Who we are

- The European arm of Friends of the Earth International, the world’s largest grassroots environmental network
- The European network’s representative at the heart of the European Union campaigning for sustainable solutions to benefit the planet, people and our future, influencing European and EU policy and raising public awareness on environmental issues
- The largest grassroots environmental network in Europe uniting 31 national member organisations and thousands of local activist groups across Europe
- The people’s voice at the heart of the European Union.

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Friends of the Earth Europe Board 2012-13

Andy Atkins, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland – chair; Bertrand Sansonnens, Friends of the Earth Switzerland – secretary; Gina Gal, Friends of the Earth Hungary – member; Hester Schoute, Friends of the Earth Netherlands – member; Lawrence Sudlow, Friends of the Earth Spain – treasurer.

Cover Image  Participants of the Good Food March in Brussels, calling for greener, fairer farming © Luka Tomac page 2/3 © Global 2000/© FoEE
Welcome

An important part of Friends of the Earth Europe’s mission is to bring the voices of people to the ears of those in power. The natural world does not have its own voice and we see it as the role of our network, and those we represent, to speak on its behalf. Having said that, the planet is sending us stronger signals all the time that it is in peril and the pressure placed on it by our overconsuming societies cannot be sustained.

Last year Arctic sea ice levels reached a record low and scientists produced new evidence linking extreme weather – for example the floods and wildfires we’ve seen in Europe, or megastorms like Hurricane Sandy in the US – to human activity. Food prices reached record highs again with the Cereal Price Index remaining on the second highest level in decades.

Europe is being increasingly shaken by the crises we face, and has a shared responsibility for the root causes. Dealing with the urgent issues is not made any easier by the ongoing economic crisis which is rocking Europe and dominating the political agenda. Within this context we need to raise our voice more than ever.

We were vocal in favour of energy saving in 2012 and succeeded in influencing the EU’s energy efficiency legislation which obliges countries and companies to reduce energy use by 2020. We spoke out strongly in favour of clean, green spending of the EU’s multi-billion euro budget – one fifth of which will go towards tackling climate change.

On the issue of tar sands we gained the support of Nobel Peace Laureates, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and added their voices to our calls to keep this highly polluting fuel out of Europe. With our partners in the Good Food March we brought thousands of people on to the streets across Europe, and collected their wishes for radical changes to food and farming policy.

In these turbulent times the voices of vested interests who want to maintain business-as-usual are also very audible. We witness a push by industry to weaken environmental and social regulation in the guise of tackling ‘administrative burden’. Corporate accountability remains an important theme throughout our work and we speak out about the importance of regulation to ensure ethical and transparent behaviour by companies.

The voice of our network in Eastern Europe was strengthened when we welcomed Za Zemiata of Bulgaria to our European family, bringing the total to 31 national groups. Za Zemiata, now also known as Friends of the Earth Bulgaria, brings to our network grassroots support and hundreds of volunteers across Bulgaria and we look forward to working with them. You can read more about them on page 9.

We recognise the need to keep strengthening our network and our impact on the wider world. For this reason we are reviewing our long-term strategy for the next five years and beyond, which will guide how we can better utilise the influence of our grassroots membership and achieve our vision of a more sustainable Europe.

This review rounds-up just some of the ways we are bringing citizens’ voices to the debate and giving a voice to those most adversely and unfairly affected by environmental injustice. It gives a flavour of the activities and successes of our office in Brussels and our European network. I hope you will find it enjoyable reading and it will inspire you to add your voice to ours.

Magda Stoczkiewicz
Director, Friends of the Earth Europe
Brussels, May 2013
Campaign highlights – our work in 2012

As with every year, 2012 saw us campaigning for environmental and social justice and pushing Europe to take responsibility for the impacts it is having on other parts of the world. We continued to work in a variety of ways, always bringing the voices of the grassroots network we represent – to demand urgent action on climate change, to oppose genetic modification of our food, to call for environmentally-friendly agriculture, to end undue corporate influence, and to speak on behalf of people and the planet. Here are highlights of just some of our activities in 2012.

Touting the potential of energy savings

We continued to push for energy savings measures to ensure Europe drives down its energy consumption. Working with varied partners we promoted energy efficiency through research, blogs, street actions, innovative lobbying and engaging materials. We are committed to ensuring Europe realises its 20% by 2020 energy savings target and benefits from up to two million new jobs and net savings of over €200 billion per year.

