



Health and Environment Alliance

Key projects & publications supporting climate
action for better health

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The Unpaid Health Bill : health cost assessment

First time numbers for the EU as a whole and for specific countries on how coal pollution harms health

- **18,200** premature deaths
- **8,580** cases of chronic bronchitis
- **4.1** million lost working days
- **5,500** hospital admissions
- **2.1** million days of medication
- **28.6** million lower respiratory symptoms

How inhalation of particulate matter may affect our health

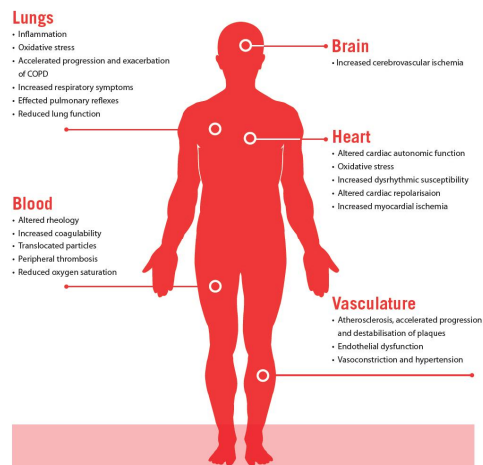


Figure 2: Exposure to particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) causes a multitude of health impacts
Adapted from source: Apeikom project (2012) Summary report of the Apeikom project 2008-2011

THE UNPAID HEALTH BILL How coal power plants make us sick



A report from the Health and Environment Alliance



Available in **English, Romanian, German, Polish; for Turkey, and Western Balkans**

<http://www.env-health.org/unpaidhealthbill>

Promoting environmental policy that contributes to good health

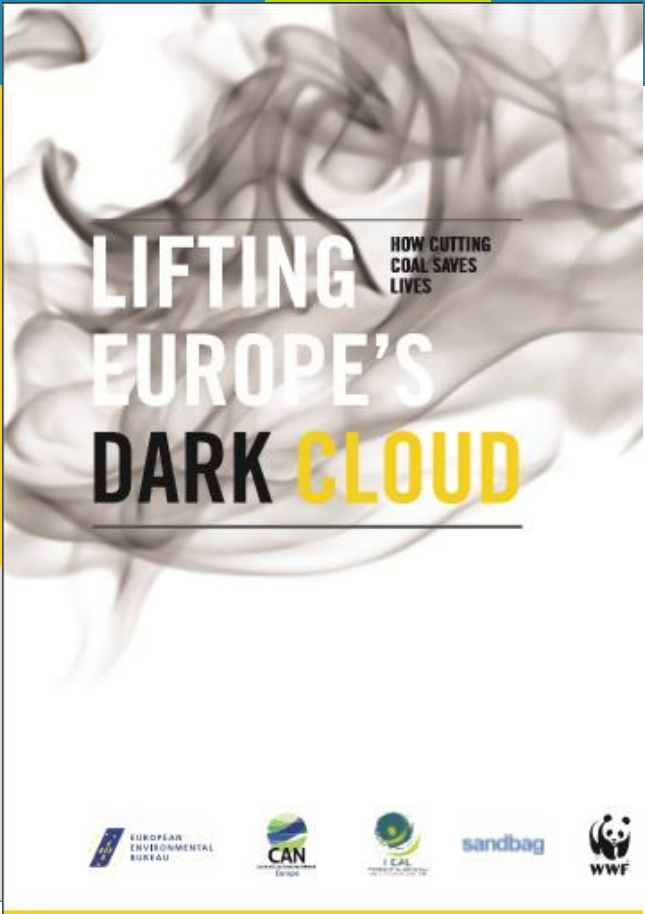
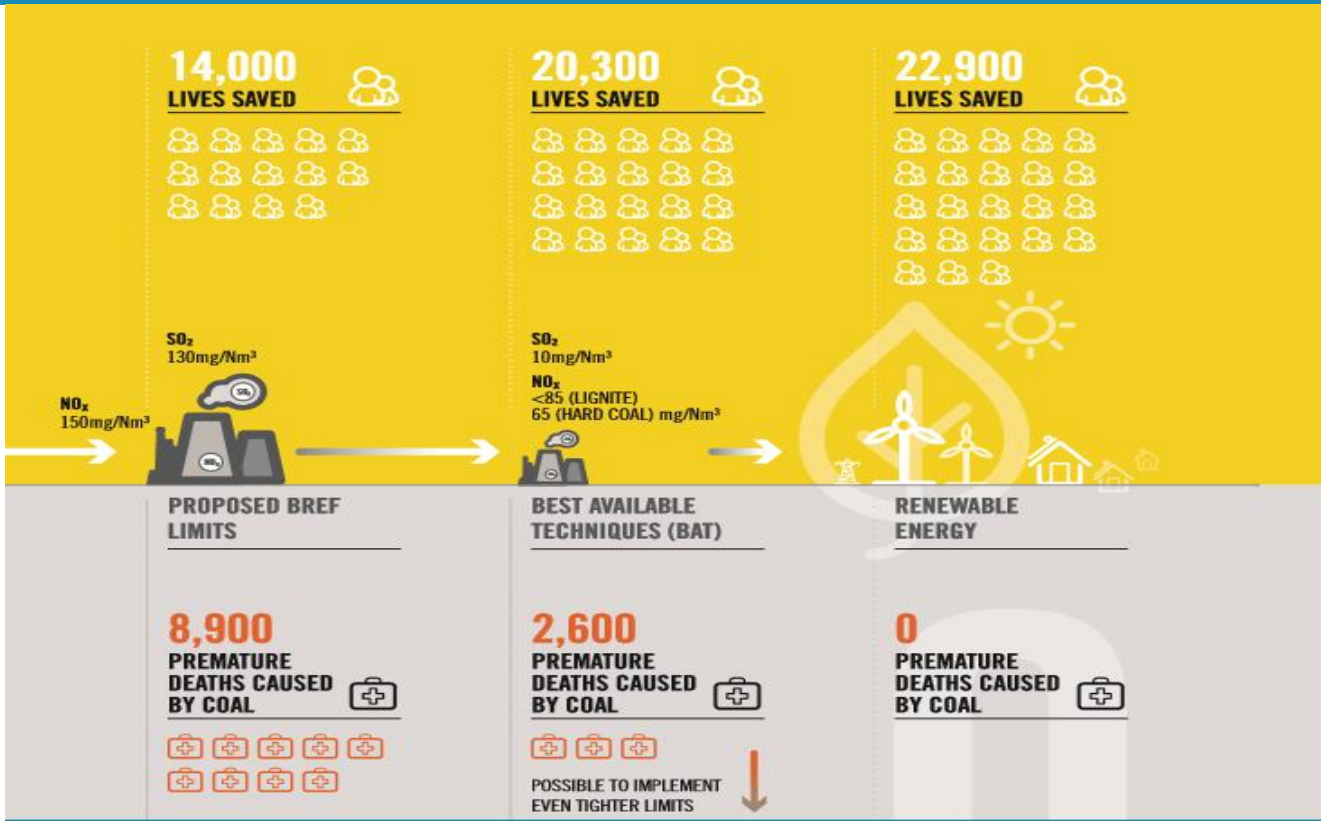
Europe's Dark Cloud- 2016 report on cross-boundary air pollution



