Flick the Switch
Summary of Flick the Switch Report & Best Practice Manual

This document corresponds to a report presenting the best practices achieved during the implementation the Flick the Switch project, the overall aim of which was to generate energy efficiency awareness among European primary and secondary school students. This document has been prepared for the Intelligent Energy Europe (IEE) programme and project consortia involved in any sectors that may benefit from the knowledge generated by the Flick the Switch project.

Through the deployment of a dynamic and stimulating campaign, the Flick the Switch project sought to encourage and motivate students to adopt simple behavioural actions such as switching off lights and electrical devices when not in use at school and at home. This 24 month project was supported by the IEE Programme and ran from 1 October 2008 to 30 September 2010.

The first steps toward achieving a successful Flick the Switch initiative involved identifying how to best reach the target group and ensure their sustained involvement in the project. Securing the cooperation and support of busy teachers was central to getting Flick the Switch to the students; every effort was made to ensure that the project was well designed so it could fit into a pre-existing work curriculum and not be time consuming to implement. Project design was also essential to guaranteeing the interest and commitment of the target group. The creation of an engaging platform from which to disseminate the message of Flick the Switch to students of different ages and from different countries was a challenge successfully met by drawing upon the resources and skills of the consortium members, which included schools, educational bodies and local authorities.

A bottom up research approach directly addressed these issues and ensured that the project was on track to meet its objectives. Questionnaires and online surveys directed at 2000 schools and 200 education boards, along with face to face school visits to European primary and secondary schools, helped us to establish their needs, aspirations and existing energy awareness levels. Once we had this information we could set about designing the most relevant and best possible campaign, which consisted of a website, educational support tools and materials for teachers and activities and competitions for students to get involved in. Undertaking this research and communicating directly with the stakeholders was also the first dissemination action of the initiative.

The results and impact of Flick the Switch must take into account the tools used to involve students and teachers in the campaign, namely the campaign website, the materials found on it and the activities and competitions for students to participate in. The impact of the initiative can then be examined in terms of registration numbers, contributions to the campaign and feedback received from participants. Key lessons in terms of best practice can then be drawn out for their application in other projects and sectors.

TOOLS – the Flick the Switch website
Following feedback obtained from schools during the initial bottom up research, the campaign website (www.flicktheswitch.eu) was developed. The goal of the website was to provide schools and teachers across Europe with the knowledge, tools and materials necessary to make behavioural changes and engage in energy saving activities. It offered users access to information on the project
and its activities, material on energy efficiency and related issues, interactive games, downloads and user-friendly tools such as activity themed galleries, flash books, etc. Among its various support tools and materials, the website housed an energy saving calculator, course materials and interactive chat facilities that enabled users to engage directly with Flick and other project participants. This last feature, along with a closely-monitored email enquiry address, facilitated the exchange of information between the project partners and participating schools all across Europe. Furthermore, the website housed upload facilities to enable students to share their creative energy saving actions. All partner languages were catered for on the website (English, Italian, Spanish, Slovenian, Slovakian, Croatian, Norwegian, Lithuanian and Estonian). The result was a content-rich platform made up of presentations, photos, posters, videos, articles, and much more that conveyed the energy saving actions of schools all over Europe. Making the website an interactive and participatory space served to enrich the experience of those involved in the campaign.

TOOLS - Competitions and Activities
In conjunction with the campaign website, a number of activities and competitions were devised. These included a series of online and interactive energy debates, a poster competition and Flick the Switch week, dedicated to schools organising their own energy saving activities.

Posters were assessed at the regional level, with the best chosen for submission to the European-wide competition. Over 600 posters were created, of which 183 were submitted to the final stage of the competition. Many of these posters were uploaded and housed in the dedicated gallery on the campaign website. The European Flick the Switch Poster competition winner in the primary school category was Daria Anamarie Dobre, 7 years old, from *Mihai Eminescu National College*, Bucharest, Romania. In the secondary school category, the winning entry came from *Scoala Duiliu Zamfirescu*, Focsani, Romania and was designed by Michaela Dima, aged 14 years old.

Schools could also compete for the title *1st European Flick the Switch Champions*, which was awarded to the most energy conscious primary and secondary schools. A total of 105 evaluation reports detailing the activities schools undertook as part of the campaign were assessed for this competition. The winners were *Vilnius Minties Secondary School* in Lithuania and *St Francis Primary School* in Malta.