Energy efficiency legislation has been significantly watered down by some short-sighted member states

The Financial Times quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Brook Riley

Marching for good food and farming

As part of a broad alliance of concerned citizens and farmers we marched with hundreds of people in the Good Food March in Brussels to call for radical changes to food and farming policy in Europe. As the European Parliament debated reforms of Europe’s 50 year-old Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) we stressed to decision-makers the importance of crop rotation and locally grown proteins for healthier soil, more wildlife, less pesticide use and pollution, and fewer climate-changing emissions. Our colourful action outside an important conference on the future of the CAP pressured decision-makers to make real reforms.

The political will to put Europe on a truly resource efficient path is there...further delay in adopting the indicators would be a missed opportunity

European Voice quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Ariadna Rodrigo

Measuring our resource use

We welcomed the European Parliament’s support for measuring Europe’s use of land, water, carbon and materials, but maintained that clear targets are needed to tackle Europe’s overconsumption of the world’s natural resources. We backed-up our calls for action with a high-level conference that addressed Europe’s land footprint, its causes, and solutions to the continent’s growing land dependency. As the EU recognises the urgent need to change the way we use resources, we are providing policy recommendations for moving towards a land-use reduction target by 2015.

Presenting our demands for green and fair farming to EU Agriculture Commissioner Cioloş

Advocating solutions

An energy savings ‘superhero’ as part of our creative campaign for energy efficiency

Presenting our demands for green and fair farming to EU Agriculture Commissioner Cioloş

We are still going to end up with an agriculture policy which is going to destroy nature, the environment, jobs and rural communities. We want to say to the European institutions that enough is enough

EurActiv quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Adrian Bebb

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Championing the facts

Presenting the true cost of tin
We turned our attention towards resource-intensive companies as the first leaked drafts of new EU-wide company reporting rules appeared. Research by our network uncovered links between destructive tin-mining techniques in Bangka, Indonesia, and products in Europe. Forests, farmland, coral reefs and communities are being devastated to provide tin for European products. As new company reporting rules were drafted we called for obligatory rules to ensure companies measure and report the resources they consume across their operations – a first step towards reducing our unsustainable demands on the planet.

Tin mining has damaged more than 65 percent of Bangka’s forest areas and more than 70 percent of Bangka’s coral reefs.

Pius Ginting of Friends of the Earth Indonesia/Walhi

European banks, insurers and funds that speculate with food and land are gambling with peoples’ lives whilst reaping huge profits. This industry needs strict regulation to protect the poorest in society.

New Europe quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Daniel Pentzlin

Reining in food speculation
Hundreds of pots and pans spelled out ‘Stop food speculation’ in giant letters outside the European Parliament as a vote took place on financial reforms known as MiFID (the Markets in Financial Instruments Directive). This was part of our on-going campaign to rein in excessive speculation and protect the most vulnerable from the whims of Europe’s big financial players. Our report ‘Farming Money’ revealed the significant involvement of European banks, pension funds and insurance companies in food speculation and the financing of land grabbing, and pressured European institutions to act.

Overconsumption in Europe is making the continent extremely dependent on land from outside its boundaries... contributing to climate change and biodiversity loss

The Parliament Magazine quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Ariadna Rodrigo

Mapping destructive EU funds
Alongside CEE Bankwatch Network, we mapped 33 socially and environmentally damaging projects in Central and Eastern Europe, with total costs of €16 billion. The projects, which include highways passing through protected nature sites, waste incinerators and airports, are being paid for – or being considered for financial support in the future – by funds from the EU budget. The message of the map to policy-makers: the use of EU money for detrimental projects must be stopped.

EU funds really don’t have to pay for ‘big oil’ infrastructure, especially not under an objective that is supposed to reduce emissions

Euractiv quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Markus Trilling

Keeping nature priceless
The ‘green economy’ was presented as a solution to the world’s environmental and social challenges, including biodiversity loss, but we refused to see nature put up for sale. We criticised the excessive influence of multinational corporations on global decision-making and the market-based mechanisms they propose – which will only worsen the environmental crisis. We participated in international discussions on biodiversity, held a high-level debate in Brussels, and asked the United Nations Secretary General to take steps to reclaim the UN from corporate capture and to prevent policies serving the pockets of a selected few over the public interest.

