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 national member organisations and thousands of local activist groups in more than 30 European countries - the people’s voice at the heart of the European Union.
Dear readers

For many, 2008 will be remembered as a year of crisis. Financial and economic crises touched almost every corner of the globe, and diverted attention away from the biggest threat facing the human race: the environmental crisis – climate change. For too long we have been living on borrowed money, and more importantly borrowed time. The effects of climate change are occurring sooner and with more intensity than predicted, yet world leaders are so far failing to use the economic situation as the opportunity it presents to rethink our current growth-led system and our relationship with the Earth.

Friends of the Earth Europe continues to see the economic downturn as a chance to change Europe’s unsustainable consumption and production patterns and heavy carbon footprint, to challenge the power of corporations and their socially and environmentally dubious behaviours and, in short, to act.

In 2008 Friends of the Earth Europe acted by launching the Big Ask campaign – calling on European governments to commit to legally binding annual emissions reductions. With high-profile support from Radiohead front-man Thom Yorke, our launch event was a great success and enthusiasm for the campaign continues to grow. The Big Ask is now gathering support in 17 countries around Europe through a diversity of grassroots activities, including Belgium’s largest-ever climate change mobilisation which saw 6,000 people converge on a beach in Ostend to tell politicians that it is time to ‘Act Now’.

We have acted for the next generation – for whom tackling climate change is a matter of survival – by building the Young Friends of the Earth Europe network which took the voice of young Europeans to the UN climate talks in Poznan. Our first full-time capacity building co-ordinator has helped strengthen the network – maximising our ability to bring the voices of European citizens to Brussels to demand action for a more sustainable future.

We continued to shed light on the lobbying activities taking place in the corridors of the Brussels institutions. We worked to expose the inadequacy of the European Commission’s new register of lobbyists, which with its voluntary nature and ineffective disclosure requirements is too flawed to bring about the transparency the Commission claims to seek.

We revealed the facts about, and cautioned against, so-called ‘silver bullet’ solutions, such as genetically modified crops and agrofuels, which in this time of crisis can look like the quick-fixes politicians are desperate for, but will only serve to make the situation worse in the long-term. We urged those in power to act with the necessary speed and ambition and opt for the solutions at hand such as more efficient cars, instead of harmful agrofuels, and strict targets for recycling in place of polluting incinerators.

In the following pages we highlight some of our successes from 2008. I hope you will be inspired by our vibrant, diverse network and our efforts to bring the voices of citizens, and their calls for environmental and social justice, to Brussels. We are in a time of crisis, and to borrow from the Big Ask campaign, it is time to ‘Act Now’.

Magda Stoczkiewicz
Director, Friends of the Earth Europe
Brussels, April 2009
## Financial information

### Income sources 2008 (in euros)

Operational grant - EU: 789,266  
Project grants - EU: 134,105  
Project grants - national governments: 141,158  
Project grants - private funders: 753,446  
Project contributions - members: 154,699  
Membership fees: 148,935  
Other income: 22,285  

**Total income 2008**: 2,143,893

Operational grant - EU: 37%  
Project grants - EU: 6%  
Project grants - national governments: 7%  
Project grants - private funders: 35%  
Project contributions - members: 7%  
Membership fees: 7%  
Other income: 1%

### Growth (in euros)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount (in euros)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,023,332</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,154,986</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,377,430</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,782,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2,143,893</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Expenditure 2008 (in euros)

Campaigning and communications: 1,027,855  
Network development: 113,590  
Support to national campaigns: 315,749  
Management and organisational development: 265,515  
Administration, IT and office costs: 379,907  

**Total expenditure 2008**: 2,102,615

Reserves carried forward (2%): 41,278

### Thank you!

Many thanks to everyone who has given generously this year again to help make our work possible. Special thanks to the EU Commission Directorate General (DG) Environment, the Oak Foundation, the European Climate Foundation, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the EU Commission DG Development, the Ministry for Environment Germany, the James M Goldsmith Foundation, the Ministry for Environment Netherlands, the EU Commission DG Employment and Social Affairs, the Humanitarian Group Social Development, the Isvra Foundation, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, OxfamNovib and Trocaire. 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](http://www.nbb.be) from 1st July 2009. Quote company number 0443.252.089.

