scheme involved a total of around **EUR 16.6 million** in the period between 2017 and 2020¹⁵. Of these funds, roughly **52%** came **from the EU budget** while the remaining 48% came from national public funds. **Every school year** around **EUR 2.2 million** was allocated **directly in the form of EU aid**. The majority of funds (63%) was devoted to **milk and dairy products**, the majority of which (around 70%) went to the purchase of drinking milk and dairy products. Vegetables and fruit purchases accounted for 35% of the expenditure while educational measures were allocated below 2% of available funding.

Both pre-school and primary school participated in the scheme, but secondary schools were not included. More than 450,000 children across an average of 1,800 schools took part in the scheme on a yearly basis between 2017 and 2020¹⁶. Lithuania is among the Member States which distributed the least varied food options under the scheme. Only apples, pears, carrots, and fruit juices were distributed for the fruit and vegetable portion. Concerning dairy products, the government strategy prioritised drinking milk and its lactose free version, cheese and curd, plain yoghurt, and milk products with fruit. Educational measures included visits to farms, cooking workshops, school gardens and lessons on healthy eating.

There is no available data on childhood consumption of fruit, vegetables and dairy products, however adult consumption levels have shown declining trends¹⁷. The levels of childhood obesity and overweight are rising in Lithuania¹⁸.

- **Romania:** In Romania the scheme is promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development jointly with the Ministry of Health (*Ministerul Sănătății*) and the Ministry of National Education (*Ministerul Educației Naționale*). The Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture (APIA: *Agenția de Plăți și Intervenție pentru Agricultură*) is the national competent authority for the implementation, control, granting of financial aid and educational measures.

The target group of the Scheme comprises pre-school children in kindergartens and schoolchildren aged between 3 and 14 years of age¹⁹. Educational measures included gardening activities, lessons, workshops and product tastings. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted the scheme through school closures and an end to farm visits or other activities to interact with nature. While schools were closed and education was being provided online, information activities were carried out on food waste, environmental protection and the benefits of a healthy diet.

¹⁵ Data obtained from the Commission summary reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/lithuania_en

¹⁶ Lithuania: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/lithuania_en

¹⁷ Based on trends observed in Eurostat data, 2014 – 2017. Source: [Eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

¹⁸ [Lithuania - WHO Country Profile](https://www.who.int/countries/lithuania)

¹⁹ Romania: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/romania_en

A total of **EUR 103.6 million** was allocated to Romania for the duration of the scheme (2017-2023)²⁰. In Romania, funds from the EU scheme were supplemented by national public funding. No national private funding was included. The majority of EU funds went to the supply and distribution of milk and dairy products (72%). The rest went on supplying and distributing fruits and vegetables (27%), with 1.4% of EU funding going towards educational measures. Total expenditure on the scheme from 2017 – 2021 amounted to **EUR 62.77 million**.

On average, 1.63 million students in over 22,000 schools have taken part in the scheme each year since 2017²¹. 100% of students participating in the scheme in Romania were part of the milk and dairy scheme. In the first year of the scheme, the fruit and vegetables component was only offered to 28% of participating students. This rose to over 85% in 2018/2019 and has remained at this level ever since. In Romania, the scheme only included fresh fruit and vegetables with no processed products, and 2 portions of drinking milk and one portion of dairy per week.

3. Primary data: findings and analysis

3.1 Effectiveness

According to the European Commission Better Regulation toolbox, the criterion of effectiveness "considers how successful EU action has been in achieving or progressing towards its objectives"²².

General conclusions

The vast majority (80%) of the respondents gave a positive opinion on the effectiveness of the EU school scheme in their country (**Question 1**). Within this majority, 60% of the respondents considered the scheme to be 'adequate' and 19% of the respondents said that the scheme was 'very good and easy to apply'. 16% of the respondents considered that the scheme was 'poor and too difficult to apply' and 4% said they 'do not know'.

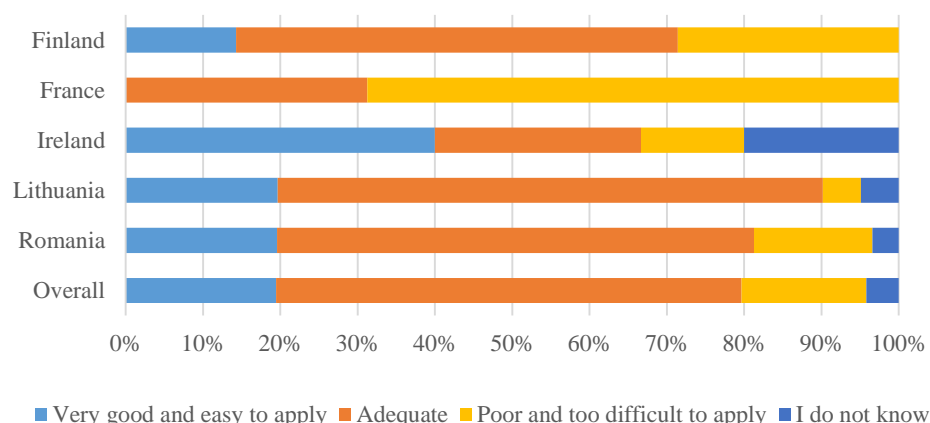
The results by country show that the opinions of the scheme are predominantly positive in four of the five analysed countries. France is the only country where the respondents had a predominantly negative opinion of the scheme, with 69% of them considering it as 'poor and too difficult to apply'.

²⁰ Data obtained from the Commission summary reports: https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/romania_en

²¹ Romania: national strategy for school scheme (2017-23). https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/market-measures/school-fruit-vegetables-and-milk-scheme/country/romania_en

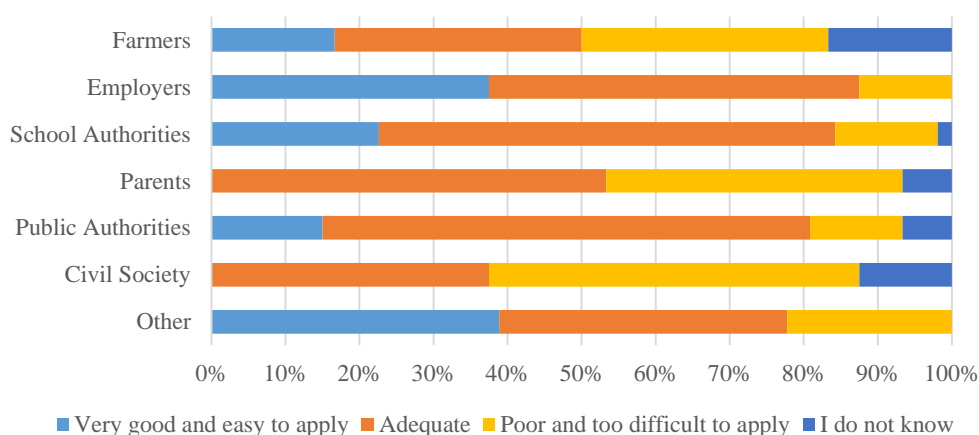
²² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf

What is your opinion of the EU school scheme in your country?
By country



Breaking down the results by the type of organisation of the respondents shows very fragmented results again. The majority of respondents of Public Authorities (66%), School Authorities (61%) and School Parents' Associations (53%) considered the scheme to be 'adequate'. In contrast, only the Civil Society had most respondents (50%) replying that the scheme was 'poor and too difficult to apply' (to be noted that half of the respondents from the Civil Society group were from France).

What is your opinion of the EU school scheme in your country?
By category



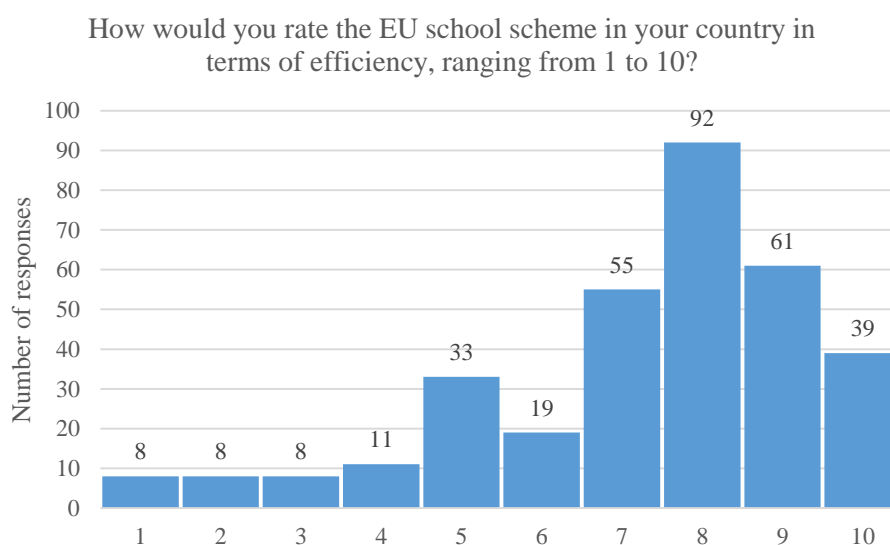
During the semi-structured interviews, participants across different types of organisations in **Finland** voiced their support for the scheme and noted the popularity among teachers. Likewise, in **Romania**, the scheme was considered as successful on nutritional and food education aspects, relevant for industry, agriculture, producers, distributors, and is generally appreciated. It was said that Romania uses all EU money (15 million EUR), and gets remaining amounts from the state for education measures.

Public authorities in **France** mentioned that the implementation of the scheme was coherent with the French guidelines on education on food and health issues (in particular the fight against obesity and a decree framing the frequencies of food distribution and encouraging low fat low sugar products) and the French national nutrition plan (PNNS) and consistent with the objectives of the French "EGAlim 1" law (50% of quality product including 20% of organic products in schools). It was, however, noted that there

had been difficulties in mobilizing the program, with less than 15% of the credits used (only 7,5% in 2021), and with low consumption rates and deployment of the scheme, which is in line with the results from the questionnaire (France showing the least positive results on the overall effectiveness of the scheme). The issue that the scheme is little well known in France has also been raised.

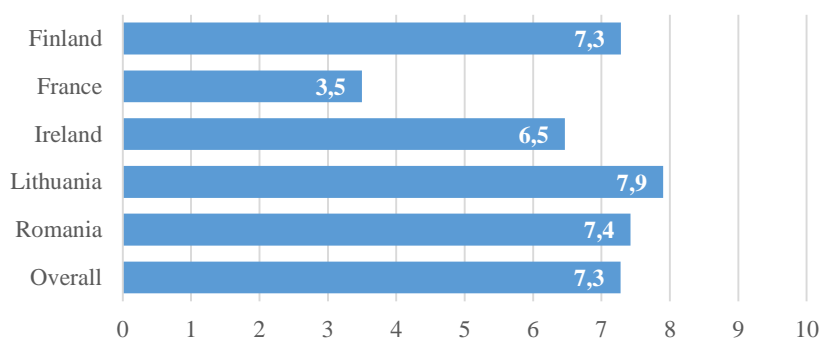
Public Authorities in **Ireland** mentioned during the semi-structured interview that the schools participating in the scheme have widely showed their appreciation of it. The schools that haven't adhered might have done do less by lack of interest, but because those schools believed the food provided there was already of good nutritional value, and thus the added value was less important. The effectiveness of the policy is nevertheless affected by the lack of public awareness. There is a general trend in terms of obesity in wealthy countries, and while this Scheme is a piece in the strategy to fight against it, the lack of public awareness is problematic.

Public Authorities in **Lithuania** mentioned that the consumption levels were rising every year. They considered the scheme to be successful and appreciated by the educational establishments. The representative from the Chamber of Agriculture noted that the Chamber was well aware of the scheme and very much in favour of including more organic products in it, as they were not happy with the existing situation. They also added that the scheme should involve as many growers and producers as possible. It could also help to get more local producers, closer to schools participating in the scheme, shortening the supply chain. It was noted that the scheme had failed to reach those educational establishments which were difficult to reach from the logistical point of view.



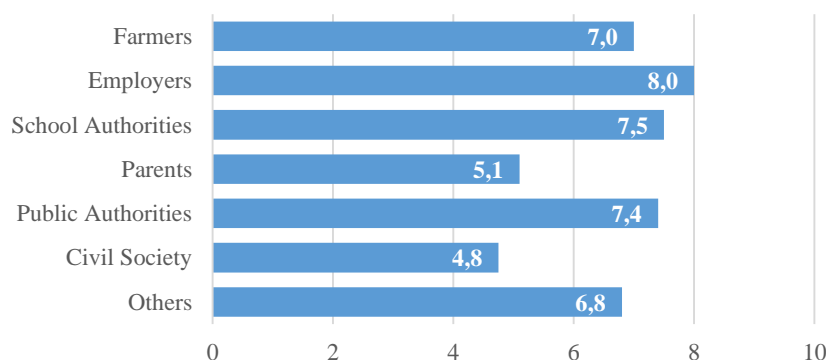
The results that we could see in the previous question reflect themselves on how the respondents rate (between 1 and 10) the efficiency of the EU school scheme in their country (Question 2.a), the average rating from all respondents was 7.28. Of the total, 12% of the respondents have rated the scheme with the highest mark. More importantly, in a country comparison, Lithuanian respondents have given the highest average rating (7.9) and France the lowest (3.5), where no respondent gave a mark over 7 and most of the ratings were at 5 (25%) and 3 (25%).

How would you rate the EU school scheme in your country in terms of efficiency, ranging from 1 to 10?
By country



Looking at the ratings from the different types of organisations, the highest average mark was given by respondents from the Employers (8) and the lowest by the Civil Society (4.75), predominantly composed of French respondents.

How would you rate the EU school scheme in your country in terms of efficiency, ranging from 1 to 10?
By category



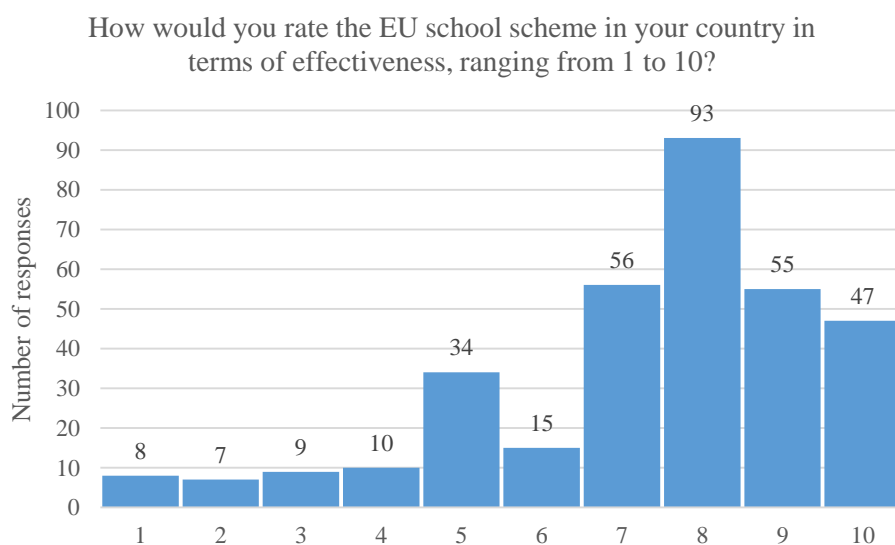
French stakeholders explained, during the structured interviews, why the application of the Scheme is inefficient. The stakeholders highlighted numerous issues of administrative burden, while recognizing that some improvements were recently introduced in France. The calls for tenders are made by the central authority which sends the products to the schools. There are penalties if documents were not well completed, while the declarations are complex. There is a need for improved flexibility for the accreditation (it cannot be modified during the year) and further difficulties arise when schools are grouped together and have only one SIRET number but two distribution locations. Furthermore, supporting documents are requested in PDF format while the Excel format would be easier. The reliance on paper archiving (delivery slips and invoice) further puts barriers to efficiency as well the necessity to do a very time-consuming sorting as not all products are subsidized.

This was a general issue that was also observed in **Romania**, as well as in **Lithuania**. In both it was said that the administration structure could be simplified. Sometimes schools would refuse to participate in the programme because the documentation required for the scheme was quite complex. This was

stressed especially by smaller schools. In this context it should not be forgotten that the system was dual in Lithuania – with public procurement being organized by the schools and kindergartens themselves, as well as there were centralized public procurement programmes, organized by the municipalities. The municipalities had noticed that the scheme was more effective when there was no centralized procurement, when the schools and kindergartens managed it themselves.

In **Ireland** schools have significant autonomy in their management, and those that did adhere to the scheme is not necessarily for fear of bureaucracy or State control, but simply for lack of logistical and human resources. The administration of the programme has become easier in terms of food distribution – the main problem is the marketing of the programme. Relatively simple means such as posters, that stay in school walls for months of a full year can be very present in the minds of the children. In terms of efficiency measurement, what would be interesting to know how much have habits change after the intervention by the programme.

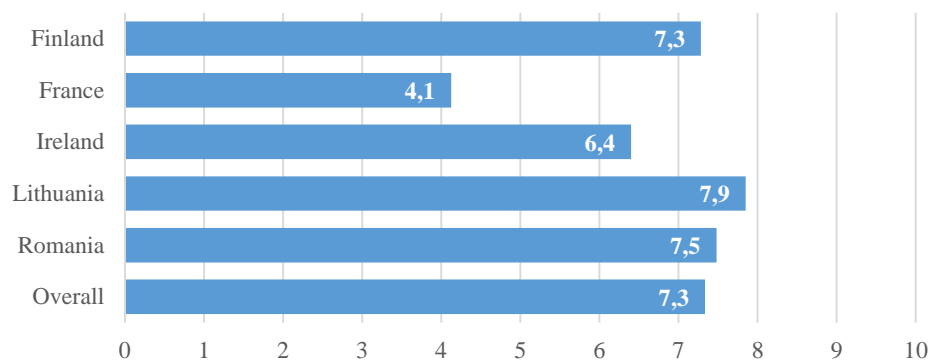
While the overall evaluation of the scheme in **Finland** is very positive, stakeholders did point some issues affecting its efficiency. Due to the existing Finnish school meal system, the preparation of food for the children is done by the school kitchen staff, not by teachers as in other countries. However, this has placed an additional burden on these staff as the cutting and preparation of fruit and vegetables is time consuming and there is little additional funding for additional staff. Root vegetables in particular need to be in-season and freshly cut in order to be acceptable to children. This leads to a lot of work for kitchen staff. Allowing the vegetables to be lightly cooked or steamed would improve the implementation of the scheme and increase the options available year-round.



To the question, how would the respondents rate (between 1 and 10) the effectiveness of the EU school scheme in their country (**Question 2.b**), the results were quite similar to the efficiency question (2a), with an average rating of 7.33 from all respondents. The distribution is also relatively similar, with the most respondents giving a mark of 8, 7 and 9. The highest mark received a somewhat more votes (14%), while the 3 lowest marks have again a bit over 2% of the votes. In the country comparison as well as in the organisation comparison, the order is again the same with Question 2.a.

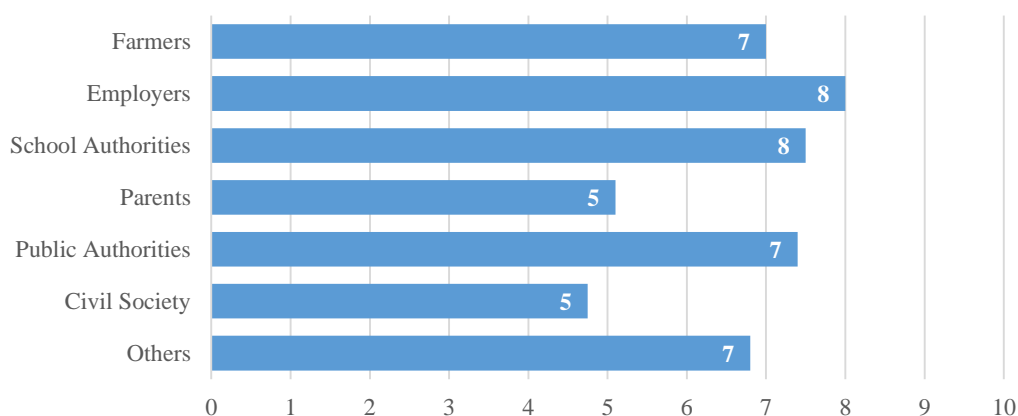
How would you rate the EU school scheme in your country in terms of effectiveness, ranging from 1 to 10?

