

Do we practice what we preach?

One of the most important topics of environmental communication these years is climate change. Numerous campaigns are carried out on ways to save energy and on the consequences of climate change. But the organisations responsible for the campaign activities - be it government institutions, NGOs or international organisations - are also causing emission of greenhouse gasses (GHG) themselves - from heating, staff commuting and travel activities. It would be a strong signal if environmental communicators were to back up the message of their campaigns by offsetting their own GHG emissions.

Different ways to offset GHG emissions

There are different ways for an organisation to offset its GHG emissions. The options include investments in energy saving and energy efficiency, purchase of verified emissions reductions from projects in developing countries and purchase of emission allowances which are then retired from the market. Some organisations have actually used these options, for instance:

- The UK government is working to offset GHG emissions arising from official air travel. This is done through a so-called Government Carbon Offsetting Fund. The fund will invest in projects under the Kyoto Protocol Clean Development Mechanism, which will deliver the required emission reductions. Read more at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/carboncost/carbon-offsetting/index.htm>
- The same system is applied by the World Bank Group (WBG) which has gone "carbon neutral". The WBG combines these investments with investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Read more at: http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/media.nsf/Content/IFC_Carbon_Neutral
- The European Commission's annual environmental conference - Green Week - has also become carbon neutral. The GHG emissions from heating and lightning at the conference venue as well as from travel and accommodation for invited participants have been estimated. Allowances covering a corresponding amount of GHG have then been purchased under the EU Emission Trading System and been retired from the market. Read more at: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/greenweek/newsitem2.html>

This newsflash is issued by the EECN which is DG Environment's support structure for European Environmental Communication Networks.

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