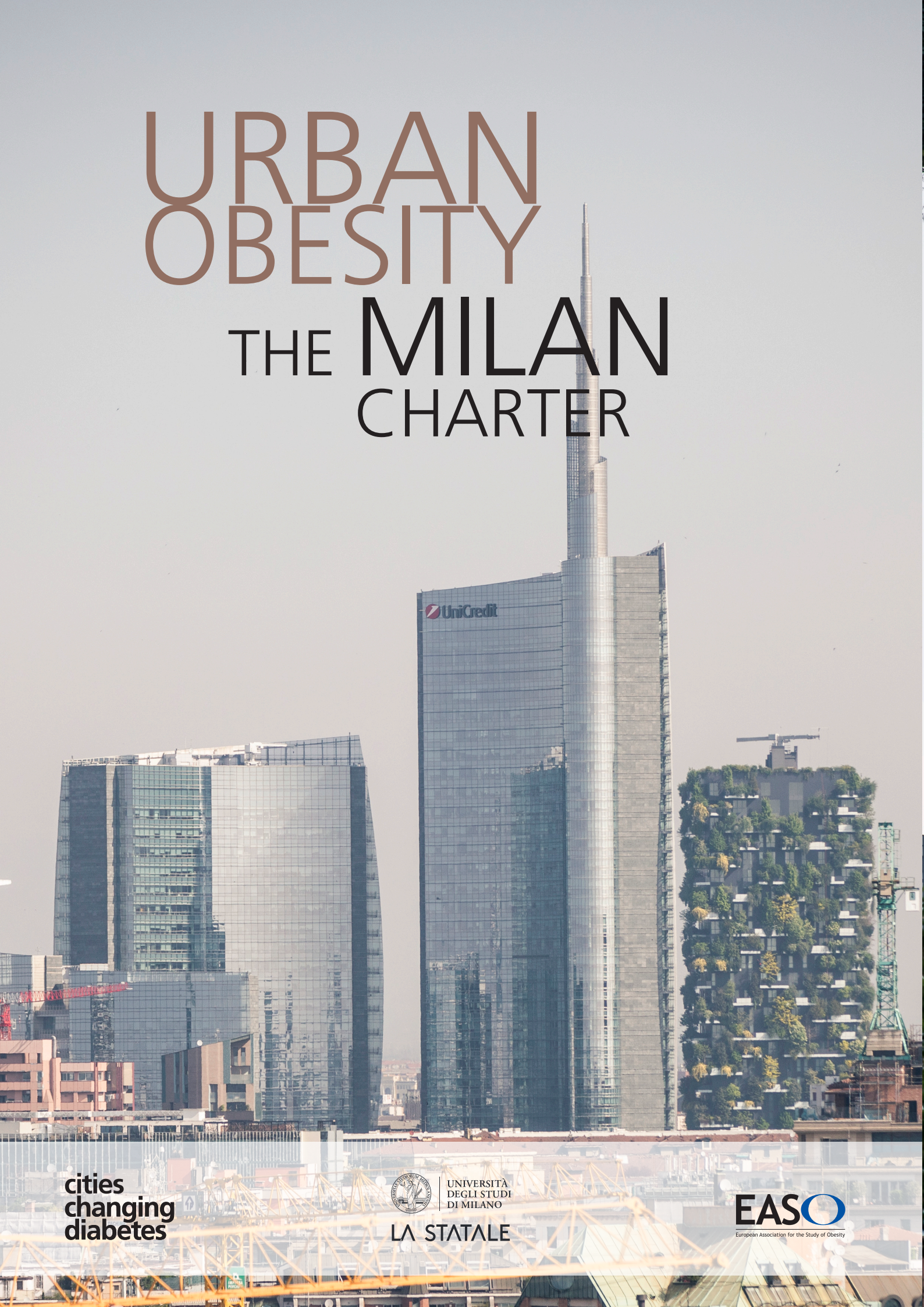


# URBAN OBESITY

## THE MILAN CHARTER



**cities  
changing  
diabetes**



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LA STATALE



European Association for the Study of Obesity

# THE MILAN CHARTER ON URBAN OBESITY

The “EASO Milan Declaration” was presented in 1999 during the European Congress on Obesity held in Milan, and was later reaffirmed during EXPO 2015.

A Call to Action was issued by European experts to recognise obesity as a disease as soon as possible, and as such be treated with the most appropriate and updated therapies. It was established that reducing the incidence and prevalence of this disease by one percentage point, avoids 1 to 3 million cases of diabetes and high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, tumours, among European citizens – an estimate that rises to 2-9 million with a 5% reduction.

The city organization and in general that of social and environmental settings influences and modifies individual emerging needs, lifestyles and expectations. All these factors should therefore be taken into account in the definition and orientation of public policies.