Details of our funding can be found on our website: [www.foeeurope.org/about/english.htm](http://www.foeeurope.org/about/english.htm)
climate change law introduced in the UK following three years of campaigning by Friends of the Earth
complaints filed by Friends of the Earth Europe against ‘greenwash’ advertising successfully upheld
Friends of the Earth groups across Europe joined the Big Ask to campaign for their governments
to commit to annual cuts in climate-changing emissions
actions took place in 17 countries around Europe as part of Young Friends of the Earth Europe’s
‘Countdown to Poznan’
environmentally damaging and economically dubious infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern
Europe highlighted on our ‘Cohesion or Collision?’ map
primary schools in the Mediterranean region took part in our ‘Good for you, Good for nature’ project
which promotes healthy and sustainable food production and consumption
campaigners from 38 countries across the world joined the largest-ever international gathering
of campaigners on Free Trade Agreements – the event was hosted by Friends of the Earth Europe
squares of fabric decorated with messages collected by Young Friends of the Earth Europe
and delivered to the UN climate talks in Poland
Radiohead fans signed-up in support of the Big Ask and called on their governments to commit
to annual cuts in emissions
people visited the Friends of the Earth Europe website – www.foeeurope.org – throughout the year,
to find out more about our work
In 2008 Friends of the Earth Europe continued to campaign for the interests of people and the planet on issues including climate change, agrofuels, corporate accountability, EU funds and chemicals. At the same time we strengthened our capacity building work and our youth network, enabling us to better bring the voices of our grassroots membership to influence decision-making in Brussels. Here are highlights of just some of our activities in 2008.

January

Exposing ‘greenwash’ advertising Following a formal complaint lodged by our corporates team, a televised advert from the Malaysian Palm Oil Council describing their palm oil as ‘sustainably produced’ was ruled to constitute false advertising. The destruction of peatlands to make way for palm plantations contributes massively to global CO₂ emissions. In 2008, as part of our work to stop ‘greenwash’ we also had complaints upheld against Toyota and Austrian oil and gas company OMV.

Leading a coalition against biofuels With our partners we heavily criticised the European Union’s bid to expand the use of biofuels. We led a coalition against the EU’s ten per cent target for the use of biofuels in transport. Through a series of reports, and a high-profile media campaign, we told how biofuels are a false solution to climate change and cause land disputes, forced evictions, human rights abuses and increased poverty in developing countries.

The report has a damning verdict on the EU policy. It should be abandoned in favour of real solutions to climate change. Financial Times quotes Friends of the Earth Europe agrofuels campaigner Adrian Bebb.

February

Researching how the beneficial potential of EU funds is wasted A new map produced in partnership with CEE Bankwatch Network detailed 50 environmentally damaging and economically dubious projects in Central and Eastern Europe. Based on the most extensive investigation to date, the map showed incinerators, motorways, dams and other controversial infrastructure projects — already financed, or planned to be financed, by EU funds and/or the European Investment Bank — with a total cost of 22 billion Euros. We called for a halt to such reckless projects and for alternative solutions to be examined first.

If the money drives reckless developments and environmental destruction, its potential to deliver benefits is being wasted. Reuters quotes Friends of the Earth Europe EU funds campaigner Martin Konečný.

The Big Ask campaign launches In February, Thom Yorke, the front-man of Radiohead, travelled to Brussels to launch the Big Ask — our Europe-wide climate campaign. Friends of the Earth groups in 17 countries are part of the campaign and simultaneous launch events were held around Europe. Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas joined Thom and heard why he supports the Big Ask in Europe. With the Big Ask the Friends of the Earth Europe network is coordinating on an unprecedented scale — our groups are calling for legally binding annual emissions cuts, at the same time, right around Europe.

Taking our message to business As the gates of the European Business Summit opened in Brussels, Friends of the Earth Europe campaigners symbolically ‘greenwashed’ the corporate social responsibility reports of companies — including BMW, E.ON, Lufthansa and Shell – taking part in the event. Backed by the colourful ‘What Lies Beneath’ exhibition, we showed how companies spend millions of euros to paint themselves green instead of making real efforts to improve their environmental performance.

March

Capacity builders meet in Madrid Our capacity building work helps maximise the network’s campaigning effectiveness. In February four of our member groups — France, Croatia, Malta, and Spain — who have been benefiting from the experience of more established groups met their ‘twins’ — UK, Netherlands and Switzerland — for the last time. In a two year project the groups helped each other to develop and grow, for example developing fundraising programmes and expanding their local groups.

