



# **Fossil Fuel Subsidies Narrative Workshop**

**Rome, Italy**

# Why building a narrative on fossil fuel subsidies?

- The voice against fossil fuel subsidies (public funding for fossil fuels) has internationally **grown stronger** the last couple of years - both among civil society and world leaders.
- But it is apparent that European decision makers **don't feel enough pressure** to start putting their money where their mouth is. A **united voice** from NGOs and other actors will help to steer the debate in the right direction – towards enhanced and fair climate action.
- Each local, regional and national struggle has its **own story**, but is at the same time **part of the bigger picture story** of the **European transition** away from fossil fuels.

# FFS narrative objectives

- Decision-makers and general public are aware that subsidies to fossil fuels are harmful and must be phased out.
- They are aware that financial flows should serve the clean and renewable energy transition.
- Potential to target new audiences and involve new messengers (allies)
- Tailor messaging frames to the audience which is targeted.

# Challenges

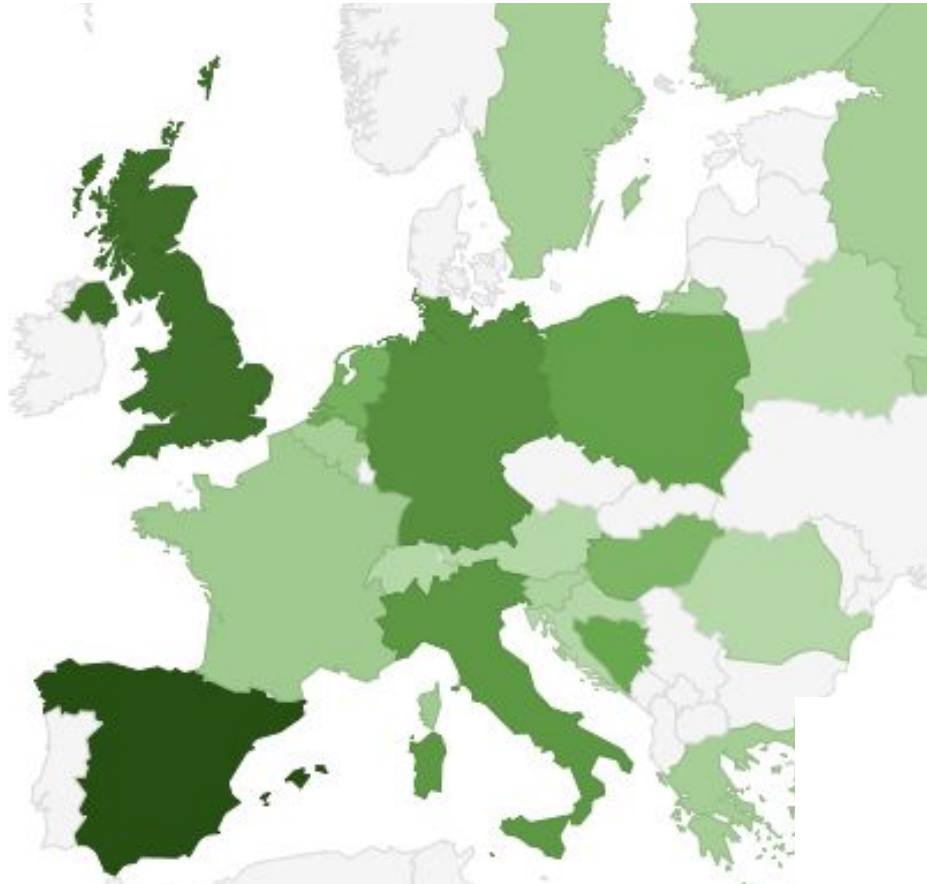
- Reverse the narrative: Fossil fuels are cheap while renewable energy is expensive and need subsidies to survive
- Fossil fuel subsidies presented as a social policy tool. Not all subsidies are bad (just transition and energy poverty)
- How should public finance support renewables and energy efficiency? Subsidies are not necessarily the solution: subsidies vs. market conditions.
- How to denounce this specific type of subsidy without being seen as against the subsidy principle? Subsidies are necessary for projects of general interest.

