

Storytelling for policymakers

EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

15 July 2022

AGENDA

Time	Item	
09:00-09:05	Introduction and objectives of the session	Jacqueline Bowman-Busato
09:05-09:10	Ice breaker	Carmen Fenollosa
09:10-09:30	Storytelling for policy advocacy	Jacqueline Bowman-Busato
09:30-10:15	Hands-on policy exercise	Jacqueline Bowman and Carmen Fenollosa

Introduction and objectives of the session

EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

Objectives of the session

- Discover the importance of storytelling for our policy advocacy work
- Practice your storytelling techniques
- Familiarise yourself with the EASO mission and messaging house

Icebreaker

EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

www.easo.org/policy | @EASOObesity | #ObesityPolicy

The elements in a story

Character

Montalbano, Livia and his colleagues

Setting

Vigàta, Sicily

Plot

Someone has been murdered, Montalbano investigates, he reaches a dead end has a breakthrough and finds the murderer

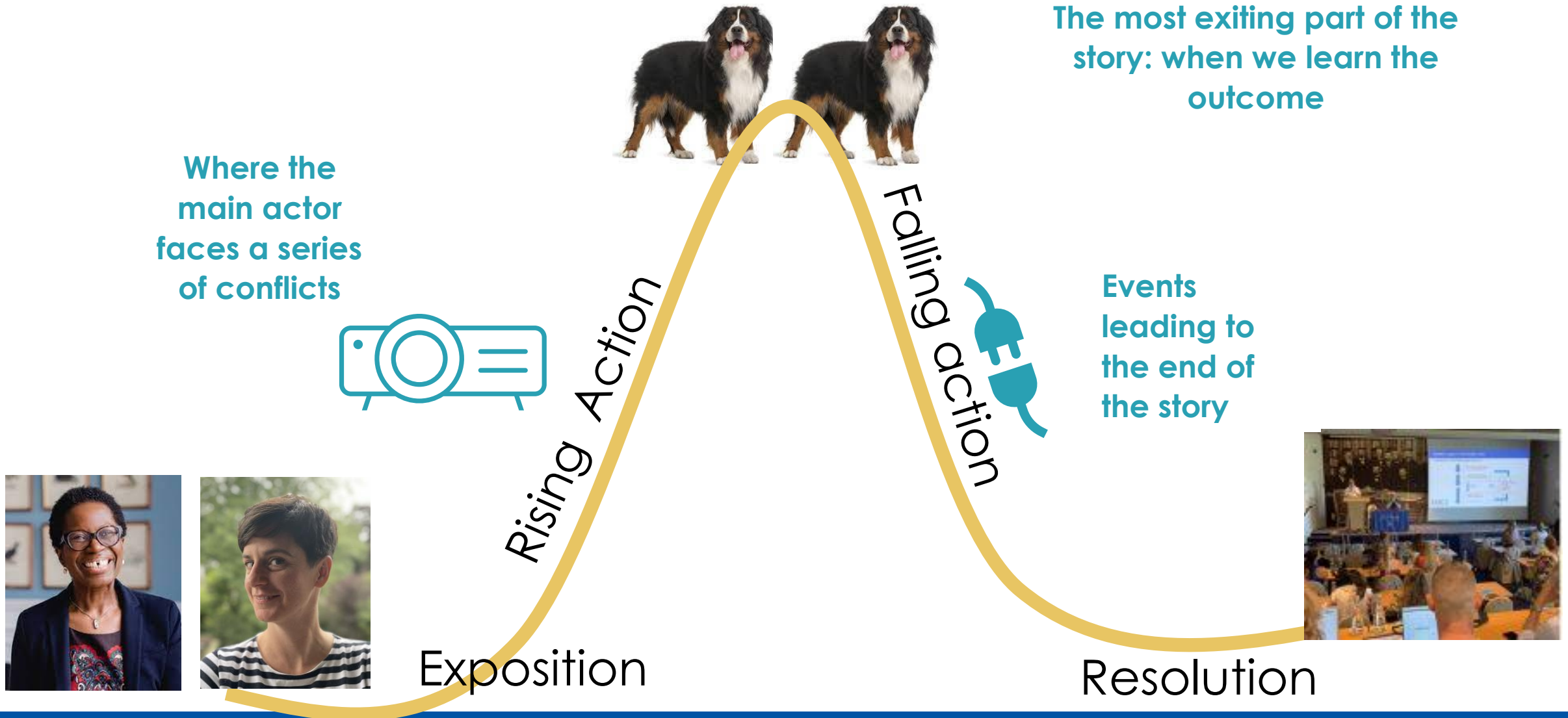
Conflict

internal conflict (his beliefs against the blind application of the law) and an external conflict (quest for a murderer, or fight against the mafia)

Theme

The search for Justice

The plot



What makes a good story?

Relatability

Identify with
the story

Accessibility

Jargon free

Articulation

