

# CHANGE

TURN DOWN. SWITCH OFF. RECYCLE. WALK.

## Make a pledge!



European Commission

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# YOU CONTROL CLIMATE CHANGE. **Make a pledge!**

Brussels, 1 August 2006

Dear student,

Climate change is an issue of global significance. You may have noticed that there are more and more stories about global warming in the news and that political leaders around the world are discussing it.

If we do not take action against climate change, the world we live in will be very different in a few decades. It will be generally hotter, and some islands and coastal areas will disappear under the sea, which is rising since the polar ice is melting. There will be more storms, floods, heat waves and droughts. Food and water shortages will spread in many parts of the world, and some climate-sensitive animals and plants, such as polar bears and penguins, will die out.

It is in our power to prevent this from happening, but this requires each individual as well as industry and governments all over the world to play their part in helping to fight climate change. The climate is changing mainly due to the way we produce and use energy to provide us with electricity, heat our homes, power our factories, run our cars and fuel the planes that fly us to our holiday destinations. By changing these patterns and using energy more responsibly, we can reduce the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases that drive climate change.

The European Commission is conducting an EU-wide campaign to raise awareness of climate change and what we can all do to limit it. As part of the campaign, we have put together a small brochure for students where you will find information about climate change and the role that you can play in controlling it. You are also invited to sign a pledge (see back page) to reduce your CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by making small changes to your daily routine.

It is important for you to know about climate change now because it is likely to be even more serious when you grow up. I would welcome it if you would also discuss it in class. If each of your schoolmates signs the pledge, you could track your efforts together and exchange your experiences of fighting global warming.

The pledge, along with more information and educational material, can also be found at **[www.climatechange.eu.com](http://www.climatechange.eu.com)**.

Controlling climate change is one of the greatest challenges humanity faces today. We hope that you and your school will join us in tackling it now!

Kind regards,



**Stavros Dimas**  
*Environment Commissioner*

**TURN DOWN. SWITCH OFF. RECYCLE. WALK. CHANGE**



## You control climate change

### What's the weather like today?

People talk a lot about the weather, which is not surprising when you consider the impact it actually has on our mood, on how we dress and on what we eat. The climate, however, is not the same as the weather. It is the average pattern of weather for a particular region over a long period of time.



### Isn't it normal for the climate to change?

Climate has, and always will, vary for natural reasons. However, recent evidence shows that above normal variations have occurred in the past decades due to human, industrial and agricultural activities.

### Why does this happen?

Heat rays from the sun warm the earth's surface. As the temperature increases, heat is sent back into the atmosphere. Some of it is absorbed or reflected back to the earth by greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, like CO<sub>2</sub>, water vapour, nitrous oxide, methane and ozone. This natural process is called 'the greenhouse effect' and it makes life possible on our planet. Without this, the global average temperature would be -18°C.

Over the last century, the impact of human activity has taken its toll and the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, of which 80% is CO<sub>2</sub>, is now higher than in the last 650,000 years. The result is that the average global temperature has risen by 0.74°C and the average temperature in Europe by 1°C.

By burning fossil fuels such as gas, oil and coal for energy, mankind has released huge amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Other greenhouse gases are released by certain industrial activities, agriculture and waste dumps.

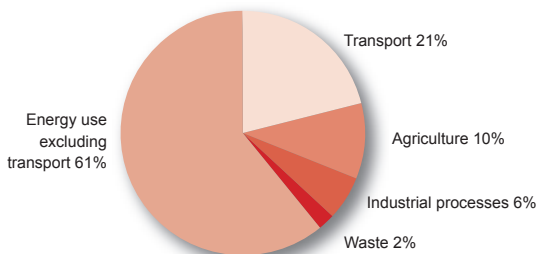


### Did you know...?

- The 11 hottest years on record have all occurred since the early 1990s.
- Scientists predict that global temperatures could rise by between 1.1 and 6.4 °C over this century if no action is taken to reduce emissions.

### Are Europeans contributing to the problem?

Greenhouse gas emissions in the EU in 2003



### Did you know...?

- Each European is responsible for 11 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year, out of which close to nine tonnes are CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- Households use one third of the energy consumed in the EU and are therefore responsible for around 20% of the EU's energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. 70% of the energy used by households is spent on heating our homes, 14% on heating water and 12% on lighting and electric appliances.
- Private cars are responsible for 10% of the EU's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- Europe is home to only 7% of the world's population, but uses 20% of the world's ecosystem resources in terms of fibres, food, energy, and waste absorption.
- On average, each European citizen produces 1 kg of waste every day. Every year, we produce the equivalent weight of 4000 Eiffel Towers in waste packaging, and it's increasing.