© FoE Croatia

Spelling out the need to curb food speculation,
outside the European Parliament

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**Building momentum against shale gas**

We became a key civil society voice against shale gas after a year of intense media work, alliance building and myth busting. We countered industry rhetoric on the benefits of unconventional gas and highlighted the dangers of ‘fracking’. Our report set out the case against shale gas, which represents a dangerous experiment on the environment and human health and is both unwanted and unnecessary. We took part in a global anti-fracking protest, and are coordinating the campaign work of more than ten Friends of the Earth groups worldwide.

![Demonstrating against shale gas, outside the European Parliament](image)

**Greening the EU budget**

As part of the Green 10, the ten largest environmental organisations operating at EU level, we pressured decision-makers to prioritise investments for a sustainable, green economic recovery in the EU’s long-term budget 2014-2020. Our report showed how the next budget can help Europe improve its economic stability and create more jobs while at the same time reducing its unsustainable ecological footprint.

![John Muyisha, whose farm in western Uganda was destroyed to make way for palm oil plantations](image)

**Counting the costs of agrofuels**

The year brought some progress in controlling the quantity of crops used for fuel, but not enough to prevent agrofuels competing with crops for food – despite evidence that agrofuels will actually make climate change worse and increase global hunger. We released new figures on the additional costs to motorists of €18 billion a year resulting from the EU’s flawed agrofuel targets, and our letter to the EU’s energy chief was signed by nine other environmental organisations. We also challenged the labelling of so-called ‘sustainable’ agrofuels, especially palm oil.

![What we need at this time of food crisis is to stop burning biofuels altogether](image)

**Working towards better spending**

Collapsed European talks delayed decisions on the EU budget 2014-2020, but with a public-facing campaign, video and website, we showed how small-scale projects across Europe prove that well spent European money can work for the environment, society and economy. We were vocal with opinion articles and comments in the media throughout the budget negotiations. We pointed out that European spending is often misguided and damaging, but quality spending on public transport, sustainable food production, renewable energy and energy efficiency projects can trigger environmental protection and sustainable development.

![An action to satirise Polish coal lobbyists, in Brussels](image)

**Challenging the status quo**

The EU must go a lot further in the fight against climate change, there are no excuses for its lack of action

The European Voice quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Susann Scherbarth

![Challenging climate action blockers](image)

**Pushing for genuine solutions to the climate crisis**

We condemned the continued lack of action on climate change by governments of industrialised countries, especially during the failed international climate negotiations in Doha, Qatar. We drew attention to the corporate capture of the UN talks and other international spaces, and were critical of proposals that would put nature up for sale on international markets. We worked with more than 50 young people from 12 countries who followed the lack of progress in Doha closely at the ‘Qatar in Brussels’ youth climate justice convergence in Brussels.

![Challenging climate action blockers](image)

**What we need at this time of food crisis is to stop burning biofuels altogether**

The European Voice quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Robbie Blake

![Counting the costs of agrofuels](image)

**The code of conduct, as it currently stands, is unfinished business**

The Parliament Magazine quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Natasha Cingotti
Joining forces with Nobel prize winners against tar sands

We are witnessing a global push for dirty unconventional fossil fuels. Intense lobby pressure from Canada and the oil industry brought about a stalemate in negotiations to keep tar sands out of Europe. We exposed some of the dirty lobby tactics used by vested interests in Brussels, and worked alongside eight Nobel Peace Prize laureates who wrote to European Heads of State urging them to agree a strong Fuel Quality Directive. Tar sands are the dirtiest source of transport fuels. Extraction of tar sands is destroying pristine wilderness areas and devastating local communities and aboriginal groups.

High-polluting sources of fuels, such as tar sands, must be cleaned up or kept out of Europe.

The Guardian quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Mute Schimpf

Shining a spotlight on conflicts of interest

Controversial conflicts of interest did not go unnoticed by our campaigners. We took an active role in calling for transparency around the ‘Dalí scandal’ following the resignation of the EU Health Commissioner over alleged attempts at undue influence by the tobacco industry. We expressed our concerns to the President of the European Parliament about potential conflicts of interest of MEPs, notably, former Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene. We were the first to analyse the declarations of financial interests of MEPs and highlight shortcomings of the new system. Our work shines a spotlight on cases of conflicts of interest among politicians and civil servants. Our goal: a high-quality, mandatory, lobby-transparency register.