# Opportunities

- Growing awareness and interest in the media.
- Recent report “Phase-out 2020: Monitoring Europe’s fossil fuel subsidies” triggered 168 media hits all over Europe. More than 152 000 000 readers. Interest growing but need to renew the story.

## Highlighted talking points:

Transport sector and gas as being the main beneficiaries of FFS in Europe



The darker the more media coverage

# Meta-narrative

- European countries have all agreed to scale up their efforts to tackle climate change in compliance with the Paris Climate Agreement + Commitment to phase out FFS by 2020
- However, governments and other public institutions all over Europe are spending billions of euros on funding one of the main causes of climate change: the extraction and burning of fossil fuels.
- By providing subsidies - tax payers' money - to fossil fuels, governments end up taking one step forward and two steps back when it comes to climate action.

# Suggested narrative frames

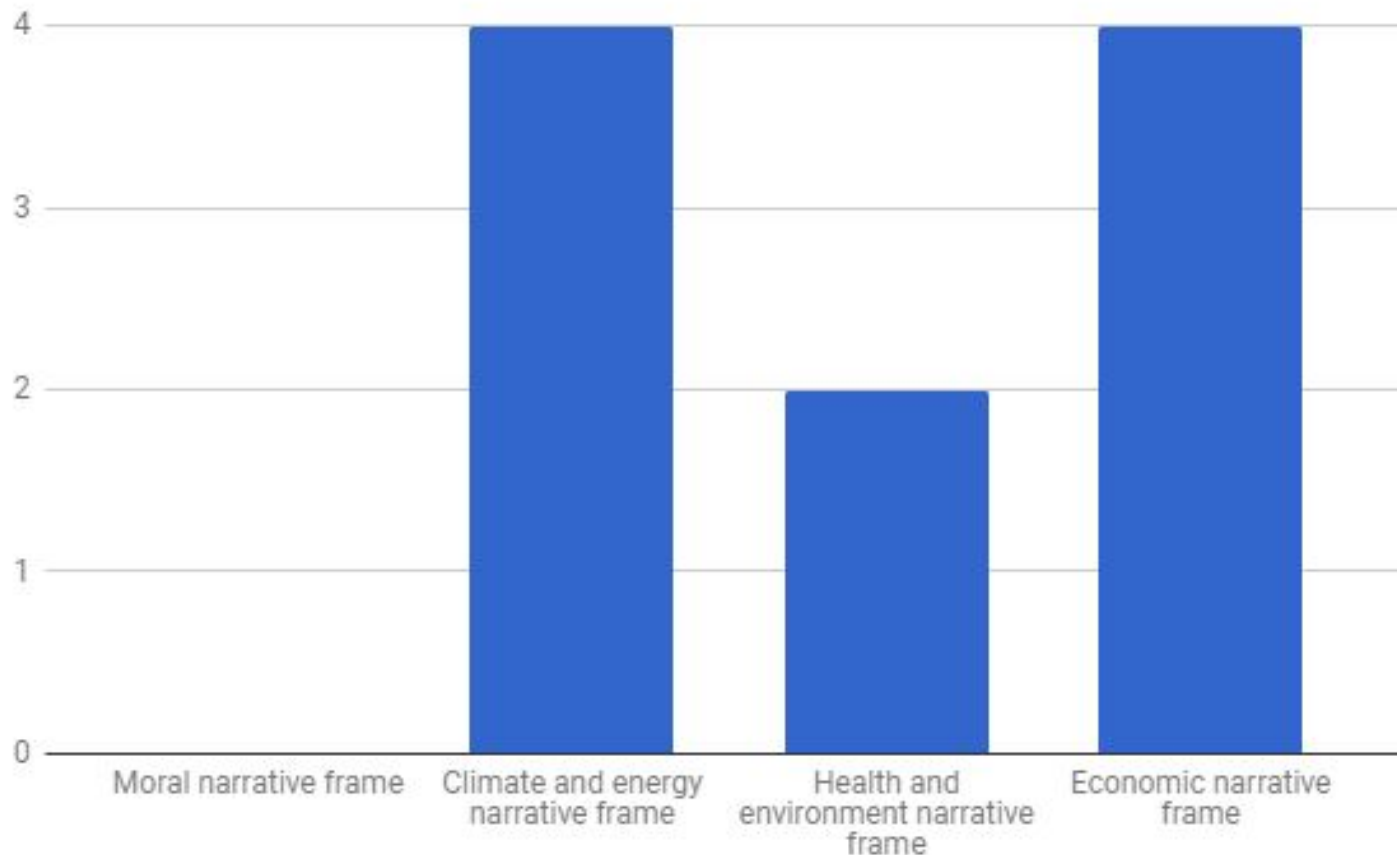
- **Moral narrative frame**
  - Hypocrisy: gap between what is promised and financial flows
  - Unfairness: subsidies shouldn't make a minority richer+potential conflicts of interest+subsidies should go to Just Transition (general interest)
- **Economic narrative frame**
  - Stranded assets, risky investments
  - FFS make fossil fuels artificially affordable
  - FFS render clean and efficient energy less cost competitive
- **Climate and energy narrative frame**
  - Stands in the way of climate ambition
  - FFS slow down transition to renewables and energy efficiency
- **Health and environment narrative frame**
  - FFS is a cost that produces additional costs: air pollution, environment deterioration and premature deaths

