



New 'Generation Awake' Initiative Helps Consumers Wise Up to Water Use



Every year, about 89 million tonnes of food gets thrown away in the EU. This equals to about 181 kg per person. Throwing away food also means wasting resources such as water and energy that are needed to produce it, as well as wasting money that is spent buying it. Across Europe, over 70% of fish stocks are overexploited. Whereas it is estimated that between 20% and 40% of Europe's available water is being wasted, 11% of the European population currently faces increasing water scarcity. Moreover, 40% of the water we consume comes from outside the EU – often from countries which suffer from serious water shortages – since all the products and services we consume and produce require significant amounts of water¹.

Given such alarming statistics, the European Commission's DG Environment (DG ENV) launched 'Generation Awake' in October 2011 to inform Europeans about the importance of developing resource-efficient habits and making smart consumption choices. The campaign urges consumers to "wake up" to the consequences of over-consumption and environmental pollution for current and future generations. Supporting the [Europe 2020](#) flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe, 'Generation Awake' (see [Newsflash n°89](#)) links people's consumption patterns to the environmental, economic and social costs resulting from the production and disposal of consumer goods.

Water's Role in Resource Efficiency

DG Environment recognises that water scarcities are an increasing reality in both the EU and around the world. To address this growing issue and support the European Commission's 2012 priority on water, 'Generation Awake' has recently launched a new initiative informing consumers about water consumption in- and outside the home.

The 'Generation Awake' campaign's water-saving tips advise European citizens to recognise how their direct and indirect water use affects water ecosystems and drinking water supplies. The campaign suggests alternative solutions and practices to help consumers cut their energy use and increase their water efficiency. 'Generation Awake's' water component is supported by a new homepage, 3D-animation, photos and videos.

Become a 'Generation Awake' Partner

- Start by filling out the 'Request for permission to use the Generation Awake logo for promotional activities' form on the [campaign website](#).
- Access campaign visuals and photos for your website and publications.
- Connect with similar organisations and potential partners throughout the EU.
- Supporting organisations' logos are published on the supporter's page under the 'Campaign News' section.



The 'Generation Awake' website homepage.



Introducing Water Maniac Walter

To help website visitors get the most out of the new 'Generation Awake' web pages, the campaign has introduced Water Maniac Walter, a 3D-animated character. Referred to as the "neurotic bucket", Water Maniac Walter joins forces with the campaign's trio of 3D-animated shopping bags – Routine Robbie, Chubby Charlie and Impulse Inga – to promote resource-efficient behaviours. In addition to starring in a lighthearted [video](#) with a concerned doctor, the character offers water-saving tips within the setting of a virtual bathroom.

The 'Generation Awake' campaign has also revamped its website content related to direct consumption and added a new section to the campaign's 'Awake Consumption Guide'. The Guide's water section offers tips on direct water use in the kitchen, bathroom and other household areas where water is often consumed. Simultaneously, 'Generation Awake' has launched a new website called '[Imagine All the Water](#)'. The website will support the campaign's message and help consumers understand the hidden consequences behind indirect water use in the production of various products.



Water Maniac Walter shows visitors how to save water in a virtual bathroom.

“ In some parts of Europe, it's easy to forget that water is a finite resource, while in others recurrent shortages are a reality. The way we use water affects other people so we have a responsibility to use it more efficiently. ”

The 'Awake Consumption Guide'

Social Media Tools and User Engagement

Both traditional and digital communication tools are used by 'Generation Awake' to educate consumers about water's importance within the resource efficiency framework. The campaign's [Facebook page](#) is one opportunity where fans can engage with the European Commission and each other by watching YouTube videos, and receiving and posting status updates.

'Generation Awake' also provides a Facebook application, '[Water matters](#)', that allows users to upload images to a photo wall expressing what water means to them. Fans can share, tweet and comment on photos posted by other users. The photo wall is meant to motivate and inspire others to recognise the significance of water in everyday life and the global community.

During the second half of 2012, the European Commission will host live events in Italy, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain to raise publicity about the new water elements of the campaign. The general public will also be able to participate in a video competition starting September 2012. More interactive content will be published on the 'Generation Awake' website revealing the impact of hidden water use in areas such as food and textile production.

Notable Campaign Successes

- 'Generation Awake's' Facebook page has attracted over 43,000 fans since the campaign's launch in October 2011.
- The Water Maniac Walter video clip has received over 3,300 'Likes' and 3,400 'Shares' on Facebook. The video was also watched by more than 380,000 people during the first 10 days after its release.
- The campaign website has generated over 235,000 page visits.