Investigating forest destruction In coalition with our Dutch member group we called on the European Commission to adopt environmental legislation to prevent illegal timber from being sold on the European market. We presented the findings of our
investigation – which discovered illegal or destructively harvested timber in four EU projects – to the Commission accompanied by a fanfare of chainsaws, axes and saw blades. We continue to push for legislation to combat illegal logging and related timber trade.

**Warning about the dangers of nanotechnology** Our report ‘Out of the laboratory and on to our plates: Nanotechnology in food and agriculture’ revealed that consumers are unknowingly ingesting nanomaterials as regulators struggle to keep pace with their rapidly expanding use. We called on European policy-makers to adopt precautionary legislation on nanotechnology and support sustainable food and farming.

*Europeans should not be exposed to potentially toxic materials in their food and food packaging until proper regulations are in place to ensure their safety.*

**April**

**Presentation shows reality of Shell** In response to the publication of oil giant Shell’s ‘Energy Scenarios to 2050’ our extractives team used an exhibition to present its own interpretation of Shell’s future. The banners featured images of the negative environmental and social impacts of Shell’s activities which include gas flaring in Nigeria, oil spills, accidents and oil sands extraction. This was part of a larger exhibition that visited four countries throughout the year to expose the harmful effects of the extractives industry.

**Largest-ever gathering of campaigners on European Free Trade Agreements** Working closely with trade campaign networks from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, we hosted more than 100 campaigns from 38 countries across the world in the largest-ever international gathering of campaigners on European Free Trade Agreements. Campaigners had the unique opportunity to share experiences, exchange information, reach out to EU policy-makers and develop strategies to counter the negative trends of the EU’s trade policy.

**May**

**Giving young Europeans a voice on climate** Young Friends of the Earth Europe’s ‘Countdown to Poznan’ began with the launch of a new ‘Wrap up climate change’ project designed to bring the voices of ordinary European citizens, especially young people, to the international climate negotiations in Poland in December. Over a six month period more than 2,000 members of the public, from 17 countries, wrote or drew their message to decision-makers on squares of material – sending the message that it is time to ‘wrap up’ the negotiations and commit to strong and effective action on climate change.

**Giving children food for thought** More than 50 primary schools around the Mediterranean took part in our ‘Good for you, Good for nature’ project which promotes healthy eating habits and sustainable food production and consumption. Pupils learnt how to make vegetable gardens and window boxes and were introduced to the concept of food miles and low CO₂ diets.

**June**

**Myth-busting about GMOs** As European leaders contemplated how to tackle rising global food prices, we warned them not to fall for biotech industry propaganda that genetically modified crops are a solution. Our food team held high level face-to-face meetings and drew attention to evidence that weakening the EU’s GMO laws will not solve the high prices faced by the European livestock and food industry. Our report ‘Who Benefits from GM crops?’ showed GM crops have led to a massive increase in pesticide use and have failed to increase yields or tackle world hunger and poverty. The hard work has begun to pay off: at the December Environment Council, ministers unanimously stated that EU GMO laws had not been implemented properly and that improvements are needed – huge progress.

*If the EU was serious about listening to its citizens, it would not be quietly weakening GMO laws behind closed doors.*

**Financial Times quotes Friends of the Earth Europe GMO campaigner Helen Holder**

**A growing active youth network** At Young Friends of the Earth Europe’s first official AGM in Vienna more formal structures to support the growing network of young activists were set up, and climate-focused activities were planned. Participants carried out a number of public actions including inviting football fans visiting the city for the Euro 2008 competition to ‘score a goal against climate change’.
Binding recycling targets achieved

Our joint study with the European Environment Bureau on the climate benefits of recycling showed the massive potential of targets for recycling municipal waste. We published figures proving that proposed EU recycling targets would be equivalent to taking 31 million cars off the road. In 2008 binding recycling targets were finally achieved, although we expressed our deep disappointment that the deal was weakened and will have less environmental benefits than we had hoped for.

July

‘Pushing’ for fuel efficiency

As part of our campaign for a strong European law to reduce the fuel consumption of cars on Europe’s roads, a symbolic ‘race’ for fuel efficiency was staged outside the European Parliament. Activists pushed a vehicle round a track on which each lap represented a year until 2012 when new rules on fuel efficiency will come into force. Activists also ‘pushed’ vehicles around Brussels, Berlin, Madrid and Paris.

