



Autumn Masterclass on Childhood Obesity

Bosco, Cilento, Italy
5-9 October 2026

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Welcome to the first ECOG Autumn Masterclass

Located within the breathtaking landscapes of the Parco Nazionale del Cilento, Vallo di Diano e Alburni, **Bosco** offers an unparalleled setting for our **ECOG first Masterclass on childhood obesity**. This extraordinary location, rich in natural beauty and cultural heritage, serves as the perfect backdrop for an intensive week of learning, collaboration, and inspiration.

Our masterclass brings together a highly selected group of young professionals from diverse fields to tackle one of today's most pressing public health challenges: childhood obesity. Through interactive lectures, case discussions, and close exchanges with internationally recognized experts, participants will explore the multifaceted nature of childhood obesity, delving into genetic, behavioral, pharmacological, and environmental influences.

The program is designed to broaden perspectives, deepen understanding, and foster meaningful connections across disciplines. Our masterclass aims to equip professionals with the knowledge, insights, and collaborative vision needed to promote healthier futures for children everywhere.

Join us in this unique learning environment, where inspiration meets action, and together, we contribute shaping a healthier tomorrow.

The **European Childhood Obesity Group (ECOG)** is a pan-European association of professionals dealing with childhood obesity and overweight. ECOG brings together experts from a diversity of disciplines, ranging from paediatricians, psychologists, dietitians, geneticists, physical activity experts, health economists, and more – all united by an unwavering commitment to the study and prevention of childhood obesity. ECOG was founded in 1991 with the mission of helping the European community to fully understand the health, social, psychological and economic impacts of childhood obesity.

Programme

Day 1: Monday, October 5

Arrivals

18:00 - 19:00 **Welcome Reception**
Ortega Experience

19:00 - 21:00 **Dinner**

Day 2: Tuesday, October 6

9:00 - 10:30 **Class 1 - David Thivel (University of Clermont Auvergne, France)**

10:30 - 11:00 **Break**

11:00 - 12:30 **Class 3 - Siân Hughes (Acumen Public Affairs, Belgium)**

- The power of communication: engaging stakeholders to shape healthier futures

12:30 - 14:00 **Walking Lunch to Cenobio**

14:00 - 15:30 **Class 2 - Beatrice Dubern (Trousseau Hospital, France)**

- Genetics and obesity: from diagnosis to treatment
- Case reports: from phenotype to genetic diagnosis: how to deeply analyse phenotype

15:30 - 16:00 **Break**

16:00 - 17:30 **Class 4 - Caroline Braet (Ghent University, Belgium)**

- Six psychological aspects in families having a child with overweight problems
- Practical cases, small groups, roleplaying
- Discussion: identifying psychological problems that need special referral

19:00 - 21:00 **Dinner**

Day 3: Wednesday, October 7

9:00 - 10:30 **Class 5 - Aaron Kelly (University of Minnesota, USA) & Daniel Weghuber (Paracelsus Medical School, Austria)**

- **Treatment session 1:** What we know and how we use it - lifestyle, pharmacotherapy, and clinical practice Guidelines

10:30 - 14:00 **Olive harvesting, baking bread with local olive oil producer and lunch**

14:00 - 15:30 **Class 6 - Aaron Kelly (University of Minnesota, USA) & Daniel Weghuber (Paracelsus Medical School, Austria)**

- **Treatment session 2:** The hard questions - surgery, adherence, safety, and the frontiers of treatment

16:00 - 17:30 **Walk and visit to Pianoro di Ciolandra**

19:00 - 21:00 **Dinner**

Day 4: Thursday, October 8

9:00 - 10:30 **Class 7 - Grace O'Malley (Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland)**

10.30 - 12:00 **Class 8 - Gabriel Torbahn (Paracelsus Medical University, Germany)**

- Pitfalls in the interpretation and reporting of study results and guidelines in the field of obesity treatment in children and adolescents

12.00 - 17:00 **Visit Costa della Masseta and walk in Scario**

18:00 - 21:00 **Closing Ceremony and dinner**

Day 5: Friday, October 9

Departures

Meet the faculty



Caroline Braet is Full Professor em. at Ghent University (Belgium). She obtained her MD in Psychology (specialization clinical psychology) in 1984 (magna cum laude). Afterwards, she obtained her MD in Teaching in 1985, two Postgraduate Specialisations (in Developmental Psychology in 1987 and in Cognitive Behavior Therapy in 1990) and her PhD in Psychology in 1993. For more than 10 years she was Head of the Department (2011-2024). Since 1984 she conducts research in particular on the development of childhood obesity and eating disorders, subtyping, the role of the parents, its prevention and treatment and the related psychological problems associated with the problem of overweight in children. Since 1993, she is consultant at the Medical Pediatric Obesity Center in De Haan (Belgium).

