



Solar days attract half a million Europeans

European Solar Days 2011 campaign draws to a close in Brussels

Brussels, 26th May 2011 – The 4th edition of the European Solar Days campaign has drawn massive support for solar energy throughout the entire continent. Over the course of two weeks (1-15 May 2011) more than 8,000 events were organized in 18 countries throughout Europe, attracting half a million people in an attempt to demonstrate that solar energy constitutes a viable alternative energy source.

In Brussels, the European Solar Days were marked by a panel debate on solar energy's contribution to Europe's energy independence and security of supply. While Mariusz Kawnik - Energy Attaché in the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Poland to the EU – confirmed that progress in the area of renewable energy remains one of the key issues in the agenda of the forthcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), Paolo Frankl – Head of the IEA Renewable Energy Division – stressed that a further push to efficiently deploy solar technology would considerably help the European Union reach its 20/20/20 energy targets.

Louis Palmer's solar taxi test-drive was another highlight of the Brussels event. Global environmental adventurer, Louis Palmer is the first man to have completed a global tour in his solar-powered car. Palmer said: *"It gave me real pleasure to see genuine interest in embracing solar-powered technologies, such as the solar taxi. Energy independence remains one of the major challenges of our times, yet my experience demonstrates that it only takes sheer conviction to implement the solar energy solution."*

"Embracing solar as a viable energy alternative remains key to building a sustainable Europe and achieving the EU's climate targets" said Reinhold Buttgereit, Secretary General of the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA). *"Today, it is even more evident that the EU needs to increase its share of renewables. We need to reassess our energy choices immediately or else we risk jeopardizing Europe's future energy independence and security of supply"* added Xavier Noyon, Secretary General of the European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF).

"The technology exists and, as the Solar Days campaign shows, consumers increasingly understand the benefits. But without the wholehearted support of policy-makers we will still face challenges in increasing solar energy's share in the EU energy mix" the two representatives concluded.

In the context of the EU's pledge to increase the share of renewables in its overall energy mix, solar energy can contribute in an essential way towards reaching this ambitious goal. Capitalizing on its characteristics – free, clean and, above all, infinite energy source – solar can ensure energy independence at local, regional and individual levels. Recent research reveals that solar thermal can meet up to 3.6% of the low temperature demand in the EU and solar photovoltaic electricity could account for up to 12% of the EU's electricity demand by 2020 assuming that the right political framework is in place.

– ENDS –

Note to editors:

European Solar Days – For a bright future

The European Solar Days campaign was originally launched in 2002 in Austria with the “Day of the Sun”. Positive feedback encouraged organisers to develop the event further into an annual pan-European campaign running over a couple of weeks.

The European Solar Days are intended to promote the use of solar energy in Europe through a wide range of events: fairs, hands-on exhibitions, presentations, races of solar-powered devices, conferences, debates etc. Over the past 9 years, the initiative has drawn an increasing number of supporters: in 2011 more than 8000 events were held across 18 European countries. Event organisers included various organisations working in the solar equipment manufacturing industry as well as local authorities or educational institutions.

The 4th edition of this Europe-wide campaign was organised by the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA) together with the European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF) and a network of some 25 affiliated organisations, including NGOs, businesses and local governments. The European Solar Days’ project is supported by the Intelligent Energy Europe programme of the European Commission.

For more information on the European Solar Days, access the official campaign website:

<http://www.solardays.eu/>

About the organisers (ESTIF and EPIA):

The European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF) is the voice of the solar thermal industry, actively promoting the use of solar thermal technology for renewable heating and cooling in Europe. With around 100 members from 19 European countries, ESTIF represents the entire supply chain: manufacturers, service providers and national associations, which together cover 95% of today's solar thermal market.

With over 240 Members drawn from across the entire solar photovoltaic (PV) sector, the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA) is the world’s largest photovoltaic industry association. EPIA Members are present throughout the whole value-chain: from silicon, cells and module production to systems development and PV electricity generation as well as marketing and sales. EPIA’s mission is to deliver a distinct and valuable service driven from the strength of a single photovoltaic voice.

For more information

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