Championing GMO-free

In a year that saw biotech giant BASF retreat from Europe, we championed stronger rights for individual countries and regions to ban genetically modified (GM) crops. We stood firm in opposition to European Union officials who began discussions on introducing GM animals to the European market. We set out why, with GM animals unwanted by the public and major retailers, European authorities should abandon moves which pave the way for their authorisation.

The public’s rejection of genetically modified crops has ensured that they are confined to small pockets of the European Union.

The Guardian quotes Friends of the Earth campaigner Mute Schimpf

Maximising our strengths

Acting together for the climate

Friends of the Earth groups across Europe continued to push for strong national climate laws as part of the ‘Big Ask’ campaign. Scottish citizens told decision makers to ‘get your act together’ at mass lobby events in Edinburgh, whilst in Belgium 80,000 people sang for the climate. A festival in Prague drew thousands asking for a climate law. There was also progress towards legally binding reductions in carbon emissions in Denmark, Finland and Spain.

Calling for a climate law outside the Finnish parliament.

Criticising the Commission’s green track record

With our allies in the Green 10 coalition of leading green groups active at EU level, we reviewed the performance of the European Commission at the mid-point of its term in office. Our critical assessment ‘Off their game’ concluded the executive was falling behind in nine policy fields with impacts on the environment. We launched the publication with a press conference and eye-catching Olympic-themed stunt outside the Commission headquarters.

Telling the European Commission to ‘up its game’ on the environment.

Involving citizens in EU decisions

Lobby transparency, political ethics and citizen participation in the European Union were the themes of our work as part of the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU). We brought 40 citizens from across Europe to see for themselves the European institutions in Brussels and participate in a conference on transparency and ethics. They had the chance to question Members of the European Parliament and representatives of the European Commission in a lively debate.

Getting our network moving

We held an exciting four day learning, training and skill-sharing event on the theme of mobilisation. The ‘Get Moving’ event brought together more than 35 staff and volunteers from 20 countries to build and share skills and experience on all forms of mobilisation, event organisation and volunteer engagement.

Forming affinities across borders

Our new ‘affinity groups’ project brings together member groups to support each other on the topics of activism, movement building, mobilisation and public engagement. It aims to provide a structured forum in which groups can exchange ideas and skills on these topics, and support each other to solve the issues they face. The project kick-started with two meetings at the beginning of the year, and ten member groups are now participating in the project.

Friends of the Earth Europe ANNUAL REVIEW 2012 | 7
Meet our network

One of the strengths of the Friends of the Earth Europe network is the diversity of its member organisations and people. Here we meet just a handful of the personalities who make it what it is.

Victor Barro
has been active with Amigos de la Tierra/Friends of the Earth Spain for 14 years. He is now an activist, member of the local group in Galicia, member of the board, and vice president.

The environment has never been a priority issue on the Spanish political agenda, but with the economic crisis it disappeared altogether. In Spain, Friends of the Earth is working to tell the story of the society in which we want to live and how we will get it. We have linked the economic crisis with the perpetual environmental crisis and now our messages are more social and many people are supporting the alternatives we propose.

The movement of ‘Indignados’ has filled us with hope. It has helped put on the Spanish political agenda the challenges of making small transformation projects reach more people, delegitimising corporate power, and building an alternative political power where people really decide. In short: changing the social and economic system.

Our ability to reach people has grown a lot. Today, we have more than 250,000 people on social networks and many more people know our messages and proposals through our local groups.

‘Act local, think global’ – I am proud to be a part of the family of Friends of the Earth because it makes this reality.

Jagoda Munic
is a member of the executive committee which runs Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia. In November 2012 she was elected chair of the Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) federation.

I joined Friends of the Earth Croatia as a volunteer to campaign against a coal power-plant back in 1997. The campaign was successful and later I joined professionally bringing a scientific background thanks to my masters in ecology.

Being chairperson of FoEI means I can combine grassroots work – I coordinate campaigns, working a lot with citizens’ initiatives and the public – and leading an international organisation. It reflects the fact we have a decentralised way of working.

FoEI is unique in many ways, perhaps most importantly in how we support and learn from each other. Solidarity is very important – when a group, or local community or individual activist is endangered, the federation is there. This is important because it increases the resilience of our member groups and their allies.

I live in a small country so perhaps I need these international spaces to provide me with experiences and cultures that I cannot find at home. It is very inspiring to have people all around the world with whom you share a vision and passion for the environment. Every time I attend a meeting of the federation I learn something new, I hear a different perspective, and I challenge my own prejudices. It is truly beautiful.

