At the present time, there is considerable diversity in the dietary reference values and recommendations used across Europe, both in terms of terminology and guideline values. Harmonization of dietary reference values would be beneficial in simplifying nutritional policy, trade, and public understanding of diet and health issues. However, this is not a simple task because of the differences in methodological approaches adopted and the assumptions made. In addition, there are genuine differences in diet, lifestyle and geography that may necessitate retaining variation in some dietary reference values between European nations. The complexities of harmonization were discussed at a recent symposium held under the auspices of the Federation of European Nutrition Societies (FENS). This provided overviews of the different terminologies currently in use, of the variations in reference values for children and adolescents, and of the disparities between different groups of countries in Europe. The symposium hosted by FENS provided a forum to exchange views and to consider the steps that will be needed if harmonization is to be realized in the future. A summary of the presentations and conclusions is presented here.

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