

Changing Behaviour



Cutting energy use is paramount in the fight against climate change; and it must be everybody's concern. Every time we buy something in a shop, every time we enter our houses, every time we travel to work, we make decisions that affect energy use. Yet because it impacts every aspect of our lives, we often take energy for granted. We stick to our established habits.

To become more energy efficient, we need to break habits. Becoming more aware of our energy use is now vital – from paying attention to the way we heat our homes, to using public transport instead of cars, to changing the way we drive.

There is a large potential for energy savings. Household appliances are becoming more energy efficient. For example in general lighting, studies estimate that the widespread adoption of high efficiency Light Emitting Diode (LED) technology, already available in the market, could save 30% of today's consumption by 2015 and 50% by 2025. However, the average household energy consumption is going up because people have more appliances at home and at work.

There are other benefits of changing our energy using habits. Security of energy supply is a major issue as we are rapidly using up finite resources of oil and gas.

:: What is the EU doing?

The main EU legislation in this field is:

- The **energy efficiency action plan** published in 2006 puts great emphasis on “behaviour change”.
- The EU, through its **Intelligent Energy Europe** programme is also funding projects such as BEHAVE – Evaluation of Energy Behavioural Change Programmes. More information: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/monitoring_en.htm
- The **Sustainable Energy Europe Campaign 2005-2008** promotes more intelligent use and production of energy. Among other awareness-raising actions, it organises energy days around Europe to spread the energy-saving message. It also provides a series of energy saving tips for the public http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy_policy/citizen_en.htm
- The **ManagEnergy** initiative gives case studies of successful actions – practical examples that can be transferred to different regions, and provides services, especially at a local level, to energy agencies and similar organisations. This enables them to network and take part in joint projects, often co-funded under EU programmes, as well as share best sustainable practice.
- The European Union institutions obviously have to practice what they preach, and so, as a start, the Commission’s buildings are in the process of being **EMAS certified**.

:: The home front

As individuals we all have to change our habits regarding energy use and saving. Because a large part of our energy use as individuals takes place at home, this is the most important place to foster more rational energy use. There is a large potential of energy saving if we change our behaviour to more intelligent use of energy.

Our habits – and attitudes – need to change so that we only use lights and heating when we need them. Air conditioning use at home should be limited to essential situations, such as in really hot climates, bedrooms and nurseries. Intelligent ventilation and small fans can often do the same job using a fraction of the electricity.

Many people leave TVs and stereos in standby mode, unaware that they are still consuming energy, indeed sometimes accounting for more than half of their actual working rating. Increasing awareness of this and encouraging people to switch appliances off completely when they are not using them can make a big difference – several large power station’s worth for the EU’s almost half a billion inhabitants.

There are other areas that can make a big difference. For example, turning the thermostat of central heating down by one degree, you can save as much as 10% on your energy bill or regularly defrosting your fridge freezer will help keep it running efficiently.

Encouraging more efficient products and appliances can save huge amounts of energy, yet many people do not realise the difference that new but already available products can make. Products such as CFL (compact fluorescent) and the latest LED (light-emitting diode) light bulbs, and the most efficient household appliances such washing machines and refrigerators, can radically reduce energy consumption.





:: Raising awareness

The more people know about energy use and the impacts of their own lifestyles, the more likely they are to change. Consumers need better information about energy-efficient products and the differences they can make.

Initiatives concerning sustainable energy should involve the public as much as possible, in order to raise awareness and change attitudes. It is especially important to involve children, as they are the energy consumers of the future.

Campaigns can target the general public, businesses or schools. Two of the most important areas to promote are more sustainable transport – through public transport or energy-efficient ways of travelling; and encouraging more energy efficient products – people need to be made much more aware of their existence and increasingly competitive pricing. As an example, there is still resistance to the higher price of CFL bulbs, whereas the difference is written off in no time by the 80% energy saving they represent – especially as they can last up to eight times longer than incandescent ones, which use 90% of the current to produce useless heat, not light.

Public authorities should take a lead. They can set an example and use their collective purchasing power to stimulate the market for greener products. Some ways in which they can have use their influence are:

- The refurbishment of public authority buildings to be more energy efficient
- Installing and using energy-efficient equipment
- Informing the public about the new energy-efficient technologies used in public buildings and the benefits

:: Good practice

Awareness campaign

Energy Awareness Week 2004, Meath, Ireland

Meath Energy Management Agency (MEMA) held an “Energy Awareness Week” in September 2004. Activities included schools visits, information displays, competitions, a ‘car-free day’, free distribution of energy-saving light bulbs and encouraging ‘walking bus’ schemes to get children to school without using cars.

The campaign attracted widespread media interest and dramatically increased requests for information from the local energy agency.

Key to the event’s success were careful planning, a close relationship with the media, involvement of local celebrities and businesses, and competitions and prizes to encourage people to take part.

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- Making visible, publicised use of energy-efficient vehicles in public fleets and for local public transport
- Including energy-efficiency criteria in public procurement contracts
- Running information campaigns and energy days for the public

:: Taking energy to the public

One way to get the energy-saving message across to the public is by organising "Energy days". These are public events which show a wide audience that sustainable energy technologies and changes to behaviour are both practical, and cost-effective as well as good for the environment.

Energy days can be run by public authorities and organisations or private companies. They can include on-site guided visits and tours, educational activities and programmes, open-door days, exhibitions and fairs, project/building inaugurations, and similar features.

An important factor for the success of such days is widespread coverage in the press, so that people know what is going on. It is usually to be recommended that the local or regional authority be involved as a lead organiser. It is also good to find companies willing to act as sponsors and to open their doors to the public.

:: Good practice

A successful energy day Energy day in Gemappe (Belgium)

This significant initiative, supported by the Wallonia Region Authorities, aims at raising awareness of energy saving, especially in transport. Target groups are the general public (adults and children) in the Walloon province of Brabant (south of Brussels), public authorities (schools, local authorities), private companies, and the commercial sector (architects, heating industry professionals, tradespeople and «white goods» suppliers).

It will include an exhibition of energy-saving products, a number of conferences and education activities, and an exhibition of schools' projects. An "Energy Rally" will take place in the region using biofuel powered cars and buses.

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:: What is ManagEnergy?

ManagEnergy is an initiative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport, which is funded by the **Intelligent Energy Europe programme**. It aims to support local and regional actions on energy efficiency and renewable energies through training workshops and on-line events. In addition, information is provided on case studies, good practice, European legislation and programmes.

ManagEnergy is also a European network of local and regional energy agencies (LEAs). These agencies promote the introduction of good energy management practices, support sustainability, provide information and guidance, and offer other services depending on local needs.

www.managenergy.net

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