# Matching messaging to audiences' values

- **Conservatives: Moral and Economic narrative frames**
  - Hypocrisy: gap between what is promised and financial flows
  - Unfairness: subsidies shouldn't make a minority richer+potential conflicts of interest+subsidies should go to Just Transition (general interest)
  - Stranded assets, risky investments
  - FFS make fossil fuels artificially affordable
  - FFS render clean and efficient energy less cost competitive
- **Progressives: Climate, Energy and Externalities narrative frames**
  - FFS stand in the way of climate ambition
  - FFS slow down transition to renewables and energy efficiency
  - FFS is a cost that produces additional costs: air pollution, environment deterioration and premature deaths

# Dominant frames currently used at national level

- Stock taking of national narratives: 10 respondents from 7 countries as of today (Romania, Hungary, Netherlands, Germany, Turkey, Spain and Poland)



# Some questions for the next sessions

- Are FFS an opportunity to engage conservatives in climate action?
- Which potential allies and messengers can be mobilised at national level?
- How to make economic stories interesting to a wider audience?  
Ex: dieselgate and diesel subsidies, air pollution and transport fossil fuel subsidies...
- Which moments can we identify at national level to speak out against FFS?



Thank you for your attention.

# National campaigns tackling fossil fuel subsidies

11:00 - 12:30

# Break-out groups:

## Mapping FFS potential audiences, narratives and influencers

Which narrative frame suits best my audience?

Which messengers could I mobilise to achieve my goal?

### AUDIENCES

- Conservative decision-makers (10 minutes)
- Finance and business stakeholders (10 minutes)
- Fossil fuel consumers (10 minutes)
- Fossil fuel workers (10 minutes)
- Environmental stakeholders (5 minutes)

**Report-back to plenary**  
**“New arguments to get everyone on board”**

# **Break-out groups:**

## **Building momentum ahead of high national moments**

Which are the key national moments or processes that can be used for subsidy reform?

Please define national communication strategies that could impact relevant national processes?

**Report-back to plenary and conclusions**  
**“New campaigning opportunities to bring  
about fossil fuel subsidies phase out”**

**...How can CAN Europe help?**

# Campaign “Stop fossil fuel subsidies” at COP



Thank you for your attention.