



Information release

New campaign to accelerate the end of fossil fuel subsidies to benefit health

Brussels, 11 July 2016 – The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is launching a campaign focused on health as a driver to accelerate the end of fossil fuel subsidies. The campaign, which will be officially launch in the Autumn of this year, builds on the knowledge that fossil fuels such as coal largely contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, climate change and air pollution which harms health.

This campaign (1) aims to shed light on one of the main underlying causes for the high use of fossil fuels, namely government subsidies to this branch of the energy sector. Subsidies make fossil fuels such as coal cheaper, encouraging their use and increasing the harmful pollution toll to the environment and human health. Negative effects include premature death, heart and lung disease, respiratory problems such as asthma and harm to the vulnerable groups such as unborn babies and children.

These subsidies represent extremely high government support to coal, oil and gas, taking place in many countries worldwide. This support comes in the form of direct investments or tax exemptions to producers, but also by not incorporating the damage fossil fuels cause to the climate and our health in pricing decisions.

Besides them being harmful, subsidies are also expensive for governments and consequently for taxpayers, locking in funds that could be used for public infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently estimated the “true costs” of government subsidies to the industry at 4,84 trillion EUR per year. This is more than the total health spending of all governments worldwide (2).

HEAL’s new campaign aims to raise awareness among the medical community and to build momentum for the phase out of fossil fuels subsidies especially for coal power generation. HEAL has a strong track record in bringing evidence and knowledge about climate change and health to the forefront of deliberations at EU and international level and is determined to use this expertise to help end the use of fossil fuel subsidies in the European region. (3)

For this purpose and before the official launch of the campaign, HEAL has prepared two documents as introductory reading: a briefing on [fossil fuel subsidies and health](#) and a Q&A overview on [fossil fuel subsidies and their consequences on climate and health \(4\)](#).

To support this campaign, HEAL will be working on the publication of the first ever report on fossil fuel subsidies and health, which will compare coal subsidies with public health spending and support for renewables in a set of target countries.

Contact:

Should you wish to find out more about the campaign, please contact Vijoleta Gordeljevic at vijoleta@env-health.org

Notes:

- (1) The new campaign will be officially launched in the autumn with a campaign website.
- (2) IMF report [HTTP://WWW.IMF.ORG/EXTERNAL/PUBS/CAT/LONGRES.ASPX?SK=42940.0](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.aspx?sk=42940.0)
- (3) In 2007, HEAL published a briefing reviewing the latest scientific evidence on climate and health from the IPCC. This laid the basis for building policy recommendations, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable groups and considering win-win scenarios for public health through climate mitigation measures. HEAL works closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and helped facilitate World Health Day on climate change in 2008. Since then, many medical groups, citizens and policy-makers have advocated for health at the centre of climate change mitigation. Public awareness was increased in 2010 with a ground-breaking HEAL – HCWH report on a 30% reduction target for EU climate policy. [HEAL's Unpaid Health Bill](#) - How coal power plants make us sick marked the beginning of a coal and health campaign in 2013 in which HEAL works closely with medical, health and climate advocacy groups, especially in countries where coal is a particular threat to health. Since its successful launch at EU level, the Unpaid Health Bill has been launched in Germany, Poland, Romania, Turkey and the Western Balkans.
- (4) Briefing on [fossil fuel subsidies and health](#) and [Q&A overview on fossil fuel subsidies and their consequences on climate and health](#).

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) — HEAL is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union. With the support of more than 70 member organizations, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Our broad alliance represents health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, citizens, women's groups, youth groups, environmental NGOs, scientists and public health research institutes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: www.env-health.org