

World governments make citizens pay billions to destroy their own health

- **New HEAL report shows how fossil fuel subsidies support an industry that causes premature deaths, ill-health and huge health costs worldwide, in stark contrast to Paris Agreement**
- **Health costs associated with fossil fuels are over six times higher than subsidies: 2,758 billion vs 444 billion USD**
- **HEAL urges policymakers to end fossil fuel subsidies for the sake of health, using freed public funds instead to support healthy energy or health care investments**

Brussels, 27 July 2017 11 am CEST – The Health and Environment Alliance ([HEAL](#)) has launched the report [Hidden Price Tags: How ending fossil fuel subsidies would benefit our health](#) providing the first-ever comparison of fossil fuel subsidies and the costs to health associated with air pollution from fossil fuels.

Burning fossil fuels causes deadly air pollution and climate change. Yet virtually all governments spend huge amounts of public money – their citizens' taxes – on supporting the oil, gas and coal industry in fossil fuel energy production. Despite nearly a decade-old commitment to end such financial support, the report reveals that on average, in G20 countries, the health costs associated with fossil fuels, are over six times higher than the subsidies: [2,758 billion USD](#) vs [444 billion USD](#) (2,600 billion Euro vs 416 billion Euro).

Every year air pollution from mostly fossil fuel combustion cuts short the lives of an estimated 6.5 million people worldwide because of respiratory tract infections, strokes, heart attacks, lung cancer and chronic lung disease. The costs to health from the resulting air pollution, climate change and environmental degradation are not carried by the industry but paid by society.

Genon K. Jensen, HEAL's Executive Director said: *"European and global leaders continue to pledge to tackle climate change and decarbonise our economy. However, they still give out billions of Euros and Dollars which lead to global warming and fuel early death and ill-health including heart and lung disease. It is time to seize the opportunity to improve the health of millions of people worldwide by abandoning subsidies to the deadly fossil fuel industry. They should walk the talk and end fossil fuel subsidies now."*

The report examines the true costs of the health impacts that arise from fossil fuel subsidies in a number of selected countries. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the health costs arising from fossil fuel driven air pollution are almost five times higher than the subsidies paid, meaning that citizens not only see 6.5 billion USD of public money given to one of the world's wealthiest industries, but that gift costs them another 30.7 billion USD in health costs alone from premature deaths from air pollution. In China fossil fuels cause a staggering 1,790 billion USD in health costs from air pollution, more than 18 times what the nation hands out to oil, gas and coal producers, helping to fuel a public health crisis that is already causing 1.6 million premature deaths every year.

In the report, HEAL puts forward recommendations to policy-makers urging them to phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2020 for developed nations and by 2025 for low-income economies, to decrease premature deaths, poor health and climate chaos and pave the way for renewable, clean energy choices and their multiple health benefits.

The report also highlights how the funds could be re-allocated to boost health in the report's seven country spotlights. For example, in Germany, the 5.4 billion USD (5.1 billion Euro) of fossil fuel subsidies represent taxpayer money that is sufficient to provide more than 300,000 households with a solar installation, powering their homes with clean energy, as well as to fund the transition for all of Germany's 15,000 coal power plant workers for the coming five years. In countries such as Turkey and Poland, fossil fuel subsidies represent valuable public funds that could greatly strengthen the nation's health systems, e.g. in Poland being used to build more than 34 new clinics and increase the number of physicians by 30,000.

"One of the best political strategies to reduce fossil fuel subsidies is to simultaneously launch universal free health services. The savings from the former can fund the latter. Combining these policies can deliver significant health, economic and environmental benefits and deliver huge political benefits to leaders who bring free healthcare to their people." - Robert Yates, Senior Fellow, Chatham House

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The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is a leading European not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union (EU). With the support of more than 70 member organisations, 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. Follow HEAL on [Facebook](#) and Twitter [@HealthandEnv](#) [@EDCFree](#) and [@CHM HEAL](#)