

Why fiscal policies, labelling and marketing restrictions?

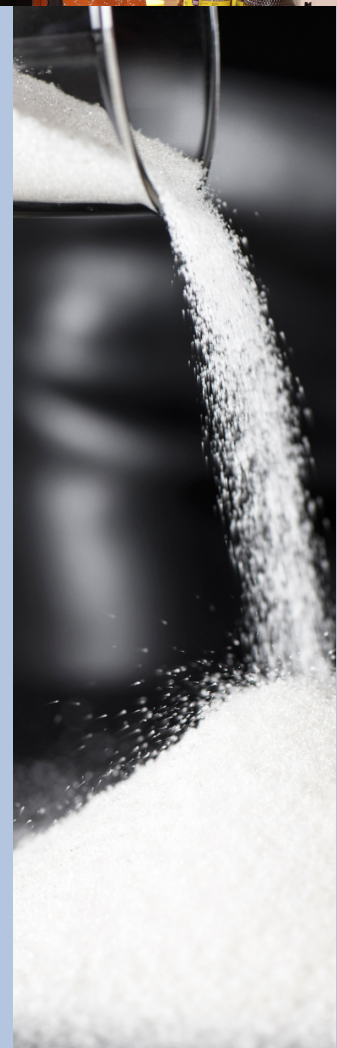
Population-wide interventions have been recognised as an effective way to improve food environments. Most European Member States, as well as leading intergovernmental institutions, including the Council of Europe, the WHO, and the UN General Assembly, recognise policies such as fiscal measures, front-of-pack nutrition labelling (FOPNL), and marketing restrictions, as key components of population-wide interventions to improve food environments and prevent childhood obesity. The evaluation of the potential impact of these interventions on children's diets is essential. One important goal of such policies is reducing children's sugar consumption.



STOP project findings: Mini-summary

- **Three separate literature reviews** were conducted on policy relevant dimensions of **health-related food and beverage taxes, FOPNL, and marketing restrictions.** In relation to cost, equity, and acceptability (1), it was found overall, that all three policy interventions merit adoption and promotion by international and national authorities. The findings from the review of systematic reviews were consistent with the evidence that all three policy interventions should, at least in principle, assist in reducing obesity risk in children (2). It was found that there is a lack of evidence for conclusive policy recommendations related to the impact of these three interventions on obesity prevalence disparities (2).
- **The effects of fiscal policies in five European countries:** A STOP study assessed the effects of a hypothetical 20% price increase of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) and an equivalent decrease in fruit and vegetable prices, on children's nutrient intake in Finland, France, Italy, Spain and UK. Findings showed that combining a SSB tax and a fruit and vegetable subsidy could reduce calorie intake (3).
- **The impacts of fiscal policies on consumer purchase patterns:** Taxes were simulated using a tiered design with different tax thresholds based on product sugar consumption. Findings showed demand in UK markets for non-alcoholic beverages and biscuits is more price-sensitive than in the Spanish and French markets across all considered household characteristics (4).
- **Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food-EPI)** was used to evaluate the level of food environment policy implementation compared to best practice in Estonia, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain in 2020-21 (5,6,7). Finland and Portugal had the highest proportion of policies on food environments (32% and 29% respectively) rated at the level of international best practice. Slovenia, Spain, and Estonia had the highest proportion of policies rated at very little if any implementation (42%, 25% and 21% respectively).

STOP publications are referenced (1-7)



Implications of findings for policy design

- **The design and implementation of health-related fiscal measures will benefit from** (a) taxing the 'unhealthy' food categories which are both consumed in excess and where there is high price sensitivity amongst households, and (b) using a tiered tax system based on the sugar (or other nutrient) content range within the product category of interest.
- While **SSB taxes**, combined with a reduction in the price of fruit and vegetables, have a positive effect on consumption and calorie intake, they have limited efficiency to make a strong difference to childhood obesity, reinforcing the need for a package of policies.
- There is **vast potential in EU countries** to improve policies and infrastructure support to create healthy food environments. Food retail, labelling, prices and marketing policies, funding, platforms for interaction, and health in all policies, were identified by experts as the most important gaps across the EU countries.

Health-related fiscal measures, front-of-pack labelling and marketing restrictions can jointly favour a healthier food environment



Future research priorities

The findings from the STOP project have provided new evidence on the impact on children of fiscal policies, labelling and marketing restrictions in Europe. Opportunities for further research identified include:

- The effect of policy measures on obesity disparities related to SES;
- The variations in price elasticities among sub-population groups for health-related taxes;
- Greater understanding of labelling e.g. which formats and positions of labels have the greatest impact on children, and to what extent they can modify food characteristics such as prices and nutrient composition;
- Extension of the application of Food-EPI to more countries across Europe to facilitate better understanding of policy implementation across the region and sharing of best practice, and to undertake repeat analyses in countries to track change over time to inform national and regional policy priorities.



STOP Publications (see www.stopchildobesity.eu for an up-to-date list)

1. Lobstein T, Neveux, M and Landon, J. Costs, equity and acceptability of three policies to prevent obesity: A narrative review to support policy development. 2020/ *Obes Sci Practice*; 6(5) 562-503 ([10.1002/osp4.423](https://doi.org/10.1002/osp4.423)).
2. Lobstein, T and Neveux, M. Supplementary D4.1a A review of systematic reviews of the impact on children of three population-wide policies. 2021. (<https://www.stopchildobesity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/D4.1.pdf>).
3. Kyureghian G and Allais O. D4.2: Comparative analysis of the impacts of fiscal policies on food and non-alcoholic beverages in Europe. 2020. (<https://www.stopchildobesity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/D4.2.pdf>).
4. Allais O, Bonnet C, Dulieu J, Leveneur P, Narayanane G and Tranchard M. D4.3: Assessment of the potential impacts of new fiscal and regulatory policies on added sugar in Europe. 2022.
5. Pineda et al. Policy implementation and priorities to create healthy food environments across eleven European countries using the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index. 2022. *Lancet Regional Health Europe*. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762\(22\)00218-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanep/article/PIIS2666-7762(22)00218-6/fulltext).
6. Zaçe D, Di Pilla, A, Silano, M, Carini E, Cacciatore P, Frisicale, E. M, Vandevijvere S, Sassi F and Specchia L.M. Implementation level of best practice policies by Italian government for healthier food environments: Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (FOOD-EPI). *Annali Dell'Istituto Superiore di Sanita*. Vol. 58, No. 1: 55-66.
7. Pineda et al. Policy implementation and priorities to create healthy food environments in Spain applying the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index. *Gaceta Sanitaria* (In review).