Total air pollution impact in Europe:
 approx. 470,000 premature deaths



Lifting Europe's Dark Cloud - How cutting coal saves lives



In the EU the annual number of premature deaths caused by burning coal could be reduced from 22,900 to 2,600 deaths.

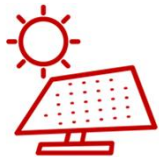
NEW: Phasing out Fossil Fuel Subsidies for better health

Energy subsidies damage the environment, causing more premature deaths through local air pollution and increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies would have multiple benefits for health:



Decrease in premature deaths



Funds to make the transition to renewables



Commitment to climate action



More money for social spending



A public health opportunity

CLIMATE CHANGE

BRIEFING

Fossil Fuel Subsidies and Health

HEAL
Promoting environmental policy that contributes to good health

PUBLISHED July 2016

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT FOSSIL FUEL SUBSIDIES?

Government subsidies for fossil fuels drive the use of coal, oil and gas and therewith damage the environment, cause more premature deaths and worsen climate change by increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), governments worldwide allocate 4.84 trillion EUR to health-harming subsidies which is more than the total health spending of all the world's governments.

COUNTRIES SUPPORT THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY WITH BILLIONS EVERY YEAR

In the 2015 working paper by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) entitled "How large are global energy subsidies?" (1) 4, 84 trillion EUR went into subsidies for fossil fuels worldwide in 2015. This is equivalent to 6.5 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that governments award to the fossil fuel industry either in the form of direct spending, tax exemptions or by not including externalities in pricing decisions (see Background Box).

The IMF figures are so high as industrial polluters do not have to pay for the trillions of dollars' worth of damage that their products are creating. This includes catastrophic effects such as air pollution and climate change as well as local events such as traffic congestion or road accidents. That being said, subsidies are expensive for governments and consequently for tax-payers, locking in funds that could be used for infrastructure (roads, schools and hospitals).

Health impacts of climate change increase as the world's most polluting companies are rewarded with public funds.

Most importantly, subsidies make fossil fuels such as coal cheap, encouraging their use and increasing a negative impact on health and the environment such as an increase in air pollution. Effects include a rise in the number of premature deaths, respiratory diseases such as asthma, and heart and lung disease. Effects are particularly felt by vulnerable groups such as unborn babies, children, pregnant women and the elderly. In addition, there is a strain on national health care budgets.

Developed countries with a high GDP and a high level of industrialisation, account for 40 percent of subsidies. Yet, looking at subsidies as a share of GDP, subsidies are approximately eight times larger in the Middle East and the North African region than in the economies of developed countries.

Background Box
What are fossil fuel subsidies?

Fossil fuel subsidies are given when the government wants to make energy sources, such as coal or oil affordable for the population and/or keep the production profitable for the industry. They can be direct or indirect.

Governments can decide to lock the price of a product at a fixed amount for consumers (possibly even below the cost of producing it) while the gap is paid for by the national budget. This is one form of a direct subsidy. For example, in Germany direct subsidies are given to producers in the form of a tax exempt for coal, oil and gas products used as inputs in energy production.

According to the IMF, another form of a subsidy, an indirect one, takes place when fossil fuel companies are not taxed efficiently. This means that the price consumers pay for coal, gas or oil does not consider the damage caused by these products, such as climate change or air pollution. Yet, eventually the costs to the environment and human health come with such damage that it needs to be paid for by tax payers, representing yet another subsidy to the industry. HEAL's report The Unpaid Health Bill showed that for example in Ireland such indirect subsidies affecting health amounted to 3- 8.2 billion EUR.²

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New 2017 HEAL campaign on government subsidies for coal, oil and gas and the need for a phase out to benefit health



Get in touch and learn more
about our work

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