## What is the impact of climate change?

- ❗ **Polar ice caps are melting.** The area of sea covered by Arctic ice at the North Pole has shrunk by 10% in recent decades, and the thickness of the ice above the water has decreased by about 40%. On the other side of the world, the ice sheet above the Antarctic continent has become unstable.
- ❗ **Glaciers are retreating.** It is likely that 75% of the glaciers in the Swiss Alps will disappear by 2050.
- ❗ **Sea levels are rising.** Over the last century they have increased by between 12 and 22 cm and are projected to rise further by up to 59 cm during this century. However, this does not include the future rapid changes in ice flow from Greenland and Antarctica – larger values cannot be excluded.
- ❗ **Extreme weather – Storms, floods, droughts and heat waves.** In the last decade, there were three times more weather-related natural catastrophes in the world than in the 1960s. The scorching summer of 2003 contributed to the premature deaths of 350,00 Europeans in the first two weeks of August, set off large-scale forest fires and caused agricultural losses of more than € 10 billion.
- ❗ **Loss in biodiversity.** Many animals and plants will not be able to cope with changed temperatures. Species like polar bears, seals, walruses and penguins are especially vulnerable.



## This sounds serious! What are we doing about it?

The European Union (EU) has been at the forefront of international efforts to combat climate change. This takes place under the umbrella of the 1992 UN Climate Change Convention and its 1997 Kyoto Protocol which sets targets for the greenhouse emissions of developed countries. The European Commission has developed many different measures to help EU Member States reach their Kyoto targets. Governments set limits to emissions from the industrial and energy sectors by allocating emission allowances. Companies are allowed to trade the allowances to keep costs low (emissions trading). Other measures taken by the EU seek to improve the energy efficiency of industrial plants, buildings and household appliances.



The Kyoto Protocol targets for reducing emissions expire in 2012. The EU strongly believes an ambitious new global agreement is needed to step up the battle against climate change after that. To prevent global warming from reaching dangerous proportions, worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases will have to be cut to around half of their 1990 levels by 2050, and emissions from developed countries by 60-80%.



### European Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas:

*"People tend to believe that their personal choices do not make a difference for the greater good.*

*In fact, they do. As much as we have been the source of climate change, we can help combat it. Each and every one [of us] can contribute by making those choices that express respect for the environment."*

Many companies are doing their bit by trying to produce their products in an environmentally-friendly way. Car makers are striving to improve the fuel efficiency of cars sold in the EU as better fuel efficiency means fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Check the Web site of your favourite brands and find out what they are doing to combat climate change.

For more information on the actions being taken by the European Commission's Environment Directorate-General, go to [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/home\\_en.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/climat/home_en.htm)

## What can I do to help? Make a pledge!

*Everyone has a role to play in combating climate change.  
Here is a list of things that you can easily do!*

### TURN DOWN

- Don't overheat your home. Reducing the temperature by just 1°C can cut up to 7% off your family's energy bill. 70% of the energy used by households is for heating.
- Ask for your parents' help to programme your home's thermostat so that at night or while you are out of the house, the temperature is set at 17°C and by the time you wake up or return home, the temperature is at a comfortable 20°C again.
- Save hot water by taking a shower rather than a bath – it requires four times less energy.
- When you make a hot drink, just boil the amount of water you need.
- When you air your room, leave the window wide open for a few minutes and then close it again, rather than letting the heat escape over a long period.
- Defrost your fridge regularly. You can save up to 30% of the energy used.
- Don't set your fridge at the highest cooling setting. When the temperature of your fridge is lower than 5°C, you will only consume more energy; your food will not keep fresh longer.
- Don't put hot or warm food in the fridge. Let it cool down first and place it in the fridge afterwards.

### SWITCH OFF

- Don't forget to switch off the lights when you don't need them.
- Don't leave your TV, stereo or computer on standby. On average, a TV set uses 45% of its energy in standby mode. If all Europeans avoided the standby mode, they would save enough electricity to power a country the size of Belgium.
- Also, don't leave your mobile phone charging when the battery is full. If you do, 95% of the electricity is wasted – only 5% is used to actually charge your phone.
- Talk to your parents about energy-saving light bulbs – they last longer and use five times less electricity than conventional bulbs.
- When your parents choose new household appliances (fridges, washing machines, etc.), ask them to consider the European Grade A+ label – that shows that they are energy efficient.
- If you turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, you save several litres of water.





