

## European Solar Days events expect more than a half-million participants

### *Grassroots campaign reflects broad consumer support for clean, cheap energy*

**Brussels, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2012** – Hundreds of thousands of European citizens will gather at events across the continent to show their support for solar energy during European Solar Days (ESD), demonstrating the huge potential contribution of solar toward meeting EU energy goals. The events, which will take place in hundreds of locations from Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May to Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, have been designed to help audiences including European policy makers and companies, but particularly individual citizens, to understand the benefits that available solar technology offers them today. Events include exhibitions of solar technologies, open door days, trainings for company staff, street festivities for children, “balloon dropping” and many more.

In addition to the events around Europe, which expect to welcome more than 500,000 visitors across 16 European countries, a special event for EU political and industry stakeholders will take place in Brussels on Thursday, 10 May. This roundtable, entitled, “Solar Citizens: People in Charge of their energy future”, will highlight the policy changes necessary to oversee the next phase of solar energy integration in Europe.

Over the course of the last decade, as Europe’s energy market has diversified, solar energy has become a crucial source of clean, decentralised energy for many households. By the end of 2011, over 50 gigawatts of PV systems had been installed in Europe – enough to supply over 15 million households with electricity –while approximately 26 gigawatts (thermal) had been installed in 2011, which is enough to provide over 12.5 million households with an average sized solar thermal system for domestic hot water production. More and more, European consumers are choosing to minimise their reliance on traditional and non-renewable energy sources, and to reduce their environmental footprint as well as their energy bills.

Xavier Noyon, Secretary General of the European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF), said: *“A strong and growing demand for solar energy is a key factor for developing an innovative and sustainable Europe. Solar thermal and photovoltaic are key industries for the European economy and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.”*

Reinhold Buttgereit, Secretary General of the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA), said: *“Solar energy offers huge societal benefits, including far greater levels of sustainability. This clean and reliable energy source gives Europeans the choice to reduce their energy bills while helping to achieve the continent’s ambitious energy and climate policy targets.”*

Europe’s Energy Roadmap 2050 and the EU Energy 2020 targets commit EU policy makers to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050, and to increasing the share of renewable energies to 20% by 2020. Under the right policy and market conditions solar electricity could account for up to 12% of the EU power demand by 2020 by itself. At the same time, solar thermal could meet up to 3.6% of the low temperature demand in the EU.

– ENDS –

**Note to editors:**

***European Solar Days – For a bright future***

The European Solar Days were 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 10 years, the initiative has drawn an increasing number of supporters: in 2011 more than 8,000 events were held across 19 EU countries, attracting the participation of half a million citizens. Organisers included various organisations working in the solar equipment manufacturing industry as well as local authorities or educational institutions.

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition of this Europe-wide campaign is organised by the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA) together with the European Solar Thermal Industry Federation (ESTIF) and a network of some 25 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.

EPIA – the European Photovoltaic Industry Association – represents members active along the whole solar PV 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 give its global membership a distinct and effective voice in the European market, especially in the EU.”

***For more information***

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