



The European Commission Awakens Citizens to Resource Efficiency



Europe 2020 flag

Resource efficiency means “using the Earth's limited resources in a sustainable manner”. We live in the age of consumption and utterly depend on all types of resources like metals, minerals, fuels, water, timber, fertile soil and clean air for our survival, and for the functioning of our societies.

The problem is, the supply of resources is limited, and our natural resource base is being depleted. Global demand is increasing pressure on the environment, and competition for resources is mounting. Many natural resources are fundamental to our health, well-being and quality of life, so it is essential that we respect the natural limits of the planet's key ecosystems.

So is it really possible to produce more value, to contribute to human well-being, while generating less waste and reducing the harm to the environment? The European Union wants to show it is. To achieve this, the EU can find alternative use for its current resources, boost recycling, reduce the size of packaging, sell services rather than goods, and much more. Using resources more efficiently has obvious benefits for the environment and for human well-being. It also brings significant advantages to the economy, improving productivity and competitiveness, reducing costs and creating employment opportunities.

Resource efficiency therefore seems to belong to a win-win strategy. However, if Europe is to truly become more resource-efficient, every single company, firm and consumer needs to be mobilised to take action. Efforts must be made at all levels to be able to concretely implement resource efficiency.

European Action for Resource Efficiency

To boost resource efficiency and to become a “smart, sustainable and inclusive economy”, the European Union has adopted the [Europe 2020](#) strategy with five ambitious targets for employment, research and development, climate change and energy, education and poverty. The strategy includes seven key areas, addressed by flagship initiatives, such as the [Resource Efficient Europe](#) initiative, launched at the beginning of 2011. It will contribute to the achievement of the EU's general goals on greenhouse gas emissions, energy dependency, etc., thus transforming the European economy into a sustainable one by 2050. This initiative is designed as a framework for policymaking, but the involvement of European citizens is also key to the achievement of these ambitious goals.

Resource efficiency is...

- “Using less to do more”, Commissioner Janez Potočnik
- “Reducing the total environmental impact of the production and consumption of goods and services, from raw material extraction to final use and disposal”, [United Nations Environment Programme](#)
- “A practice in which the primary consideration of material use begins with the concept of ‘Reduce - Reuse - Recycle - Repair’”, www.ecowho.com
- “Using the Earth's limited resources in a sustainable manner”, [European Commission](#)



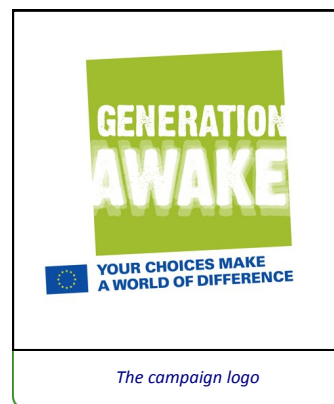
The Polish Minister of Environment during the launch event of the “Generation Awake” campaign in Warsaw



The “Generation Awake” Campaign

Within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, on October 17, 2011 in Warsaw (Poland), a Europe-wide campaign called “[Generation Awake](#)” was launched with Commissioner Janez Potočnik and Polish Minister for Environment Andrzej Kraszewski. The campaign aims to encourage consumers to develop resource-efficient habits, with a motto rooted in everyday consumption: “your choices make a world of difference”. The campaign, available in 23 languages, is designed to both raise awareness about the need to use natural resources wisely, and to encourage citizens to think about their impact on the planet when making purchasing decisions. “The campaign is not encouraging citizens to consume less, but to consume differently”, indicates Katarzyna Wolos, the campaign’s coordinator at the European Commission.

The campaign focuses on the pre-consumption phase – in other words, the moment of choosing a product or service – and is being implemented in the EU countries, with events arranged in the four target countries in 2011: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the United Kingdom.



The campaign logo



Impulse Inga, one of the shopping bag characters presented on the campaign website

“It's about using less to do more. Everyone can do their bit. We just need to wake up !”

Commissioner Janez Potočnik during the launch event of the campaign

Meet the Clever Shopping Bags

The campaign intends to raise awareness about the consequences of using resources unsustainably and explain why resource efficiency is now critical. However, despite the gravity of the issue, the campaign has adopted a positive tone that is fun rather than authoritative, thus inspiring people to take concrete social action. The key tools of the campaign will be a combination of real-life situations and 3-dimensional animation. For instance, the characters of the campaign are friendly 3D shopping bags, that represent different types of consumption behaviours: Routine Robbie – daily consumption; Impulse Inga – impulse consumption; and Chubby Charlie – overconsumption. They will be “waking up” consumers and advising them about how to use natural resources in a more efficient way in their daily lives, and were particularly visible during the launch event in Warsaw.

A [video clip](#) was also created to be disseminated in viral form, and the website of the campaign provides a vast amount of information and tips on resource efficiency, set up in a familiar environment — a typical European house. Social media are also used to target young urbans, the main consumers of tomorrow, who are already aware of environmental issues. Indeed, the designers of the campaign set up a [Facebook page](#) with challenges for citizens to undertake, such as “for one month, use only reusable bags for all your shopping”, with the hopes that this triggers commitment both in the long and in the short run. Families with young children will also be targeted, on the basis that they are concerned by the choices they make for their children. Get ready to see Europe awake !

Areas covered by the campaign

Natural resources:

- Air
- Water - 2012 policy priority
- Wood / timber
- Soil
- Metals
- Minerals
- Biodiversity

Cross-cutting issues:

- Mobility
- Nutrition
- Housing