The relationship between health, quality of life and the environment is a crucial issue for social, environmental and medical science. The global increase of NCDs (Non-Communicable Diseases), especially obesity and diabetes, is due to higher urbanization levels, together with population ageing, more sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy food consumption. All these factors have been carefully described and reiterated in multiple official documents, both national and international.

“The Milan Charter” was signed during the 2015 Milan EXPO. This document lists the principles of healthy diets, sustainable development and environmental sustainability, whilst promoting human rights. The Charter was translated into 19 languages and was given to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the 16th of October 2015. The “Milan Charter” asks its signatories to undertake explicit commitments regarding right to food – one of the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Lack of access to healthy food, to sufficient and nutritious food, clean water and energy, represents a violation of human dignity.

The Manifesto “Health in the city: the common good”, promoted by The Health City Institute was signed in 2016. The document defines the main drivers for cities to study and improve health determinants in their urban environment and set up strategies to improve their citizens’ health and lifestyles.



In 2017, during the G7, the Ministry of Health and ANCI (the National Association of Italian Municipalities) signed the “Roma Urban Health Declaration”, a document defining strategic actions to improve health in the cities through a holistic approach needed for the individual and through a multisectoral approach for the promotion of health policies in cities.

The “Manifesto on Obesity” promoted by the Italian Obesity Network (IO-NET) was signed in 2018: it describes a roadmap to improve quality of life of people suffering from obesity.

The “Charter of Rights and Duties of the people with obesity” was signed in 2019 and promoted by IO-NET. The Charter reiterates that the rights of these individuals are identical to the human and social rights of people without obesity.

These rights include equal access to information, therapeutic education, treatment of obesity, diagnosis and control of its complications.

In 2019 the Italian Chamber of Deputies unanimously adopted a “Motion on Obesity” engaging Government on a number of actions for the prevention and care of obesity. A national plan is amongst these commitments and it is aimed at standardizing activities in the field of prevention and fight against obesity; of full access to diagnostic procedures for comorbidities and dietary treatment and care; and, in the most severe cases, of full access to second-level centres to assess psychological, pharmacological and surgical approaches.

Each of these documents inspires the creation of a sustainability pact addressing our cities, to help us facing the challenges linked to obesity and to its complex management in our contemporary world.

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*This pact is called MILAN CHARTER ON URBAN OBESITY and has been promoted by: Centre for the Study and Research on Obesity (CSRO) of the Università degli Studi di Milano, in cooperation with the Municipality of Milan, the Region of Lombardy, ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities), the Parliamentary Intergroup on Obesity and Diabetes, HCI (Health City Institute), CCD (Cities Changing Diabetes) network, IO-NET (Italian Obesity Network), OPEN (Obesity Policy Engagement Network), SIO (Italian Obesity Society), SIP (Italian Society of Paediatrics), SIEDP (Italian Society of Paediatric Endocrinology and Diabetology), ADI (Italian Association of Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition), IBDO Foundation (Italian Barometer Diabetes Observatory), SIMG (Italian Society of General Medicine and Primary Care), Amici Obesi onlus (Friends of PwO association) and CittadinanzAttiva (Active Citizenship association).*

*“Togheter  
to fight a new  
disease:  
Obesity”*



**WE, WOMEN AND MEN, ADMINISTRATORS, PHYSICIANS, EXPERTS AND CITIZENS endorse** this document known as the Milan Charter on Urban Obesity, to undertake specific commitments on how to deal with Obesity as a disease, in full synergy, thus ensuring a better quality of life of people with obesity who are living in large urban areas. We are convinced that joint efforts are required to make the urban context and the environment less obesogenic and more focused on the quality of life of individuals suffering from obesity, by removing social, architectural, structural and cultural barriers which prevent them from leading a normal life.

We believe that the synergic work accomplished by multiple stakeholders will lead to truly innovative and creative efforts giving birth to processes able to overcome the major challenges linked to obesity, such as access to treatments, and to fight against the social stigma which is particularly relevant in high impact socio-demographic contexts and in large urban and metropolitan areas.