The world faces global environmental crises and as FoEI we ask ourselves, do we do enough? I think there is room for improvement in our work but when we integrate different levels – local, national, regional, international, as in our campaign against Shell – it brings success and inspiration to others.

Professor Hubert Weiger
was a founding member of BUND/Friends of the Earth Germany in 1975. He has been involved ever since. In 2007 he was elected president and represents the organisation externally.

Instead of joining the army in 1972 I became Germany’s first civil servant at an environmental organization – BUND Naturschutz in Bavaria. Then, I was among those who thought we needed to join forces to have more influence, and in 1975 I was a founder of BUND.

I still believe we need to join forces – if the Friends of the Earth European network didn’t exist we would need to invent it because so much legislation is made in Brussels. Being a member of FoE Europe makes us stronger, not only because the office in Brussels keeps us abreast of the political processes, but also because the network allows us to achieve something as part of a stronger movement without being the driver ourselves.

In order to win the climate battle we first have to win the ‘Energiewende’ in Germany and elsewhere. We have to shift from nuclear to renewables, cut energy waste and enforce energy efficiency. But despite the fact that in the long-run this shift will make us independent from coal and gas imports and will create jobs, we still see a powerful lobby against it.

The energy revolution and the agricultural transformation need grassroots support. BUND is a membership based organisation with 280,000 members, 16 regional branches and roughly 2,000 local groups. Last year 23,000 demanded a different agriculture policy and the federal minister for agriculture agreed to review the use of antibiotics for animals. And 50,000 demanded a quicker phase-out of nuclear power.
Genady Kondarev
is an economist heading work on the sustainable use of public money at Za Zemiata of Bulgaria which joined the Friends of the Earth network in 2012.

I joined Za Zemiata because it was one of the few organisations working on the issues which interested me, like nuclear power and clean energy. Within Za Zemiata I got interested in other topics like GMOs and mining. Now we’re starting to campaign against coal – we are the first organisation to dare to tackle this in Bulgaria.

There’s been big successes in Bulgaria like the ban on GM crops in 2011, and a ban on fracking last year. Za Zemiata has been very much supporting the anti-shale gas movement – this issue has ignited the whole country.

But increasing corporate capture is a problem in Bulgaria and shale gas and GMOs continue to knock on the door. The pursuit of short-term profits means people suffer more and more.

I’m really glad I’ve discovered Friends of the Earth. It’s very good for people like me to benefit from the knowledge and experience in the network. Solidarity and community are important concepts in Friends of the Earth. These things have lost their meaning in Bulgaria but we are working to try to communicate and revive these ideas.

Joining Friends of the Earth is a big recognition for Za Zemiata and our efforts. The course of Za Zemiata is in harmony with Friends of the Earth – we stand for the same things.

Natasja de Vries
is one of the three Dutch citizens chosen by Milieudefensie/Friends of the Earth Netherlands to make a documentary about Shell’s oil pollution in Nigeria.

Before going to Nigeria I was trying to be as unprejudiced as possible, I wanted to be neutral.

No one can imagine how horrific it actually is. The first thing you notice is the smell. I can still remember it today – like a petrol station but a thousand times worse. I realised all these people are drinking polluted water; they give it to their children because they don’t have a choice. People are dying from this disgusting water.

What struck me most was the hope people have. The pollution has been going on for 50 years yet people still have hope it will stop. Their hope is really difficult to experience when you’re standing there seeing how bad it is – we owe it to them to do something.

It’s difficult to know exactly what kind of pressure Shell feels. The documentary was screened on national TV on Friday evening and on Monday morning at 9 o’clock Shell was on the telephone to me. Nearly one million people in Holland have seen it – that must make a difference.

Shell told me it intends to make a difference. I’m trying to believe it. Next year they’re going to show me what they’ve done to clean things up. I’m going to hold them to their promise.

It was very good to meet people from Friends of the Earth Nigeria because they live it, they’re there. I’ve had this huge chance to see it but I’ve not lived it.

Friends of the Earth Netherlands has a very political approach. It is making people aware of what’s going on and how we pollute the world...and in a sense ourselves.

Zane Rugēna-Bojāre
has been a volunteer for Latvijas Zemēs Draugi/Friends of the Earth Latvia for four years and led its campaign to stop supermarkets selling products containing GMOs.