Clearly
expressed

Speed

Smooth

Emotionality

Emotional
dynamics

Storytelling for policy advocacy

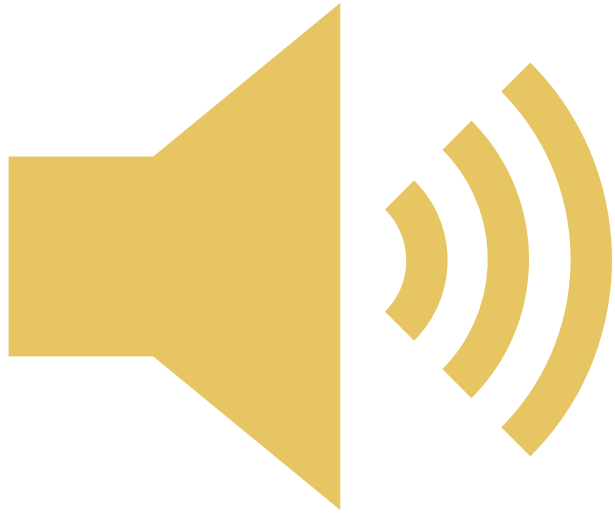
EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

www.easo.org/policy | @EASOObesity | #ObesityPolicy

What is the point of storytelling when used with policymakers?

- Do you think the story should explain what the problem is?
- Should it help you present a solution?
- Should it explain a best practice?

What is advocacy?



Advocacy is when a person or organisation / body **publicly supports** and **champions** a cause or campaign with the objective of making a change

What can advocacy achieve?

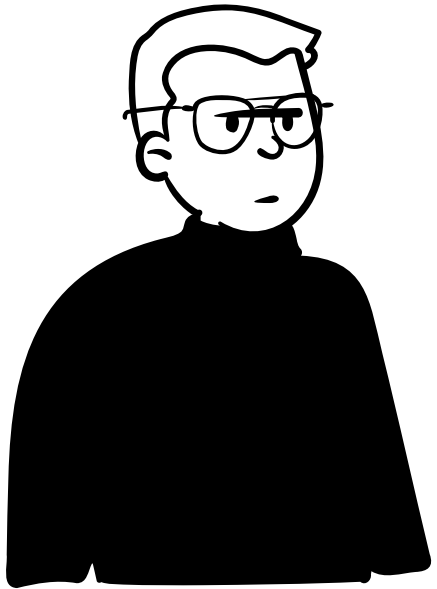
- Influence **policy makers**, regulators and other players who can bring about change
- Influence **decisions** within political, economic, social, health or educational systems
- Gain public **support** for a cause



What can does policy advocacy involve?

- **Talking with ministers and / or government**
- Collaborating with other organisations
- Encouraging community activity (including marches)
- Fundraising
- Liaising with the media

How do policy maker make decisions?



- Quick decisions
- They have wide briefs
- Policymakers look for anything that “seems reasonable, has a clear message and is available at the right time

Davies, 2005 in Young and Mendizabal 2009

And it's short...

