



Press Release - EuroCross for a Cause ASBL

Brussels, 19 April 2017

A young Belgian ultra-runner is attempting a world record by running across Europe, from the north of Norway to the south of Spain, to raise awareness about childhood obesity.

1 in 3 children between the ages of six and nine in the European Union are now classified as overweight or obese.

The European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) has called on the EU to act now to tackle this growing epidemic. The 24th European Obesity Day (EOD) will be organised on the 20th of May, with a host of activities planned, a clear call to action is echoing throughout Member States. The theme of EOD this year is 'Tackling Obesity Together', encouraging people of all ages across the European Union to get involved.

This message is supported by EuroCross for a Cause (ECFC), a Belgian non-profit organisation founded by Ralph Mesquita to raise awareness and funds to fight childhood obesity. Ralph himself may be based in Belgium, but with a European team behind the project, ECFC intends to share a message of unity, going beyond your limits and keeping fit with as many people as they can. The network is reaching out to youth groups and running clubs all across Europe to encourage people to join the team as they cross Europe from North to South. Be it for 5, 10 or even 100km, running with Ralph, sharing experiences and educating others are all major aspects of the project.

ECFC seeks to promote a multifaceted approach to tackling obesity, encompassing not only the promotion of physical activity, but also of healthy eating and education amongst young people. This approach intends to not only drive the event this summer, but also to continue the campaign following Ralph's return.

Another goal of the project is to raise money and awareness for the European Childhood Obesity Group (ECOG), an organisation whose support ECFC is proud to have, that brings together experts from across the board including paediatricians, psychologists, nutritionists, geneticists, physical activity experts, economists and more, with the goal of helping the European community to understand the health, social, psychological and economic impacts of childhood obesity. ECOG created and maintains the 'First Free Reference eBook on Childhood and Adolescent Obesity'; an ongoing project with the goal of providing a reference point for information, both medical and general intended to promote progress in the field by integrating discoveries and sharing knowledge.

Having taken up marathon running 4 years ago, following a childhood that was influenced both by his own and his family's struggles with weight, Ralph decided to use his skills as an ultra-marathon runner to take his message around Europe.

"If I can use my experiences and story to inspire even one young person that I meet on my way from Norway to Spain – I'll be happy. Role models in sports are often the product of years of training, I want to show that whatever your age or level of experience, if you put your mind to it, you can exceed your greatest expectations." Ralph Mesquita, ECFC founder.

Obesity is entirely preventable, join us and help do more to stop it!

How can you support the project?

Spread the word, organise local runs, [follow Ralph on his journey](#)



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EVENT

The official launch of the project will take place on May 11th ECFC in conjunction with TraKKs, from 18:30 at the TraKKs Uccle store.

<https://www.trakks.be/>

WHAT are we doing? Running from the north of Norway to the south of Spain to raise awareness about childhood obesity

WHY are we doing it? To raise money for the European Childhood Obesity Group, bring people together, and talk about why we need to act to reduce childhood obesity

WHEN is this happening? This summer! July – September 2017. It will take Ralph approximately 70-75 days

WHO is running? Ralph Mesquita (with his support crew following closely behind)

WHERE is he running from? Nordkapp, Norway to Punta de Marroqui, Tarifa, Spain

Find out more: <http://ralphmesquita.com/>

More about Ralph Mesquita

He is a 25-year-old Belgo-Brazilian ultra-runner, currently ranked in the top 100 Belgian trail runners and ultra-runners. He is also a physiotherapy student who will be graduating in the summer of 2017, and a sponsored athlete for TRAKKS, a running store with their own elite team. In 2016, he finished in the top 10 of all his Belgian races, with a fastest marathon time to date of 2:54:30 in Barcelona.

More about ECOG

- Founded in 1991 by paediatricians with a unique experience in the field of child and adolescent obesity
- ECOG's members are well-known physicians, psychologist, physical activity specialists, nutritionists & health workers.
- ECOG is a European network aiming at better understanding, evaluating, preventing & treating child & adolescent obesity.
- ECOG members belong to major national scientific associations & take part to EU meetings, expertise & studies.
- Their eBook was edited thanks to the collaboration of over 30 European Universities, WHO and IOTF.

Key facts about obesity, according to the WHO

- Worldwide obesity has nearly doubled since 1980.
- In 2008, more than 1.4 billion adults, 20 and older, were overweight. Of these over 200 million men and nearly 300 million women were obese.
- 44% of the diabetes burden, 23% of the ischaemic heart disease burden and between 7% and 41% of certain cancer burdens are attributable to overweight and obesity.
- More than 40 million children under the age of five were overweight in 2011.

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