Calling for protection from hazardous chemicals

Our report ‘Blissfully unaware of Bisphenol A’ showed how chemical regulators are putting consumers at risk. We condemned the European Food Safety Authority’s decision to permit a five-fold increase in the authorised daily intake of the chemical which is found in goods such as baby bottles and plastic microwave food containers and has proven links with a wide range of health disorders such as infertility and cancer.

EFSA has again ignored overwhelming scientific evidence. This decision leaves consumers at risk and again highlights...the need for a complete review of this system

The Daily Mail quotes Friends of the Earth Europe chemicals campaigner David Azoulay

Big Ask on tour with Radiohead

The Big Ask hit the road for three months in the summer as part of Radiohead’s European summer tour. Concert-goers were asked to sign postcards to be sent to their governments calling for annual reductions in emissions. Over 30,000 postcards were collected across ten countries.

August

Questioning: ‘60 Years of Progress?’

An opinion poll in five countries showed overwhelming support for our demands to force carmakers to increase fuel efficiency. 87 per cent of people polled agreed that measures to reduce the fuel consumption of new cars by a quarter by 2012 should be introduced urgently. MEPs were urged to vote for these tough targets by our advertising campaign featuring the 1948 and 2008 models of the Volkswagen Beetle, which, despite 60 years of advances in automobile design, share the same level of fuel efficiency. As MEPs went to vote we parked a vintage Beetle and its contemporary counterpart in front of the Parliament. The poll and adverts brought the voices of European citizens visibly to the steps of parliament.

Citizens are sending a loud and clear message to politicians and carmakers to shift fuel efficiency up a gear

Reuters quotes Friends of the Earth Europe car campaigner Jeroen Verhoeven

September

MEPs convinced to ‘feed people, not cars’

Friends of the Earth Europe campaigners dressed as waiters served mock lunchboxes with the words ‘Feed people, not cars’ to MEPs before their vote on a target for the use of harmful biofuels in transport. The result: MEPs supported proposals to reduce the target from five per cent to ten per cent, followed by a major review – a welcome move away from using food crops to produce fuels. Their decision was later undone by the European Council with potentially devastating consequences.

Promoting ‘Living Alternatives’

The European Social Forum in Malmö, Sweden presented the opportunity for us to voice the views of our international network on economic justice, food, farming and climate issues through five days of seminars, workshops, exhibitions, music and activism. Our youth network cooperated with Young Via Campesina to run a ‘Living Alternatives’ camp for over 200 young people where they delivered training programmes on media, activism and lobbying.

Challenging MEPs to answer the climate change call

As discussions on the EU climate and energy package entered the crucial final stage, our climate campaigners, in coalition with Climate Action Network Europe, challenged MEPs to take action consistent with avoiding catastrophic climate change. MEPs were asked to answer...
a telephone hotline outside the European Parliament. The stunt marked the launch of the ‘Time to Lead’ campaign through which thousands of people asked their governments to show true leadership in the fight against climate change.

*Europe’s politicians continue to fail to make the overall commitments consistent with avoiding the worst consequences of climate change* – European Voice quotes Friends of the Earth Europe climate campaigner Sonja Meister

**October**

**Calling for an end to an illegitimate relationship** Friends of the Earth Europe, as part of the Seattle to Brussels network, staged a mock wedding ceremony between the European Commission trade section and lobby group BusinessEurope. The wedding symbolised our call for the Commission to break away from its liaison with business lobbyists and to develop a more sustainable approach to trade.

**November**

**New capacity building project launches** We launched our third capacity building project, known as Kolga, with a planning meeting in Berlin. The project focuses on Friends of the Earth groups in the Baltic region – Poland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland – who are ‘twinning’ with supporting groups – Switzerland, Netherlands, UK and Germany respectively – to work on key areas of organisational development. By the end of the two-day meeting, the Kolga project had agreed an ambitious two-year plan and ways to continue working together.

**December**

**Refusing to be silenced about worst lobbyists** The winners of the 2008 Worst EU Lobbying Awards were revealed at a ceremony in Brussels after more than 8,500 people participated in an online public vote. This year’s award for the worst lobbying practice was shared by agrofuel lobbyists for falsely promoting biofuels as a solution to climate change, and energy company Abengoa Bioenergy for its misleading information and greenwash. One of the candidates for the worst conflict of interest award, suspended Commission official Fritz-Harald Wenig, unsuccessfully tried to silence us by taking legal action, but the court ruled that freedom of speech was more important in this case.