How do you position yourself to get to your goal?

Interventions can take place on an **inside track** or **outside track**:

1. **Inside track:** cooperative relationships, the policy maker is interested in your topic
2. **Outside track:** can be more confrontational, need to build popular interest and support

Why does storytelling matter in this context?



- Empathy and motivate action (positive and negative motivations)
- Helps illustrate and relate to complex systems
- Stories can be inherently persuasive

And what makes a story good for a policy maker?

- Demonstrate **critical mass** on the issue and the **proposed solution** that can be reached **via policy**
- A story that they can repeat
- Evidence-based but that resonates with them emotionally
- It should always be preceded by a solution or your ask



I can fix this problem for you and this is the story...

Research of your audience

- Know your policymaker and tailor your story for them...
- Know their priorities, activities related to your story
- What are their values?



Context

EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

EASO: New Mission and Vision

○ EASO Mission

To improve health outcomes across society, EASO **empowers, advocates and educates** to research, prevent, diagnose, treat and manage the chronic disease of obesity along the life course

○ EASO Vision

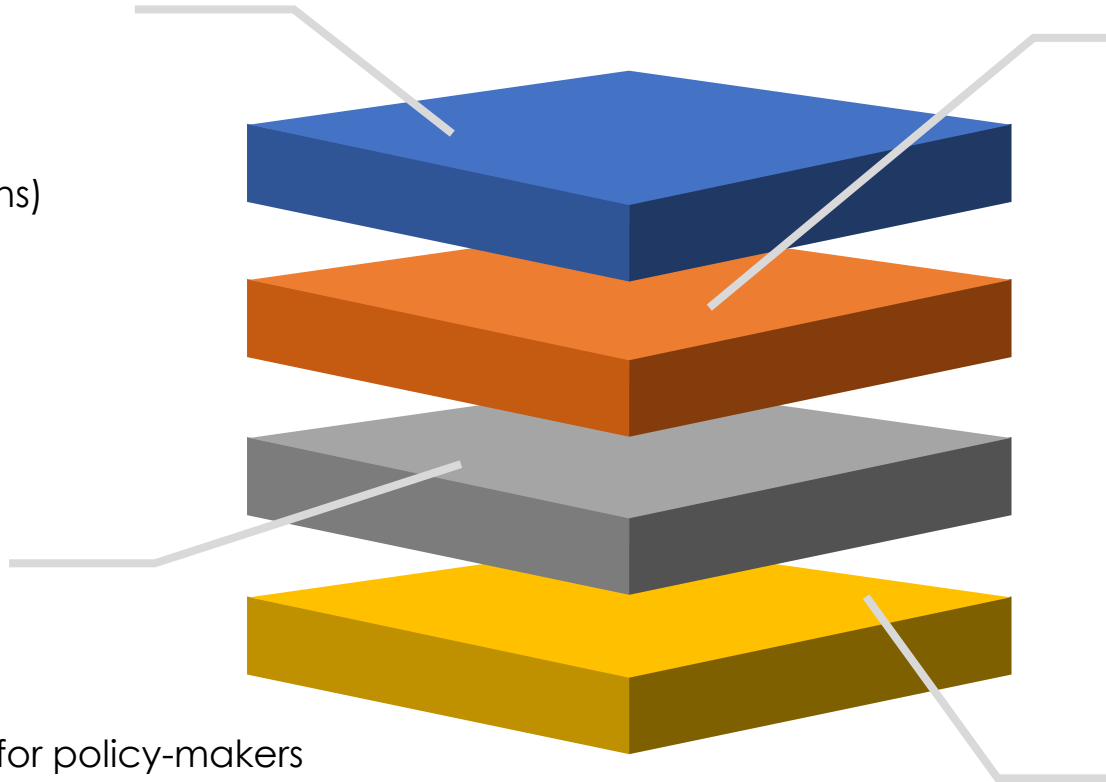
Identifying and solving the challenges of obesity through collaborative action with multidisciplinary stakeholders underpinned by a strong scientific understanding