By country



How would you rate the EU school scheme in your country in terms of efficiency, ranging from 1 to 10?

By category



During the country visit in **Lithuania** municipalities gave a very positive opinion of the effectiveness of the scheme. It was said that the scheme was operational in 900 schools out of 1000, and the only problem they noted was some cases of supply chain issues due to suppliers refusing to provide products to some very small establishments and the municipalities faced difficulties in delivering products to schools.

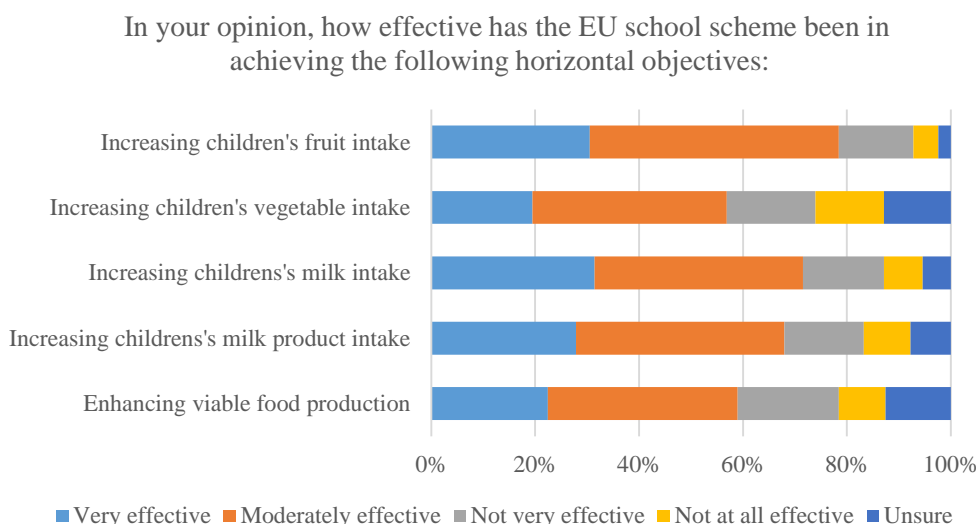
French stakeholders, however, noted numerous issues to the effectiveness of the scheme. For example, the responsibility should not fall on the kitchen managers only but should be shared with the school staff. There is a lack of communication with parents. One of the main issues raised was the need for a true food education programme financed by the scheme. The issue of the better support for cooks was also highlighted, with the suggestion to have nutritionists working in all schools and visiting schools to enhance the quality/ freshness/ presentation/ cooking of the products.

In **Ireland**, parents and school authorities raised the issue of knowing how effective the scheme is. They suggested the scheme to have a social targeting and to aim at reaching poorer areas more specifically. They also added that the scheme should have a far greater focus in nutrition as a fundamental building

block of national well-being policy. Public authorities warned about how rising costs of essential goods, including food, will change the effectiveness of the scheme, as cheaper food, regardless of the nutritious value, tend to be the preferred option.

Specific conclusions

Respondents provided the following answers regarding the effectiveness of the EU school scheme in achieving several horizontal objectives (**Question 3**).



When asked how effective the EU school scheme has been in achieving increasing children's fruit intake, the majority (79%) of the respondents answered positively; the highest result of the 5 objectives. 19% gave negative answers and 2% were unsure.

Regarding the effectiveness of the scheme to achieve increasing children's vegetable intake, a small majority (56%) answered positively; the lowest result of the 5 objectives. 30% gave negative answers and 2% were unsure.

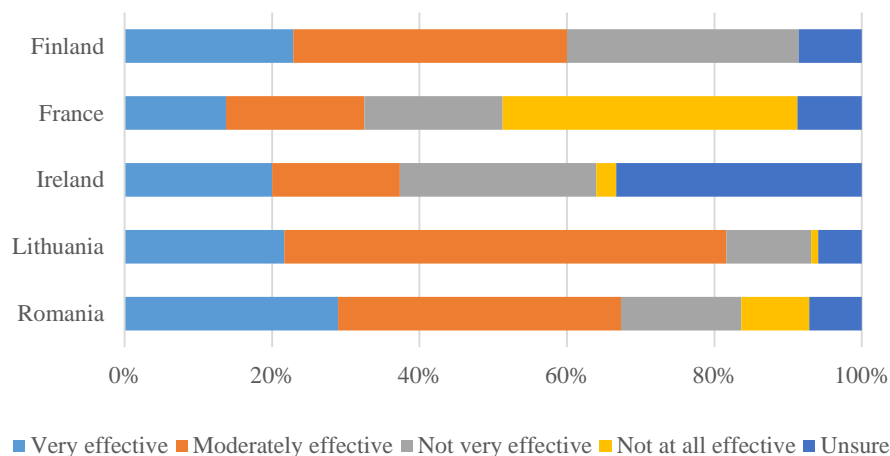
For the effectiveness of increasing children's milk intake, a majority (72%) of the respondents also answered positively. 23% gave negative answers and 5% were unsure.

For the effectiveness of increasing children's milk product intake, a majority (68%) of the respondents also answered positively. 24% gave negative answers and 8% were unsure.

For the effectiveness of enhancing viable food production, a majority (59%) of the respondents also answered positively. 28% gave negative answers and 13% were unsure.

The results by country show that respondents from Lithuania have given the highest positive answers across all objectives with an average of 81% effectiveness (12% negative) and the lowest in France with 32% effectiveness (59% negative). Ireland has, on average across the 5 objectives, the highest number of respondents unsure of the effectiveness of the scheme (33%) It is especially high for the milk and milk product intake with 47% of the respondents unsure of the scheme's effectiveness.

Total effectiveness at achieving the five horizontal objectives



During the meeting with food education and parents' association representatives in **Finland**, it was mentioned that the fruits and vegetables used under the scheme were not the best options for snacks in Finland. Berries in Finland were not very sweet so they needed to be served with something else, for example sugar or yoghurt, which was not permitted under the scheme guidelines. The promotion of certain food products over others confuses the children and undermines the scheme's focus on a balanced diet. The scheme's focus could be widened to include whole grain products, plant-based milks and dairy alternatives. Finland already had strict school meal nutritional recommendations before the EU School Scheme, so the scheme has limited contribution in increasing nutritional balance. However, given the financing available and the scheme's focus on increasing fruit, berry and vegetable consumption, the scheme is still a useful way to further improve the existing school meals offered.

The different stakeholders and organisations present at the meeting said that 2% of all liquid milk consumed in Finland was through the school scheme, which they saw as a proof of success. They further added that organic milk consumption was also becoming more common in schools/municipalities. Public Authorities, however, mentioned that organic fruits and vegetables were still difficult to source despite the benefits offered by the scheme.

The meeting with **French** collective catering stakeholders highlighted that not allowing the use of fruits and vegetables as a starter reduced the effectiveness of the measure. In France, the main focal point is midday as intermediate snacks are not allowed in the morning or afternoon (only allowed upon arrival - breakfast- or after school). Representatives of the farming sector would support having distribution in the morning (before school) as it is well-known that some pupils come to school without having had breakfast, or after school rather than milk products during lunch. They further advised to inform the parents about the distribution, to avoid that the pupils get two snacks (one from home and one from school).

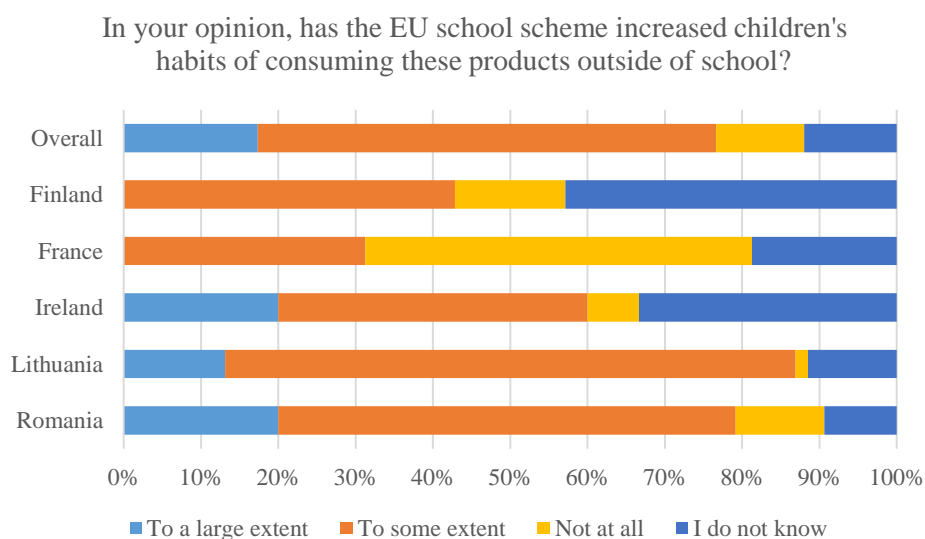
School parents' board members noted during the meeting in **Lithuania** that, although the scheme was very effective in increasing the children's milk and milk products intake at school, the lack of involvement of parents reduced the effects at home. Most parents only knew about the free milk, fruits

and vegetables part of the scheme but not much about the other aspects of the scheme. The Ministry of Health noted that they had carried out a survey and no significant increase in intake of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products was found.

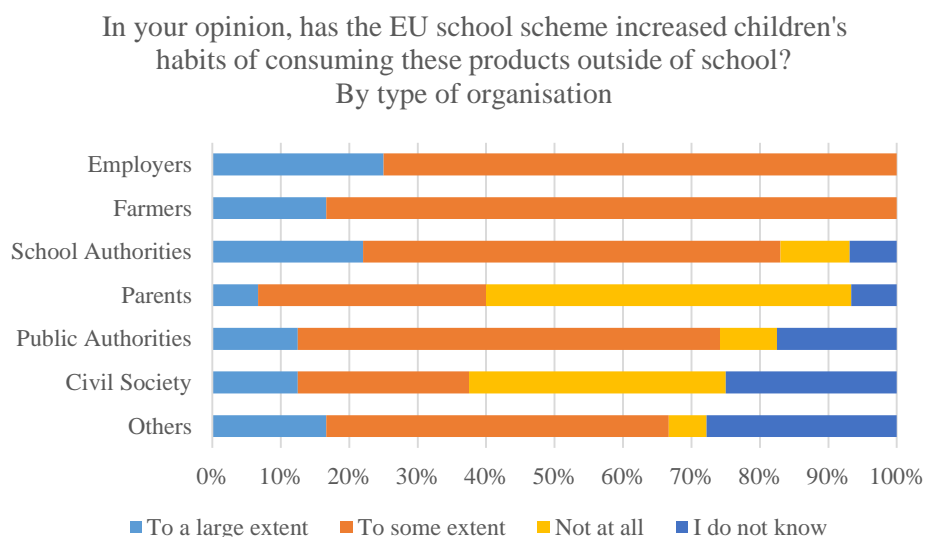
Irish public authorities gave an example of successful programmes that have been effective in helping children try new types of food. School bodies tend normally to prefer to give food based on the preferences of children, with less considerations on the nutritious value of the food provided. Thus it has been noted an increased consumption of fruits, less of vegetables, in a short-term period after the programme. The long-term effects remain to be seen, though, as the effectiveness of the programme depends on social and economic uptake. In this context, the problem of branding was raised by some stakeholders, arguing that, to better compete against big food chains, a common name across Europe could make it more recognisable and more effective.

Stakeholders in **Romania** suggested to increase the diversity of the distributed products to better cover all the nutritional needs of children. For example, by replacing milk with yogurt a few times per week. Further improvements in the consumption of the target products could be achieved by a closer monitoring of the quality and increasing the diversity of the products delivered.

The vast majority (76%) of the respondents considered that the EU school scheme had increased children's habits of consuming fruit, vegetable, milk and milk products outside of school (Question 4). The results by country show that the scheme appeared to have increased the habits in Lithuania the most, with 87% of positive answers and in France the least, with 50% of respondents saying the scheme did 'not at all' increase such habits. Finland had the most (43%) of unsure respondents, closely followed by Ireland (33%).



Breaking down the results by the type of organisation of the respondents shows that all respondents of the Farmers and the Employers categories considered that the scheme had increased children's habits of consuming these products outside of school (17% and 25% respectively – 'to a large extent', and 83% and 75% - 'to some extent'). In contrast, the majority (53%) of the respondents from Parents' category replied that it 'did not at all' increase the children's habits.

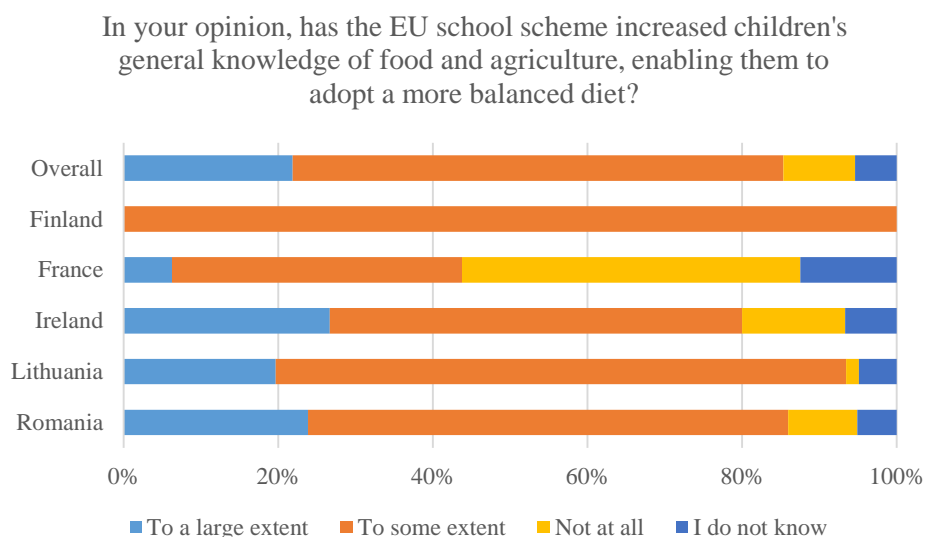


During the semi-structured interviews, the **Irish** stakeholders noted that the impact of the programme had been affected by the disconnection with what was available on the market and in retail stores. The products that were delivered to schools under this scheme were not comparable to what supermarkets would sell. This meant that even if a child wanted to ask it to their parents, they might not easily find the equivalent product.

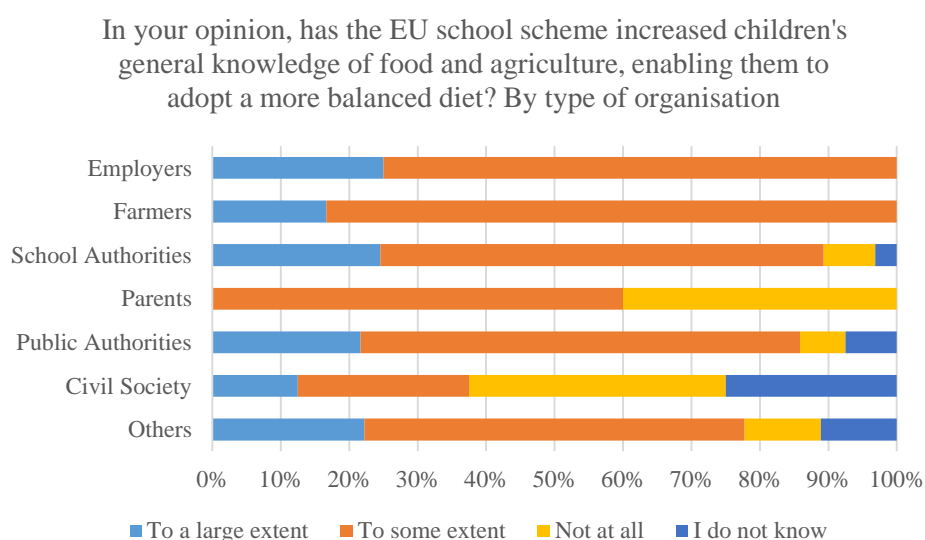
Regarding the benefit of the EU School scheme in **Lithuania**, it was said by a representative from parents' association that, from a participant's point of view, both the awareness and intake of healthy food, including milk, fruit and vegetables, was growing in Lithuania. It could be seen as a fact that children were eating more of those products both in kindergarten/school and at home. Furthermore, the public authorities noted in this regard that the scheme was also very useful in terms of education because schools would organise lessons and information sessions, in turn children would share their experience and knowledge at home, which would further enhance a healthy diet (not only at school but within the wider community and at home).

Regarding the question whether the EU school scheme had increased children's general knowledge of food and agriculture, enabling them to adopt a more balanced diet (Question 5), the majority (85%) of the respondents considered that it had indeed done so (22% - 'to a large extent' and 63% - 'to some extent').

Looking at the results by country, most respondents in all countries except France considered the scheme to have increased children's general knowledge, especially in Finland where all respondents (seven) said it did 'to some extent'. Almost half (44%) of the French respondents considered that the scheme had not had increased children's general knowledge of food and agriculture at all.



Breaking down the results by the type of organisation of the respondents shows that 100% of the respondents of the Farmers and the Employers considered the scheme to have increased children's general knowledge of food and agriculture, enabling them to adopt a more balanced diet. However, 38% of the civil society respondents and 40% of parents said it did 'not at all'.



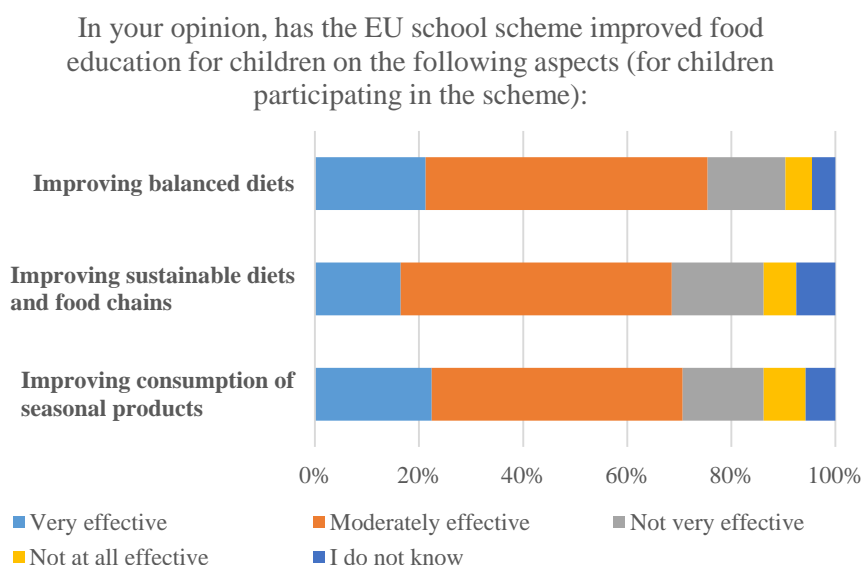
During the semi-structured interviews in **Finland**, the representatives from school authorities and parents' associations welcomed the scheme's focus on non-fat and organic milk, and it was noted that it led to large increases in student awareness of the dietary benefits of such types of food. Nevertheless, it was also mentioned that the scheme's focus could be widened to include whole grain products, plant-based milks and dairy alternatives for a better balanced diet.

According to parents in **Lithuania**, there was not a huge effect on the regular diet of the pupils. The main issue identified was the fact that parents were not involved in the scheme, meaning that the effect stopped at the school and did not always reach the parents at home. Furthermore, some parents acknowledged the fact that, sometimes, they did not have the time or the wish to provide these items at home. For public authorities, the scheme was very useful in enabling children to adopt a more balance

diet, as it replaced certain products that children refused to eat. They also mentioned the positive effect of complementing the children's lunchboxes they got from home with missing products.

