

## **SEMINAR ON TRANS FATTY ACIDS**

### **OPENING REMARKS BY MEP GYÖRGY HÖLVÉNYI**

Brussels, 4 April 2016

Dear Mr Ambassador,  
Distinguished Experts and Speakers,  
Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was a special honour for me to take part in the organization of this event.

When Ambassador Stelbaczky first presented to me the idea of holding a seminar to address the issue of trans fatty acids, a personal memory came to my mind.

In fact, TFA was not an unknown, misterious expression to my ears.

A few years ago when I was serving as state secretary in the Hungarian Ministry of Human Capacities, my learned colleague, Mr Miklós Szócska, that time state secretary for health, had strongly advocated the reduction of trans fats in the diet of the population.

Although I was responsible for religious affairs, sitting next to him during our regular meetings was up to a special training on trans fatty acids! There was even no business lunch, no small talk in the corridor without mentioning those troublemaker trans fats. 😊

As a result, I've got easily acquainted with the facts and numbers which are all based on a broad scientific consensus today:

**High consumption of trans fats not only increases the risk of coronary heart disease, but may also be associated with high risk of other cardiovascular diseases, obesity and type 2 diabetes.**

Since heart disease is the leading cause of death in the EU, **it is the crucial responsibility of the European legislator to address this issue.**

Denmark, Austria and Hungary already realized that the *status quo* is not an option and introduced legislation on the maximum tolerable level of trans fatty acids in foodstuffs. What's more, other Member States like Latvia and Slovenia also intend to follow this example.

Although, the Hungarian ban is only effective since 2014, **the beneficial effects have already been shown shortly after introduction.** The ratio of foodstuffs containing trans fatty acids over the legal limit has significantly been reduced based on monitoring data and compared to previous years.

Of course, this short period of time does not allow us to examine the public health benefits as a whole in Hungary, but let me draw your attention to the Danish case.

Denmark was the first EU Member State to limit the content of trans fats in oils for human consumption according to a law adopted in 2003. **A recent study confirmed that Danish cardiovascular mortality has decreased faster than it would have been done without the ban.**

To sum it up, I am convinced that **the most effective tool for decreasing disease burden resulting from TFA intake is setting maximum TFA content limits.**

The recently published Commission report also concluded that a legal limit for industrial TFA content would be the most effective measure for tackling the problem.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, trans fatty acids are high on the EU's and international public health agenda. Against this background there are many aspects and interest to be discussed. Therefore, I am very glad to welcome our distinguished experts and stakeholders among our speakers, as well as our participants at this seminar.

I wish you a fruitful discussion and a pleasant afternoon here at the Hungarian Permanent Representation.

*And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me give the floor to my dear colleague, Mr Peterle to hold his presentation.*

Thank you very much for your kind attention!