I got involved in Friends of the Earth Latvia when some like-minded people invited me to an unofficial anti-GMOS meeting. We all were volunteers. We had a strong desire to prevent GMOs entering our country.

Our biggest achievement was our ‘Thank you for GM-free Latvia!’ campaign targeted at all supermarket chains in Latvia. It was a meaningful time, and it brought a lot of positive changes. Twelve of Latvia’s 14 supermarket chains pledged to keep products containing GMOs off their shelves. Our experience has been an inspiration for Lithuanian and Scandinavian colleagues’ work for GM-free supermarkets.

I’m proud to be the part of such a big movement and at the same time I enjoy the freedom of decision-making and action planning.

From my experience, being a volunteer is an effective way to get things started. And you can have a lot of power. When your motivation is high you need to get involved, you just can’t do otherwise.

I think taking responsibility for the environment is not just some ‘green’ thing to do – it is about being a normal member of society and taking care of each other. It’s about the shared values we all have, and bringing society together to see the bigger picture and everybody’s involvement.

© Friends of the Earth
Jelle van Leeuwen

has been finance officer at the Friends of the Earth Europe office in Brussels since 2007.

I was a kid the first time I heard of Friends of the Earth. I remember watching TV and Friends of the Earth Netherlands climbed an aeroplane to protest against the expansion of Schiphol airport in Amsterdam. I liked aeroplanes a lot so I thought it was very cool.

My most important task is to ensure the smooth functioning of FoE Europe’s finances. This basically means I coordinate the payment of all expenses and make sure these are recorded in the accounts and later reported properly to our donors. Next to this I help out with other financial topics like budgeting, fundraising and taxes.

My career started in the environmental youth movement, at the local and national level in the Netherlands, so I understand the difficulties of having to deal with administrative procedures when you are a small organisation. As FoE Europe we need to be strict, to meet the obligations to our funders. We need to be transparent and justify our expenditure of public money.

The office has changed quite a lot in the last six years. There is less turnover and there are a lot more people with families now. I have a two year old daughter myself. There are a lot of nationalities in the office which creates an atmosphere of cultural acceptance. I got so used to it now I wonder whether I would easily fit into a different organisation where everyone is from the same country.

I think FoE Europe is very adaptable and able to react quickly to changing circumstances. We are not afraid of standing up for what we believe in and speaking our minds, even if others think we sound radical.

Julì Okropiridse

is the coordinator of Global2000 Jugend/Young Friends of the Earth Austria. She is an active member of Young Friends of the Earth Europe.

As coordinator of the Friends of the Earth youth group in Austria I’ve tried to get our group more involved in the European youth network. Now everyone knows we’re in that network.

I am on the steering group of Young FoE Europe and am involved in three working groups – on climate justice, food and agriculture, and communications.

Last year I went to several working group meetings and the network gathering. It’s motivating to see so many people who believe in the same things and think in the same way. Meeting people who have the same opinions and priorities in life is very fulfilling.

Qatar in Brussels was amazing. It was a whole week for young people to follow the UN climate talks. Different people from different countries planned and did actions together – it was a very good feeling, we motivated each other.

I like the idea of building a European movement – that’s how we can influence and inspire a lot of people, young and old. And it’s far more effective than trying to do things on your own, and much more fun.

Youth is going to be the future. It really does matter what youth think and what their opinion is, because it is us that will have to live with the decisions that adults make now.
Five years young The youth voice for social and environmental justice

In 2007, a dedicated group of young activists dreamt of creating a network that brought young people from across Europe together – to share ideas, make friends, and most importantly campaign for people and planet.

In 2012, we celebrated Young Friends of the Earth Europe’s fifth anniversary, and the realisation of that dream. Groups in 16 countries across Europe now participate in a truly youth-led, democratic, and participatory grassroots network; a network of young people and youth organisations working collectively for social and environmental justice on a local, national and European level.

Young volunteers now lead work on food and agriculture, climate justice and opposing corporate power. From urban gardening, to the promotion of local and organic food, to challenging European subsidies for industrial farming as part of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy – we are not afraid to demand policy changes, whilst getting our hands muddy and walking our talk.

We followed the world’s politicians as they deliberated and disappointed on climate action over the last five years. For the last three years we brought youth activists to Brussels for youth climate justice convergences in parallel to the international climate talks in Cancun, Durbun and Qatar. These have been chances to discuss alternative, just solutions to the climate crisis. We pushed, and will continue to push, Europe to take action on climate change, with an ever-evolving focus – we are currently exposing corporate influence over decisions about our climate and environment.