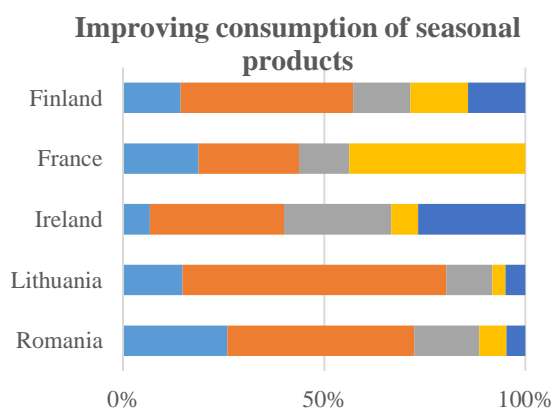
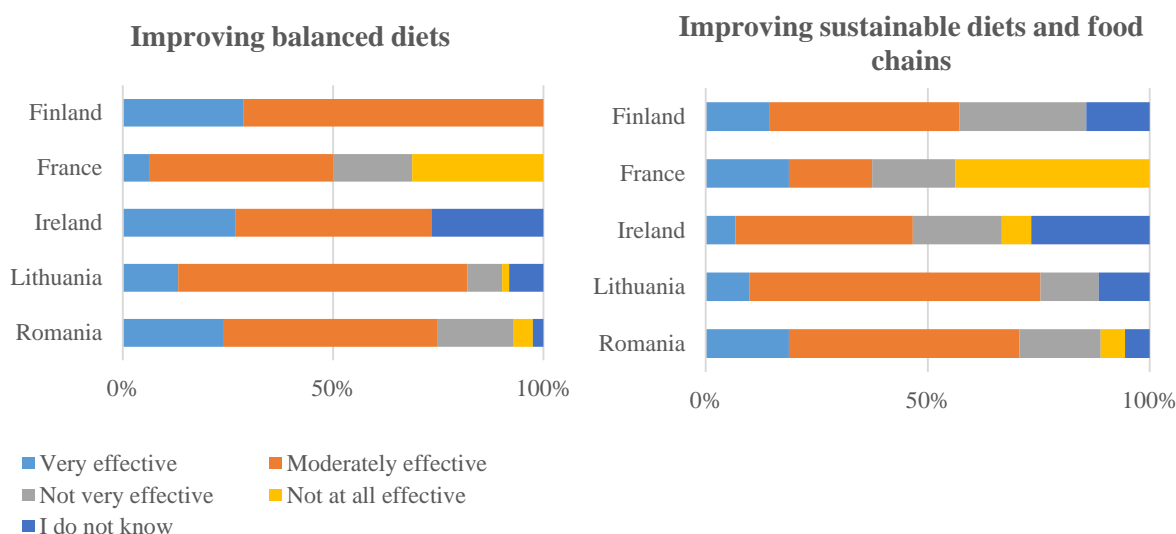
Looking to the future, the Lithuanian stakeholders suggested that study visits to farms could be made obligatory for children, educating children about the making of bread, for example, or growing plants and vegetables. It was said that in some kindergartens/schools in Lithuania these projects already existed. More attention should be paid to small and medium-sized farms which could organize these educational activities; they should be organized via the Ministry of Education, and financing would need to be earmarked on a separate budget line (cities and municipalities did not have budget for that; however, at the moment these mentioned singular activities were financed by the cities and municipalities themselves).

When asked whether the EU school scheme had improved food education for children (participating in the scheme) on balanced diets, sustainable diets and food chains and consumption of seasonal products (Question 6), the majority of respondents answered that it had been very or moderately effective in all three aspects. Namely, 75% considered that it had improved food education on balanced diets (('very effective' – 21% and 'moderately effective' – 54%), 68% for sustainable diets and food chains ('very effective' – 16% and 'moderately effective' – 52%) and 70% for consumption of seasonal products ('very effective' – 22% and 'moderately effective' – 48%).



Looking at the results by country shows that, again, the majority of respondents from all countries except from France ('not at all effective' ranging from 31% to 44%) considered the scheme to have been effective in improving food education for children on all three aspects. Particularly, in Lithuania, 66% - 69% of respondents considered the school scheme to have been 'moderately effective' in reaching these aims.

In your opinion, has the EU school scheme improved food education for children on the following aspects (for children participating in the scheme):
By country



Breaking down the results by the type of organisation, the School Authorities and Public Authorities held the most positive views in all three categories (45-53% 'moderately effective' and 20-30% 'very effective' for School Authorities; 58-63% 'moderately effective' and 10-14% 'very effective' for Public Authorities).

The least satisfied by the results were the respondents from the Parents' Associations, with 13-27% considering the school scheme to have been 'not at all' effective and 27-40% 'not very effective'. No parents responded that the scheme had been 'very effective' at improving sustainable diets, food chains, or consumption of seasonal products. Civil society organisations were also more critical of the scheme, with 38% of respondents indicating that the scheme had 'not at all' improved consumption of seasonal products.

Overall, the aim of improving consumption of seasonal products saw the most negative responses, due to the high numbers of negative responses in France and from parents' associations and civil society groups.

The data gathered during the semi-structured interviews in the selected countries indicates that the educational component of the scheme is in need of further strengthening in most of the countries studied. In **Romania**, it was noted that the programme did not educate children on what is a quality product and that more educational measures such as farm visits should be organised.

Greater inclusion of parents and families in the educational part of the scheme is important. Healthy food habits also have an impact in family life, and differences between the messages children are receiving at home and at school about food could impact their learning. In **Ireland**, it was noted that parents can sometimes not be happy with schools intervening in non-formal topics such as diet, so including families would be a way to overcome this.

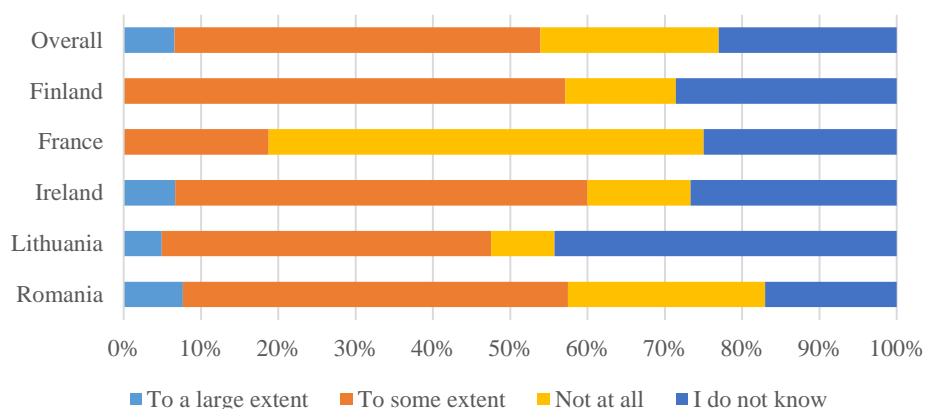
During the country visit in **France**, one organisation pointed out that eating habits were primarily formed before the age of 12, so the scheme's educational component should target children in elementary classes and their parents in particular. In **Lithuania** some parents noted that children do not like healthy food, and that instead of eating the healthy food provided during the lunch at school, sometimes children go to nearby shops and buy something sweet (candy etc.). Public authorities, however, considered the scheme to be very useful in terms of education because children would share what they learned in school at home, which would further enhance a healthy diet within the communities.

The requirements of the scheme were also said to act as a constraint to proper education on balanced diets and sustainability in **Finland** and **France**. For example, one French stakeholder stated that consumption of yoghurt decreased among children because they could not have added sugar. The promotion of certain food products over others in the scheme was said to confuse the children and undermine the scheme's aim of promoting a balanced diet. The scheme's focus could be widened to include, for example, whole grain products, plant-based milks and dairy alternatives. Nutritional education representatives in **Finland** especially questioned why there were no plant-based drinks (eg: non-dairy milks) available under the scheme. The priority given to dairy products, without any non-dairy alternatives, was felt to be at odds with the scheme's sustainable ethos.

In **Ireland**, students were noted to be very much aware of environmental issues, but less aware of the role of agriculture in our economies and societies. The promotion of 'sustainable living' – including local production, local transport and healthy food – could be another means of achieving the goals of educating children on sustainability and food chains. However, better awareness needs to be raised about how food is produced and the sustainability challenges in food production. Furthermore, this needs to be done in conjunction with stronger emphasis within the scheme on local and seasonal produce, to avoid mixed messages being given. Sourcing locally produced goods for the scheme was noted as an issue in several countries, due to the administrative burden of the scheme and the strict requirements.

When it comes to the view of respondents on whether the EU school scheme contributed to a decrease of obesity in children since its implementation in 2017 (for children participating in the scheme) (**Question 7**), a small majority (54%) of the respondents responded affirmatively (47% - 'to some extent', 7% - 'to a large extent'). However, an equal number (23%) either did not have an answer to this question or were of the opinion that it had not been the case at all.

In your opinion, has the EU school scheme contributed to a decrease of obesity in children since its implementation in 2017 (for children participating in the scheme)?



Looking at the results by country shows that, contrary to the other countries, most of the respondents from France (56%) said the scheme did 'not at all' contribute to decreasing obesity. The Irish, Romanian and Lithuanian respondents shared the most positive views with 53%, 50% and 43% respectively considering that the scheme had contributed to decreasing obesity in children 'to some extent', and 7%, 8% and 5% respectively – 'to a large extent'.

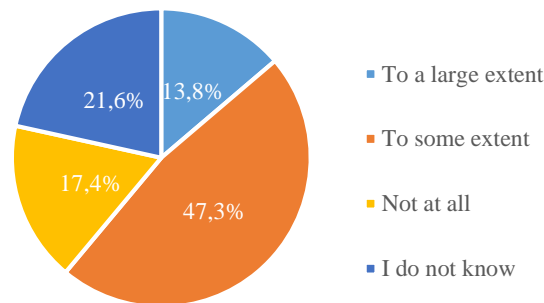
Breaking down the results by the type of organisation of the respondents shows that most of the respondents from the civil society category and parents' associations were of the view that the scheme did not contribute at all, with 75% and 40% respectively. However, the school authorities and public authorities to more than 40% considered the scheme to have contributed to a decrease of obesity in children (55% 'to some extent' and 9% - 'to a large extent' for school authorities and 40% and 3% respectively – for public authorities).

Few countries had data at hand during the country visits on obesity levels among children. **Finnish** participants from parents' groups and nutritional education bodies criticized the use of obesity statistics as a measure of the scheme's success or of children's health in general. It was also noted during the meeting with school authorities and the parents' associations in **Ireland** that while the scheme was a piece in the strategy to fight against obesity, the lack of public awareness was problematic.

Finally, in **Lithuania**, it was said that the municipalities did not have any specific statistics with regard to reducing obesity and overweight, however, their representative informed that some municipalities had implemented organic food schemes, which led to an increase in healthy living / lifestyles that could be observed.

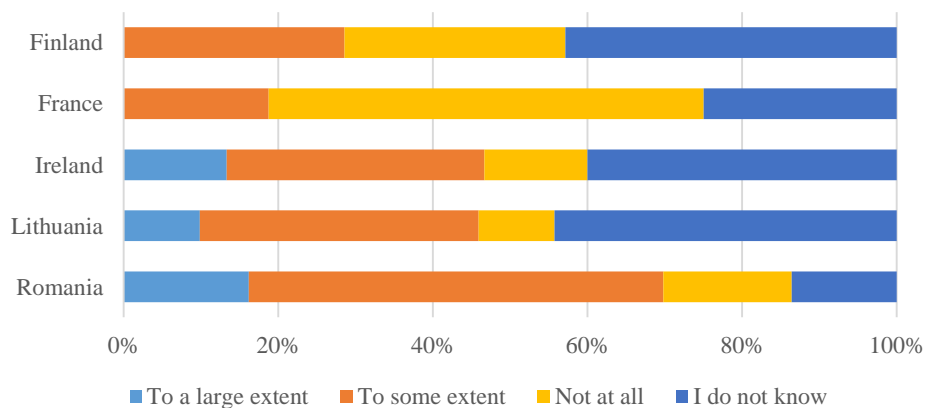
With regard to the impact of the EU school scheme in fighting children's overnutrition, in particular for those coming from families in a precarious economic situation (**Question 8.a**), almost half of all respondents (47%) thought that the EU school scheme had helped to fight this phenomenon 'to some extent' and 14% thought that it had happened 'to a large extent', whilst 17% held the view that it had not been the case at all. More than 1/5 (22%) did not know how to answer this question.

In your opinion, has the EU school scheme helped to fight children's overnutrition, in particular for those coming from families in a precarious economic situation?



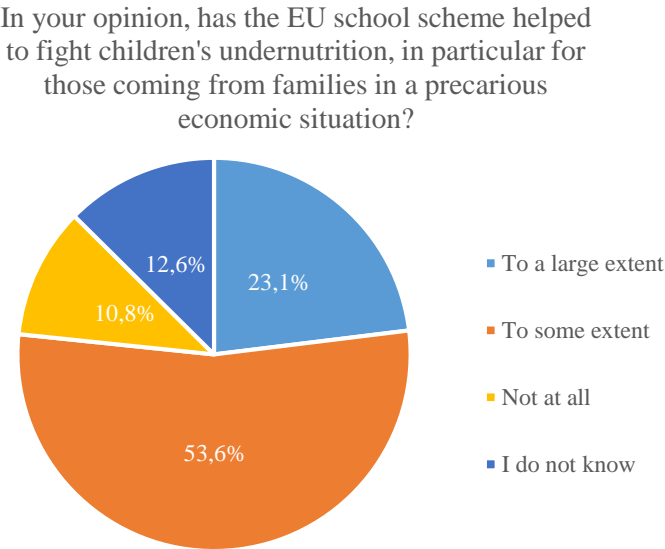
In a country perspective, the views were quite divergent. The Romanian stakeholders were the most positive with 16% expressing the view that the EU school scheme had helped fight children's overnutrition 'to a large extent' and 54% - 'to some extent'. Also 13% of the Irish and 10% of the Lithuanian stakeholders considered that it had been so 'to a large extent', and 33% of the Irish and 36% of the Lithuanian thought that the impact had been 'to some extent'. However, 56% of the French respondents were of the view that there had been no such impact at all, with 29% of the Finnish stakeholders agreeing with this statement as well. Quite a large part of the respondents also did not know how to answer to this question – 44% for Lithuania, 43% for Finland, 40% for Ireland and 25% for France.

In your opinion, has the EU school scheme helped to fight children's overnutrition, in particular for those coming from families in a precarious economic situation?

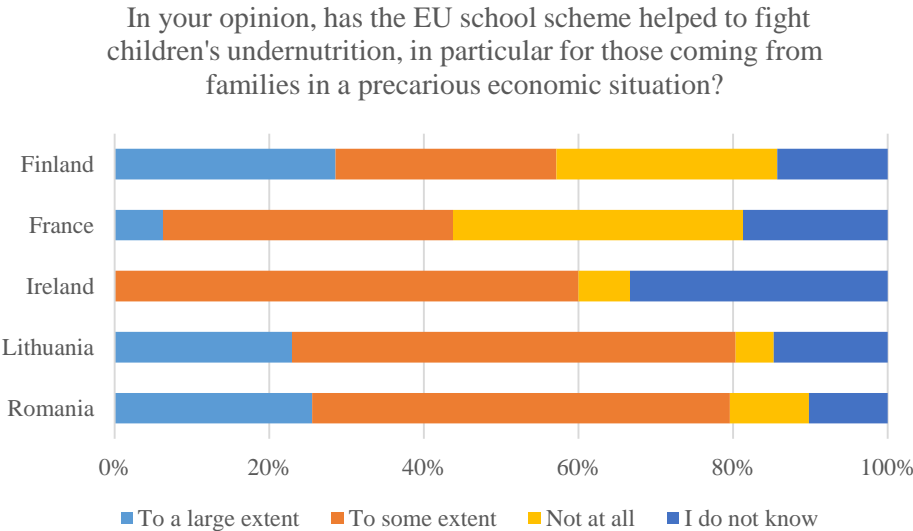


Looking at responses by category, school authorities and public authorities held the most positive view when it came to measuring the impact of the EU school scheme in helping fight children's overnutrition with 16% and 11% respectively expressing the view that it had been so 'to a large extent', and 53% and 48% respectively – 'to some extent'. The few respondents from the Parents' category did not seem to agree, with 40% not knowing how to answer to this question, 33% being of the view that the EU school scheme had not helped at all fight this phenomenon and 27% agreeing that it had done so 'to some extent'.

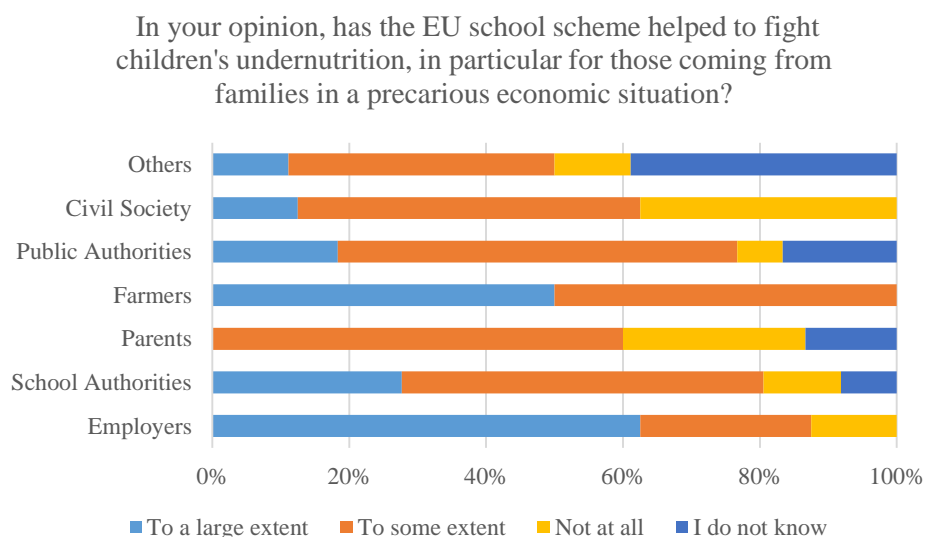
With regard to the impact of the EU school scheme in fighting children's undernutrition, in particular for those coming from families in a precarious economic situation (**Question 8.b**), the overall response was more positive towards the scheme with 54% of the respondents considering that the EU school scheme had helped fight children's undernutrition 'to some extent' and 23% 'to a large extent'. Only 11% thought that it had not helped at all.



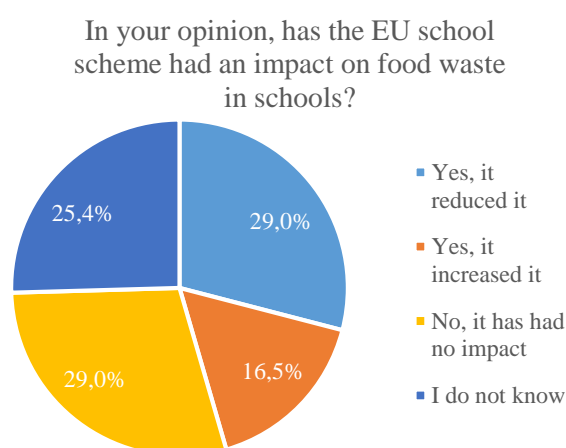
Comparing across countries, again the Romanian, Lithuanian and Irish respondents attributed a more positive impact to the scheme with 26% of the Romanian and 23% of the Lithuanian respondents measuring the EU school scheme to have helped fight children's undernutrition 'to a large extent', whilst 54%, 57% and 60% respectively thought that it had been the case 'to some extent'. Conversely, 38% of the French respondents and 29% of the Finnish respondents held the view that the EU school scheme had not had an impact at all in reducing children's undernutrition, whilst another 38% of the French and 29% of the Finnish respondents thought that the impact had been 'to some extent'.



