

## WORKSHOP SUMMARY

In November 2011 EHN released a scientific report on *Diet, Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Europe* which reviews the evidence for action and identifies a range of potential policy options.

In June 2012, The National Heart Forum (NHF) held a country workshop that arose from the European Heart Health Strategy II project which has received co-funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme. The meeting's aim was to present the report and its recommendations to an invited audience of 63 people including representatives from members of the NHF alliance and invited guests from academia, non-governmental organisations and Government departments.

In the report, the use of economic instruments – such as taxes and subsidies – is highlighted as an area of growing interest and debate (page 51). This meeting also focused on this particular recommendation within the report, namely to debate the role of food taxes in policies to support healthier diets with expert speakers in fiscal policy and public health from the UK, Denmark, France, Hungary and from international agencies (World Health Organization and European Public Health Alliance). ***A copy of the programme, speakers' biographies and a list of attendees are included below. Delegate packs supplied at the meeting also enclosed a synopsis of the EHN report.***

### *Key points of the discussion:*

In the UK around 60 per cent of adults are overweight of which 20 per cent are obese and this is contributing to a growing social and economic burden of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes. It is clear that rising rates of overweight and obesity are significantly driven by current patterns of food consumption; in particular, over-consumption of energy-dense processed foods and beverages high in fat, sugar or salt, and under-consumption of fruits and vegetables. These patterns of food consumption also underpin widening inequalities in health. WHO data for cardiovascular mortality rates in the European Region show significant and persistent disparities in health both within and between countries in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

There are a range of potential policy responses to the crisis in diet-related health. These include education programmes, statutory and voluntary controls on food marketing to children, food reformulation, and nutritional information on food packaging. The application of taxes on foods known to be 'unhealthy' could be part of the package of policy responses: to influence consumption patterns and/or to raise revenues for health promotion purposes including subsidies of foods known to be 'healthy'.

The presentations and discussion considered:

**The case for food-related health taxes:** Including the current pressures on governments to tackle increasing rates of diet-related chronic diseases – including cardiovascular disease – and widening disparities in rates of these diseases between rich and poor.

**The most promising types of tax instrument:** The different types of tax instruments available to policy makers and the pros and cons that must be considered in developing an appropriate and effective tax instrument.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Health for All Database

**The factors likely to influence effectiveness:** Factors such as price elasticities, the response of businesses to new taxes on individual products or categories of product, possible substitution effects, and the effect of other policies.

**The impact of taxes on poorer consumers:** Recognising that indirect taxes tend to be regressive on the income of poorer consumers and considering evidence for progressive effects on health learned from tobacco, alcohol and from food-related taxes (where available) and from modelling evidence.

**The factors likely to influence acceptability:** Potential factors including the terms used to describe any tax instrument, mitigating policies such as subsidies introduced alongside taxes and the purposes to which revenues are used (such as public health initiatives).

***A full report of the meeting will be available in November 2012 and will be widely circulated to policy makers, public health advocates and the media.***

## PROGRAMME

*Diet, Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Prevention in Europe*  
**What is the role of food taxes?**

**Friday 29 June, 2012**

**Venue: Competition Commission Rooms 1&2  
Victoria House, London WC1B 4AD, UK**

- 9.30-10.00**      **Registration and coffee**
- 10.00 – 10.10**    **Chairs welcome**  
  
Chair: Professor Joy Townsend, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- 10.10 – 10:40**    **Introduction to the report – *Diet, Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Prevention in Europe***  
  
**What is the role of food taxes?**  
  
Speaker: Dr Mike Rayner, British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group, University of Oxford
- 10:40 – 11:00**    **WHO Perspective – European Region**  
  
Speaker: Dr João Breda, WHO Regional Office for Europe
- 11:00 – 12.10**    **The impacts of food taxes**  
  
Speakers:            Martin O’Connell, Institute of Fiscal Studies, UK  
  
                                 Professor Richard Tiffin, Reading University, UK  
  
Q&A and Discussion
- 12.10 – 13.10**    **Lunch**
- 13.10**              **Afternoon session**  
  
Chair: Jane Landon, National Heart Forum
- 13.15 – 15.00**    **Food taxes in practice: case studies**  
  
Speakers:            Professor Jørgen Dejgård Jensen, Institute of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen  
  
