



The more you know, the more you dare®

CALL FOR PAPERS

The role of taxation and other economic incentives in promoting healthier lifestyles: a focus on tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy diets

Organisers: Professor Amandine Garde, University of Liverpool, and Professor Alberto Alemanno, HEC Paris
Dates: 16 and 17 January 2017
Venue: University of Liverpool London Campus, 33 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1AG

Governments across the world increasingly recognize the urgency of promoting healthier lifestyles, with a view to lowering the alarming rates of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) resulting in large part from the consumption of commodities such as tobacco, alcoholic beverages and unhealthy foods. As evidence shows price is a major determinant of consumption choices, and taxation and other economic measures may act as a disincentive to the consumption of these commodities, policy makers have started to use these instruments as part of their NCD prevention strategies.

Tax measures on tobacco products and alcoholic beverages have been used for years to raise revenue. It is only more recently that they have been presented as public health measures. Most notably, the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) explicitly acknowledges that “price and tax measures are an effective and important means of reducing tobacco consumption by various segments of the population, in particular young persons”, and calls on State Parties to adopt price policies on tobacco products so as to contribute to the health objectives aimed at reducing tobacco consumption. Similarly, the WHO Global Strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol states that “pricing policies can be used to reduce underage drinking, to halt progression towards drinking large volumes of alcohol and/or episodes of heavy drinking, and to influence consumers’ preferences. Increasing the price of alcoholic beverages is one of the most effective interventions to reduce harmful use of alcohol”. Tobacco and alcohol taxation are considered as two of the WHO’s NCD prevention “best-buys” – providing significant health benefits at a relatively low cost for governments. They have been widely adopted across the world, sometimes in connection with other measures such as minimum unit pricing.

More recently, food taxes have also appeared on the public health agenda. As the access to, and in particular the affordability of, healthy foods is a major and recurring concern, a growing number of governments are exploring the use of taxation and price incentives to alter consumption patterns. A 2016 report devoted to “Using price policies to promote healthier diets” by the European Regional Office of the WHO concluded that price policies have the potential to influence consumer purchasing in the desired direction. Moreover, the UK Government has recently announced to enact a soda tax, whilst the Scottish Government is defending its recent legislation mandating minimum unit pricing of alcoholic beverages before law courts.

It is against this backdrop that this conference will focus on the role that taxation and other price measures can play in promoting healthier lifestyles – in particular by increasing the price of commodities such as tobacco, alcoholic beverages and unhealthy foods. It proposes to adopt an interdisciplinary – and where possible transdisciplinary – viewpoint, and we would particularly welcome contributions by lawyers, economists, public health experts, psychologists... We would also welcome contributions focusing on specific case studies – looking at the experience gathered in countries that have recently experimented – or are thinking of experimenting – with minimum unit pricing and/or food taxes. The focus of the conference will include the following questions:

- What is the evidence base for tax and economic incentives for lifestyle intervention? In particular, what is the importance of price in influencing consumer choices? (Evidence)
- How can / should price be affected to limit the consumption of tobacco, alcoholic beverages and unhealthy food? (Effectiveness)
- What are the respective advantages or disadvantages of taxation and minimum pricing measures? (Cost Effectiveness)
- What do we know of the contribution which existing price-related measures have made (or are likely to make) to NCD prevention? (Empirical Analysis)
- How should price measures – if adopted – be designed to be as effective as possible? (Design)
- When will a price measure be considered incompatible with international economic law – and international trade law and European Union internal market law more specifically? (Legality)

If you are interested in presenting a paper, you should submit an abstract of no more than 400 words by email to both amandine.garde@liverpool.ac.uk and alemanno@hec.fr by **Friday 18th November**. The conference budget will cover one-night accommodation in London (where necessary) and/or part of the travel costs.