By naming and shaming the winners of the awards, I hope we can illustrate the crucial need for action across the EU to prevent such conflicts of interest and corporate abuse from damaging people’s lives and the environment – EU Observer quotes Mark Thomas, comedian and presenter of the Worst EU Lobbying Awards

**Campaigning for EU leadership on climate change** The ‘Time to Lead’ campaign reached a peak as European leaders finalised the EU’s response to climate change. With our coalition partners we installed giant blocks of ice outside a meeting of environment ministers to symbolise Europe’s climate leadership melting away, and fiercely criticised the final deal done by EU heads of state and government which is not consistent with keeping global warming below two degrees Celsius. Earlier in the year Friends of the Earth Europe was the first environment group in Brussels to call for 40% reductions in EU emissions by 2020 – a move we made to reflect the latest scientific predictions.

**Bringing voices from the global South to Europe** Six MEPs, three European Commission spokespeople and seven Friends of the Earth representatives from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America were among the speakers at a conference we hosted jointly with the European Parliament. 170 people from over 30 countries participated in the two days of debates on Europe’s external competitiveness strategy ‘Global Europe’. The conference helped raise awareness about the negative impacts of ‘Global Europe’ on human rights and the environment, and gave campaigners from the global South a voice in Brussels policy-making.

**Young people demand ministers ‘wrap up’ climate change** Young Friends of the Earth Europe’s year of planning and activity came to a climax as a delegation of 40 activists attended the UN climate talks in Poland. The group was part the official youth delegation and used the opportunity to build relationships with the other international youth organisations and organise actions inside the conference. Young people wrapped a giant globe in the 2,000 messages they had collected from around Europe and individual messages were presented to the European Environment Commissioner, and national ministers. We blamed the rich industrialised world, and most notably the European Union, for the severe lack of progress made at the talks.
The Big Ask campaign brings together Friends of the Earth groups across Europe, all with the same big ask – that their governments commit to reduce carbon emissions, year on year. Every year. These cuts should be equal to a 40% reduction of emissions by 2020 and 100% by 2050. Binding targets will encourage fair and effective climate solutions that will help us all – individuals, business and communities – to cut our carbon footprint.

The Big Ask campaign was launched in 17 countries across Europe in February. Thom Yorke, the front man of Radiohead, presented the campaign to the European Commissioner for Environment, Stavros Dimas, and explained to journalists at a packed press conference why he supports the Big Ask.

“Austria The Austrian Big Ask campaign – known as SOS Klima – organised a balloon ride over the Austrian Alps to show journalists first-hand the effects of climate change on the landscape and raise awareness through the media of the campaign.

Europe-wide The Big Ask travelled on tour with Radiohead during summer 2008. Local activists from Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Scotland and Spain signed up over 30,000 supporters. As well as allowing us to talk to their fans about the Big Ask, Radiohead have taken a carbon conscious approach to their world tour, making important changes to reduce their carbon footprint.

Belgium A short film made by Friends of the Earth in Belgium, with the help of award winning film director Nic Balthazar and 6,000 extras, is helping to spread the message that politicians must ‘Act Now’ to tackle climate change. Since its launch in November 2008, the clip has been watched over 100,000 times on YouTube, and by well over one million people on Belgian TV.

Finland The Finnish campaign ‘Polttava Kysymys’ received a boost in September when two climate law proposals were introduced to parliament. Some of the 17,000 people who signed campaign postcards to support a climate law were present for an action on the steps of the parliament.

“This seems to be the first sane, reasoned way out of what is basically an international emergency. Any person out there who has any concern about global warming, who feels powerless like I did, should think about getting involved in the Big Ask.”

Thom Yorke, Radiohead

“I would like to thank Friends of the Earth for their great contribution to mobilising people in order to achieve the reduction of emissions that is necessary to effectively fight climate change.”

Stavros Dimas, European Environment Commissioner
At the European level, the Friends of the Earth Europe climate campaign had its biggest ever lobby success when Big Ask campaigners from all across Europe lobbied for binding annual emission cuts in the EU’s climate and energy package. Our proposals, including tough penalties for countries which don’t meet their reduction targets, were supported by all parties in the vote of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament. Much to our disappointment MEPs’ views were ignored in the final weak deal done by heads of state and government.