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

- The loudest voice wins
- information overload
- Embedded myths
- Siloed working (various reasons)
- COVID-19 and beyond

CAPACITY TO CHANGE THE LAW

- People
- Consolidated narratives
- Easily digestible evidence for policy-makers
- **EASO Policy Changemaker Programme**



EASO OUTPUTS: Research, education & scientific evidence dissemination

- Contribute to evidence base
- BUT need to go BEYOND scientific community
- Need to consolidate language & narrative

LAW = Sustainable basis for change in healthcare

- **Change in International Norms – UNGA (legally binding)**
- EU Legislation Packages / Referencing of guidelines
- Prioritised in Research agendas
- **Embedded in recognised education modules (as prescribed by the law)**

Definition of obesity – scientifically accurate

WHO 1948 (ICD6 and onwards)

Overweight and obesity are defined as abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that may impair health.

[Obesity and overweight \(who.int\)](#) (updated 21 June 2021)

ICD11 Entered into Force as of 1 January 2022

Foundation URI : <http://id.who.int/icd/entity/149403041>

Obesity is **a chronic complex disease** defined by excessive adiposity that can impair health.

It is in most cases a multifactorial disease due to obesogenic environments, psycho-social factors and genetic variants.

In a subgroup of patients, **single major etiological factors can be identified (medications, diseases, immobilization, iatrogenic procedures, monogenic disease/genetic syndrome).**

Body mass index (**BMI**) is a **surrogate marker of adiposity** calculated as weight (kg)/height² (m²). The BMI categories for defining obesity vary by age and gender in infants, children and adolescents. For adults, obesity is defined by a BMI greater than or equal to 30.00 kg/m². There are three levels of severity in recognition of different management options.

European Commission 2021

Pre-obesity (overweight) and obesity are medical conditions marked by an **abnormal and/or excessive accumulation of body fat that presents a risk to health** (WHO)

Obesity is **a chronic relapsing disease, which in turn acts as a gateway to a range of other non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer**

Source: European Commission [Obesity prevention | Knowledge for policy \(europa.eu\)](#)

It matters because it acknowledges that

- Obesity comes in many shapes, shades and sizes
- The scientifically and medically **accurate definition** of obesity allows policymakers, health systems and all stakeholders to address the medical disease along the life course,
- We can all move beyond BMI