Comparing the results by the respondents' categories, again, School authorities' and Public authorities' representatives viewed the impact of the scheme regarding the fight against children's undernutrition in a more positive light than the other categories (28% of school authorities and 18% of public authorities – 'to a large extent'; 53% and 58% respectively – 'to some extent'). Nine respondents from the Parents' category (60%) were of the view that the EU school scheme had helped fight children's undernutrition 'to some extent', whereas 27% (four respondents) thought that it had not been the case at all.



Regarding the impact of the EU school scheme on food waste in schools (**Question 9**), an equal number of the total respondents (29%) thought that it had reduced it or had had no impact at all, whereas 26% did not know how to answer this question and 16% were of the view that the scheme had actually increased it.

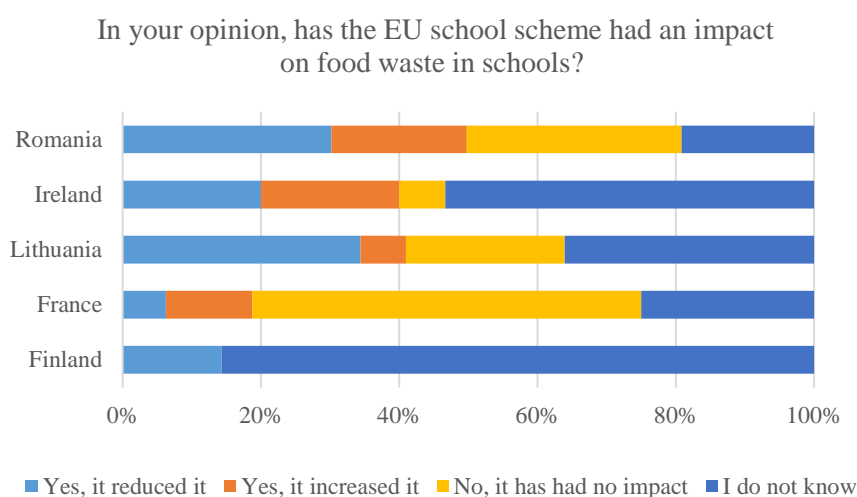


Comparing across countries, French respondents held the most negative view of the impact of the scheme on food waste with more respondents thinking that it had actually increased it (13%) than reduced it (6%).

When it comes to Finland, only one Finnish respondent expressed the view that the scheme had reduced food waste, whereas the other six respondents did not know how to evaluate this matter.

The Lithuanian and Romanian respondents viewed the scheme's impact in the most positive light with 34% and 30% respectively holding the view that it had helped reduce food waste in schools. 7% and 20% respectively held that it had increased it, 23% and 31% respectively thought that it had had no impact whatsoever and 36% and 19% respectively did not know.

Finally, more than half of the Irish respondents (53%) did not know how to assess this matter, whilst equally 20% (three respondents in each category) held the view that food waste had both reduced as well as increased. One respondent thought that the scheme had had no impact on this at all.

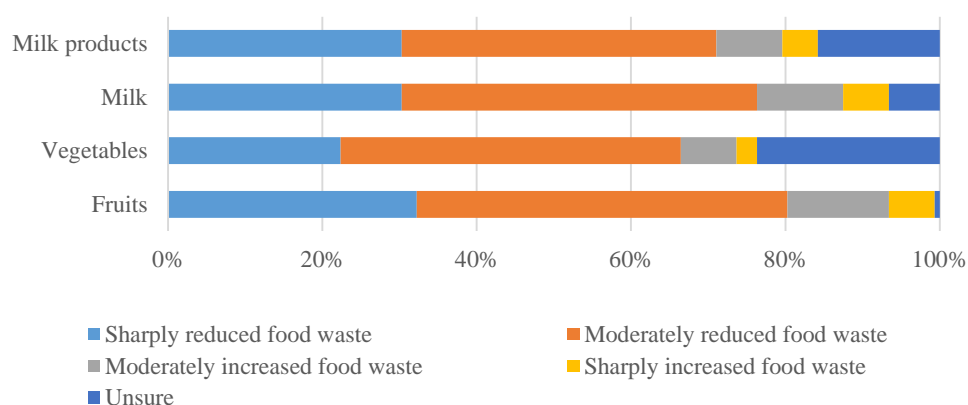


Regarding food waste in specific food categories – fruits, vegetables, milk and milk products (Question 9.a), more than half of the respondents (54%) did not have an answer to this question. The highest assessment of 'sharply reduced food waste' was given in the category of fruits (15%), followed by milk and milk products (both 14%). Moderate reduction of food waste was thought to have been achieved in all categories by roughly 1/5 of the respondents. Only 1-3% of the respondents thought that the food waste had been increased in any of the categories due to the implementation of the EU school scheme. Across all countries, the majority of respondents did not know how to answer this question.

During the semi-structured interviews in **Lithuania**, it was noted that to avoid food waste, children were allowed to bring food home. Yogurts were packed away and children could take portions and bring fruits and vegetables home. In general, it could be said that there was not a lot of food waste.

In **Romania**, representatives from schools' authorities and parents' associations suggested to work to reduce food waste (using products that taste good).

If, in your opinion, the EU school scheme has reduced or increased food waste in schools, how is this impact distributed between products?



Asked to assess how effective the EU school scheme had been in achieving specific objectives (**Question 10.a and 10.b**), the respondents provided the following answers:

When it comes to increasing the school supply of local products, short-chain products, seasonal products etc. (**Question 10.a**), 45% of the total respondents considered that the EU school scheme had been 'moderately effective' in reaching this goal, whilst 18% thought that it had been 'very effective' and 10% 'not at all effective'. Also in a cross-country comparison, the Lithuanian, Romanian and Irish respondents mostly found it to have been 'moderately effective' (43%, 42% and 33% respectively), whilst 44% of the French respondents found it to have been 'not at all effective'. The few Finnish respondents were quite evenly split between all answer options.

During the semi-structured interviews in **Lithuania**, with regard to the supply of seasonal products stakeholders mentioned that the quality of products was not always ensured and municipalities would sometimes receive complaints. The range of products was limited (almost poor), which meant lack of diversity and consequently, children were bored of having the same products all the time. It was observed that the quality of fruit and vegetables was manifestly worse in spring time. Lithuania being quite a Nordic country geographically, there was a very limited supply of fruit and vegetables during wintertime. There were more types of vegetables in the springtime but they were seasonal, they could only be supplied during a period of several months (like asparagus).

Furthermore, the schools were trying to buy from local producers but there was a storing problem in Lithuania. In springtime the quality would decrease, and schools would start to deliver back to producers. Regarding the storage problem for the local producers, there had been plans to establish logistical hubs in some districts in Lithuania, to store fruits and vegetables there, later to be supplied to schools, kindergartens etc. This project was currently at a very early stage and had not yet been launched.

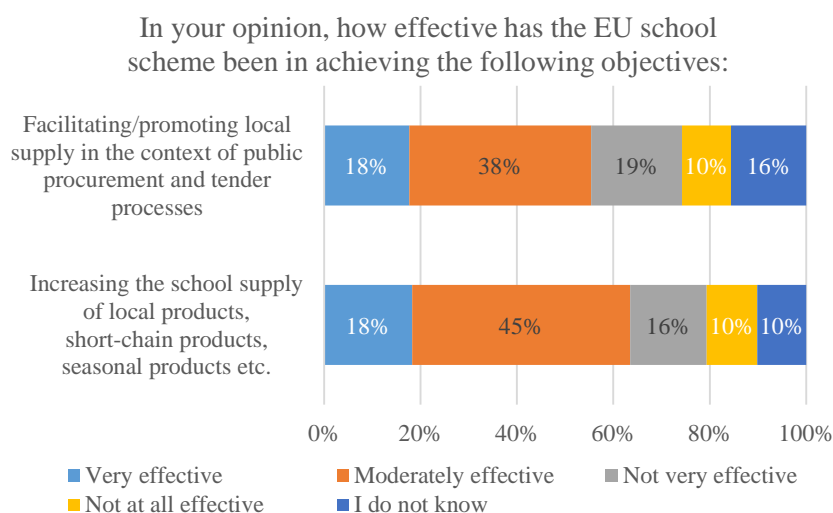
Moreover, with regard to increasing the school supply of short-chain products, it was noted that in **Lithuania** the current rules allowed to choose a supplier within the distance of 350 km. Having a shorter supply chain could be set as a priority, however not all of the business entities had the possibility to supply fruit and vegetables throughout the whole period (1 October to 1 June) due to lack of infrastructure, equipment etc. Also, there was no possibility for all the farmers and small processors and

producers to register in the scheme so that the schools could choose them. Hence, the producers existed but not all of them were in the position to supply all the logistics of a supply chain and for all the months from October to June. Cooperatives between farmers were not as well developed in Lithuania as it was in other countries due to the Soviet legacy. Prioritization could be established in the rules, then more producers from a closer distance to schools could be involved.

In **Ireland**, it was noted that the connection to local production was not easy. Not all produce could be supplied from local or even national farmers. Moreover, local production could not supply the year-long variety of fruit and vegetables that are needed for a healthy diet. Nevertheless, it was considered important to raise awareness about products that are produced locally/ regionally, as well as for the Scheme to make this link by the national authorities asking food suppliers to source products in Ireland as much as possible.

A further issue with local production in Ireland was that food still needed to be processed and packaged before distribution in schools. That could only be done centrally, so the environmental aspect of local production needed to be seen under an appropriate lens, capturing all the complexity of the food chains.

When it comes to facilitating/promoting local supply in the context of public procurement and tender processes (**Question 10.a**), 38% of the total respondents considered that the EU school scheme had been 'moderately effective' in reaching this goal, whilst 19% found it to have been 'not very effective' and 18% 'very effective'. Also in a cross-country comparison, the Lithuanian, Romanian and Irish respondents mostly found it to have been 'moderately effective' (43%, 39% and 20% respectively), whilst 38% of the French respondents found it to have been 'not at all effective'. The majority of the Finnish respondents found that the scheme had been 'very or moderately effective' (2 vs 3 responses).



During the semi-structured interviews in **Romania**, the food providers highlighted the need for the tender rules to change, as they were currently almost only based on the price (lowest price is 90% of the tender, 10% is the producer part), not on the quality: a priority for quality, local and fresh foods as well as for fair trade should be added (also to avoid importing products from other countries such as asparagus). In general, the stakeholders recommended to strengthen the supply of local and fresh

products, in order to improve the quality of the products distributed, by considering local distributors within the tender book and taking more into account quality criteria in the tender specifications.

In **France**, it was noted by the public authorities that *FranceAgriMer* required that suppliers be chosen in accordance with public procurement rules, but the difficulties in reaching out to local producers in the context of public procurement in collective catering were highlighted. It was advised to have dedicated markets instead. Furthermore, stakeholders from an agricultural organisation underlined that products were sometimes imported from other countries because of these public procurement criteria. It was therefore suggested to add references to local producers and environmental aspects in the tender specifications.

When it comes to increasing the school supply of quality products, including officially recognised quality and origin products (Question 10.b), 40% of the total respondents considered that the EU school scheme had been 'moderately effective' in reaching this goal, whilst 23% found it to have been 'very effective' and 18% 'not very effective'. Comparing across countries, the Lithuanian, Romanian and Irish respondents mostly found it to have been 'moderately effective' (57%, 37% and 40% respectively), whilst 44% of the French respondents found it not having been very effective. The majority of the Finnish respondents found that the scheme had been 'very or moderately effective' (2 responses in each category).

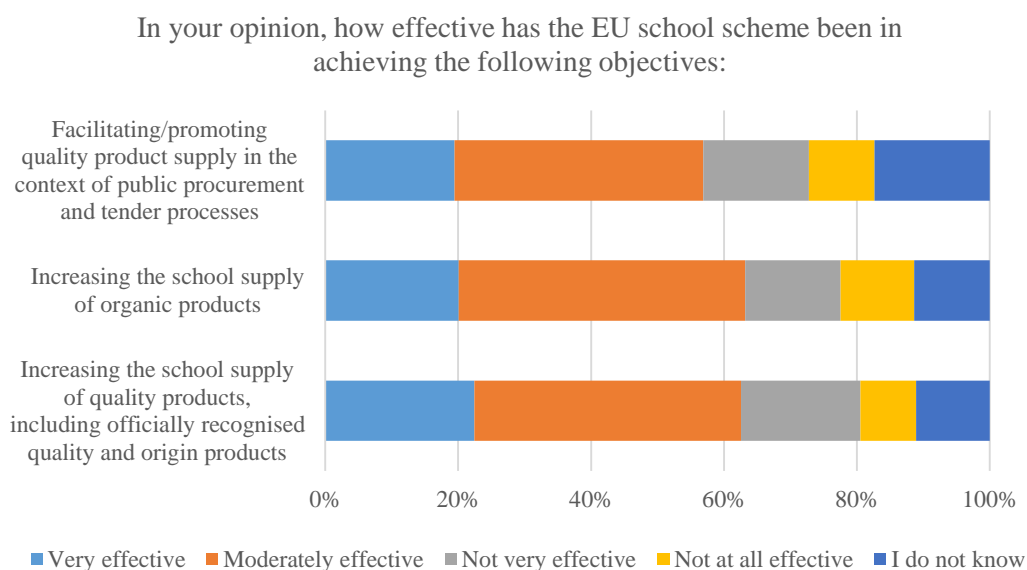
When it comes to increasing the school supply of organic products (Question 10.b), 43% of the total respondents considered that the EU school scheme had been 'moderately effective' in reaching this goal, whilst 20% found it to have been 'very effective', 14% 'not very effective' and 11% 'not at all effective'. In a country perspective, the responses were slightly different regarding this angle, as 25% and 31% respectively of the French respondents considered the EU school scheme to have been 'very effective' or 'moderately effective' in increasing the school supply of organic products; also, the few Finnish respondents were rather optimistic, with 5 persons (71%) considering that the scheme had been 'very effective' and 2 persons (29%) 'moderately effective'. The Irish respondents held the least positive view in this regard, with 27% considering that the EU scheme had been 'moderately effective', 13% 'not very effective', 20% 'not at all effective' and 40% did not have an answer. Finally, the Lithuanian and Romanian respondents viewed the scheme as having been 'moderately effective' to 67% and 39% respectively, whilst equally 20% of respondents from both countries considered it to have been 'very effective'.

During the semi-structured interviews in **Finland** the public authorities noted that there was still a low overall level of organic produce for fruit and vegetables. It was said that the scheme had had little impact on increasing the production or consumption of organic fruits and vegetables. However, the stakeholders informed that organic milk consumption had increased significantly thanks to the scheme's promotion of organic milk, and was becoming more commonly used by schools/municipalities. The Finnish dairy industry representative stated that sales of organic milk to the public sector (including schools) had increased from 1 million litres to 3 million litres thanks to the scheme. Furthermore, it was noted by the public authorities that the increased use of organic milk under the scheme had had a knock-on effect for overall demand for organic milk. The public authorities believed this indicates that children bring the messages they are receiving about healthy food at school back home with them, therefore affecting household purchases.

In **Lithuania**, the public authorities informed that all products in the scheme were either organic or grown according to the national quality programme. Also, the stakeholders noted that there was a full supply of organic milk and dairy products in Lithuania, but when it came to fruit and vegetable sector, the problem was that the national quality scheme involved chemical fertilizers and pesticides. As this was being supported at the national level, many farmers who could easily become organic farmers chose to stay within the framework of the national quality scheme. To sum up, organic products were not given priority in Lithuania, the emphasis was on the products within the national quality scheme.

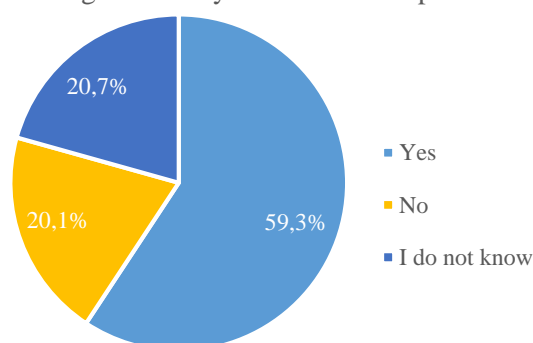
Moreover, the representative from the Association of Organic farms noted that 100% organic meals for children could be possible in Lithuania; however, the scheme should cover more products both in terms of vegetables and dairy.

When it comes to facilitating/promoting quality product supply in the context of public procurement and tender processes (**Question 10.b**), 37% of the total respondents considered that the EU school scheme had been 'moderately effective' in reaching this goal, whilst 19% found it to have been 'very effective', 16% 'not very effective' and 17% did not know how to assess this. Across the countries studied, the Lithuanian, Romanian and Irish respondents mostly found it to have been 'moderately effective' (41%, 40% and 33% respectively), whilst 31% of the French respondents found it to not have been very effective. The few Finnish respondents were rather optimistic, with 3 persons (43%) considering that the scheme had been 'very effective' and 1 person (14%) 'moderately effective'.



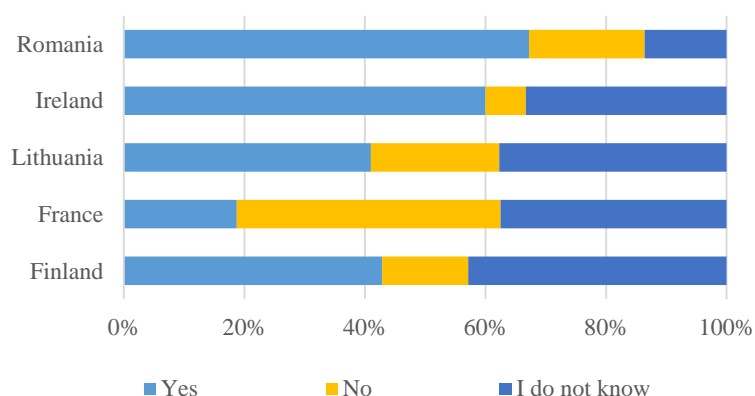
Asked whether the actions of the EU school scheme had been adapted to the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (**Question 11**), the large majority of the total of the respondents (59%) agreed with the statement, 20% disagreed and 21% did not know.

In your opinion, have the actions of the EU school scheme been adapted to the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?



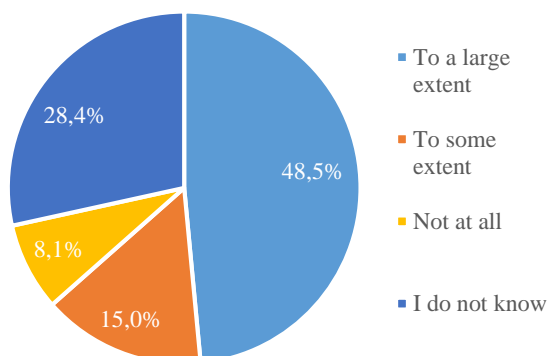
Comparing country responses, the answers were to a large extent split between positive views and not knowing how to assess the matter, with 67% of the Romanians, 60% of the Irish, 43% of the Finnish, 41% of the Lithuanians and 19% of the French considering that the EU school scheme had been adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversely, 43% of the Finnish, 38% of the French and Lithuanian, 33% of the Irish and 14% of the Romanian respondents did not know the answer. It is worth noting, however, that 44% of the French respondents held the view that the EU school scheme had not been adapted to the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In your opinion, have the actions of the EU school scheme been adapted to the change brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic?



