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Climate change in Europe: Warning signs becoming ever clearer

European Environment Agency publishes new report

Is there a higher incidence of heat waves and severe weather in Europe? How much are the sea levels in Europe rising? How does climate change impact man, plants, and animals? The answers to this are provided in *Impacts of Europe's changing climate - 2008 indicator based assessment report*, which the European Environment Agency (EEA) issued yesterday in Copenhagen, Denmark. It confirms that the climate in Europe has indeed changed considerably over the past decades—and the impact of this change is becoming more and more evident. The results of latest modelling forecasts predict a sharp increase in the degree of this impact. The report applies 40 indicators with which to describe the increased risk of floods and dry periods, loss of biodiversity, or risks posed to the energy industry. The report covers ten key areas including human health, energy management, agriculture, tourism, transport, and ecosystems. "We are seeing clear warning signs in all areas of life and the economy", said Federal Environment Agency Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann, adding that "Europe must also come together on how to counteract climate change."

According to the report, the temperature in Europe has risen by 1 degree Celsius since the onset of industrialisation, which is more than the global average of 0.8 degrees Celsius. The glaciers in the Alps have lost about two-thirds of their ice mass since 1850, and this process has accelerated since the 1980s. Climbing temperatures and heat waves have given rise to health issues; melting glaciers could pose new challenges to water supply in the Alps region. The EEA projects a continued rise in temperature over the next one hundred years with greater consequences for the environment and society.

A rise in the incidence of natural disasters-- mainly caused by extreme weather incidents- will face the insurance industry as claims for damages grow. The sea levels on Europe's coasts is also rising, the range of species in its seas is changing, and vegetation period has become significantly longer in many parts of the continent.

Although the report also points out some positive consequences of climate change, i.e. better conditions for agriculture and shipping in northern regions, it is quite clear that negative consequences outweigh the positive. UBA Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann said, "The far-

reaching consequences of climate change in Europe emphasises the urgency of further reducing climate gas emissions. At the same time, we must also adapt to these now irreversible climate changes."

The report is founded on new scientific publications and years of statistics from scientific observations in various European countries. Possible future climate changes and their consequences are projected by means of computer modelling.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has published the report jointly with the EU Joint Research Centre, Institute for Environment and Sustainability, Ispra, Italy, and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, Rome.

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) participated in production of the report, along with other institutions, as members of the European Topic Centre on Air and Climate (ETC/ACC).

The report has been published in English and is at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/pressroom/newsreleases/europe-needs-to-intensify-actions-to-adapt-to-climate-change-impacts> and will be accessible from the UBA home page www.umweltbundesamt.de soon.

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