The UK adopted a climate law in November 2008 – committing the government to achieve cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. The campaign for this groundbreaking new legislation was led by Friends of the Earth through the Big Ask campaign, and was supported by over 200,000 people.

The Big Ask Big Happening in October brought campaigners from across the network together to discuss how to take the Big Ask to the next level in 2009. Plans include strengthening communication between groups, increasing political pressure for national climate laws, and mobilisation in the lead up to a big action in Copenhagen in December 2009.
Campaigning with and for people across Europe
Highlights of our member groups’ achievements in 2008

Hungary: Ringing the climate alarm With the need for a national climate strategy, Friends of the Earth Hungary launched its Big Ask campaign, called ‘Climate Alarm’, asking for an effective Hungarian climate law by 2010 – with a concept paper that includes cutting Hungarian fossil energy use by a minimum one per cent a year. The campaign is gaining increasing support: several MPs and the environmental ministers have already signed up, alongside nearly 2,000 citizens.

Austria: Public pressure secures climate bill commitment 2008 saw the launch of Friends of the Earth Austria’s ‘SOS Klima’ campaign, part of Friends of the Earth Europe’s Big Ask. With help from its new youth group, Friends of the Earth mobilised thousands of people across Austria to ask politicians to commit to a climate change law. Thanks to its work, the new coalition of Social Democrats and Conservatives committed to adopt a climate bill as part of its coalition agreement.

Switzerland: Five species of butterflies saved from extinction Friends of the Earth Switzerland creates and manages nature reserves and runs projects to safeguard biodiversity with the support and collaboration of local communities. Thanks to these tailor-made local projects, no less than five species of butterflies, which were about to completely disappear from the country, could be declared as saved in 2008 – a tremendous achievement.

Germany: Resisting coal Friends of the Earth Germany continued to take an active role in protests and legal action surrounding the continued struggle against coal-fired power plants in Germany. Thousands of people demonstrated against the plans of German utility companies and called for a climate change policy. With more than 25 new coal-fired power plants originally planned, seven have been stopped due to the resistance from Friends of the Earth Germany and their partners.

Cyprus: Engaging young people and photographers 2008 saw the creation of Friends of the Earth Cyprus’ youth group. The group collected 650 cloth drawings from people wishing to send their own message about climate change to negotiators at international talks in Poland. Friends of the Earth Cyprus also launched a photographic competition on the theme ‘Our Environment’, in coalition with the Photographic Society of Cyprus. More than 200 people attended the opening night of the exhibition of all the entries – re-establishing Friends of the Earth Cyprus as a leading voice for the environment.

Belgium: Big Ask hits big screen A short film made by Friends of the Earth Belgium as part of the Big Ask campaign is helping to spread the message that politicians must ‘Act Now’ against climate change. More than 6,000 people took part in the recording of the Big Ask video clip at Ostend on the Belgian coast. It was the largest event against climate change ever in Belgium, and has established Friends of the Earth as a major player in the climate change movement. The film was made possible with the help of many film industry professionals, including award winning director Nic Balthazar, who all gave their time for free. Music was supplied by Hooverphonic. The launch of the clip was attended by members of parliament from every political group, and the climate minister.

Scotland: ‘Home Energy Challenge’ Five politicians, one from each party represented in the Scottish Parliament, took up the challenge in late 2007 to achieve the greatest reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from their home over a year. Robin Harper MSP won the challenge by saving an impressive 6.3 tonnes of CO₂ over the year, amounting to a saving of 46.6 per cent. The challenge started in 2007 and ended in December 2008 with audits from the Energy Saving Trust.

Finland: Calling for a climate law now As Members of Finnish Parliament returned for the autumn session in September, they met a human banner on the stairs of the parliament building spelling ‘Climate law now!’ 150 people took part in the demonstration, lying on the stairs in the pouring rain, which made a big impact on a number of MPs. Two climate bills on annual greenhouse emission cuts were submitted in the parliament on the same day: a huge achievement for the Finnish Big Ask campaign and for almost 22,000 people who have asked their MP to support a climate law.