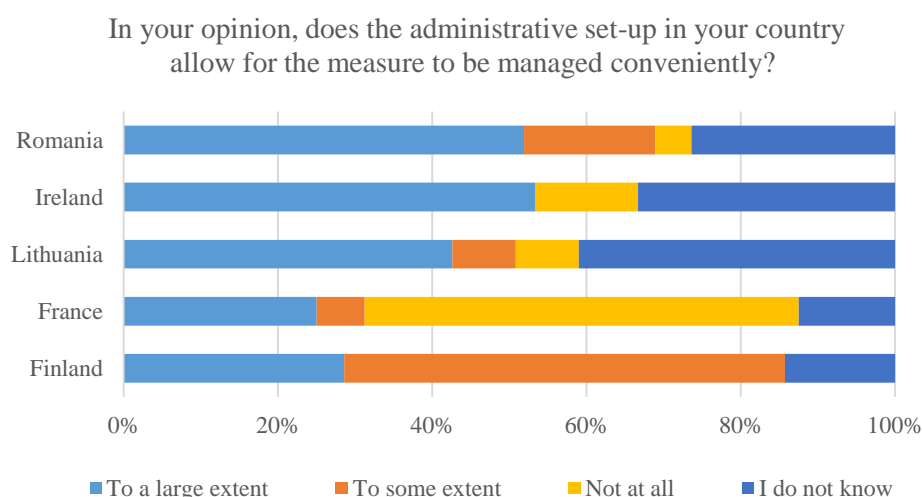
Regarding the respondents' view on whether the administrative set-up in their respective country allowed for the EU school scheme to be managed conveniently (Question 12), almost half (49%) of the total number of respondents answered that it did so 'to a large extent', 15% thought it to be the case 'to some extent', 8% thought that the administrative set-up in the country was not at all appropriate and 28% did not know how to assess this.

In your opinion, does the administrative set-up in your country allow for the measure to be managed conveniently?

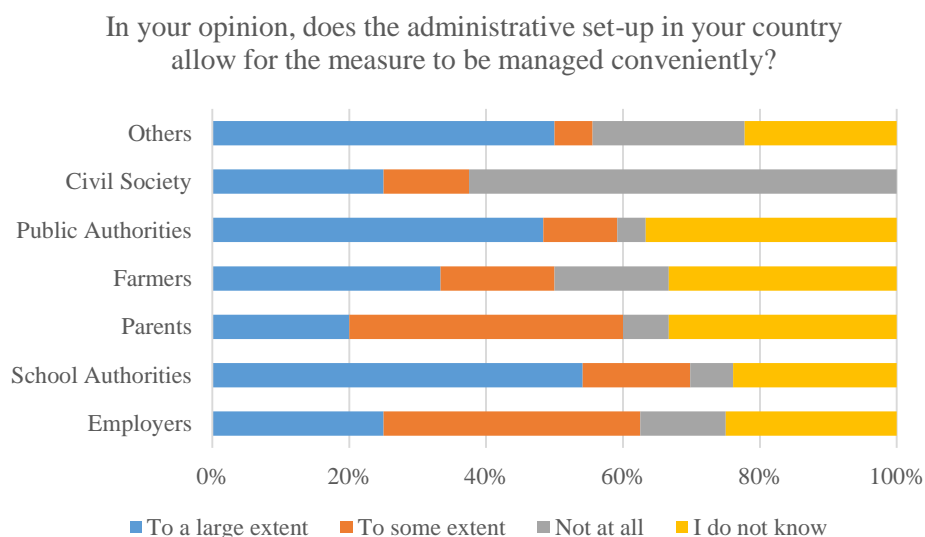


When looking at the different countries, all examined countries but France had a somewhat positive assessment of the administrative set-up in place for the management of the EU school scheme.

In France, more than half of the respondents (56%) considered the administrative set-up not to allow for the EU school scheme to be managed conveniently, whilst still 25% thought that it was appropriate 'to a large extent' and 6% 'to some extent'. Of the other countries, Finland was the most positive, with no respondents indicating that the administrative set-up was not at all suited. Large portions of respondents in Romania, Ireland and Lithuania did not know how to respond, but over half of respondents stating that the administrative set-up allowed convenient management of the scheme 'to a large' or 'to some extent'.



When it comes to the views of the different respondent categories, Public Authorities and School Authorities had the most positive view of the administrative set-up in place in their respective country, with 48% and 54% respectively viewing the set-up as appropriate 'to a large extent' and 11% and 16% respectively 'to some extent'. It is worth noting, however, that 37% of the respondents from the Public Authorities did not know how to assess this. Finally, the few respondents from the Parents' category across the countries had a more sombre view with 20% viewing the set up as convenient 'to a large extent', 40% 'to some extent' and 33% did not know.



During the semi-structured interviews in **Finland** the heavy bureaucratic burden of applying for and participating in the scheme was mentioned as a barrier to both school and food supplier uptake of the scheme. It was said that on the side of the schools/municipalities, the administrative burden would often fall to the catering staff. This had increased the amount of paperwork for these staff, especially for fruit and vegetable ordering as these are mostly done through smaller suppliers. Dairy industry suppliers were larger, more aware of the scheme and better positioned to take on more of the administrative burden themselves. In this respect, further publicising the scheme would be welcomed, accompanied by efforts to decrease the administrative burden involved.

Another point mentioned in Finland was that the Finnish scheme was organised on municipality level, so it was also dealt with by municipality administrators, which helped alleviate the bureaucratic burden on the schools themselves.

In **Lithuania**, the public authorities noted that the administrative burden had been facilitated a lot; the payment requests were being settled within 5 days, as the farmers were a priority for the Rural Business and Market development Agency (for other producers the payment request settlement lasted 3 months). Furthermore, regarding simplification it was said that the scheme had already been simplified, and starting from the beginning of this school year, some documentation would be further simplified. Participants would be able to join the scheme irrespective of the number of beneficiaries; they would be given access codes, so they could enter the required data (indicate the amounts of delivered and distributed products + their cost; the number of children who had the meals etc.). hence, the administrative burden had already been reduced considerably.

However, a municipality representative noted – with regard to the overall implementation of the scheme in Lithuania -, that the administration structure could be simplified. Sometimes schools would refuse to participate in the programme because the documentation required for the scheme was quite complex. This was stressed especially by smaller schools. In this context it should not be forgotten that there was a dual system in Lithuania – with public procurement being organized by the schools and kindergartens themselves, as well as there were centralized public procurement programmes, organized by the

municipalities. The municipalities had noticed that the scheme was more effective when there was no centralized procurement, when the schools and kindergartens managed it themselves.

Furthermore, a practical problem was mentioned, namely, that apples would be given out to school children but there was nobody to wash them, teachers and social workers would end up washing apples outside of the kitchen. Or yoghurts would be delivered on Friday – refrigeration facilities were necessary. Therefore, more detailed explanation and guidelines would be needed, and the Ministry of Health was currently considering amending and issuing them. The representative from municipalities was not of the opinion that new guidelines would be so helpful; rather a separate funding should be allocated towards solving the practical issues in the management of the EU school scheme.

In **Ireland**, the stakeholders made a suggestion to create an online system to prepare and follow reports in order to simplify administrative measures and reinforce coordination between stakeholders. Furthermore, it was said by the public authorities that there was no duplication of administration efforts, however, there was a significant diversity and number of tasks (budgeting, training, reporting) that made its application not so effective. Reporting in particular could be quite demanding, and national authorities would appreciate the introduction of a more streamlined reporting. Concretely, there were a lot of individual items (or small batches of individual items) of low value to be accounted for. This implied large coordination with different suppliers.

Finally, the Irish stakeholders noted that, in practical terms, the fact that the scheme in Ireland is extremely centralized, with central national management and one contractor, had allowed to overcome some bureaucratic barriers. Payments for suppliers, for example, were simple, with the contractor company paying directly against the delivery of the agreed goods.

During the semi-structured interviews in **Romania**, the general recommendation was made to simplify the procedure for implementing the EU school scheme in the country, as it involved a lot of bureaucracy, and to give more uniformity to this programme throughout the country, explore the possibilities of digitalisation (application, better electronic management system to manage documents, information flow etc). In particular, the Romanian food providers noted that the administrative burden for the procedures should be reduced (improving the criteria of the tender, lack of clarity, simplify the link with the number of children present each day at school, keeping the proofs "1kg product = 1kg of paper " etc.).

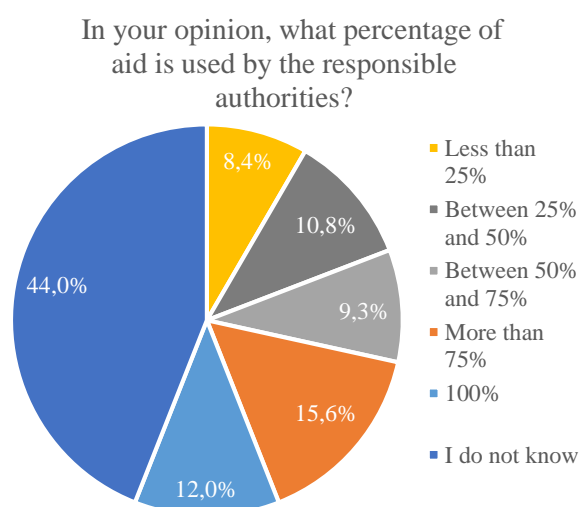
In **France**, a general recommendation by the stakeholders was to simplify, better frame and innovate the EU school scheme in order to reduce the administrative burden and complexity of the procedure. Particularly civil society representatives stressed that the programme was under-used due to the administrative burden: producers must register with very precise information (complicated) to get *FranceAgriMer's* approval, schools can apply until November, beneficiaries must explain the use of European credits etc.

Furthermore, the collective catering stakeholders highlighted numerous issues of administrative burden, while recognizing that some improvements were recently introduced in France: the calls for tenders are made by the central authority which sends the products to the schools, penalties if documents were not well completed, the wish to get simplified declarations, the need for improved flexibility for the accreditation (it cannot be modified during the year), difficulties when some schools are grouped

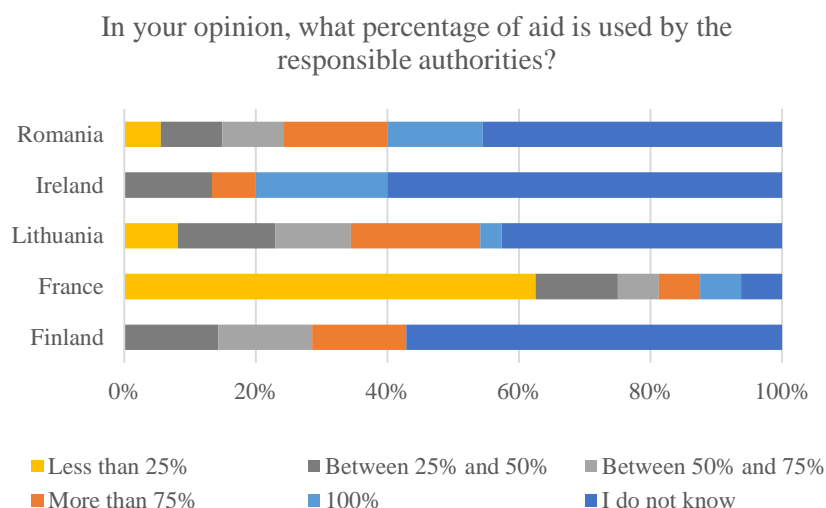
together and have only one SIRET number but two distribution locations, supporting documents requested in PDF format while the Excel format would be more easy, the need for paper archiving (delivery slips and invoice), the necessity to do a very time-consuming sorting as not all products are subsidized etc.

Finally, and most importantly, the stakeholders highlighted that the scheme had been much easier to implement before (before *FranceAgriMer*).

In response to the question of what percentage of aid was used by the responsible authorities (**Question 13**), a large part of the respondents (44%) did not know how to assess this.



Comparing across countries, besides a rather significant number of respondents in each country not knowing how to evaluate this, the Lithuanian respondents had the most optimistic view with 20% thinking that more than 75% of the funds available for the EU school scheme were being used by the responsible authorities. In Ireland, 20% thought that this amount reached 100%, as well as 14% in Romania. Furthermore, 16% of the Romanian respondents were of the view that it was more than 75%. In France, quite the opposite, 63% of the respondents thought that less than 25% of the aid were used by the responsible authorities.



During the semi-structured interviews in **Finland**, the public authorities informed that approximately 90% of the milk scheme budget for 2021-2022 was spent, including distribution and ancillary costs. In Finland, the scheme worked through post-fact reimbursements to schools for their spending, therefore they would intentionally leave a margin in the budget as a buffer against overspending.

In **France**, the public authorities noted that France had difficulties in mobilizing the programme, with less than 15% of the credits used (only 7,5% in 2021), and with low consumption rates and deployment of the scheme. The low use of the credits had been accentuated due to the COVID crisis (school closures, confinement) over 2019 to 2021. The current school year was a year of catching up on the level of consumption, a doubling (15%) was targeted compared to previous years (the plan was to use 4 to 5 million € on the 35 million € available for France).

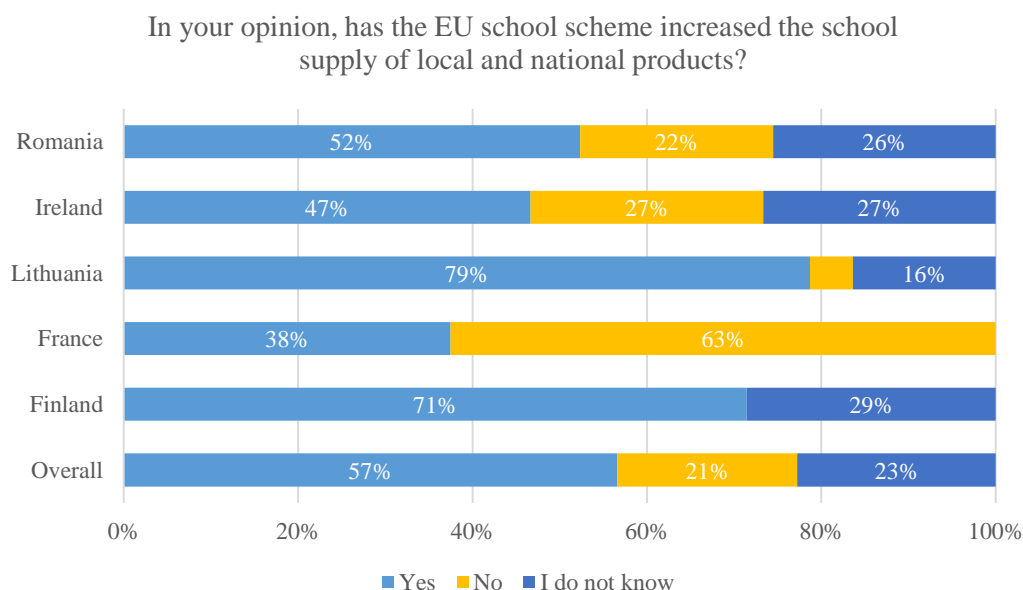
3.2 Relevance

According to the European Commission's Better Regulation toolbox, the criterion of relevance *"looks at the relationship between the needs and problems in society and the objectives of the intervention and hence touches on aspects of design. Relevance analysis also requires a consideration of how the objectives of an EU intervention (...) correspond to wider EU policy goals and priorities."*²³

Asked whether the EU school scheme had increased the school supply of local and national products in the examined countries, the majority of respondents (57%) were of favourable opinion, whilst 23% did not know and 21% thought that it had not been the case (**Question 14**).

²³

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/better-regulation-toolbox-47_en_0.pdf

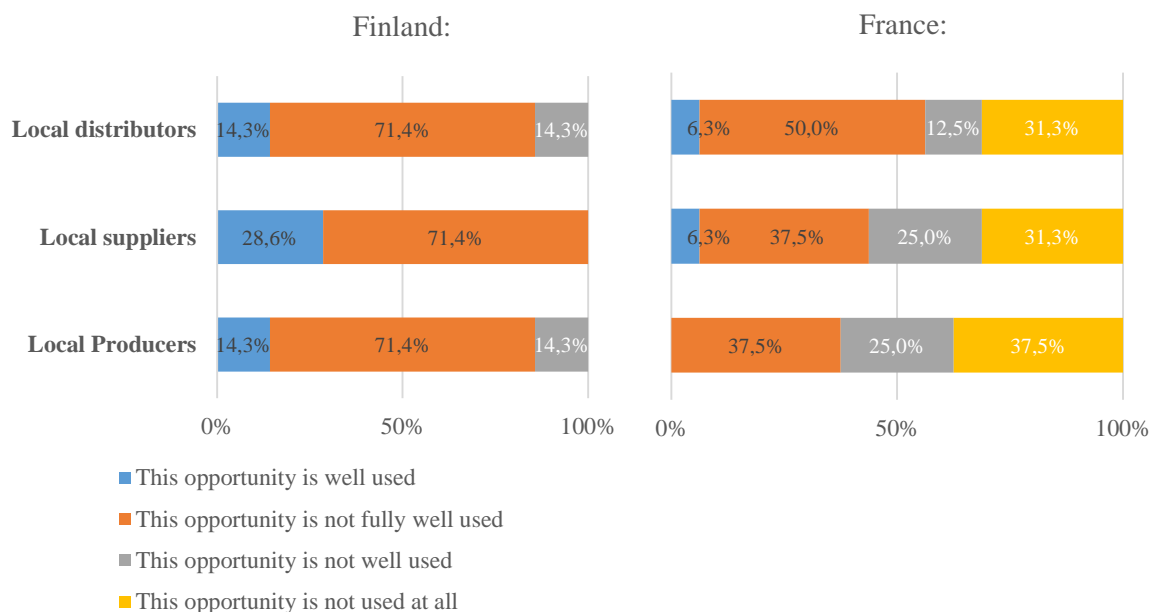


In a country comparison, the Lithuanian and Finnish respondents were the most positive with 79% and 71% respectively believing that the EU school scheme had increased the school supply of local and national products. The French held the most negative view in this regard with 63% of the respondents expressing the view that the scheme had not had such an impact. Also 27% of the Irish respondents thought that the scheme had not achieved an increase in school supply with local and national products, along with 22% of the Romanian respondents. However, 52% of the Romanian respondents held a positive view, which was slightly more than the Irish (47%).

In the total results, approximately three in each ten respondents believe that the school scheme has been well used for local producers to improve or to move towards collective school catering (Question 15.a), and a similar proportion believe it was *not well used or not used at all*. Very similar results are to be found concerning local suppliers (**Question 15.b**) and local distributors (**Question 15.c**).

The most positive answers come from Finland, where no respondent claimed that the scheme was not at all used by actors of local economies. These results contrast with those from France, where approximately half of the respondents affirmed there was a lack of integration between the scheme and the local economy.

This measure represents an opportunity for local producers, distributors and suppliers who want to improve or to move towards collective school catering. In your opinion, is this opportunity well used?



In the structured interviews with stakeholders, Irish authorities stated that the connection to local production is not easy. **Not all produce can be supplied from local or even national farmers.** In France, equally, the difficulties in reaching out to local producers in the context of public procurement in collective catering was highlighted. It was advised to have dedicated markets instead.

Nevertheless, it is important that the Scheme makes this link, and indeed national authorities do ask the food supplier to source products in Ireland, as much as possible. Representatives of both farmers and catering services further mentioned that it is very important to stress the sustainability aspect – citizens need to be aware of issues such as food-miles for example. The link to local production is important, though local production cannot supply the year-long variety of fruit and vegetables that are needed for a healthy diet. Equal remarks were made in Lithuania, where it was said that the Lithuanian fruit sector was limited to apples and pears only. There is no great diversity in terms of different types of fruit. Lithuania being quite a Nordic country geographically, there is a very limited supply of fruit and vegetables during wintertime. There are more types of vegetables in the springtime, but they are seasonal, only being supplied during a limited period (like asparagus).

Some reservations need also to be made concerning local or regional sourcing of products. In **bigger countries** (such as France) regional production can have a true meaning. But in **smaller countries** (like Ireland or Lithuania) that definition might *de facto* encompass the whole country. A further issue with local production is that food still needs to be processed and packaged before distribution in schools. That can only be done centrally, so the environmental aspect of local production needs to be seen under an appropriate lens, capturing all the complexity of the food chains.

