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Nudges: Behavioural Interventions in Public Policy

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Abstract

This study reviews the development of behavioural economics and nudge theory and examines the use of behavioural nudges in public policy in both international and Croatian contexts. It employs a narrative review of relevant academic literature, institutional reports, and publicly available data, supplemented by a comparative analysis of selected interventions in environmental protection, healthcare, taxation, nutrition, and tourism. The international cases include interventions promoting sustainable transport in England, preventive health screening in Japan, and tax compliance in Sweden, Norway, and Portugal. The Croatian cases comprise the Tax Administration's receipt lotteries, the European Union School Scheme, and initiatives introduced by coastal cities to encourage more appropriate tourist behaviour. The analysis distinguishes between pro-self-nudges, which primarily benefit individuals, and prosocial nudges aimed at generating broader societal benefits. The findings indicate that simple messages, reminders, social and moral norms, loss aversion, and rewards can influence citizens' behaviour, although their effects vary according to the policy area and intervention design. In Croatia, receipt lotteries provide the most tangible results; however, the available evidence does not allow their effects to be isolated from those of other tax policy measures. The principal limitation of the study is the uneven availability and comparability of data across the interventions examined. Behavioural nudges therefore show promise as relatively simple and cost-effective public policy instruments, but more systematic evaluations of their long-term effects are needed, particularly in Croatia.

Keywords: Behavioural Economics, Nudges, Public Policy, Receipt Lottery, Choice Architecture