## We believe it is necessary

**TO GUARANTEE** full access to medical and scientific information, care, innovative treatments to individuals suffering from obesity in the whole urban territory;

**TO SUPPORT** people with obesity and their family members in overcoming obstacles, prejudice, mistrust and discrimination;

**TO ENCOURAGE** institutions to urgently consider obesity as a highly disabling disease, which requires specific legislative and regulatory instruments;

**TO REMOVE** architectural barriers in cities, medical centres, transportation and mobility infrastructures, workplaces, education and meeting places, preventing people with obesity from living their life to the full;

**TO ADOPT** policies aimed at reducing the supply of food and drinks contributing to obesity and at improving accessibility to healthy food;

**TO PROMOTE** nutritional education, in schools and through press and communication messaging;

**TO DISSEMINATE** accurate, well-balanced and non-partisan information, scientifically evidence-based, with proper advertising and public service announcements involving each ministry;

**TO INTRODUCE** urban planning policies and protocols aimed at improving healthy urban environments providing more green spaces to exercising as an integral part of daily life, thus ensuring their feasibility;

**TO SUPPORT** full access to care in order to improve the quality of life of individuals with obesity, and reduce the risk of disabling and/or fatal complications;

**TO CONSIDER** prevention of obesity as an urban policy objective ensuring that actions are taken in all sectors: health, education, media and culture, sustainable development and social services;

**TO INCREASE** the involvement of institutions, general practitioners and specialist physicians, citizens and media, urging them to recognise the severity of obesity as a disease;

**TO ADOPT** policies to protect people, employees and students respecting the individual regardless of his/her weight, avoiding any discrimination in society, schools and universities, in job interviews, and fighting all types of bullying and social disparity;

**TO CONSIDER** the obese individual as a person and not only as a patient, by using the term "people with obesity" and not "obese people", making sure that media do not use false and inaccurate stereotypes on obesity, as well as images undermining or devaluing their personality.

## We believe it is unacceptable that

**THE PERSON WITH OBESITY** is often a victim of prejudice and is subject to discrimination;

**THE PERSON WITH OBESITY** is a victim of cultural stereotypes, fuelled by different social contexts; images which often accompany news stories about obesity, both in the social media and in advertising campaigns using posters in cities, portray **THE PERSON WITH OBESITY** in a negative way; in many urban contexts **THE PERSON WITH OBESITY** does not get adequate attention regarding his/her disease.

**At the same time we are willing to contribute in leaving a healthier and more equitable and sustainable world to future generations, and as citizens we are committed to:**

**CONSUMING** quantities of food supplies only enough to fulfil our needs, thus avoiding food waste, donating it when in excess and preserving it at its best to avoid spoilage;

**ADOPTING** healthier lifestyles;

**AVOIDING** waste of food and water in all our daily activities, both at home and in external contexts;  
**ADOPTING** responsible behaviour and virtuous practices in order to protect the environment;  
**PROMOTING** nutritional and environmental education in the family setting for a more conscious growth of new generations;  
**CHOOSING** food supplies consciously, considering the impact of their production chain on the environment;  
**BEING** an active part in building more sustainable cities, through innovative solutions stemming from our professional competences, our creativity and talent.

### **As members of the civil society and part of the community, we are committed to:**

**MAKING OUR VOICE HEARD** at all decision-making levels, for more liveable cities;  
**REPRESENTING** the demands of the civil society in debates and in public policy processes to fight against obesity;  
**REPORTING** all forms of discrimination and stigma towards people with obesity;  
**WORKING** with city and health institutions for the removal of architectural barriers from public buildings, public transport system, sports facilities, schools, workplaces and medical centres;  
**FOSTERING** nutritional and environmental education to reach collective awareness on their importance for the future of mankind.

### **We, women and men, administrators, physicians, experts and citizens, by underwriting the Milan Charter on Urban Obesity, call on Governments and Mayors to:**

**ADOPT** regulations and laws to ensure the right to medical treatment for the person with obesity; **STRENGTHEN** the laws in favour of the person with obesity and his/her family members; **PROMOTE** the debate on obesity and healthy lifestyles in all cultural settings;  
**SUPPORT** and spread the culture of healthy food as a tool for global public health;  
**PROMOTE** a pact on nutritional strategies, both in urban and rural contexts, with reference to healthy food;  
**INCREASE** resources allocated to research on metabolic disorders, including obesity and diabetes, and transfer and disseminate results in the education and communication fields;  
**INTRODUCE** or strengthen programs of nutritional, physical and environmental education in schools and school canteens, to be used as health and prevention instruments, by enhancing particularly the knowledge and exchange of food cultures, starting from typical, organic and local products;  
**DEVELOP** measures and policies for national and regional public health systems, promoting healthy and sustainable diets and reducing nutritional imbalances;  
**PROMOTE** information campaigns aimed at citizens' increase of awareness about the relevance and the risks linked to overweight and obesity;  
**INVEST** in building an environment and a urban social context which is less obesogenic and healthier, by developing policies and infrastructures devoted to the aim.

**Since we believe that an effective fight against obesity and its spread has to start from the cities, we are committed to adopting the principles and practices enshrined in this Milan Charter on Urban Obesity, turning them into an active part of our pledge for the future of mankind and of our planet.**

# **A fair and sustainable future for people with obesity lays in our responsibility, too**



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