Despite all the difficulties, it is important to raise awareness on products that are produced locally/regionally. Understanding the nutritional values of food is important, but children should also be able to understand where the food is coming from and this could be enhanced via pedagogical support such as digital contents, for example. Indeed, in **Finland** the use of digital educational resources allows teachers

to better integrate the goals of the school scheme into the school curriculum. The scheme funding is used to support the 'Food Radar'²⁴ project on food education. This provides educational materials for teachers for food education lessons. This has proven extremely popular with teachers and is widely praised.

Concerning the role of professional agricultural organisations (unions, inter-professional organisations, etc.) in the school scheme (**Question 16 – open question**) a majority of respondents believed there was no specific role or were not aware of any involvement. A large number of participants in the questionnaire also said that such organisations could contribute by **raising awareness** of both the school scheme to farmers and of the local products to schools and the general population.

A Lithuanian authority specifically believes that these organisations have an important role to play in the *farm-to-fork* strategy, generating information on supply and demand, coordinating regional short-chain sales and carrying out publicity campaigns on the farm-to-fork production path. Nevertheless, the **interest from these organisations** in this scheme was deemed weak.

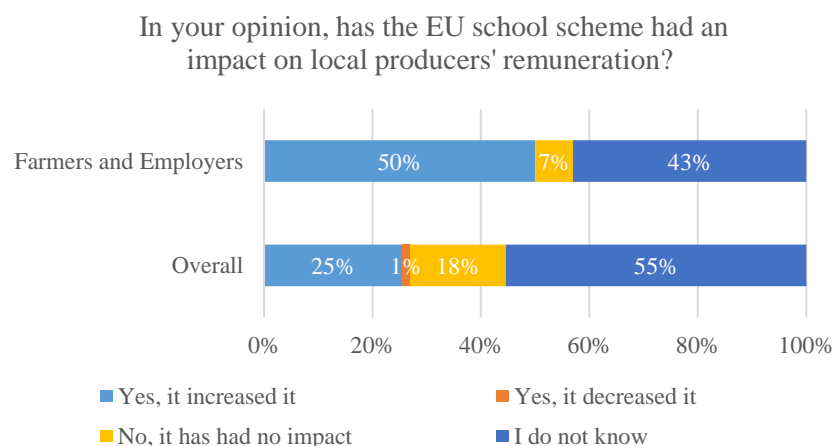
The sharing of information, as stated above, was for many stakeholders an important element. In Finland in particular one stakeholder responded that such organisations could provide **expertise to public authorities** so that national regulations allow for the widest possible range of school meals and maximum supply of produced products to children. Similar statements were made by stakeholders in Romania (both schools and producers), saying in particular that there is an urgent need for producers, or producers/suppliers' organisations, to **cooperate with the central and local authorities** in implementing the programme, with a view to optimising production costs or developing initiatives in the field of promotion and of marketing products approved by the scheme.

In France, Lithuania and Romania several stakeholders stated that professional agricultural organisations could play a stronger role **gathering the efforts of small, regional producers** to allow local and regional authorities and school authorities (or the food catering companies, depending on with whom lies the competence for food provision in that country) to access their produce in a more structured way.

With largely consistent results across the five countries and the majority of the types of respondents, participants in the questionnaire were not aware if the scheme influenced positively the income of local producers (**Question 17**). More than half answered that they did not know if that was the case. Nevertheless, in what is probably the most knowledgeable set of respondents in this specific question, a total of fourteen companies and farmers, seven did answer that they believe there was a positive impact.

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<https://www.ruokatutka.fi/>.



Regarding the storage problem for the local producers, there had been plans to establish logistical hubs in some districts in Lithuania, to store fruits and vegetables there, later to be supplied to schools, kindergartens etc. This project was currently at a very early stage and had not yet been launched.

In the context of rising costs across the food chain, the scheme is seen in **Finland** as increasingly important. There have been worries that rising production costs could make dairy products too expensive to be provided for children under the Finnish free school meals scheme, and the EU school scheme is seen as an important funding mechanism to tackle this. The scheme has directly benefitted farmers, and this benefit has applied to small and large farmers equally due to the co-operative structure of the Finnish dairy industry.

A different reality was noted in **Lithuania**, where there is no possibility for all the farmers and small processors and producers to register in the scheme, so that the schools could choose them. Hence, the producers exist but not all of them are in the position to supply all the logistics of a supply chain, encompassing all the months from October to June. Cooperatives between farmers were not well developed in Lithuania as it was in Finland, due to the Soviet legacy. Prioritization could be established in the rules, then more producers from a closer distance to schools could be involved. Furthermore, some farmers would want to take part in this scheme but, especially smaller farms, faced financial difficulties. The reimbursement procedures are quite long, sometimes up to 3-4 months. Therefore, selling their produce at a local market may be more attractive than participating in the scheme.

Besides the issues raised in the questionnaire, participants of the structured interviews raised a series of other questions.

Disparities between rural and urban areas were stressed in Ireland. Students in more urban areas are normally less aware of how the food is produced than children in rural areas. In that sense, the school scheme can play a role in raising awareness about the importance of agriculture. On the other hand, schools in urban areas have a more solid offer of food – even if not healthy. Furthermore, students are very much aware of environmental issues, but they are not aware of the role of agriculture in our economies and societies. Awareness of the rural economy is low, and the environmental angle could be one of avenues to achieve it. The promotion of 'sustainable living' – including local production, local transport and healthy food – can thus be another means of achieving the goals of the Farm to Fork strategy.

The **supply of different sorts of food products** was raised by some participants. In France, authorities suggested to work more with mini-vegetables (carrots, mini-tomatoes, radishes) that are better accepted by the pupils. Also in France, some stakeholders believed the scheme was not accomplishing its goals in terms of increasing the consumption of fruits and vegetables – the opposite perception in Lithuania could have a link to the type of products being served. As the vegetables there are being served sliced, there was a certain element of self-service with children taking those products that they liked. At the beginning they would only eat cucumbers or carrots, but more recently and seeing their peers eating other types of vegetables, children have started eating more diverse types of vegetables, like cabbage and beetroot. There are also awareness raising activities and classes, for example, specialists would arrive to speak about the benefits of healthy eating.

Also in this topic, however, the view was expressed **that the scheme should cover more products both in terms of vegetables and dairy**. The scheme should also cover meat and bread, for example. Representatives from the Lithuanian municipalities stated also that the quality of products was not always ensured and municipalities would sometimes receive complaints. The range of products was limited which meant lack of diversity, and, consequently, children were bored of having repeatedly the same products. Children especially do not enjoy natural yoghurts. Similar remarks coming from Finland stated that allowing for greater diversity of products could mean, for example, supplying yoghurts with berries, something that is produced nationally and is part of the national food culture. Also in Finland, some participants questioned why there are no plant-based drinks (i.e., non-dairy milk-substituted) available under the scheme.

Besides broadening the type of products, stakeholders in several countries underlined that it would be of great relevance for the programme **to include kindergartens**. That was the case in Ireland, where it was stated that if some resources were to be directed to pre-schools, the relevance and effectiveness would be improved. The younger children are the better food habits can be molded. The programme could be better in the long run if interventions from 10 years of age and older were just short reinforcement messages, whereas the active development of food habits should be done in a younger age.

Finally, the **weight on school staff and catering services** was also mentioned. The big challenge is how to integrate the Scheme into the school curriculum in a way such that does not constitute an obstacle to normal school curriculum implementation and allows the information to be passed from children to their parents, thus influencing family food habits. Parents can sometimes not be happy with schools intervening much in terms of educating children in non-formal topics. Healthy food habits also have an impact in family life and that might raise problems in some sections of society.

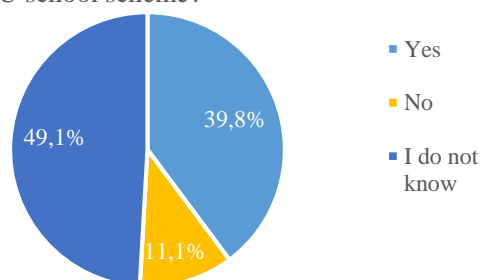
In **Lithuania**, a practical problem was mentioned, namely, that apples would be given out to school children but there was nobody to wash them, teachers and social workers would end up washing apples outside of the kitchen. In Ireland, the lack of canteens in smaller, rural schools puts barriers to the distribution of food.

In **Finland**, smaller schools also face issues, as the school catering services sometimes cannot separate out the budget as required by the scheme. For example, a school's catering service sometimes also serves local retirement homes or other public institutions, and all the food ordering is done together.

3.3 Inclusion of civil society and added value

Overall, respondents to the questionnaire divided themselves between affirming that public authorities included social partners and civil society organisations in the design and implementation of the EU school scheme (Question 18), and not having enough information on the subject.

Do the public authorities in your Member State include the social partners and civil society organisations in the design and implementation of the EU school scheme?



Half of the respondents said they did not know it, whereas 40% responded that social partners and civil society organisations were involved. The only major exception to this pattern was France, where the number of respondents not being able to answer remained the half (8 out of 16) but where approximately the percentages between Yes and No were reversed (6 claimed they were not involved, against 2 that said they were).

In the semi-structured interviews, French and Romanian economic actors affirmed that the farming professional organisations had not been consulted. The representative from the Lithuanian Chamber of Agriculture noted that she had not seen any invitation to such a discussion and she had no knowledge of such meetings taking place. In Finland that has not been the case. The agricultural sector is in constant dialogue with the Finnish food authorities about the scheme and have good working relationships. Though they are not formally involved in the scheme, the strong farmers association in Finland has established links to the policy making process.

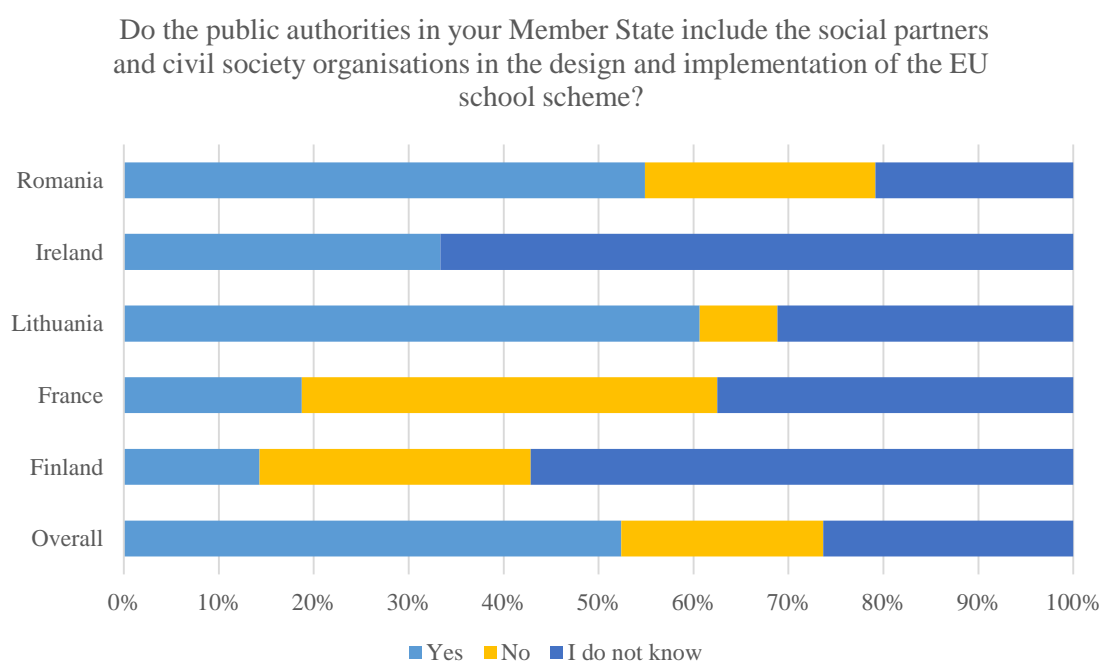
The **French** national public authorities stated that they have installed a "*comité de pilotage*" with the different stakeholders that gathers 3 times a year. However, they also advised to install similar structures at the regional level. The Association of Lithuanian municipalities had submitted a proposal for the establishment of a coordination committee between the stakeholders, and they believed that this type of committees should be established at the municipal level (and not at the level of the Ministry) with the participation of members from municipal councils, some representatives of the administration, representatives of farmers, parents, school headmasters etc; such committees would be very useful, as they could discuss local problems. Should it not be possible to address them at the municipal level, they could be brought to the ministerial level.

In **Romania**, one stakeholder highlighted the need to have discussions between the authorities and the different actors to analyse how to work together towards a holistic national strategy, to set up working groups to discuss for example the technical specifications of the scheme (not only quantitative criteria),

workshops for food education, farm visits, and other activities. Similar remarks were made in Ireland, where in the future, a national steering working group to join all social partners that could have a stake in this policy would be a way to involve civil society in a structured way.

Lithuanian authorities said that there was a supervisory committee for the scheme, and it involved some social partners, for example the Association of Fruit and Vegetable growers, the producers' association "Fruit and Vegetables", the State Food and veterinary service, VivaSol company (working with craftsmen and local partners). At the end of each school year, the supervisory committee meets and exchanges views on how this programme should further be implemented.

Concerning the involvement of heads of schools, directors of school restaurants and school parents' associations (**Question 19**), the results suffer no change, except for Romania and Lithuania, where a majority of respondents said that public authorities had reached out to these stakeholders in order to better implement the School Scheme. Given the high volume of answers from these two countries, the total results are skewed towards a more positive answer than in the question above. For that reason, we present here the data per country.



The majority of those that did answer affirmatively above thought the level of involvement was good or very good (90%), with only 8% thinking it was insufficient.

In the semi-structured interviews, **Romanian** stakeholders stated that during the covid pandemic, pupils' parents' meetings have been put in place. As mentioned before, stakeholders believe that the future it is important to involve schools, civil society organisations, representatives of producers and county councils. Similarly, in **Finland** public hearings are held as part of the development of the annual nutritional guidelines for the overall Finnish school meal scheme. This provides an opportunity for stakeholders and civil society to share their views. Also, a national survey is currently being undertaken to investigate parental involvement in school nutrition decisions and how to increase this. However,

being noted that there could be closer involvement of civil society in the EU school scheme the priority is on children's involvement and enjoyment of the food.

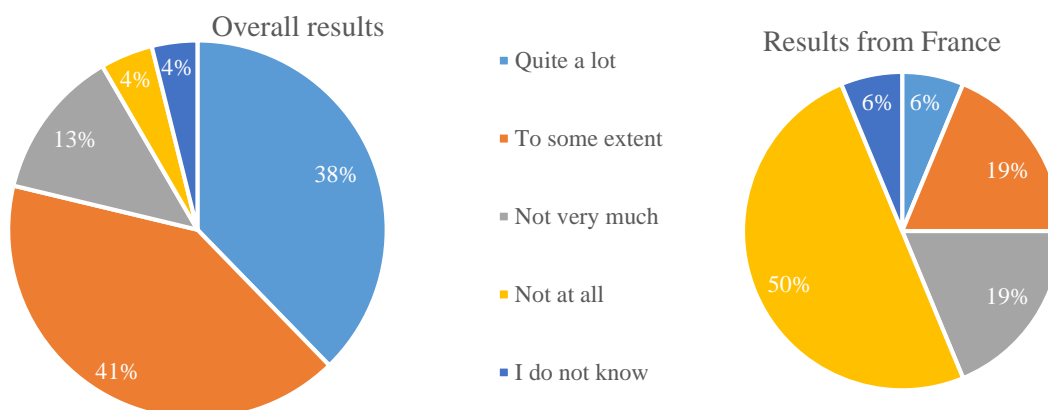
Civil society in **Finland** has not been widely included in the decision-making or the implementation of the scheme. This leads to a lack of awareness of the scheme and is seen to have impacted the uptake. Among the parents' organisations, the scheme is not widely discussed. Finnish school meals are organized at city level, not school level, so there is less opportunity for direct parent input than in other systems. Public hearings are held as part of the development of the annual nutritional guidelines for the overall Finnish school meal scheme. This provides an opportunity for stakeholders and civil society to share their views. However, it is noted that there could be closer involvement of civil society in the EU School Scheme process specifically.

As for **Ireland**, the school community is not aware of the functioning of the scheme. There is no communication with parents of students' organisations. In that sense, it is not possible to assess the capacity of civil society to help the implementation and promotion of the school scheme. Student organisations have also not been involved in the implementation of the Scheme. The overwhelming majority of students is not aware of its existence. Civil society has not been very involved in the design and implementation of the Scheme, and there should be a larger focus on that, both in terms of national authorities calling on civil society to provide expertise, and on civil society itself to make itself available to support schools in promote healthy food habits. Several stakeholders stated that the centralized management of the Scheme in Ireland meant that there was no significant integration of civil society. The inclusion of relevant civil society organizations could anchor the scheme in the communities and allow it to better achieve its goals.

Lithuanian municipalities noted that there were both good and bad examples, however, the majority of them was bad. It was said that there was a lack of involvement from the side of the civil society, both from parents' organisations and NGOs. Sometimes a certain formal approach was being observed – some committees and councils would be established, but they did not perform the tasks they were created for, or their work was rather symbolic. This gap needs to be amended.

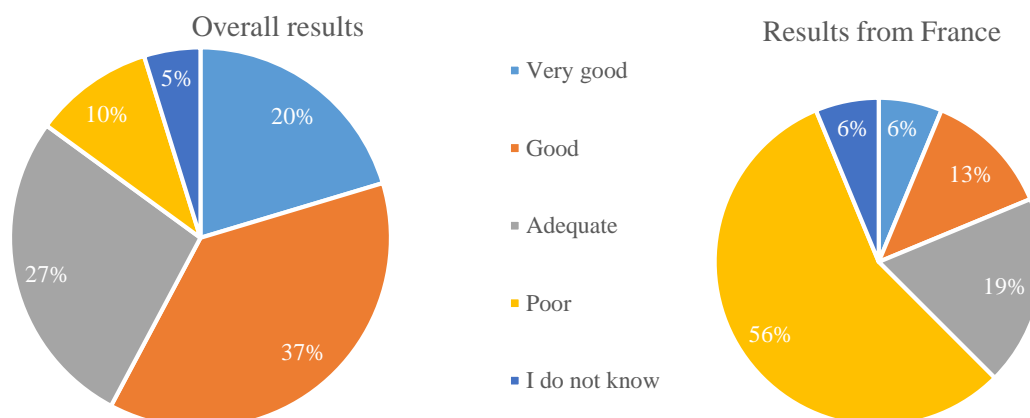
On average, about 80% of the respondents think that the parents and children in their country who are participating in the scheme were aware of it (Question 20). Across four of the five countries analysed, the percentages of respondents that answers *Quite a lot* or *To some extent* ranges from 65% (Ireland) to 85% (Lithuania). The only exception was France, where half of the respondents said that the participants were not at all aware of the programme.

In your opinion, are the parents and children in your country who are participating in the scheme aware of this EU school scheme?



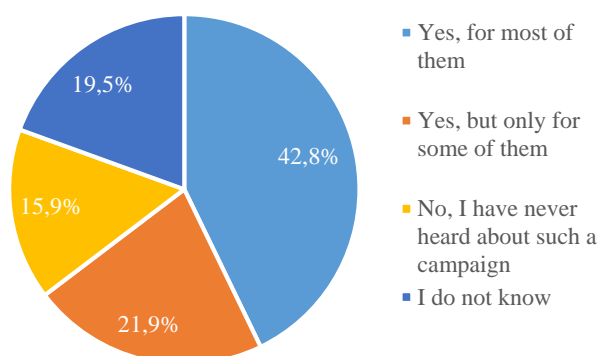
The results in Question 20 trickle down to **Question 21**, where only 10% of the overall participants of the questionnaire rate the communication and information about the EU school scheme in their country as being poor, with the exception of France, where nine of the sixteen participants answered this way.

How would you rate the communication and information about the EU school scheme in your country?



Concerning schools participating in the scheme, a majority of respondents answered that most (43%) or at least part of them (23%) had launched awareness campaigns concerning the scheme (**Question 22**). This result is mainly related to public authorities (60%) and school authorities (75%) seem to confirm this. Other types of respondents are less aware of such campaigns. For example, of the fifteen representatives of parents' associations, eight did not know or had never heard of such campaigns.