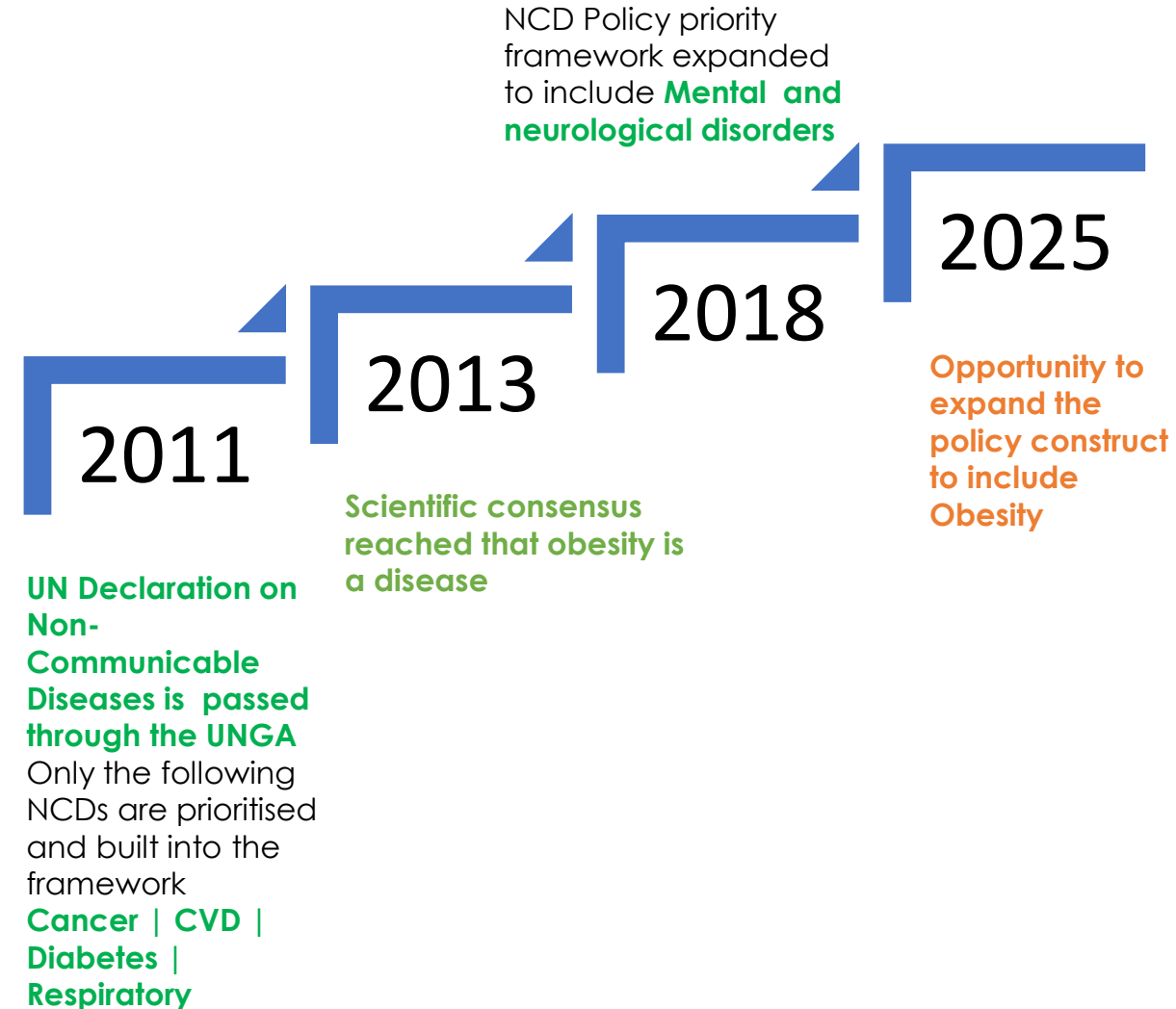


NCD Policy Framework $\neq$ Policy Construct $\neq$ Science

The World Health Organization
(WHO) defines **chronic disease management** as the “ongoing management of conditions over a period of years or decades”

SOURCE: [Tackling chronic disease in Europe \(who.int\)](#)

Screening → Early diagnosis → Diagnosis → Treatment → Long term management



The messaging house

**Obesity urgently needs to be addressed
as a chronic relapsing disease**

Obesity must be implemented as a chronic relapsing disease in NCD frameworks for national plans in order to lower premature mortality, reduce associated economic costs and fundamentally build more resilient health systems

Core message 1:

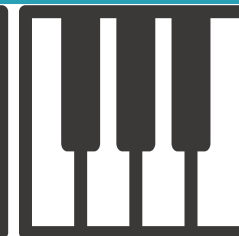
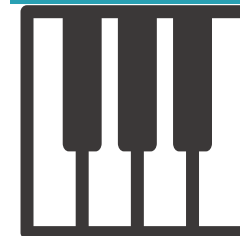
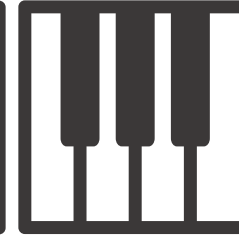
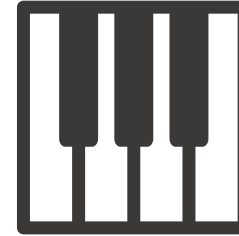
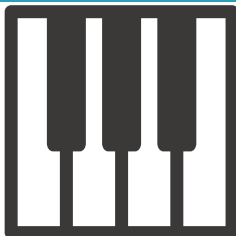
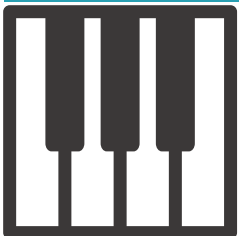
Obesity is a chronic relapsing disease on the rise causing high mortality due to it being a gateway disease to other NCDs

