

Request for advice on physical activity standards

On 19 May 2016, the President of the Health Council of the Netherlands received a request from the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport for advice on physical activity standards. (ref 914095-146948-S):

I am very grateful that the Health Council of the Netherlands has accepted the responsibility for updating the physical activity standards as part of its 2016 work programme. The existing Dutch Standard for Healthy Physical Activity (NNGB) was established in 1998.¹ This standard specifies the minimum level of physical activity that is required for health benefits. The standard is different for young people, adults and those aged 55 years and above. In addition, a second standard, the Fitnorm, defines the intensity of physical activity required to maintain cardiovascular condition. Finally, the Combinorm is a combination of the Dutch Standard for Healthy Physical Activity and the Fitnorm.² The Combinorm is used by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport as a unified measure for the physical activity habits of the Dutch population.³

I would like to ask the Health Council of the Netherlands to evaluate these standards in the light of new scientific developments. Central in this evaluation is the effect of physical activity on health. Our primary requirement is to evaluate the physical activity standards for the general population, with a specific focus on cut-off values for intensity and on new developments such as muscle-strengthening exercises and sedentary behaviour. More generally, we look forward to the findings of the Health Council of the Netherlands regarding internationally applied standards, such as the recommendations of the WHO.⁴ I would also like to receive advice on whether the various aspects of physical activity could be integrated into one standard. I would ask the Health Council of the Netherlands to produce concise standards for the three age categories mentioned above.

In addition to the substantive considerations already outlined, I would also ask the Health Council of the Netherlands to aim for measurable and implementable standards when drafting the new standard(s). The new standards will be used by many different actors in the Netherlands, such as the new Knowledge Centre for Sport Netherlands and National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). I will ask RIVM, as the coordinator for the core indicators for sports and physical activity, to translate the standards into new core indicator(s). This will allow the situation regarding the new standards in the Netherlands to be monitored over the longer term.

I look forward to receiving your advisory report in the second quarter of 2017.

Yours sincerely,

(signed)

The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport (E.I. Schippers MSc)

¹ The current Dutch Standard for Healthy Physical Activity (NNGB) was established in 1998 by the Universities of Amsterdam (VU), Maastricht, Groningen and Utrecht, RIVM, the TNO and the sports umbrella association NOC*NSF.

² The older fitness standard is based largely on US guidelines. The Combinorm is calculated using the NNGB and the fitnorm: the number of people who meet the NNGB and/or Fitnorm (Time for Sport, Physical Activity, Participation, Performance Memorandum, VWS 2005).

³ The budget statement under Art. 6 of the budget for the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport makes reference to the Combinorm.

⁴ Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2010.