Has an awareness campaign been set up by schools participating in the scheme to promote food education and inform people about the EU school scheme?



Of the over two hundred respondents that were aware of such campaigns, only 10% said they were not sufficient, with an overwhelming majority of more than 80% believing such campaigns were efficient.

In **Ireland**, authorities stress that all educational materials linked to the scheme have the appropriate branding as demanded by European guidelines, but is unlikely that schools and students are aware that it is part of a broader European project.

Furthermore, the action in schools needs to be supplemented with wider intervention in society for it to be properly efficient. In some schools/ areas the food provided under the Scheme is the only source of healthy, nutritious food that some children might have access to. The big challenge is how to integrate the scheme into the school curriculum in a way such that does not constitute an obstacle to normal school curriculum implementation and allows the information to be passed from children to their parents, thus influencing family food habits. This needs to be backed up by supplementary actions that can allow consistent habits to be developed. Among such actions, the link to the retail sector should be investigated. It is unlikely that a parent rejects a child's request to buy healthy food (as opposed to sweets and candy).

As regards education, the representative from municipalities in **Lithuania** stressed that the promotion of the scheme needs to be strengthened, with more funding was necessary for publicity activities, it could be provided from the EU school scheme. It was suggested that study visits to farms could be made obligatory for children, educating children about the making of bread, for example, or growing plants and vegetables. In some kindergartens/schools in Lithuania these projects already existed. More attention should be paid to small and medium-sized farms which could organize these educational activities; they should be organized via the Ministry of Education, and financing would need to be earmarked on a separate budget line (cities and municipalities did not have budget for that; however, at the moment these mentioned singular activities were financed by the cities and municipalities themselves).

3.4 Additional comments

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to raise further issues that were not included in the questionnaire or to strengthen issues that they deemed as deserving additional attention. We here summarize the additional contributions, organizing them by topic.

Concerning the quantities, quality and processing of the distributed food:

- Rules imposing the subsidizing only of vegetables without seasoning, vegetable preparations without adding starch to the recipe or even yogurts without adding sugar are not correct. These rules are not practically possible to implement and are not consistent with the recommendations of dietitian nutritionists. In France, there are nutritional rules which emanate from the recommendations of the GEMRCN²⁵ which sets frequencies for each type of preparation and limits in sugars and fats which ensure an adequate nutritional balance in children. In particular, it is recommended to season vegetable starters with oils rich in omega 3, which children generally lack.
- Furthermore, unseasoned vegetables tend to be less attractive to children in terms of taste, leading to food waste.
- As for the consumption of raw fruits, instead of promoting them only at the end or the lunch, it should be further promoted in the morning breaks, when mastication and absorption are more suited for such produces.
- The quantities of fruits and vegetables need to be adapted to the age of the beneficiaries. Children and teens have different needs and different capacities to consume food, and it is not advisable to have uniform quantities for a 16-year-old and a 6-year-old.
- In Romania several stakeholders raised the issue concerning the quality of the products delivered, which is deemed by them as sub-standard. As a result, often the products distributed under the Scheme are not used by the children, generating food waste.
- In Lithuania several stakeholders stressed that a healthy diet includes more than dairy, fruits and vegetables, and so more products should be included in the school scheme.

Concerning educational tools and information:

- Better means (not necessarily requiring much investment) could be put into action, such as a single online portal for food education offering resources to schools and teachers, information for children and proposing actions for, for instance, FAO's world food day (16 October) or how to conduct workshops for children to learn how to process different sorts of food.
- A more holistic (food culture, cultural patrimony) approach to food, in conjunction with earlier (kindergarten) interventions would, for several stakeholders, contribute to better results in terms of teaching healthy food habits.

Concerning the European added-value and coherence with national programmes:

- In Finland there is a wider programme supporting school meals. The integration with the European school scheme exists, but it is not flawless. Some efforts to reduce the complexity in reporting and acquisition of products could help a better integration between the two policies, reducing redundancies.

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“Groupement d’Etude des Marchés en Restauration Collective et de Nutrition”, <http://www.gemrcn.fr/definition-gemrcn>.

Concerning regional disparities:

- In several countries, rural regions face special challenges, such as lack of infrastructure (school canteens) and lack of informed and properly remunerated staff to distribute the products. This has been detrimental to the uniform and efficient approach to the implementation of this programme and in the transmission of goods and educational contents. In rural areas, the implementation of the programme (reception, distribution, preparation and transmission of knowledge) has been placed on behalf of teachers (educators, teachers, even managers) whose main tasks involve the pupils' education and do not have time to face the logistics of the programme. While this situation was reported in more than one country, Romanian stakeholders were especially insistent on this point.

4. Secondary data: literature review of EESC work

In [NAT/844](#) on Food security and sustainable food systems (2022), the EESC noted that it had been the first EU institution to call for a comprehensive food policy in the EU, with the aim of nurturing healthy diets from sustainable food systems, linking agriculture to nutrition and ecosystem services, and ensuring supply chains that safeguard public health for all sections of European society. Such a policy, now reflected in the F2F strategy, should improve consistency across food-related policy areas, raise awareness of the value of food and promote sustainable food systems.

The EESC identified the following key levers to be used at EU level to safeguard the competitiveness of European producers, with a view to ensuring both European food security and sustainability and affordable prices for consumers:

- i. fostering an open strategic autonomy for food security and sustainability;
- ii. developing innovative technologies and seeds to always be able to provide solutions to farmers faced with restrictions on existing tools;
- iii. ensuring broadband coverage and digitalisation as a precondition for precision farming and robotics, and supporting the investments in such sustainable techniques;
- iv. promoting and facilitating access to training on these new technologies for agricultural producers, especially for young farmers;
- v. ensuring reciprocity of standards and a level-playing field by incorporating the Green Deal's F2F and Biodiversity strategies and their norms as global sustainability standards in all future EU trade deals and having them included in existing trade agreements and in WTO agreements;
- vi. promoting the value of food, by fostering food education among consumers, which contributes to bringing the agricultural sector closer to society;
- vii. ensuring fair prices and distribution of income along the chain, improving consumers' willingness to pay appropriate prices for food to consume less but better, and banning unfair trading practices (UTPs) through ambitious regulations;
- viii. aligning food business practices and operations with the SDGs;
- ix. ensuring the structured involvement and participation of civil society and of all stakeholders across the food supply chain, including through a European Food Policy Council – fostering cooperation rather than competition.

Furthermore, the Committee welcomed the "Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis" and the proposed creation of a European Food Security Crisis preparedness

and response Mechanism (EFSCM), and recommends that these provisions be integrated into a comprehensive food policy. The EESC asked for an active role in the dedicated group of experts.

In [NAT/822](#) on Strategic autonomy and food security and sustainability (2021), the EESC proposed a definition of open strategic autonomy applied to food systems based on food production, workforce and fair trade, with the overarching aim of ensuring food security and sustainability for all EU citizens through a fair, healthy, sustainable and resilient food supply. In particular, EU food systems should be more diversified; the agricultural workforce should be strengthened especially by attracting young people and ensuring decent working conditions and remuneration; trade policies should be aligned with EU food sustainability standards and competitiveness.

The Committee noted that open strategic autonomy and the sustainability of food systems are best guaranteed by developing a tool box that includes risk management measures to help food supply chains to deal with extreme situations and national and EU authorities to take immediate actions.

In order to improve the coping mechanisms, there is a need to develop existing food systems and at the same time diversify food systems, including business models for farm shops, urban farming, vertical farming and the "local-for-local" approach in general. This requires a wider application of research and innovation by farmers and growers and should help minimise the risks of "food deserts" and production specialisation. At the same time, the advantages of the efficient distribution system from farms to processing and markets should be strengthened.

To ensure the long-term production of sufficient and healthy food and viable livelihoods it is important that natural resources are used in a sustainable way, preserving soil and water resources, combating climate change and biodiversity losses and protecting animal welfare. The EU should also strengthen local and regional production to combine well balanced food production and food processing with low carbon foot print.

The EESC reiterated its recommendation to explore the option of a multi-stakeholder and multi-level European Food Policy Council. In the context of open strategic autonomy, such a Council could play, inter alia, a monitoring role and help evaluate and anticipate the risks in the food supply chain.

The EU needs to ensure that borders are kept safely open and that workforce together with logistics are kept going for food production and distribution ("green lanes") both within the EU and towards third countries. This requires a strong mechanism of coordination between the Member States, the EC and third countries.

In NAT/818 on Action Plan for the development of EU organic production (2021), the EESC recognised the role of organic farming in achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal and welcomed the communication from the European Commission on an action plan for the development of organic production. The EESC sees this a solid basis for developing the organic sector in a sustainable manner.

The Committee considered the European Green Deal target of making 25% of agricultural land in the EU organic by 2030 to be very ambitious; and supported in particular the Commission's market-oriented

approach to further increasing consumer demand and confidence in organic products. A balance between demand and supply is crucial for the sector's successful development.

Furthermore, the EESC recommended establishing a kind of "twinning mechanism" to step up exchanges of experience between Member States, since they are starting out from different positions. Exchanges between farmers should also be encouraged. The EESC would be happy to take part in any activities to raise awareness of organic production (for example as part of an annual EU organic day).

The Committee emphasised that consumers are increasingly setting store by regional food. The EESC believes that shorter and local organic production and marketing chains that also take account of seasonality could be a promising way of generating more added value along the food chain. The EESC also sees potential for additional employment opportunities in rural areas.

Finally, it expressed the belief that, in particular, the public sector (local, city, regional and federal authorities) should make greater use of regional organic food products in public procurement (e.g. in canteens). In doing so, they should also take account of seasonality.

In [SOC/682](#) on EU strategy on the rights of the child/Child Guarantee (2021), the EESC stressed that the unacceptable figure of one in four children across the EU growing up at risk of poverty and social exclusion requires a coordinated European approach based on strong policy and legal frameworks in order to reverse this trend and break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage. There must be an ambitious target aiming to lift all children out of poverty by 2030 and not only five million children.

Mainstreaming children's rights into policy-making is essential. Practically every policy area affects children, hence a whole-society approach is needed to ensure that different policies (relating to the family, education, the economy, the digital world, the environment, housing) have empowering and long-lasting positive effects on children's health and well-being. An integrated approach and horizontal measures need to be adopted urgently at EU, national, regional and local level, in order to encompass all important areas that can have an impact on children's lives, both today and in the future.

The EESC recommended that the national action plans on the Child Guarantee include a set of two- and multi-generation measures to develop supports for both children and their parents as the vulnerability of a child cannot be addressed without addressing that of their family. Parents and carers must be supported through a mix of actions: adequate income, work-life balance, the take-up of adequately paid maternity, paternity and parental leave, carer's leave, flexible work arrangements and family-friendly workplaces.

The Committee noted that only 11 countries had earmarked specific ESF+ funding for lifting children out of poverty, while a number of other Member States were very close to the EU average with their data on poverty risks among children. The EESC recommends that all Member States earmark ESF+ funding for lifting children out of poverty, taking the designated 5% as a minimum. There is also a need to improve the collection of quality disaggregated data in order to help monitor progress towards ending child poverty and social exclusion.

The EESC recommended that Member States grant free access to early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities and healthcare or grant these services free of charge. Alternatively,

they can ensure, through appropriate cash benefits, that children obtain these key services without causing an extra financial burden for families.

While drawing up their National Plans under the Child Guarantee, the EESC recommended that Member States specify the target age group when appropriate, while noting that children's rights apply to every person under 18 years of age. This is especially important for ensuring the complementarity of frameworks such as the Child Guarantee and the Youth Guarantee, in the best interest of the beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the Committee urged the Commission to put the Strategy on the Rights of the Child at a horizontal coordination level with other recently approved European strategies, such as the strategies for gender equality, for LGBTIQ equality, for Roma, and for disability rights.

In [SOC/677](#) on Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (2021), the EESC welcomed Europe's Beating Cancer Plan (Plan) as a milestone in the fight against cancer and its social, financial and psychological consequences among EU citizens and calls for a concrete roadmap on the implementation of the Plan, accompanied by performance indicators and realistic timeframes.

The Committee noted that, as an urgent measure, it is necessary to tackle the problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to access to health services. Restrictions and delays may reduce the chances of recovery and must be effectively addressed, and an urgent response is needed to address people's fears. The social partners (SP) and civil society organisations (CSO) have an indispensable role to play by disseminating best practices and providing relevant information – about what can cause cancer, about helping people recognise early symptoms, promoting prevention and inspiring healthy lifestyles. Their efforts shall be supported, including by devoting relevant funds under ESF+ for joint actions in combating cancer and for dissemination of best practices on health prevention.

To enhance the early detection of cancer, the EESC endorsed the initiatives of screening and cancer prevention projects and encourages the use of new technologies and efforts to raise people's awareness of the need for preventive screening. The screening and educational initiatives should target all of the frequent types of cancer and be available to the largest possible number of people.

The EESC considered research and innovation a cornerstone for better understanding cancer risk factors and improving diagnoses, therapies and treatments. Innovation ecosystems, involving different sized enterprises, researchers, patients, health professionals and authorities, need to be encouraged, advanced and supported by EU and national funding, particularly through partnerships under Horizon Europe.

Furthermore, the Committee emphasised the need for major efforts to be focused on the generation, availability and accessibility of data to help develop more advanced prevention, diagnosis and treatment methods. Linking digital health data with the genomic data of biobanks must be facilitated to enable personalised prevention and care. The development and use of data analytics methods, including AI, also need to be enhanced through strengthened EU cooperation.

The EESC called for close involvement of the SP and CSO in the further development and follow-up of the Plan, together with targeted promotion and funding for joint actions of the SP and CSOs, including a broad representation of different sectors.

Finally, the EESC called for EU-wide campaigns to increase awareness and knowledge of measures to prevent and manage cancer in workplaces, and of the role of high-quality food products, clean water and air, and healthy individual lifestyles, including diet, exercise and the choice of better alternatives, in cancer prevention. Communication, with the aim of making the Plan and its measures understandable and credible to European citizens, will play a crucial role in the success of the Plan and the achievement of its goals.

In [NAT/787](#) on From farm to fork: a sustainable food strategy (2020), the EESC stressed that a comprehensive EU food policy should, according to the EESC, deliver: i) economic, environmental and socio-cultural sustainability; ii) integration across sectors, policy areas and levels of governance; iii) inclusive decision-making processes; and iv) a combination of compulsory measures (regulations and taxes) and incentives (price premiums, access to credit, resources and insurance) to accelerate the transition towards sustainable food systems. The proposed strategy doesn't reflect those objectives sufficiently.

The budget for the CAP must not be decreased or kept at the current level, but should be increased in line with those objectives. Cuts to rural development funding could be detrimental, given that it contains some of the most relevant tools for supporting the transition. While the additional EUR 15 billion proposed under the COVID-19 recovery package are welcome and necessary, they are no replacement for long-term commitments.

Fair food prices (reflecting the true cost of production for the environment and society) are the only way to achieve sustainable food systems in the long term. The EU and Member States should take action to ensure that farmgate prices stay above the costs of production and that healthy diets become more readily accessible. In order to do so, it will be necessary to deploy the full range of public governance tools, from hard fiscal measures to information-based approaches to make the true costs visible.

Cheap imports often imply high social and environmental costs in third countries. Without changes in EU trade policies, the objectives of the strategy will not be met. Hence, the Committee urged the EU to ensure true reciprocity of standards in preferential trade agreements.

Furthermore, the Committee expressed the view that the strategy failed to address sustainable land management and access to land. This is a major omission given that it represents one of the main obstacles to renewal of the farming population, without which the EU's basis for sustainable and productive farming will be lost.

Finally, the EESC noted that the option of a European Food Policy Council, as put forward in previous EESC opinions, should be explored (including its financial viability). Food policy councils already exist at local level, bringing together diverse food system actors across a specific area to resolve challenges, reconnecting cities to food production in the surrounding regions and ensuring effective governance of local and regional food policies.

In [NAT/789](#) on Towards an EU strategy on sustainable consumption (2020), the EESC called for a comprehensive EU strategy on sustainable consumption. The most sustainable choice should be the easiest choice for citizens. This requires a systemic change in the way we produce and consume. In

particular, the responsibility of producers to address unsustainable consumption needs to be better acknowledged. As markets will not deliver sustainable outcomes automatically, a strategy is necessary to create the regulatory context and strategic direction both for the private sector (including through circular and sustainable business models) and for public authorities (e.g. through public procurement).

The social dimension must be fully integrated in the strategy along with the economic and environmental dimensions, to achieve a much-needed policy coherence for sustainable development. Moreover, an EU strategy on sustainable consumption should pay particular attention to the impact on vulnerable populations and low-income households, which have been – and will continue to be – particularly hit by the current crisis, while also looking at the impact on vulnerable actors in supply chains, including farmers and workers. Sustainable products and services should be made accessible and affordable to all.

In the context of the post-COVID recovery, the EESC called on the Commission, the Parliament and Member States to work closely with the EESC on developing a substantial and coordinated programme of integrated policies that will help Europe "build back better" and create the conditions for a comprehensive EU strategy for sustainable consumption.

The EESC recommended the following specific actions for implementation:

- Introduce product norms and bans fostering sustainability, i.e. those promoting product longevity and sustainability
- Prohibit Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs)
- Improve the competition rules for collective initiatives that promote sustainability in supply chains
- Make social and environmental clauses in trade agreements enforceable
- Improve corporate accountability and increase the awareness of companies on the environmental (e.g. EMAS) and social aspects
- Introduce tax shifts from labour to resource use
- Promote fair and green public procurement, with minimum mandatory criteria
- Improve transparency by introducing mandatory labelling rules on origin, sustainability and the social dimension
- Encourage bottom-up initiatives and pilot interventions
- Address advertisement and marketing
 - Promote education on sustainable consumption.

In [NAT/755](#) on **Promoting healthy and sustainable diets in the EU (2019)**, the EESC acknowledged and supports the existing initiatives by the Commission to promote healthy and sustainable diets, for example the inclusion of provisions in the latest CAP reform proposal to improve the response of EU agriculture to societal demands on food and health including safe, nutritious and sustainable food, food waste and animal welfare. However, a coordinated approach to these initiatives is missing.

The complexity of the food-health-environment-society nexus requires a more comprehensive approach on diets, not just related to consumers' behaviour. To provide cohesion and shared purpose, the EESC calls for the development of new Sustainable Dietary Guidelines, which take into account cultural and

geographical differences between and within Member States. Simply reducing the use of resources in production and changing ingredients does not translate into better or healthier diets.

New Sustainable Dietary Guidelines would help create clearer direction for farms, processors, retailers and foodservice. The agri-food system would benefit from a new "framework" to produce, process, distribute and sell healthier and more sustainable food with a fairer price.

The EESC called for the creation of an Expert Group to formulate Europe-wide sustainable dietary guidelines within two years. This should include relevant professional and scientific bodies from nutrition, public health, food, environmental and social sciences. The Committee expressed its readiness to contribute to the work of such an Expert Group to provide the input of civil society organisations, particularly through its Temporary Study Group on Sustainable Food Systems.

The EESC reiterated the importance of investing in education on sustainable diets from an early age, to help young people appreciate the "value of food". Special attention must be paid to vulnerable groups, especially people on low incomes.

The EESC highlighted that a common European food labelling approach reflecting the Sustainable Dietary Guidelines would improve transparency and discourage the use of unnecessarily cheap raw materials that are both unhealthy and unsustainable (e.g. trans fats, palm oil and excess sugars). Consumers would benefit from extension to food labelling, to include environmental and social aspects. This would help drive consumers' choices towards healthier and more sustainable options.

Besides helping the commercial sector, Sustainable Dietary Guidelines would also provide common, clear criteria for use in public procurement. Europe needs food to be at the heart of a Green Public Procurement (GPP). In this context, the EESC calls for the revision of EU GPP criteria for food and catering services to be urgently adopted.