                                 Michel Chauliac, Ministry of Health, France  
  
                                 Dr András Nagy, Hungarian Heart Foundation

Q&A and Discussion

**15.00 – 15.15    Break and coffee**

**15.15 – 16.30    Panel discussion: Policy practicalities and public opinion**

Panellists:            Monika Kosinska, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance

Robin Ireland, Chief Executive, Heart of Mersey

Charlie Powell, Director of Campaigns, Sustain

**Plenary discussion**

**16.30            Tea and close**

*This meeting arises from the European Heart Health Strategy II project which has received co-funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Programme. Sole responsibility for this meeting lies with the National Heart Forum; the Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.*

## **SPEAKERS**

### **Dr. Mike Rayner**

Mike Rayner is Director of the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group which is based within the Department of Public Health of the University of Oxford and which he founded in 1993. The Group carries out research in two areas: the burden of cardiovascular disease and population based-approaches to the promotion of healthier diets and increased levels of physical activity. Mike is also Vice Chair of Sustain and Chair of its Children's Food Campaign. He is a trustee of the UK National Heart Forum, a member of the Public Health Interventions Advisory Committee of NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence), Chair of the Nutrition Expert Group for the European Heart Network based in Brussels and a member of the Scientific Advisory Panel of the International Obesity Task Force. He is also an ordained priest in the Church of England.

### **Dr. Joao Breda**

Programme Manager: Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity, Noncommunicable diseases and Health Promotion Division at WHO Regional Office for Europe. He is responsible for providing support to the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region on the implementation of the European Charter on Counteracting Obesity and evaluating its progress. His team is responsible for the largest and most comprehensive childhood obesity surveillance mechanisms globally. He is a PhD in Nutritional Sciences from Porto University. He graduated in Nutritional Sciences also at Porto University, he has done his Master Degree in Public Health by the Medical Sciences Faculty of the University Nova de Lisboa and an MBA from the European University in Barcelona. He was the Portuguese representative in the WHO-Europe for the area of Nutrition and Physical Activity and in the European Union and also the focal point from Portugal in the European Network on Nutrition and Physical Activity, at the High Level Group on Nutrition & PA and the European Platform on Diet, Nutrition and Physical Activity of the EU. First and former Coordinator of the National Platform against Obesity under the Portuguese Ministry of Health. Worked as a Public Health Nutritionist at the General Health Directorate in the Portuguese Ministry of Health. He was Professor of Nutrition at the University Atlântica and Head of Department of the Nutritional Sciences as well as Professor of Nutrition and Food Safety at the Agriculture Faculty of Coimbra University and the Coimbra Hospitality School (12 Years).

### **Martin O'Connell**

Martin is a senior research economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies. A major strand of his work involves modelling consumer and firm behaviour in the food market, including how consumers choose between the multitude of products on offer and, given this, how firms compete over the products they offer, the prices they set and their advertising strategies. Understanding the behaviours of the main actors in the market is crucial for assessing pre-existing or proposed policy. Policies Martin works on include assessing the impact of introducing a fat tax, evaluating the impact of government information campaigns and tracing out the impact of income transfers on diet. Martin is also currently studying for a PhD at University College London.

### **Professor Richard Tiffin**

Richard is Director of the Centre for Food Security at the University of Reading. The Centre capitalises on Reading's existing reputation in the agri-food sector by fostering internal and external collaborations to meet the multidisciplinary food security agenda. He has also held posts at the Universities of Newcastle and Durham. He is trained as an Applied Econometrician and his current research is focussed on diet and health policy. Recent work has examined the impacts of alternative food policies on land use in the UK and the impacts of a fat tax on health in the UK. Current research is modelling the distributional impacts of such a tax.

### **Professor Jørgen Dejgaard Jensen**

Jørgen Dejgaard Jensen is economist and associate professor at the Institute of Food and Resource Economics at the University of Copenhagen. He has for many years done economic research within the fields of food consumption, including the potential role of economic mechanisms to support developments to more healthy and sustainable food consumption patterns. One of his research topics is the role of food taxes as a tool in health promotion policy.

### **Dr. Michel Chauliac**

Michel Chauliac is a public health physician in charge of the French national nutrition and health programme since its launching in 2001, at the French Ministry of Health. Previously he worked on international nutrition (mainly in French speaking Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe) during 18 years at the International Children Center. Michel holds a Masters degree in "Strategies of Development".

### **Dr. Andras Nagy**

Andras Nagy is President of the Hungarian National Heart Foundation and Head of the Department of Cardiology at Kecskemet Hospital, Hungary. He holds a MD and PhD.

