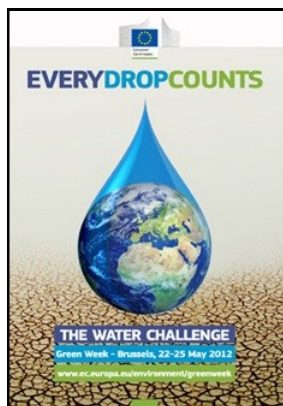




Green Week 2012: 'Every Drop Counts - The Water Challenge'



Water is one of Earth's most precious natural resources. It is integral to the survival of natural ecosystems and the support of climate regulation. In fact, only 2% of the planet's water is actually fresh and useable. Moreover, a recent European Commission survey revealed that seven out of ten Europeans think that water-related problems are a serious issue, while eight out of ten Europeans see flooding as a serious threat to human safety and the environment¹.

In light of these public concerns and DG Environment's identification of water as a 2012 priority, this year's Green Week conference in Brussels shined the spotlight on water issues. Entitled '[Every Drop Counts – The Water Challenge](#)', Green Week 2012 offered environmental experts and professionals the opportunity to attend some 40 sessions on water from May 22nd to May 25th 2012. Over 50 Green Week exhibitors from green businesses, NGOs, public bodies, and local and regional government authorities presented their water campaigns and initiatives. Conference attendees and speakers came together in sessions to discuss water problems and explore solutions for making Europe more water-efficient (archived web streaming of the conference sessions can be watched [here](#)).

Conference Sessions Focus on Water Challenges and Solutions

The first day of Green Week 2012 opened with the session '[Water resources: policies for Europe and the world](#)', which set the tone and framework for the following three days of the conference. Led by Karl Falkenberg, Director-General for Environment of the European Commission, the presenters reviewed the state of freshwater resources, and whether these resources are adequate for meeting current and future challenges.

A [video](#) featuring Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment, helped frame the remainder of the opening session and overarching goals of Green Week. The Commissioner provided his thoughts on the collaborative measures that have so far produced positive results for Europe's river basins, and possible solutions for improving water quality and pollution control in the coming decades.

In addition to highlighting the link between sustainable water use and public health across the globe, speakers remarked on the needed improvement of groundwater quality in Europe's intensive agricultural areas. Executive Director at Water Footprint Network, Ruth Mathews, revealed that 40% of Europe's water footprint is outside the continent. In other words, 40% of Europe's water footprint has an impact on the river basins and watersheds, as well as water scarcity and pollution in other parts of the world.

Throughout the week, additional sessions were held on topics including green infrastructure, the marine environment, [Rio+20](#) and water pricing. The closing session, which featured Janez Potočnik as a panel speaker, examined the policy options planned for release in the '[Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters](#)' and how water legislation could be improved.

Green Week 2012 Highlights

- Over 3,000 participants attended Green Week 2012.
- Green Week also hosted the [3rd European Water Conference](#).
- Participants were able to follow live streaming of the conference sessions, now available on the web streaming [archive page](#).
- View [photos](#), [videos](#) and [presentations](#) from the conference.



Janez Potočnik addresses the audience in his video speech.

1: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/496&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



Green Spiders Showcase Water Campaigns at Green Week

Green Spiders from Austria, Finland and Germany joined the European Environmental Communication Networks (EECN) Secretariat at the [Green Spider Network \(GSN\)](#) stand during Green Week. The GSN presenters were Annette Weber from the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management; Kirsi Norros from the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE); and GSN President Hildegard Kaiser from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The EECN Secretariat also presented the GSN and the network's new [2012 brochure](#) during the conference.



Green Spiders exhibit at Green Week 2012.

“ Green Week is a great opportunity for the countries to present their different campaigns to a broad audience. ”

Annette Weber, Austrian Green Spider

- Annette Weber presented the Austrian Ministry's '[Generation Blue](#)' campaign. The initiative provides an online water platform informing teenagers from ages 13 to 19 years-old about the importance of water conservation and careful use of Austria's water resources.
- Kirsi Norros followed Ms. Weber's presentation with the Finnish online collaborative tool and associated campaign '[Lake Wiki](#)'. The wiki service promotes the protection of Finland's lakes and other water bodies by allowing visitors to upload observations and photos to the site.
- Current GSN President Hildegard Kaiser presented the German Ministry's campaign, '[Water in the 21st Century](#)', an educational initiative that raises awareness among students about water scarcity.

Green Week 2012 provided GSN members with an open forum to share their best practices in environmental communication with other countries and organisations working on water issues. Green Spider Kirsi Norros remarked that, "It was a pleasure to introduce the Finnish Lake Wiki at Green Week. People from different countries were interested in this new tool and wanted to learn more about this service. It is very popular in Finland, where there are more than 60,000 lakes!". [Click here](#) to view photos of the GSN stand and exhibition on the GSN website, and additional commentary from Green Spiders.

Water-Related Tools and Resources

- [Water Footprint Network](#) provides training and online resources to help individuals and organisations calculate and reduce their water footprint.
- [EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#) provides information on activities and events building awareness about the Danube region.
- UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) [Cleaner and Sustainable Production Unit](#) promotes the efficient use of natural resources, including water and energy.