Finally, the EESC underlined that the full range of public governance tools should be considered as policy instruments to discourage the production and consumption of unhealthy foodstuffs and to promote healthy eating habits. The externalised costs of unsustainable diets are a "hidden" burden on society, economy and the environment which must be reduced or internalised. The Committee called for proper policy strategies to implement sustainable dietary guidelines, especially focusing on the co-benefits for farmers and businesses.

In [NAT/711](#) on Civil society's contribution to the development of a comprehensive food policy in the EU (2017), the EESC reiterated its call for the development of a comprehensive food policy in the EU, with the aim of providing healthy diets from sustainable food systems, linking agriculture to nutrition and ecosystem services, and ensuring supply chains which safeguard public health for all sections of European society. A comprehensive EU food policy should improve coherence across food-related policy areas, restore the value of food and promote a long-term shift from food productivism and consumerism to food citizenship.

The Committee noted that the current EU policy framework was not suited to making the transition to more sustainable food systems, in order to ensure the effective implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as of the right to food and the other human rights. While the current

policy frameworks may have been successful in addressing individual problems, they do not provide the collective coherence needed to address the range of challenges that global and EU food systems are expected to face in the future. The EESC, therefore, highlighted that existing EU policy tools need to be realigned and harmonised in order to deliver environmentally, economically and socio-culturally sustainable food systems. The EESC also reiterated that a comprehensive food policy should be complementary to – not replace – a reshaped CAP.

The EESC stressed the need to maintain a culture that values the nutritional and cultural importance of food, as well as its social and environmental impact. In this respect, the rich array of food and regional/local specialities available in the EU is a real asset and, as such, should be further valorised. A comprehensive food policy should foster an increased appreciation of food by consumers, promote food waste prevention and reduction, and help reintegrate and realign the price of food with other values. In particular, it should ensure fair prices for producers so that farming remains viable.

The EESC emphasised that all stakeholders across the food supply chain have a role to play in the development of a comprehensive framework, so as to achieve a fair distribution along the chain. No individual sector can do this alone. A comprehensive food policy should harness industry and retail power to accelerate the consumer shift towards sustainability. The transition to sustainable food systems also requires engaged consumers to become active food citizens.

The EESC called for a new smart system on sustainable food labelling. Policies have focused on nutrition and other health claims, but the EESC noted rising concerns about the lack of consumer information on the environmental and social impact of food. The food industry is aware that it can tackle environmental impacts up to a point, but ultimately consumers need to be engaged and information must be provided.

In order to support the establishment of a comprehensive framework bringing together EU food-related policies, the EESC proposed in the short/medium-term to create a cross-sectorial and inter-institutional task force, involving different Commission DGs and other EU institutions. This task force would be responsible for developing an Action Plan on Food Sustainability, with the aim of helping the EU implement food-related SDGs. The Action Plan should be developed through a participatory process involving stakeholders across the food supply chain, civil society and researchers. The EESC would suggest organising and developing a space for civil society to get involved and actively participate in this process.

In particular, the EESC recommended developing an EU sustainable food scoreboard, which would allow food systems challenges to be addressed through a multi-year approach, thereby promoting policy alignment at different levels of governance. The scoreboard would provide indicators and would thus encourage and monitor progress towards meeting targets set.

In [NAT/642](#) on Fruit and milk in schools (2014), the EESC supported the creation of a common legal and financial framework for the EU's school fruit and milk schemes, which until now have been managed and funded separately.

The EESC especially welcomed the greater emphasis placed on pedagogical support in the scheme, which, if the potential were fully realised, would contribute significantly to tackling child obesity and food waste.

The Committee expected to see substantial administrative and organisational streamlining; the Member States should be given sufficient scope for their own priorities and specific circumstances.

The EESC underlined the profound importance of balanced nutrition for children and school pupils. Poverty, which has increased as a result of the financial and economic crisis, is a significant risk factor in terms of children's and adolescents' nutrition. An alarmingly high number of children go to school each day on an empty stomach. Growing obesity and food waste are both serious social challenges. Furthermore, the EESC particularly welcomed the stronger emphasis on pedagogical support by the EU, and feels that this vindicates the Committee's previous recommendations. Instilling healthier eating habits in children of school age and fostering an understanding of agriculture and food supply chains should be seen by the state as well as by schools, parents, agri-food businesses, civil society and the media as a duty and a civic task to which everyone can contribute.

The Committee also strongly supported the proposal for more opportunities to foster understanding of the local agri-food sector, including its products, work and social benefits, for instance by creating school gardens, through school trips or product tastings on farms and in craft workshops, or by passing a 'nutritional driving test'. The EESC considers the approach followed in some Member States, whereby farmers deliver milk directly to schools and are thus in constant contact with children, to be exemplary.

Finally, the EESC recommended that clear priority be given to sustainable European products that are as fresh, seasonal and regional/local as possible.

5. List of organisations consulted

Organisation Name	Member State	Consultation Via Online Questionnaire	Consultation Via Meetings
Maa- ja metsätaloustuottajain Keskusliitto – MTK	Finland	X	X
Suomen Vanhempain Liito (Finnish Parents' League)	Finland	X	X
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Finland		X
Finnish National Agency for Education (Opetushallitus)	Finland	X	X
Valio Oy	Finland	X	X
Ruokakasvatusyhdistys Ruukku ry (Finnish Society for Food Education Ruukku)	Finland	X	X
Ruokavirasto (Finnish Food Authority)	Finland	X	X
Conseil économique, social et environnemental (Commission Territoires, Agriculture et Alimentation)	France	X	
Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles (FNSEA)	France		X
Protection sociale travail emploi (CFDT)	France		X
Fédération des conseils de parents d'élèves (FCPE)	France		X
Fédération des parents d'élèves de l'enseignement publique (PEEP)	France		X
Direction Générale de la performance économique et environnementale des entreprises (Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Souveraineté Alimentaire)	France		X

Direction Générale de l'Alimentation (Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Souveraineté Alimentaire)	France		X
GECO Food Service	France		X
Syndicat national des entreprises de restauration et services (SNERS)	France		X
Sysco	France		X
Slow Food France	France		X
Les professionnels du négoce/Confédération des grossistes de France (CGF)	France		X
Groupe POMONA	France		X
LE SAINT	France		X
Caisse des Ecoles du 5 ^e arrondissement de Paris	France		X
Cuisine centrale de Rouen	France		X
Association française des Diététiciens nutritionnistes (AFDN)	France		X
Caisse des Ecoles du 13 ^e arrondissement de Paris	France		X
Caisse des Ecoles du 19 ^e arrondissement de Paris	France		X
Associations familiales catholiques	France		X
Syndicat de la restauration collective	France		X
Association nationale des directeurs de la restauration collective (Agores)	France		X
Association de parents d'élèves de l'enseignement libre (APEL)	France		X
Restau'Co	France		X
Ville de Paris	France	X	
Restaurant scolaire	France	X	
CNIEL	France	X	
Association Les Voyageurs	France	X	
L'Atelier du Placard	France	X	
Mairie CGRE de Toulonne	France	X	
Mairie de Saint-Chamas	France	X	
Mairie de Mouans Sartoux	France	X	
Ville de Tours	France	X	
Ville de Brest (Finistère)	France	X	
SYM Pyrénées Méditerranée	France	X	
API Restauration	France	X	
L'école comestible	France	X	
Lycée Voltaire (Wingles)	France	X	
Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU)	Ireland	X	X
Individual Primary school teacher	Ireland	X	
Department of Education	Ireland	X	X
Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)	Ireland		X
School of Public Health, Physiotherapy, and Sport Science – University College Dublin	Ireland		X
Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association	Ireland		X
Irish Farmers Association	Ireland		X
Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland	Ireland		X
Newport College	Ireland	X	
St Ailbe's school	Ireland	X	
Real Nation Ltd	Ireland	X	
Bord Bia – Irish Food Board	Ireland	X	X
Safefood	Ireland	X	
BOS Management Ltd	Ireland	X	
Glanmore Foods Ltd	Ireland	X	X

Akmenės rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
School Parents' board (Tėvų komiteta)	Lithuania	X	X
Association of Lithuanian Municipalities	Lithuania		X
Lithuanian Association of Organic Farms	Lithuania		X
Alytaus miesto savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania	Lithuania	X	
Birštono savivaldybė	Lithuania	X	
Biržų rajono savivaldybės administracijos Švietimo, kultūros ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkai Atgimimo school	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkų "Saulės" pagrindinė mokykla	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkų lopšelis-darželis "Bitutė"	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkų lopšelis-darželis „Žibutė“	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkų sav. Leipalingio progimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Druskininkų savivaldybės Viečiūnų progimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Elektrėnų savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Ignalinos rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Jonavos r. savivaldybės administracijos Švietimo, kultūros ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Jurbarko "Ažuoliuko" mokykla	Lithuania	X	
Jurbarko r. savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Kaišiadorių lopšelis-darželis "Žvaigždutė"	Lithuania	X	
Kaišiadorių r. Kruonio gimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Kaišiadorių r. Rumšiškių Antano Baranausko gimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Kaišiadorių r. Žaslių pagrindinė mokykla	Lithuania	X	
Kaišiadorių r. Žiežmarių gimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Kaunas City Municipality	Lithuania	X	
Kauno rajono savivaldybės administracijos Kultūros, švietimo ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Kazlų Rūdos Kazio Griniaus gimnazija	Lithuania	X	
Kėdainių rajono savivaldybė	Lithuania	X	
Kelmės rajono savivaldybės administracijos Švietimo, kultūros ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Klaipėdos miesto savivaldybė	Lithuania	X	
Kupiškio rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Lazdijų rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
LEUA	Lithuania	X	
Lr Žemės Ūkio Rūmai	Lithuania	X	X
Marijampolės savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Mažeikių lopšelis-darželis "Eglutė"	Lithuania	X	X
Ministry of Agriculture of Lithuania	Lithuania	X	
Ministry of Health of Lithuania	Lithuania	X	X
Nidos lopšelis-darželis "Ažuoliukas"	Lithuania	X	
Panevėžio miesto savivaldybės administracijos Švietimo skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Panevėžio rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Pasvalio rajono savivaldybės administracijos Švietimo ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Pravieniškių lopšelis-darželis Ažuoliukas	Lithuania	X	
Prienų rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Raseinių rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Rokiškio rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Šalčininkų r. Švietimo ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Šiaulių miesto savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	

Šiaulių rajono savivaldybės švietimo ir sporto skyrius	Lithuania	X	
Šilalės rajono savivaldybė	Lithuania	X	
Švenčionių rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Tauragės rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Telšių rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Ukmergės rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Varėnos rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Vilkaviškio rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Vilniaus miesto savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Vilniaus rajono savivaldybė	Lithuania	X	
Vilniaus rajono savivaldybės administracija	Lithuania	X	
Visaginas municipal administration	Lithuania	X	
VšĮ Kaimo verslo ir rinkų plėtros agentūra	Lithuania	X	X
Agency for payments and intervention in agriculture (APIA)	Romania		X
National Institute of Public Health (CNEPSS – INSP)	Romania		X
CSJ Bacau	Romania		X
Senapan	Romania		X
BioCarpathia	Romania		X
FRULER	Romania		X
Relay Adina	Romania		X
LAPAR	Romania		X
Association of private schools (ASP)	Romania		X
CSDR	Romania		X
FSA Terra	Romania		X
School 49	Romania		X
Slow Food	Romania		X
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR)	Romania		X
"Simion Barnutiu" school, Zalau	Romania	X	
Agrosemcu Srl	Romania	X	X
Individual student	Romania	X	
Asociatia Albinute Vesele	Romania	X	
Bio România Asociation	Romania	X	X
Centrul Școlar pentru Educație Incluzivă	Romania	X	
Centrul Scolar Pentru Educatie Incluziva Mihalцени	Romania	X	
Colegiul De Arte Baia Mare	Romania	X	
Colegiul Economic Pinteazul Cavnic	Romania	X	
Colegiul National "Vasile Alecsandri", IASI	Romania	X	
Colegiul Național Al.I.Cuza	Romania	X	
Colegiul National Andrei Muresanu	Romania	X	
Colegiul Național Emil Botta-Adjud	Romania	X	
Colegiul National Emil Racovita	Romania	X	
Colegiul National Grigore Moisil	Romania	X	
Colegiul Pedagogic Vasile Lupu Iasi	Romania	X	
Comuna Corunca	Romania	X	
Comuna Dumesti	Romania	X	
Comuna Eremitu	Romania	X	
Comuna Galesti	Romania	X	
Comuna Magherani	Romania	X	
Comuna Oșorhei	Romania	X	
Comuna Sânpaul	Romania	X	
Consiliul Judetean Calarasi	Romania	X	
Consiliul judetean Cluj	Romania	X	
Consiliul Județean Mureș	Romania	X	

Consiliul Judetean Vrancea	Romania	X	
Directia De Sanatate Publica Calarasi	Romania	X	
Droj Calina	Romania	X	
Gr.P.P.nr.1 Odobesti	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu PN Nr 4, Unirea Odobesti	Romania	X	
Grădinița P.P. Chișineu-Criș	Romania	X	
Grădinița "Arlechino"	Romania	X	
Gradinita "CLOPOȚEL"	Romania	X	
Gradinita Confesionala cu PP "Sf. Ana"	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu P. Nr. "Lumea Piticilor" Structura 1 Dej	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu P.P. PINOCCHIO Câmpia Turzii	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu P.P. SFÂNTA MARIA TURDA	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu P.P. Paradisul Piticilor Dej	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu PN Nr. 3 Odobesti	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu PN Zana Zorilor	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu P.P. Aschiuta	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu P.P. Nr. 1 Odobesti	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu Program Prelungit "ARICI POGONICI"	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu Program Prelungit Manocska-Tg.Secuiesc	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu program prelungit nr 1 Odobești	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu Program Prelungit Nr. 14 Arad	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu Program prelungit nr.1 Odobești, Vrancea	Romania	X	
Gradinita cu program prelungit Piticot Cehu Silvaniei	Romania	X	
Grădinița cu Program Prelungit Piticot Dej	Romania	X	
gradinita nr.44	Romania	X	
Inspectoratul Școlar Județean Bacău	Romania	X	
Judetul Neamt	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Sebis	Romania	X	
Liceul "Ioan Buteanu" Gurahont	Romania	X	
Liceul cu Program Sportiv Arad	Romania	X	
Liceul cu Program Sportiv Cluj Napoca	Romania	X	
Liceul De Arte Plugor Sandor	Romania	X	
Liceul Special pentru Deficienti de Vedere	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic "Al.I.Cuza" Panciu	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic Beliu	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic De Construcții Și Protecția Mediului Arad	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic Ion Creangă	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic Nr.1 Fundulea	Romania	X	
Liceul Tehnologic Stefan Hell Santana	Romania	X	
Liceul Teologic Adventist Maranatha	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Duiliu Zamfirescu", Odobesti, Vrancea	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Gelu Voievod" Gilau	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Gheorghe Lazar" Pecica	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Grigore Gheba" Dumitresti	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Ion Neculce" Tg. Frumos	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Lucian Blaga" Cluj-Napoca	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "Mihai Veliciu" Chișineu-Criș	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic "O Goga", Huedin	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Apaczai Csere Janos	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Avram Iancu	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Bulgar Hristo Botev	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Eugen Pora	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Ioan Slavici	Romania	X	

Liceul Teoretic Kemény Zsigmond-Gherla	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Pavel Dan Campia Turzii	Romania	X	
Liceul Teoretic Petru Maior Gherla	Romania	X	
Liceulu de Informatica Tiberiu Popoviciu	Romania	X	
Individual parent	Romania	X	
Municipiul Reghin	Romania	X	
Individual parent	Romania	X	
Oras Miercurea Nirajului	Romania	X	
Rcs Rds Sa	Romania	X	
Sălătioan Rodica	Romania	X	
Sc Pif&Lms Company Srl	Romania	X	
Individual teacher	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Baita De Sub Codru	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Adrian Paunescu"	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Al. I. Cuza" Podu Iloaiei	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Aron Cotruș" Arad	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Ăvram Iancu"Dej	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Contantin Brâncuși"	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Ioan Alexandru" Sânpaul	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Ioanid Romanescu" Romanesti	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Lia Manoliu"	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Liviu Rebreanu"	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Simion Bărnuțiu"	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Stefan Pascu" -Apahida	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Andrei Saguna"	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Avram Iancu" Belis	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Barbu Șt. Delavrancea" Năruja	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Gyulaffy László" Cehu Silvaniei	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Pelaghia Roșu" Mărișel	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Principele Radu" Adjud-Vrancea	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Simion Balint" Copaceni	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Ștefan Cicio-Pop" Conop	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Alexandru Vaida Voevod"Bobalna	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Simion Barnutiu" zalau	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Avram Iancu" Arad	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Constantin Brâncuși"	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Emil Isac" Cluj-Napoca	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Ion Simionescu" Iasi	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Tabajdi Karoly" Zerind	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Titu Maiorescu"	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Ioan Slavici" Șiria	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Regina Maria"	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Adrian Paunescu Focsani	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Al.Vaida Voevod	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Apor Istvan Sanzieni	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Boghesti	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Bontida	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Borănești	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Buza	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Călărași	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Călățele	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Câmpuri	Romania	X	

Școala Gimnazială Căpușu Mare- Școala Primară Căpușu Mic	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Cârjoaia	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Câțcău	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Chelintă	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Chicerea	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Chiojdeni	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Chiuiеști	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Cojocna	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Cosâmbеști	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Craiva	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Cristian Herbei Varadia de Mures	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Cuzdrioara	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Fitionești	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Frata	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Gaal Mozes Baraolt	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Gagești	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Gârbău	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Godri Ferenc	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Gura Calіței	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Internationala Spectrum Iasi	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Ioan Opris Turda	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Ion Creanga	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Ion Creanga	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Iuliu Hațieganu Panceu	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Jaristea	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Kos Karoly Izvoru Crisului	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Luna de Sus	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Mihai Viteazul Campia Turzii	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Milcovul	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Milosesti	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Mintiu Gherlii	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Moldovenesti	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nănești	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Negreni	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nicolae Iorga Focsani	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nireș, com.Mica, Jud.Cluj	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Românași	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nr. 3 Slobozia	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Biliesti	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Gârbou	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Rus	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 192	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nr. 2 Bordeasca Veche	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Boghis	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Gherla	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Oțelu Roșu	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 1 Sindrilari	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 197	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Nr. 3 Slobozia	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Octavian Goga Cluj Napoca	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Olari	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Paltin	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Peregu Mare	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Petre Ghelmez	Romania	X	

Scoala Gimnazială Recea	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Rediu	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Romulus Cioflec	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Ruginesti	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Serbanesti	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Sfantul Calinic De La Cernica	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Simion Bărnuțiu Zalău	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Simion Mehedinti Soveja	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Speciala pentru Deficienti de Auz "Kozmutza Flora" Cluj Napoca	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Spiru Haret Oltenita	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Spulber	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Tarnova	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Traian Darjan	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială Vârteșcoiu	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială Vizantea Razaseasca	Romania	X	
Scoala Gimnazială "Andrei Saguna" Turda	Romania	X	
Școala Gimnazială "Pavel Covaci" Macea	Romania	X	
Școala Gmnazială "Ioanid Romanescu", Voinești	Romania	X	
Scoala Negrulesti	Romania	X	
Scoala Primara Kinderland (Cu Gradinita)	Romania	X	
Scoala Primară Podeni, Moldovenești	Romania	X	
Școala Profesională Specială SAMUS	Romania	X	
Scoala Profesionala Tatarusi	Romania	X	
Scoala Simion Bărnuțiu Zalău	Romania	X	
Secondary Special School No. 7	Romania	X	
Simion barnutiu school	Romania	X	
Simultan SRL	Romania	X	X
studio atletica zalau	Romania	X	
UAT Judetul Ilfov - Consiliul Judetean	Romania	X	
Total		294	63