### **Monika Kosinska**

Monika has a Bachelor in European Studies from the University of Liverpool, Faculty of Social Sciences and received a Masters degree in International Peace and Security at King's College, University of London. She has extensive knowledge of public health issues at EU and national level. Her previous jobs have included representing regional health bodies in Brussels, government relations for a major retail group and interim director for an alliance on health and ageing. Monika is bilingual Polish/English and speaks several other languages.

### **Robin Ireland**

Robin Ireland has been Chief Executive of Heart of Mersey (HoM) since the organisation's launch in 2003. HoM is an internationally-recognised cardiovascular health charity based in Merseyside, North West England. The charity advocates for policies at local, national and international levels which enable healthier lifestyles. This currently includes leading work regionally on smoke free play areas, pre-school nutrition and takeaway food. Robin was a member of NICE's Public Health Programme Development Group which issued guidance in 2010 on the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease at a Population Level and has worked as a consultant for the World Health Organisation (EURO) on non-communicable diseases prevention strategies since 2007.

### **Charlie Powell**

Charlie Powell is Campaign's Director of Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming. Charlie first worked for Sustain in 2001 as Food Labelling and Marketing Project Officer and then as the Children's Food Bill Campaign Co-ordinator. Prior to his appointment as Campaign's Director at Sustain, he spent four and a half years working for Oxfam GB, firstly on its Make Trade Fair Campaign and then co-ordinating Oxfam International's public campaigning on climate change. He has also worked for a variety of other NGOs as well as in the private sector, has a Masters Degree in Human Nutrition and is a director for ethical food consultancy Food Matters.

## ATTENDEES

Ailsa McGinty	Department of Health
Alan Dangour	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Amy McLennan	University of Oxford
Andras Nagy	Hungarian Heart Foundation
Andrew Dougal	Northern Ireland Chest, Heart & Stroke
Angela Blair	Sandwell Primary Care Trust
Ben McKendrick	British Heart Foundation, Scotland
Ben Kapetanakis	National Heart Forum
Caroline Mulvihill	National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
Charlie Powell	Sustain
Chit Selvarajah	Cancer Research UK
Clare Farrand	Consensus Action on Salt & Health (CASH)
Dan French	National Heart Forum
Diana Divajeva	National Heart Forum
Emily Pollinger	Royal College of Nursing
Hannah Graff	National Heart Forum
Helen Eyles	Auckland University
Ian Gilmore	Alcohol Health Alliance
Ian Shemilt	University of Cambridge
Jane Landon	National Heart Forum
Joao Breda	World Health Organization Europe
John Kemm	JK Public Health Consulting
John Wyn Owen	National Heart Forum Trustee
Jorgen Dejgard Jensen	University of Copenhagen
Joy Townsend	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Karen Dunnell	National Heart Forum Trustee
Kawther Hashem	Consumers International
Ketevan Rtseladze	National Heart Forum
Khamis Al-Alawy	British Association for Nursing in Cardiac Care
Klim McPherson	University of Oxford
Laura Bonhard	University of Maastricht
Laura Brennan	Royal College of Physicians
Laura Webber	National Heart Forum
Laura Haynes	Cabinet Office
Louise Peardon	Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
Lynn Young	Royal College of Nursing
Martin O'Connell	Institute of Fiscal Studies
Maura Gillespie	British Heart Foundation
Michal Brzezinski	Polish Society of Health Programmes
Michel Chauliac	French Ministry of Health
Mike Rayner	University of Oxford
Modi Mwatsama	National Heart Forum
Monika Kosinska	European Public Health Alliance
Nigel Carter	British Dental Health Foundation
Oliver Mytton	University of Oxford
Paul Belcher	Royal College of Physicians

Paul Lincoln	National Heart Forum
Peter Dick	Department of Health
Rebecca Hiscutt	Weight Concern
Richard Tiffin	Reading University
Robin Ireland	Heart of Mersey
Rosie Green	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Ruth Ash	London Metropolitan University
Sarah West	World Cancer Research Fund International
Steve Shaffelburg	Inner North West London Primary Care Trusts
Sue Davies	Which?
Sue Dibb	Food Ethics Council
Tara Garnett	Food Climate Research Network
Tim Lobstein	International Association for the Study of Obesity
Tim Marsh	National Heart Forum
Yvonne Robinson	National Heart Forum Member