## RECYCLE

- When shopping, use a reusable bag instead of a disposable plastic one.
- Bring used glass to the bottle bank and sort paper, cardboard and cans from the rest of your waste. Recycling aluminium cans consumes 10 times less energy than producing new ones. Factories use far less energy making paper from old newspapers than from wood pulp.
- If you have a garden, compost your biodegradable waste.
- Choose products that come with little packaging, and buy refills when you can.
- Take your lunch in a reusable lunch box instead of aluminium foil or paper bags.

## WALK

- For short distances, for example a few kilometres, avoid taking the car. Walk or cycle instead!
- When you travel further, consider taking a bus or a train.
- Also avoid air travel if you can – aeroplanes emit a huge amount of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Flying is the world's fastest growing source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.
- If your parents are about to buy a car, ask them to buy a small and fuel-efficient model – they will also save money on their fuel bill! Under European legislation, car manufacturers must display information about CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and fuel consumption.

## ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Plant a tree at school, in your garden or neighbourhood! Five trees soak up around one tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> throughout their life time.
- Look for goods with the European Eco-label (symbolised by a little flower) in shops and supermarkets.
- Use as little paper as possible: photocopy on both sides. Use email.
- Consume locally produced, seasonal food. Not only is it healthier, it is also better for the environment!
- Eat less meat. Producing meat is CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive.

Keep track of your actions to reduce climate change! For a period of six weeks, give yourself points for every action you have taken during that week and, at the end of the period, add all the totals and see how you scored.

	Week 1:	Week 2:	Week 3:	Week 4:	Week 5:	Week 6:
<b>Turn down.</b>						
Turn down the heating of your home by 1°C for one week. <i>You get 10 points.</i>						
Close doors and windows of heated rooms for one week. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
Take a quick shower instead of a bath for one week. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
Make up your mind before opening the fridge – don't leave the fridge door open. Do this for one week. <i>You get 1 point.</i>						
<b>Switch off.</b>						
Switch off the lights whenever you can for one week. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
Unplug your mobile charger when your phone is charged. Do this for one week. <i>You get 1 point.</i>						
Switch off your TV, stereo or computer for one week. Don't leave them on stand-by. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
<b>Recycle.</b>						
Bring used glass to the bottle bank for one week. <i>You get 1 point.</i>						
For one week, bring a refillable bottle to school instead of a can or a disposable plastic bottle. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
Take a shopping bag to the supermarket or reuse old disposable plastic bags for one week. <i>You get 5 points.</i>						
<b>Walk.</b>						
Walk, cycle or take public transport to get to school, to your after-schools activities, and back home. <i>For each km, you get 1 point.</i>						
<b>Other.*</b>						

\*Check out the Web site [www.climatechange.eu.com](http://www.climatechange.eu.com) and choose some additional activities.

Your name and signature: ..... Your total score after six weeks: .....

Witnesses (names and signatures): .....