We believe the voices of young people should be heard, and we will continue to build our exciting movement, with summer camps, training and planning events, and online outreach. We will continue to connect young, passionate people across Europe, to share knowledge, empower and motivate each other, and to demand just and sustainable solutions to global problems, for all of our futures.

Foundation: Friends of the Earth Europe Annual General Meeting, May 2007, Hungary, ten youth representatives from Young Friends of the Earth and Friends of the Earth groups submitted a proposal for the creation of the Young Friends of the Earth Europe network. The proposal was accepted, the network was born, and the foundations were laid for a European youth movement.

Groups active: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, United Kingdom, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Switzerland, Ukraine
Campaigning with and for people across Europe
Highlights of our member groups’ achievements in 2012

Spain Putting carbon on the table ‘How far has your food travelled?’ asked Friends of the Earth Spain in a study on the distance food has come before ending up on the average Spanish table. The study calculated the amount of carbon dioxide emitted before food reaches our tables, and informed citizens about the inconsistencies of Spanish agricultural and economic practices. With press conferences, presentations, dinners and media attention the group raised awareness of the importance of regaining sovereignty over the Mediterranean diet.

Belgium Greenwash circus Friends of the Earth Flanders shone a spotlight on false solutions being proposed in the name of the ‘green economy’ with its ‘Greenwash Circus’. The event coincided with the Rio+20 summit in Brazil. Participants explored the social and environmental impacts of false solutions including green investments, putting a price on nature, and carbon trading. The Flemish meat company VLAM was given a greenwash award for its misleading advertising. The circus will return to town to challenge the green credentials of the unconventional gas industry, Coca Cola and GDF Suez in 2013.

Croatia Preserving Dubrovnik’s heritage The cultural and natural heritage of the UNESCO city of Dubrovnik is threatened by plans to build a hydroelectric power-plant at the source of the city’s river, and a golf complex overlooking the city. Both threaten an area of rich biodiversity, and the source of drinking water for Dubrovnik. Friends of the Earth Croatia and local citizen’s initiative Srd je naš have been actively campaigning for greater public participation in the projects by pushing for a local referendum.

The project will only move forward at great expense to local biodiversity and the citizens of Dubrovnik

Enes Cerimagić from Friends of the Earth Croatia

Switzerland Protecting Swiss forests and species Swiss forest law, one of the most protective in Europe, remained strong thanks to the work of Friends of the Earth Switzerland. The law was threatened by the Swiss government’s attempt to open forests to building and infrastructure development. Intense lobbying kept the forest law intact. This was combined with a second victory over the Swiss government’s attempts to make it easier to hunt wolves, thus preserving Switzerland’s forests for people, and the fledgling community of wolves.

France Opposing large dams A street action marked the launch of Friends of the Earth France’s campaign against large dams a few days before the World Water Forum in Marseille. The campaign highlights the impacts of dams on the environment and local populations. It targets French companies like EDF and GDF Suez, as well as international financial actors like the European Investment Bank.
Oil ‘cowboys’ have little regard for the Arctic, and should retreat before we have an Arctic calamity

Paul Daly of Friends of the Earth Scotland

Scotland Satirising oil company ‘cowboys’ Scottish oil supplier Cairn Energy’s plans to extend oil exploration and extraction into the Arctic came under fire from Friends of the Earth Scotland as part of its work against fossil fuel extraction and use. Global warming is opening new areas of the Arctic to drilling. Activists dressed as cowboys satirised energy companies and their reckless and slapdash approach exploiting the unique and sensitive Arctic environment outside Cairn Energy’s office in Edinburgh.

Criticising Cairn Energy and its potential role in the destruction of the Arctic

Netherlands 70,000 tell Shell to clean up its mess The chief executive of Shell, Peter Voser, was presented with 70,000 signatures protesting against the oil giant’s practices in the Niger Delta, at its annual general meeting. The message from citizens was that Shell must clean up its mess in the highly-polluted area of Nigeria. On another occasion activists dressed in Dutch national costume had oil poured over them by a ‘representative’ from Shell for a stunt designed to ridicule the Dutch government’s friendly relationship with big oil companies. These activities were part of Friends of the Earth Germany’s campaign to keep the country GMO-free. The campaign thanked supermarkets for not selling GM food and this unexpected, positive tone was a real hit. It was supported by celebrities and the biggest public radio station. People took part in flashmobs and public expressions of happiness, and sent messages to the major supermarkets thanking them for not stocking GM products. 12 of the 14 pledged to keep products containing GMOs off their shelves.