Switzerland: Defending the right to protect our natural and cultural heritage A referendum was held in November, questioning the legal right of Swiss organisations such as Friends of the Earth Switzerland to use the courts to challenge projects that threaten the environment, and the natural and cultural heritage. Thanks to a Friends of the Earth Switzerland campaign, a two-thirds majority of the Swiss population voted in favour of maintaining organisations’ right to use the courts, and the proposal was dropped – a clear expression of the Swiss people’s support for groups like Friends of the Earth, and an expression of their enduring attachment to both democracy and their natural heritage.
England, Wales and Northern Ireland: People change politics. The UK Climate Change Act became law in late 2008 — and it’s a world first. It’s an enormous success for the thousands of citizens who took part in the Big Ask campaign in the UK and hopefully a significant step in the global effort for a safer climate. The campaign saw sustained public mobilisation with well over 200,000 people involved: writing and speaking to their elected representatives, and turning out for public meetings. MPs and commentators have said that the weight of public response to this campaign was central to its success. The campaign continues to spread across Europe — with Friends of the Earth groups in 17 countries now running their own Big Asks.

Germany: Creating a corridor for the European wildcat. A major publicity campaign from Friends of the Earth Germany raised public awareness of the threatened European wildcat, and garnered support for one of the largest conservation projects in central Europe – the development of 20,000 kilometres of migration corridors. The Friends of the Earth initiative aims to connect existing and potential habitats through the planting of trees along migration routes and the construction of ‘green bridges’. The first corridor has been completed with many more corridors under construction, running alongside a comprehensive monitoring programme.

Hungary: Founding the National Council for Sustainable Development. After a series of forums — organised by Friends of the Earth Hungary — the Hungarian Parliament adopted a resolution for the foundation of a National Council for Sustainable Development, created as a conciliatory, consultative and advisory body for issues in the field of sustainable development. Chair of the Council is the current speaker of the Hungarian parliament, and the vice-president of Friends of the Earth Hungary was invited to be secretary general. The Council decided to renew the Hungarian Sustainable Development Strategy and will bring sustainability onto the political level and into everyday life.

Austria: Successes against GMOs. Friends of the Earth Austria celebrated the success of its campaign against genetically modified crops when the import of three GM varieties of oilseed rape was banned by national law. Spectacular actions, including a banner drop from the ministry, and lobbying and media work attracted lots of public interest and generated pressure on politicians.

Netherlands: Influencing government on climate investment funds. Friends of the Earth Netherlands organised a range of activities targeting the Dutch government after the World Bank approved its Climate Investment Funds — funds intended, in theory, to support the development of clean, climate-friendly technologies. Friends of the Earth Netherlands was successful in voicing its concerns about how the funds are developed and what their actual impacts will be, with the result that the Dutch government’s contribution to Climate Investment Funds will not now be used for funding fossil fuel projects — a huge victory for the campaign.

Norway: Winning funds for forest conservation. Friends of the Earth Norway and close partner Rainforest Foundation Norway joined forces and were successful in persuading the Norwegian Government to promise funds to stop rainforest destruction, to be spent over five years. Knowing that promises are not always kept, Friends of the Earth Norway has been in constant contact with the Norwegian authorities in 2008, keeping up the pressure by lobbying parliament and the government at the outset of the 2009 budget process. In October 2008, the Norwegian Government presented its budget for 2009, with nearly 200 million Euros earmarked for rainforest protection – a historic victory for Friends of the Earth Norway and The Rainforest Foundation.

Switzerland: Stopping urban sprawl. Friends of the Earth Switzerland has been the leading organisation in collecting signatures for a new law to protect landscapes and stop uncontrolled urban sprawl. More than 110,000 citizens’ signatures have been gathered within one year, forcing the government to organise another referendum, where people will hopefully say ‘stop’ to the destruction of landscapes while preserving climate and biodiversity.

Georgia: Communicating dangers of GMOs. Friends of the Earth Georgia researched and published a regionally-focused brochure on GMOs and bio-safety in four languages: Armenian, Azerbaijani, Georgian and Russian. The brochure, including research from a range of sources, was distributed widely throughout the region and gained enormous interest, becoming a tool for organisations to discuss future activities and strengthening and expanding the anti-GMO movement across the region.

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In 2008 Friends of the Earth Europe produced the following publications, all of which are available on our website – www.foeeurope.org/publications – or by contacting us.

**Publications**

**GMOs: Who benefits from GM crops?** The rise in pesticide use (January 2008) As in past editions of Who Benefits from GM Crops? Fact-based assessment of genetically modified crops around the world, addressing common misconceptions about their impacts.