IMPACT - Registration Figures
Information about Flick the Switch was sent to more than 6900 primary and secondary schools and over 300 education boards/authorities via mass mailings and dissemination of the Flick the Switch newsletter. This resulted in 718 schools registering on the campaign website and availing themselves of the tools and materials found on it. This was an excellent result for a project whose target expectations were to achieve 500 registered schools to the website, 200 of which would actively take part in the campaign. Motivating schools to get involved in the campaign was partly achieved by the distribution of starter packs full of Flick the Switch promotional material to the first 200 schools that registered in the campaign. These materials included the official dissemination material (posters, leaflets, stickers) coupled with other promotional material commissioned by each partner (bookmarks, badges, pencils, pocket calendars, pens etc.). All material displayed the project logo and web address. Pre-campaign registration figures were above 30 prior to the launch of the campaign and website, largely due to the bottom up approach used to design the campaign and the
distribution of leaflets through various dissemination channels and organisations with which we had collaborated.

**IMPACT - Contributions**

Over 22,000 visits to the website have been recorded since it was first launched back in October 2009. Central to achieving this figure is the dynamism of the website and the possibility for students and schools to directly contribute to it. The website galleries showcase many fine examples of work schools have done to promote energy saving in the school and at home, including videos, photos, posters, presentations, poems, articles, song lyrics and comic scripts. In all, a very fine collection of imaginative and creative actions are on display in the name of Flick the Switch.

Furthermore, Flick the Switch has had a domino effect, with its message about energy saving moving from schools to homes. Home assignments relating to Flick the Switch teaching materials have facilitated this along with activities, organised by participating schools, which involved parents and the community as a whole.

**IMPACT - Feedback**

Probably the best example of the campaign’s impact can be judged through the feedback and comments gathered from the kids, teens, teachers and parents around Europe participating in the project. A series of 4 campaign evaluation questionnaires were especially designed for this purpose. The questionnaires were disseminated to over 700 registered schools, with a total of 4050 questionnaire responses received from kids (1510), teens (1480), teachers (580) and parents (480).

Feedback from primary school students showed that 97% would turn off lights and devices if they are not in use by other people. 94% said they would encourage their parents and teachers to turn off unused lights and devices every time they leave the room, indicating that they have taken on ownership responsibilities outside the school environment. More than half the students visit the website regularly, with the campaign message reaching 66% through support materials used by teachers. Flick the Switch branding also left a strong and memorable impression on 75% of the kids and 88% said they liked the campaign. This, combined with successful dissemination actions, meant that 95% of students surveyed had heard about Flick the Switch at least once in school.

Among the feedback from secondary school students, it was observed that 85% recognise that something needs to be done to fight climate change. Most importantly, over two thirds of them understand that their actions are also responsible for this problem. Over half of the students agree they should turn off all lights and devices that are on stand-by every time they leave the classroom or home with less than half neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This indecision could be a result of the fact that not all students are able to control light use at school. In regards to the domino effect, over half of the students recognise the influenced to switch off lights through the actions of their friends.

With regards to the website, 39% of the students reported visiting the website often or very often, whereas 43% visited the portal not so often and 18% did not visit it at all. Having said this, the website has managed to successfully communicate the campaign message, as 72% understood this message to be about switching off lights and devices when they are not in use. 64% recognised the “saving energy, saves our future” concept, 41% agreed that old inefficient light bulbs should be replaced and 32% agreed with the idea that their parents should use energy efficient kitchen devices. All these concepts were expressed via the campaign and the website. The campaign itself
was also successful, with 52% of students finding the campaign interesting. 96% of student awareness of the campaign came from the school environment.

Among teachers, the successful application of the campaign, website and its support tools and materials was mainly achieved in science related classes (65%). For 45% of teachers, Flick the Switch offered them the opportunity to put energy saving actions more squarely on their school’s agenda. 80% of teachers felt well informed about energy efficiency topics following their involvement in the campaign. This bodes well for the campaign and its future, as most teachers have the necessary knowledge to continue to inform their students about energy saving and related actions. 91% of teachers think that they will continue to teach their students about energy saving and the importance of turning off lights and devices when not in use after the campaign came to an official end. 85% of the teachers that participated in the study would also recommend other colleagues to participate in an initiative similar to Flick the Switch. This shows that teachers consider the overall topic as being very important and are enthusiastic to access similar community programs.