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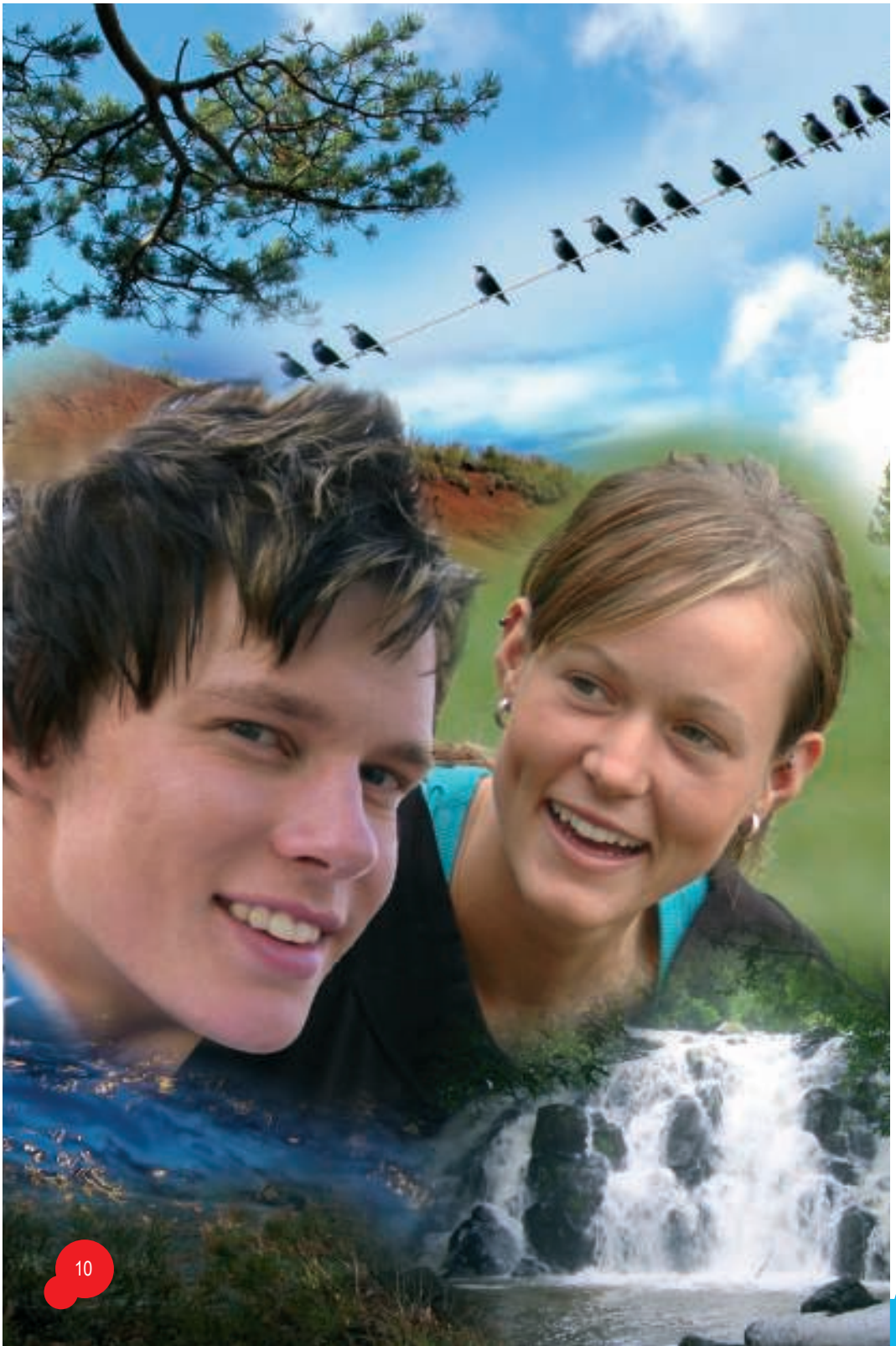
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Take action at school, at home or at the youth centre or sports club.

It's more fun when you do it together!

- Develop a poster campaign that encourages people to make small changes in their daily lives, such as switching off the lights, walking instead of driving, recycling, etc and hang them up at school, in your neighbourhood, your sports centre or youth club.
- Organise a fund-raising activity to finance your school's double-glazing. You will not only combat climate change; the club's energy bill will also drop significantly.
- Talk to your school council about eco-friendly solutions for heating and airing classrooms, the energy-efficiency of the school's computer suite and the recycling of paper and other rubbish.
- Carry out a sponsored bike ride and donate the money you raise to a climate change campaign. ■





# PLEDGE 'WE CONTROL CLIMATE CHANGE'

We, students from .....

(fill in school and grade) can control climate change and pledge to become responsible citizens by reducing our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through making small changes to our daily behaviour.

Date: ..... Country: .....

School's address: .....

.....

.....

School's telephone number: .....

Teacher's name: .....

Teacher's e-mail address: .....

**Please send signed pledges to**

[pledge@climatechange.eu.com](mailto:pledge@climatechange.eu.com)

**or by mail to:**

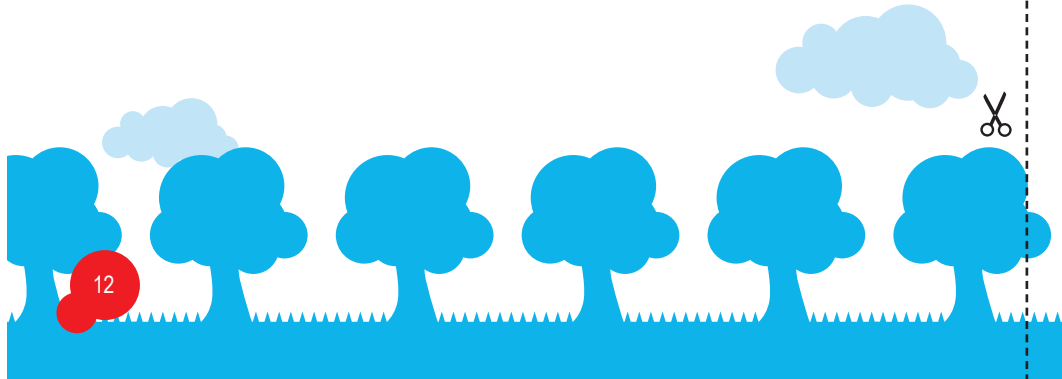
European Commission  
Environment DG  
Information Centre  
Office: BU-9 00/11  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium





Signatures:

Name	Date of birth	Signature



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