**Nuclear: Completing the Mochovce Nuclear Power Plant in Slovakia – Reactors from the 70s for the 21st Century** (January 2008) This report calls into question the safety standards of the Slovak government in the completion of Mochovce Nuclear Power Plant.

**EU Funds: Cohesion or Collision? – EU and EIB funding for controversial projects in Central and Eastern Europe** (February 2008) Map detailing 50 environmentally damaging and economically dubious infrastructure projects in Central and Eastern Europe.

**Nanotechnologys: Out of the laboratory and on to our plates:** Nanotechnology in food and agriculture (March 2008) Report on the untested and potentially hazardous manufactured nanomaterials found in food, food packaging and other products in the EU.

**Waste: How recycling can fight climate change** (March 2008) Looks at how recycling and waste prevention play a key role in the sustainable management of resources and the fight against climate change.

**Extractive industries: Extracting the truth:** Oil industry efforts to undermine the Fuel Quality Directive (April 2008) This report uses industry’s own data to show how oil companies are falsely claiming that targets for reducing their emissions are unachievable.

**Agrofuels:** Sustainable as a smokescreen: The inadequacy of certifying fuels and feeds (April 2008) Challenges the certification schemes set up to reduce the widespread environmental and social problems caused by growing crops for fuels and animal feeds, and shows how they are bound to fail.

**Friends of the Earth Europe Annual Review 2007** (May 2008)

**Chemicals:** Blissfully unaware of Bisphenol A: Reasons why regulators should live up to their responsibilities (July 2008) Comprehensive review of the scientific knowledge available regarding controversial chemical Bisphenol A.

**Chemicals:** Bisphenol A in plastics: is it making us sick? (September 2008) A consumer guide to Bisphenol A in plastics.

**Agrofuels:** Fuelling destruction in Latin America: The real price of the drive for agrofuels (September 2008) A look at the negative impacts of current and proposed developments in a number of Southern and Central American countries to scale-up agrofuel production.

**Corporates:** Malaysian palm oil: Green gold or green wash? (October 2008) Examines the case of the Malaysian State of Sarawak which is developing large-scale palm oil plantations with devastating effects.

**Corporates:** Whose Views Count? Business influence and the European Commission’s High Level Groups (December 2008) Report on the unbalanced and undemocratic nature of the expert groups known as high level groups which advise the European Commission on controversial issues like climate change, chemicals and food.
In 2009, Friends of the Earth Europe is continuing to press for long-term, just and sustainable solutions to the immediate problems facing Europe, global society, and the planet. For us, the financial and economic crises, which are dominating people’s thoughts, media headlines, and the agendas of our leaders and policy-makers, represent an opportunity to rethink Europe’s unsustainable consumption and production patterns – an opportunity to shift towards ways of life which are more in harmony with the Earth.

That’s why exploring the challenges of over-consumption is increasingly becoming a common thread through all our campaigns. Internally, this year will see the completion of our strategic planning process which will set out the direction of our work until 2013, with assessing the effects of Europe’s growth-led economic model a constant theme. This long-term planning is an important undertaking for our network, and we are approaching it in a participative manner, confident that it will enable our member groups around Europe, and our Brussels office, to speak with more coherence and influence on behalf of European citizens on the issues which matter most to them and on which we can make most difference.

As the European Union looks for ways to spend its way out of the economic downturn, we will push for the money to go to green projects with positive environment and climate benefits in new member states through our work on the EU structural and cohesion funds.

The Big Ask, following in the footsteps of its successful collaboration with Radiohead, will be seeking to engage even more people in 2009 by touring with musicians Coldcut. Our climate campaign, and our growing youth network, will focus on mobilisation in the run-up to crucial UN climate talks to be held in Copenhagen in December where we aim to flood the city’s streets with our demands for climate justice. The event will be the high point in a year of cyber-actions, street actions and campaigning from Friends of the Earth groups around the world, and will represent the voice of EU citizens in Copenhagen.

In Brussels, the European Parliament elections offer an opportunity to question the environmental and social convictions of prospective MEPs and to try to influence the composition of this important actor on European legislation. We will be ‘pinning down’ candidates on their commitment to counter the corporate dominance of EU politics.

We will continue to draw attention to false solutions, whilst promoting the positive ones, through our work on GMOs, agrofuels, extractive industries, trade and resource use. All of this will be done against a background of network development, including capacity building on communications.
Friends of the Earth Europe

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