Beatrice Dubern, MD, PhD is assistant professor in the department of pediatric nutrition and gastroenterology at Trousseau hospital in Paris, France. In clinics, she is taking care of children with severe early-onset obesity or syndromic obesity and others nutritional pathologies in childhood. Her main research topic is the identification of genes implicated in early onset obesity and studied especially the role of the genes in the leptin/melanocortins pathway. She worked with Dr Christian Vaisse in San Francisco on MC4R and LEPR genes and is now part of Pr K Clement's team.



Siân Hughes is a multilingual communicator with over 25 years' experience in supporting organisations and business leaders to communicate with their internal and external stakeholders in a way that is authentic, meaningful and engaging. She has worked in corporate affairs, communications and human resources functions holding senior leadership roles in trade associations, international consultancy and C-suite positions in global businesses – from industrial manufacturing to FinTech.

Aaron Kelly is a Professor of Pediatrics, the Minnesota American Legion Chair in Children's Health, and the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Center for Pediatric Obesity Medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School. As a physiologist and clinical trialist, he has more than 20 years of experience conducting intervention studies for the treatment of pediatric/adolescent obesity and has published more than 190 peer-reviewed papers on this and related topics. Dr. Kelly's research program has been continuously funded by the National Institutes of Health since 2011. He is a leader in the field of pediatric obesity medicine and has been heavily involved in the development and evaluation of obesity medications for adolescents and children.



Dr. Grace O'Malley, Research Lecturer at Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist in Paediatrics, Temple Street Children's University Hospital. She completed a PhD in Epidemiology and Public Health at University College Cork. This work focused on the design, implementation and evaluation of multi-disciplinary interventions for adolescent obesity. She received a 2008 Fulbright award to Yale University School of Medicine, where she undertook clinical research into the pathophysiology of type 2 diabetes in children who are obese. She graduated with a BSc Physiotherapy in 2004 and MSc 2006 from the University of Dublin, Trinity College.



David Thivel is Full Professor at the Faculty of Exercise and Health Sciences at Clermont Auvergne University (Clermont-Ferrand, France). He completed a PhD in Exercise Physiology and Human Nutrition in 2011 at French the National Institute for Agronomic Research and Blaise Pascal University of Clermont-Ferrand. He mainly explores the impact of physical activity and weight variations on the behavioral and physiological control of energy intake and appetite in the context of pediatric obesity. His other research interests are in the field of physical fitness, body composition and metabolic health in pediatric populations.

Gabriel Torbahn holds a BSc degree in applied nutritional sciences and a MSc degree in public health (MPH). He has more than 15 years of practical experience treating children and adolescents living with obesity. He currently co-leads the obesity counselling centre for children and adolescents at the Department of Pediatrics at Paracelsus Medical University in Nuremberg. His main focus is the management of obesity in children and adolescents and the application of evidence-based research methodology (e.g. systematic reviews, (network) meta-analyses, clinical practice guidelines). He received training in this at Cochrane Germany and during several research projects.



Daniel Weghuber, MD, is an alumnus of Vienna Medical School. He is Professor of Pediatrics at Paracelsus Medical School (PMU) in Salzburg, Austria. Clinically, he is Head of the Department of Pediatrics, being specialized in Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition and Pediatric Endocrinology, focusing on metabolic comorbidities including glucose and fat metabolism (in particular disturbed insulin sensitivity and secretion) and phenotypes of preclinical atherosclerosis. Other areas of particular interest include mitochondrial genetics, lifestyle and pharmacological treatment of children and adolescents with obesity. He is heading the YOUNG.HOPE Research Center for Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine based in Salzburg, Austria.

Course structure & learning outcomes

An Advanced Interdisciplinary Training Programme

Childhood obesity is a complex and rapidly evolving public health challenge that requires expertise across clinical care, genetics, physical activity, communication, evidence synthesis, and policy. This masterclass offers a small, highly selected group of 13 professionals the opportunity to spend an intensive week learning directly from internationally recognised experts in these complementary fields. Through interactive lectures, case discussions, and close exchange with faculty, participants will explore how different scientific, clinical, and societal perspectives can be brought together to better understand and address pediatric obesity in research, practice, and policy.

The programme is designed for young professionals with a clear focus on childhood obesity who wish to broaden their perspective, deepen their understanding of key approaches, and reflect on how their expertise can contribute more effectively to real-world impact.

Key Themes and Learning Focus

During the masterclass, participants will have the opportunity to:

- **Explore the multifactorial nature of childhood obesity**, with focus on genetic, behavioral, pharmacological, and environmental influences, through an interdisciplinary lens.
- **Gain insight into current and emerging therapeutic approaches**, including pharmacotherapy and lifestyle-based interventions, and discuss their appropriate use in pediatric populations.
- **Examine the role of physical activity and energy metabolism** in prevention and treatment strategies, with attention to practical implementation and long-term engagement.
- **Strengthen evidence-informed thinking**, by engaging with experts in systematic reviews, data analysis, and the development of clinical practice guidelines.
- **Develop a deeper understanding of communication strategies**, including how to engage families, professionals, industry, and the public on sensitive and complex obesity-related issues.
- **Learn about policy decision-making processes and institutional relations**, exploring how scientific evidence, expert knowledge, and stakeholder engagement can inform policy development, regulation, and public health strategies for childhood obesity.

