

Project Spraoi: A strategy to improve nutrition and increase physical activity in school children

The World Health Organisation recognise overweight and obesity as the most common childhood disorder in Europe. In Ireland, the National Taskforce on Obesity has called for joined-up thinking and practical engagement to tackle the condition. If no decisive action is taken, Ireland's rising childhood obesity rates will continue. While other interventions amongst Irish schoolchildren have been effective to some degree, they have concentrated on either nutrition OR physical activity; no intervention has focussed on nutrition, physical activity and sedentary time, together.

An 'Exercise and Health Research Cluster' has recently been established in the School of Humanities at Cork Institute of Technology (CIT). This research cluster is developing a health promotion intervention which will attempt to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and decrease sedentary time amongst Irish primary schoolchildren. This project has been titled "Project Spraoi" and is based on international research ([Project Energize](#), NZ).

Major programme components will include:

- i) promotion of key messages through social marketing techniques;
- (ii) incorporation of key policies into schools;
- (iii) provision of staff into schools to structure activity programmes that are aligned with the curriculum;
- (iv) seeking opportunities to improve nutritional habits.

The proposed benefits of the intervention are improved physical activity and healthy eating behaviour, and reduced time spent engaging in sedentary activities, which should lead to lower child obesity rates. As a consequence, the cost to the State in dealing with obesity-related disorders would be significantly reduced.

The successful applicant will be part of the 'Exercise and Health Research Cluster' in Cork Institute of Technology and will be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of "Project Spraoi".