

EXPLAINER: WHAT IS SCHOOLS STRIKE FOR CLIMATE?

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

16-year-old Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg and Anuna De Wever, a Belgian climate student activist take part in a protest claiming for urgent measures to combat climate, in central Brussels, Belgium February 21, 2019. The placard reads: "School strike for climate" | Photo Credit: [Reuters](#)

The Schools Strike for Climate is a global, growing movement of students demanding more action from authorities regarding global warming and climate change. The movement began last year as a solo protest by a 15-year-old Swedish girl Greta Thunberg outside the Swedish Parliament building. It has since grown, and on March 15, thousands of students from across continents are expected to skip school and take part in protests. It is said to be the largest such protest.

Ninth-grade student Greta Thunberg, on August 20, 2018, decided to skip school that day and sat outside the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) with the sign *Skolstrejk för klimatet* (school strike for the climate). Spurred by the recent heatwave and wildfires in Sweden, Ms. Thunberg skipped school for the next three weeks and continued her protest outside Parliament, demanding that the Swedish government reduce carbon emissions per the Paris Agreement. On September 8, Ms. Thunberg decided to continue striking every Friday, leading to the hashtag #FridaysForFuture and #Climatestrike. She posted her protests on social media, which went viral and the movement spread as students started protesting outside their respective parliaments and town halls. In November 2018, Ms. Thunberg spoke at TEDxStockholm, the following month she addressed the United Nations Climate Change Conference. In January this year, she spoke at the World Economic Forum in Davos. On Thursday, she was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

The students reason that it is pointless to go to school and study for a future that may not even be there, given the worsening climate standards. The 2015 Paris Agreement's central aim was to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. But the fear is that even 2 degree Celsius can cause starvation, drought and fires.

Most strikers want their governments to aggressively cut their greenhouse gas emissions. Some youngsters are even demanding a lower voting age, so they can have a bigger say in political process. They want a safe future, powered by the wind and the sun, not dirty and dangerous coal and gas. For instance in Australia, students are urging politicians to move beyond fossil fuel projects, with the hashtag #StopAdani trending. The fear is that the coal mine project will damage water and the reefs.

The protests so far have largely been restricted to the European countries, with Germany, Belgium and Switzerland figuring prominently. Now, nearly 30 States in the USA alone are expected to participate. According to FridaysForFuture.org, 75 countries are set to take part.

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