Core message 2:

Managing and treating obesity in line with frameworks established for other NCDs would reduce its high economic impact

Core message 3:

Managing and treating obesity as an NCD is fundamental to building national, regional and pan-regional resilient health systems



Exercise

EASO
POLICYHUB* | **CHANGEMAKER**
PROGRAMME

The exercise

- In groups of 4
- Prepare a **2 minute pitch** about Endocrine Disruptor example

15 minutes

The plot...

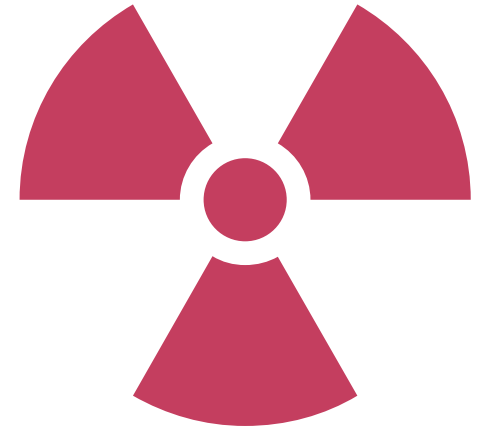
There is a new EU proposed **legislation on plastics** that includes a section on **endocrine disruptors** (ED) and how to limit their impact on the physical environment being proposed by the European Commission

There has been discussion that Bisphenol should be included in the list of materials to be banned

Objective: **All types of Bisphenols should be part of the banned list** on the grounds that they increase the risks for people at the **onset of obesity**, people **living with obesity** and causes **involuntary infertility**

The plot...

- **15 minutes** meeting with a very important policymaker
- Pitch to argue the urgency of the case and request that Bisphenols are included in the list of ED to be banned.



Our policymakers today...

Anna is a **Finish MEP** who is part of the **Green group** (European Free Alliance)

Committees:

- International trade,
- Civil liberties and Home Affairs
- Surveillance and spyware
- Maghreb Union

She describes herself as: human rights defender and feminist.

She was a city hall representative in a **very rural** area of Finland.

She is **38 years old** and is **single**.



The exercise

- In groups of 4
- **2 minute pitch**
- Use the EASO messaging house as an example
- Think which **stakeholder groups** you could be collaborating with.
- Present your pitch to our policymaker
- Remember storytelling, elements that should be included stories, the need for a problem and a solution.

15 minutes

The messaging house

**Obesity urgently needs to be addressed
as a chronic relapsing disease**

Obesity must be implemented as a chronic relapsing disease in NCD frameworks for national plans in order to lower premature mortality, reduce associated economic costs and fundamentally build more resilient health systems

Core message 1:

Obesity is a chronic relapsing disease on the rise causing high mortality due to it being a gateway disease to other NCDs

Core message 2:

Managing and treating obesity in line with frameworks established for other NCDs would reduce its high economic impact

Core message 3:

Managing and treating obesity as an NCD is fundamental to building national, regional and pan-regional resilient health systems

Final tips...

- Start with a solution or your ask, you never know when your policymaker will leave the room
- Choose one story that is clear and concise
- Share one to two details that make your story memorable
- Connect your individual story to your larger ask, data helps
- Relax and have a nice flight



Interested in our policy work?

- Advocating on obesity webinars: Registration open
- Next editions: August and December
- Set or resources including the links to Obesity Connect
- A member of EASO or the national associations? Join the policy changemaker programme
- Get involved with the Early career Network and its Young Policy Advocates network