Communication Strategies for Subsidy Reform

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- expert platform on Market-Based Instruments for environmental policy
- members in almost all EU Member States
- a platform for all – representatives of ministries, politicians, policy makers, international organisations, EU Commission, NGOs, research community, business
- NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!
Presentation structure

- Why communicate?
- What to communicate?
  - Explaining EFR measures
  - Monitoring and communicating the results of EFR
- How to communicate?
  - Possible ways of communicating reform
- Concrete examples of innovative information campaigns
Why communicate?

- building acceptance is key for successful implementation of EFR measures
- acceptance of an instrument both among general public and in other interest groups seems to be related to awareness of environmental problem
- acceptance can be strengthened by creating common understanding of a problem and possible solutions to it by:
  1. providing correct and targeted information on the environmental issue and proposed activities to rectify it
  2. involving stakeholders in policy formulation e.g. consultations / committees / working parties
What to communicate? (1)

- The problem of subsidies (environmental and fiscal sustainability)
- The reasoning behind the proposed legislation
- ‘Fairness’ – explain which groups are benefiting from subsidies most?
- The benefits of a subsidy reform package for all
- Immediate winners of subsidy reform
- Compensatory measures to protect the vulnerable
- Results and impacts of policy
  Particularly of course if the policy was a success (requires sound and detailed monitoring of EFR policy measures).
What to communicate? (2)

- What you communicate also depends to some degree on your target audience:
- everyone should be informed about the environmental problem and your proposed solution
- this information should be easily understandable and accessible
- compensatory measures should be clearly communicated
- business needs to know about the impact of subsidy reform on their costs and competitiveness and how to respond to these changes, as well as about compensatory/flanking measures affecting them
- the impact of subsidy reform should be monitored and disseminated
How to communicate?

- use unusual alliances, try to find stakeholders from across the board to speak out in support EFR measures
- draw on sound research and analysis to back your arguments
- use the press to get your message to a wide audience
- convey your message in unusual ways
- design easily accessible billboards, posters, cartoons
- distribute flyers (keep text to a minimum!)
- put information on internet sites, make a new website
- social media sites
- make a short (low budget) and easily accessible film
Some examples from around the world – campaigns by governments and NGOs
Green scissors – an unusual alliance

- very successful campaign in the USA run by NGO Friends of the Earth with Taxpayers for Common Sense and the US Public Interest Research Group
- worked across party lines in Congress
- produce an annual report on wasteful spending
- based on principle of cutting wasteful expenditures, especially those which harm the environment
- campaign focuses on benefits important to the electorate:
  1. saving taxpayers money, reducing the tax burden (i.e. more than just revenue neutrality).
  2. reducing environmental pollution and resource use.

Immediate impact – easy to understand

- cartoon from the Centre for Science and Environment (a non-profit organisation) criticising traffic pollution in Dehli
- CSE’s campaign targeted old and highly polluting diesel engines and two-stroke rickshaws
- their message is easy to understand in this cartoon
- better still – the poster on the next slide does not use any words at all

Source: www.cseindia.org
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“What’s good about the ecotax?”

- German Environment Ministry campaign to explain the benefits of the ecotax
- Eye-catching billboards explained the advantages of an ecotax in an accessible way (see following slides)
- Highlighted benefits for different social groups
- Research on the positive impacts of reform commissioned by the MoE were widely publicised
- Bi-annual surveys of public opinion and awareness of environmental issues inform campaigns
In Germany, billboards told people about the advantages of the Ecotax for them...

Targeting business, the German slogan was....

effective climate protection is profitable – and saves the environment
...and for employees....

lower labour costs create new jobs
Further positive impacts...
more
Sex
Sorry?
Those who turn off the lights are rewarded, one way or the other
German Parliament: MP’s request

- “Which cognitions influenced the Federal Government to answer the question “what’s the ecotax good for?” with “more sex“ and will there be further sexist advertising?”
“...the motive “more sex“ is just one out of four motives of a poster-campaign showing the advantages of the ecotax:
German Government‘s reply on MP‘s request (II/III)

- more climate protection through efficient use of energy,
- more jobs through lower pension fund contributions,
- more money due to reducing ancillary wage costs
German Government’s reply on MP’s request (III/III)

- “...the motive „more sex“ must be interpreted along with the following statement: „who turns off the lights gets rewarded one way or another...“

- If there is the political will, the Government is ready to analyse more closely the relationship between the ETR and sex.“

- The Government did not receive a reply on that...
The Clean Air Action Group’s parable of cheap shoes

- The government has decided to support the population in acquiring their shoes – 80% of the price of all purchased shoes will be covered by the state.
- Buyers are elated. As a result, more and more shoes are sold. People start to replace their shoes every week, throwing away the old ones.
- Shoe repair shops close down one after the other, shoemakers become unemployed.
- Shoes thrown out create huge waste piles, transport and disposal costs are steadily growing.
- Due to increased demand, the price of raw leather soars, hiking up shoe prices, too. This, in turn, forces the state to increase its subsidies.
- The cattle and pig industries become more lucrative, but increased animal stock causes severe environmental damage.
- Owing to the need for additional quantities of animal feed, less arable land remains for the purpose of growing other crops; thus even food prices begin to rise.
- The state feels it must somehow provide the required financial resources for the ever-increasing shoe subsidies.
- It raises personal income tax and social security contribution rates, and cuts spending on education, healthcare and public transport.
- Poorer social groups are compelled to use up all their money just to cover their basic daily necessities, so they are unable to buy more shoes than before.
- On the other hand, the rich purchase dozens of shoes every month.
- Social unrest results...
The web-based “Act on CO2” campaign in the UK

- a cross-government initiative in the UK (Ministries of Energy and Climate Change, Transport, and Environment)
- campaign uses TV, press, radio and online advertising
- informs public on climate change and easy ways to reduce their climate footprint
- TV advertising, e.g. to encourage UK citizens to use public transport more and drive 7km less per week
- participants can ask to receive one e-mail per week suggesting practical ways of reducing their CO2 emissions – and can give feedback on the suggestions
- informative and interactive internet site

- Source: [http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/home.html](http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk/home.html)
Renewable energy and feed-in tariffs

From 1st April 2010, individuals, organizations and businesses in England, Wales and Scotland can claim cash back for electricity they produce from eligible renewable and low-carbon sources.
A short film on ecological driving

- using humour can often help people to remember and tell others about what you would like to communicate
- the short film “bank robbery” is available here: [http://www.bmu.de/english/climate_change/doc/3472.php](http://www.bmu.de/english/climate_change/doc/3472.php)
- this short film was shown in cinema’s all over Germany, prior to the main film

It is freely available online in English and can be easily translated
Recommendations for future campaigns

1. Do solid scientific work on the extent and impacts of subsidies
2. Campaigns should find innovative and attractive ways of communicating subsidy policy to the general public
3. Forge unusual alliances to run such a campaign
4. Use images as they are far more effective than only words
5. Use humour and absurdity
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

- ANY QUESTIONS?
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