

EU'S CLIMATE CHANGE CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN MALTA

"You Control Climate Change" is the title of a new awareness raising campaign that European Commission has launched today in Malta. This campaign which will run in all 25 member countries of the European Union challenges individuals to make small changes to their daily routine in order to achieve significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.

The launch, attended by the Head of the European Commission's Representation in Malta, Dr Joanna Drake and by Rural Affairs and Environment Minister, George Pullicino, took place at the Valletta Waterfront. Over one hundred primary school children from different schools were also present and took part in an animated presentation, led by well known TV presenter Marie Briguglio, on the causes and effects of climate change.

As in other EU countries, the Malta campaign was launched with the unveiling of a huge banner showing the Earth in the universe, with a thermostat attached to it measuring its rising temperature. "You Control Climate Change," reads the title. "Turn down. Switch off. Recycle. Walk."

It was announced today that the second phase of the campaign will take place in early Autumn when Secondary School children will be making a pledge to take practice steps to reduce the CO2 emissions through making small changes in their daily behaviour. Over 300 children are expected to take part in this campaign. A series of educational spots on climate change are also planned to be transmitted on one of the local television stations.

Apart from aiming to give people a sense of personal responsibility and empowerment and help them contribute to the fight against climate change the campaign also includes the launch of a new website <http://www.climatechange.eu.com>, which offers a wealth of practical and easy-to-do tips on how to reduce emissions.

Households in the EU are responsible for some 16 per cent of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions, most of which comes from the production and use of energy. Speaking at the launch of the campaign in Brussels, Commission President José Manuel Barroso, said: "For the Commission action against climate change is a priority. This campaign complements and reinforces our political and legislative efforts. It makes clear to which extent we all are responsible for climate change and what individuals can and need to do to limit this threat."

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Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "People may say that their individual behaviour does not matter; I say – on the contrary: Households in the EU count for a large part of the EU's total greenhouse gas emissions, so each of us has a role to play in bringing down emissions. Our campaign will provide citizens with information about climate change and their role in combating it. Doing the right thing is not as difficult as it seems."

Practical advice included in the campaign website include avoiding the stand-by mode of TV sets, stereos and computers, saving 10 per cent of the energy they use saved and printing on both sides of each sheet of paper. The website also includes a carbon calculator which calculates the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) saved by each action, and a downloadable power-saving screen saver for computers. In the coming months the campaign will also target secondary school pupils, who will be encouraged to sign a pledge to reduce their CO₂ emissions and track their efforts.

Per head and year, each EU citizen is responsible for 11 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, mainly CO₂. Most of the greenhouse gas emissions in the EU are caused by the production and use of energy (61%) followed by transport (21%), both of which use fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) that release emissions of CO₂ when burnt.

Households use almost one third of the energy consumed in the EU, and private cars are responsible for roughly half of the transport emissions, so individuals have a direct influence on these emissions. But they can also help reduce emissions from other sectors such as industry by reducing their waste and making sure it is recycled or composted. For example it costs ten times less energy to recycle an aluminium can than to produce a new one. Last but not least, citizens can push for the structural changes needed to achieve a low-carbon society, for example the increased use of renewable energy sources.

"For the European Commission, action against climate change is a priority. Climate change poses a major threat to the stability and prosperity of our societies. Over the last century, the average temperature increased by 0.6°C globally, and by almost 1°C in Europe. The ice caps are melting, sea levels are rising, and the number of storms, droughts and floods is increasing, with more dire consequences to come in the coming decades. Many people tend to feel helpless in the face of this threat. Or they believe that their actions do not matter, not knowing that households and private car use are directly responsible for more than 25 per cent of EU greenhouse gas emissions. With this campaign, we want to motivate individuals across the EU join the fight against climate change, and show that that their contributions are crucially important," said Dr Drake.

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Also present for the launch of the campaign were the several Ambassadors from EU member countries, the Mayor of Valletta, politicians, and representatives from Malta's leading environmental organisations

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