A close-up photograph of a person's arm and hand writing in a notebook. The person is wearing a yellow shirt and blue jeans. The notebook is open, and the person is using a black pen to write. The text in the notebook is handwritten and appears to be a list of items, including 'how I can help', 'in all', 'world', 'I can', 'greater', 'with', 'co', 'v', 't', 'n'.

A unique learning environment

With a maximum of 13 participants, the masterclass offers a highly interactive setting that encourages discussion, networking, and close exchange with faculty and peers. Rather than aiming to “train” participants in entirely new skills within a few days, the programme provides space to:

- Broaden perspectives
- Share experiences, learn from each other
- Discuss challenges across disciplines
- Explore how different forms of expertise can work together
- Identify opportunities for collaboration, leadership, and policy engagement

Participants will leave with fresh insights, new professional connections, and a clearer understanding of how diverse approaches — from genetics to communication to public policy.

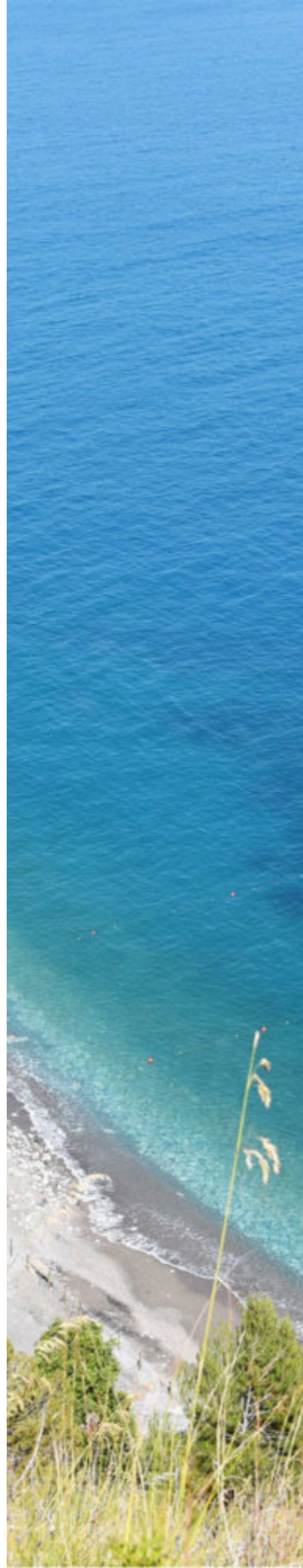
About the Location

Bosco: where inspiration meets action

Nestled within the **Parco Nazionale del Cilento**, Vallo di Diano e Alburni, the largest protected natural area in Italy, Bosco is a hidden gem of southern Italy. From its vantage point, the Gulf of Policastro unfolds to the Calabrian-Lucanian coast, framed by the majestic Monte Bulgheria the “Dolomites of Cilento.” This extraordinary landscape of rare beauty embodies a profound cultural and historical heritage. This enchanting land is the birthplace of the Mediterranean diet. Just a few kilometers from Bosco, in the 1950s, the village of Pioppi welcomed pioneering researchers **Ancel and Margaret Keys** of the University of Minnesota, whose groundbreaking studies on human nutrition and cardiovascular health laid the foundation for the Mediterranean diet tradition.

The area preserves deep roots in contemplative life and learning. Among its treasures is the **Cenobio Basiliano** — a Byzantine-era monastic complex founded by Basilian monks — which was once a flourishing center of spiritual life and intellectual activity. These monks, rooted in a tradition of communal study and manuscript copying, evoke another dimension of what we seek to achieve with the masterclass: the creation and sharing of first-class knowledge and the cultivation of meaningful networks across borders and disciplines. Bosco is also home to a museum dedicated to the Spanish artist José Ortega — painter, sculptor, ceramist, and philosopher — whose work celebrates the ethical function of art. Some sessions of the masterclass will take place in these inspiring halls, reinforcing the ethical purpose that underpins our program.

Bosco is more than a setting — it is a source of inspiration, a landscape where knowledge, culture, and ethics converge to shape a healthier tomorrow.



How to Get There?

To reach **Bosco**, follow these steps:

By Airplane:

Fly to either **Rome Fiumicino – Leonardo da Vinci Airport (FCO)**, or **Naples International Airport – Capodichino (NAP)**

By Train:

From Rome Termini or Naples Centrale train stations, take a train to Sapri. Both cities are well connected to Sapri, with frequent train services. Train schedules and tickets can be checked on the [Trenitalia](#) or [Italo](#) websites. If you plan to travel by high-speed train, we recommend booking well in advance.

By Car:

As an alternative, you can rent a car at Naples Airport and drive to Bosco. The journey is approximately 170 km.

Shuttle Service:

Upon arrival in Sapri, a shuttle service will be available to take you to Bosco. The drive takes approximately 15 minutes. Details regarding the meeting point and shuttle schedule will be provided upon registration.

If you have any further question, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Fill in the application form