Raising awareness of the dangers of GM crops

France Nature is not for sale! To mark the start of the Rio+20 summit, Friends of the Earth France held an alternative people’s summit in Paris, outside the stock exchange. Supporting real social and ecological justice and opposing the commodification of nature, the event was held in solidarity with the thousands of people who marched for climate justice and against the ‘green economy’ in Rio. This formed part of the group’s work denouncing corporate solutions to the current global crises.

Shifting power towards community-owned renewables in front of the German Chancellery

Satirising oil company ‘cowboys’

France Marching for better food and farming Friends of the Earth France continues to challenge factory farming and gain support for good food and farming in France. More than 25,000 people, including farmers, beekeepers and citizens, marched in Berlin under the slogan ‘We are fed up’. They called for farming that promotes animal welfare, protects biodiversity, and minimises its contribution to climate change. In addition a ‘Meat atlas’ made by the group demonstrated the ecological, economic and social consequences of meat production and consumption across Europe.

We need to ensure that small farms are encouraged, instead of factory farms

Hubert Weiger, chairman of Friends of the Earth Germany

Colombia

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Financial information

Income sources 2012 (in euros)

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Project grants - EU</td>
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Total income 2012: 2,531,769

Expenditure 2012 (in euros)

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Total expenditure 2012: 2,481,769

Thank you!  Friends of the Earth Europe’s work would not be possible were it not for the support of our donors. We would like to thank the following institutions and foundations who helped fund our work: EU Commission Directorate General (DG) Environment; DG Development and Cooperation - Europe Aid; Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA); the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs; European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe; Attac; CEE Bankwatch Network; David and Lucile Packard Foundation; European Climate Foundation; Grassroots Foundation; Heinrich Böll Foundation; Isvara Foundation; James M Goldsmith Foundation; New Venture Fund; Oxfam Novib and Tides Foundation. Thanks also to Friends of the Earth Europe national member groups and Friends of the Earth International.

Full copies of Friends of the Earth Europe’s accounts are available from the Belgian National Bank at www.nbb.be from 1st July 2013.
Quote company number 0443.252.089

Details of our funding can be found on our website: www.foeeurope.org/about/financial
Looking ahead – our work in 2013

We continue to bring the voices of our diverse grassroots network, which unites 31 national member organisations and represents more than 2,500 local groups across Europe, to influence the most pressing environmental challenges of our time.

We will employ a diverse range of tactics in 2013 – from working in solidarity with populations in the Global South, to challenging corporate power in the courts, and influencing decision-making – to bring about change. Here are just some of the issues we’ll be concentrating on:

• pushing the EU to set three binding targets for 2030 – for energy savings, renewable energies, and greenhouse gas reduction, so Europe can tackle climate change effectively and with maximum benefit

• spreading the idea of ‘Community Power’, in which ordinary people, often as part of a cooperative, participate in decisions about the energy they consume, making communities energy independent and breaking dependence on big energy companies

• campaigning to prevent the spread of genetically modified crops in Europe which draw attention away from real sustainable alternatives to alleviate hunger and poverty

• getting Europe to act on agrofuels and stop food being burned in our fuel tanks

• exposing the European financial institutions and companies involved in land-grabbing

• urging Europe to tackle its over-use of the world’s land and other global resources by implementing an effective system for measuring and reducing resource use

• calling for obligatory corporate reporting rules to ensure companies measure and reduce their natural resource consumption across their supply chains

• ensuring member states avoid damaging spending in their plans for the EU budget and open the door for investments in energy savings and renewables, green innovation, resource efficiency and sustainable transport

• bringing the concerns of communities threatened by shale gas exploration, supporting grassroots resistance and trying to put a stop to a global ‘dash for gas’

• monitoring the implementation of the new ethics code for Members of the European Parliament and its effectiveness in preventing conflicts of interest

• advocating for new rules to improve corporate transparency and accountability for European companies wherever they operate

• raising awareness of the work being done by Friends of the Earth activists to save biodiversity, by collecting personal testimonies from across Europe.

To find out more about any of our activities please visit www.foeeurope.org or contact us.