Overall, the campaign website was well received, with over 70% of teachers finding it useful, informative and well-stocked with the necessary campaign information and materials. 82% found the website to have an attractive and interesting design. 84% of teachers from non-English speaking countries confirmed that it was extremely useful to have the main contents available in their respective national languages. 80% confirmed that that their Flick the Switch national contact point kept them regularly informed about the latest campaign developments.

84% of teachers agreed that Flick the Switch had a strong impact on the behavior of students and will continue to do so in the future. 73% of the teachers also think that Flick the Switch raised awareness of the various school facilities where energy is consumed and often wasted unnecessarily. In addition to that, 81% think that Flick the Switch also fostered more conscious energy consumption behavior among teachers and school staff.

From the perspective of parents, 84% that took part in the evaluation questionnaire had been informed about the Flick the Switch campaign by their kids. This is an important result, as the project also puts emphasis on the domino effect, which would see students replicating the energy efficient behaviour they have learnt at school in their homes. The positive impact of the campaign on the energy consumption behavior of parents themselves had been observed by 49% of parents, with 58% of them thinking that the campaign had a positive impact on their child. This confirms that in order to get children interested in topics such as energy saving, parents and teachers alike need to motivate them and guide them towards a more energy efficient and sustainable future. In this respect, future initiatives in this area are likely to be successful as 88% of the parents think that learning about energy efficiency in school is important.

**KEY LESSONS**

Through the experiences we have gained during the execution of the Flick the Switch project, we have observed a number of key lessons that we would like to share with other projects or initiatives.

It is important to **seek the cooperation of your target group** from the very start of your project and in particular to gain their support and feedback. This can be done by applying a bottom up approach designed to research their needs to produce a campaign closely built on the recommendations and specifications of our target group. It was crucial for us to get the cooperation of teachers in order to
reach the students. To achieve this we had to promote the educational significance of our initiative and show them the benefits of their involvement. It was important to put the campaign squarely on the curriculum of schools across Europe. The website facilitated this, acting as an educational tool housing useful teaching materials for subjects such as English language studies, science and art.

From a project management point of view, it is very beneficial to involve the target group in your consortium. Having schools as partner members opened the door to our target group. Furthermore, the support of an Advisory Committee can be useful in combating some of the main obstacles confronting initiatives by acting providing advice on website design and campaign structure.

For a long-term project to have real outcomes, it is vital to ensure the continued focus of the target group on the campaign. Flick the Switch did this by carefully planning and scheduling activities such as the poster competition and Flick the Switch Week. Powerful branding and a well designed website also stimulated the involvement of students and, as survey results show, have contributed significantly to making the campaign successful now and in the long term.

Using a pilot group, or a pilot school in the case of Flick the Switch, helps determine if ideas and plans are being mapped out correctly. This is also a valuable means of applying risk analysis, particularly when your project involves measuring results and gauging performance from your findings. For the Flick the Switch project, use of a pilot school to conduct a dry run of the planned energy audit clarified the best means of monitoring and calculating expected energy saving within a school exposed to our energy saving initiative.

Allowing the target group to have direct input into the overall development of project materials is sound practice, particularly when these very materials and tools will be used to stimulate and motivate your target group. Students and schools were encouraged to directly contribute to the Flick the Switch campaign. Children particularly enjoy being creative and showcasing their talents. The number and creativity of submissions to Flick the Switch is evidence of this. Incentives also appealed to the students, as evidenced by the high numbers of entries for both the poster competition and the Flick the Switch Champion award.

When designing a website it is very important to adequately cater for your target group. The Flick the Switch website did this by offering content in 3 different sections: kids, teens and teachers. The website was dynamic, with flash images, galleries, interactive modules and downloadable material that provided a stimulating experience for the visitor. As the project was European-wide, web content was made available in 9 European languages.

Communicating in multilingual and multicultural Europe is a challenge for all European projects. In this regard, the make-up of the consortium proved pivotal to the successful management and dissemination of the project. The Flick the Switch consortium is comprised of 11 partners representing the following countries: Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Croatia, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Slovenia, Slovakia and Estonia. This helped to ensure that the linguistic and cultural scope of the project was as wide as possible, not only for the sake of web content but also to enhance the events and ceremonies organised by the consortium.