

## EUROPEAN SOFT DRINKS INDUSTRY TO STOP SALES OF SUGARY DRINKS IN EU SECONDARY SCHOOLS – EUROPEAN VENDING ASSOCIATION RESPONSE.

UNESDA expands existing policy of no soft drinks in primary schools to cease sales of drinks containing added sugars in over 50,000 schools.

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### UNESDA POLICY

The European soft drinks industry represented by UNESDA, recently announced that it will voluntarily cease sales of drinks containing added sugars to secondary schools across the European Union. This pledge maintains and expands UNESDA's existing policy - first introduced in 2006 - not to sell any beverages in primary schools nor advertise any beverages to children under 12.

The voluntary move will impact 50,000 secondary schools and more than 40 million young people in 28 countries. Complete implementation is expected by the end of 2018, when UNESDA member companies will provide only no and low calorie soft drinks in secondary schools.

The expanded policy is the latest milestone in the European soft drinks industry's efforts to contribute to reducing obesity levels. Earlier this year UNESDA pledged to reduce added sugars in beverages by 10% by 2020, building on the 12% reduced already delivered from 2000 to 2015. UNESDA's members include brands such as Coca-cola, Fanta, Lipton, Oasis, Orangina, Pepsi, Schweppes and Sprite, and the new commitment has been widely welcomed by stakeholders and aligns with action calls from the EU Plan for Childhood Obesity, EU Council Conclusions June 2017, and the World Health Organisation 'Child and Adolescent Health' Report 2017.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR VENDING

- The policy impacts all retail channels within the school environment including e.g. canteens, tuck shops and vending machines;
- No soft drinks with added sugars to be sold in secondary schools;
- Zero/no added sugar drink variations still allowed;
- Vending machines in secondary schools to be unbranded to reflect the non-commercial aspect of school environments (in force since 2006);
- No soft drinks sold in primary schools (in force since 2006);
- Impacts products, but not machines - Operators can continue to place machines in school environments.



#### European Vending Association

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## EVA POSITION

While it is clear that fighting obesity must be a multifaceted approach, incorporating education, provision of healthier products and environments, in combination with a more active lifestyle, the European Vending Association acknowledges that industry associations must push their members to do their utmost to play their part to combat obesity, ideally as joint actions. The EVA therefore commends UNESDA on this proactive and voluntary industry step.

This being said, EVA Members feel that a policy supporting an educational choice by secondary school children would potentially be more of a long-term solution. For example, a policy whereby a restriction (but not a ban) on full sugar soft drinks implemented in schools & requiring zero/no added sugar soft drinks products to be supplied, would be a more fitting beverage policy for vending operators to fully support. Product restrictions, perhaps in combination with educational health messages placed on vending machines, would also

"A policy encouraging an educated choice for secondary school children could be a more long term solution"

empower secondary school children to make suitable choices for themselves; something which would help them once they leave the school environment. This policy by UNESDA removes any choice for secondary school children, and does nothing to educate children to the product choices they will be faced with when outside the school gates.

Furthermore, EVA members believe that a policy like this - while potentially a step towards healthier diets - in order to make a more profound impact on the provision of healthier school environments should not solely focus on soft drinks but encompass all soft drinks supplied outside a school.

On a more general note, it must be recognised that wider societal education and cultural changes is also required, as in reality children (and particularly secondary school age children) will still be able to easily access any added sugar soft drink from e.g. the convenience store next to the school, or even within the home environment. EVA Members therefore question whether this policy will lead to any sizable difference to obesity levels in children in reality. EVA Members consider that a better method to fight against childhood obesity should be a self-regulation by all sales channels e.g. shops, supermarkets, is the best method to fight against childhood obesity.



Furthermore, the media response to the UNESDA commitment has seemed to lay the provision of full sugar soft drinks to school children solely at the feet of vending machines, and has consequently led to increased calls for vending machine bans in schools. Calls for vending machine bans in a school – or any other – environment, as opposed to product changes, would not be a policy the EVA or the vending industry could support.

The EVA would like to take this opportunity to express once again the vending industry's commitment to continue to find, implement, and support practical and workable solutions which can result in a measurable reduction on the obesity levels of society, particularly amongst school children.