



Radio 2

**m'illumino
di meno**

**16 FEBRUARY
Italian National Day
for Energy Saving
and Sustainable Lifestyles**

What is M'illumino di Meno?

M'illumino di Meno is a radio campaign designed to raise awareness about energy conservation and sustainable living. It was launched in 2005 by the Rai Radio2 program Caterpillar. The campaign began on February 16, 2005, the day the Kyoto Protocol came into force, when Caterpillar encouraged its listeners to symbolically turn off their lights and reflect on energy consumption together.

Over the past two decades, M'illumino di Meno has grown into a comprehensive initiative developed by Rai Radio2, centered around February 16. The campaign focuses on three key pillars:

- **Environmental Education** – Raising awareness of environmental issues by covering news on the climate crisis and sharing positive stories about the energy transition.
- **Community** – Providing a platform for listeners who have adopted sustainable practices and wish to share their experiences.
- **Participation** – Encouraging listeners to take action by participating in M'illumino di Meno, organizing energy-saving and sustainability initiatives on February 16.

The national success of the campaign led to the official recognition of February 16 as the "National Day for Energy Saving and Sustainable Lifestyles" (Law No. 34/2022).

The Impact on Society

The recent establishment of the National Day for Energy Saving and Sustainable Lifestyles has further strengthened M'illumino di Meno's two-decade-long journey. This awareness campaign has become an integral part of the lives of thousands of citizens who embrace its goals and, in turn, spread the message, multiplying its impact. The campaign's effect is particularly notable among children and young people in schools, with many joining M'illumino di Meno each year. Students not only gain environmental awareness, which will make them more informed and conscientious citizens, but they also act as ambassadors of this awareness within their families. Over the years, M'illumino di Meno has grown and continues to thrive thanks to the active participation of citizens.

Lights off: Leaning Tower of Pisa - Colosseum - Pirelli Tower in Milan



A Community Campaign

Every year, thousands of citizens engage in M'illumino di Meno, both publicly and privately. Participating in the campaign means taking action by organizing events, both large and small, to raise awareness about energy conservation and the transition to more sustainable lifestyles.

The first act of participation traditionally involves turning off lights. On the National Day for Energy Saving and Sustainable Lifestyles, municipalities across Italy — from provincial capitals to small towns — switch off lights in squares, streets, and monuments. From Venice, where the lights in Piazza San Marco are turned off, to Erice in Trapani, where the lights along the ancient walls are dimmed, these symbolic acts highlight the campaign's reach.

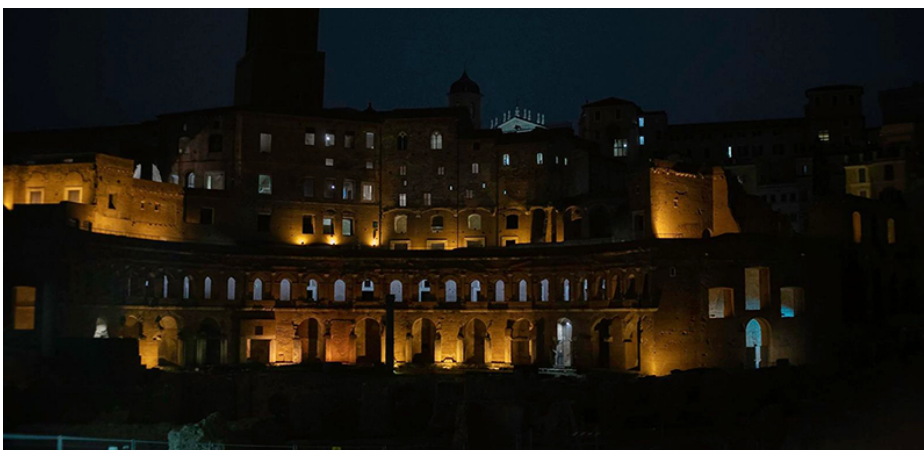
The campaign has a strong presence in schools at all levels. Every year, the Ministry of Education and Merit circulates an official notice to schools, informing them of the initiative and encouraging participation. In support of the campaign, schools organize various educational activities focused on energy conservation and sustainability. In 2022, in collaboration with the Carabinieri Biodiversity Group of the Italian Carabinieri, M'illumino di Meno planted trees in school gardens through the "A Tree for the Future" project. In 2023 and 2024, the Genoa Science Festival, in partnership with Rai Radio2, developed specific learning workshops for M'illumino di Meno, designed for different age groups, which were offered free of charge to teachers.

Universities also take part by organizing conferences, seminars, and scientific meetings, as well as recreational activities involving faculty and students. The RUS (Italian Network of Universities for Sustainable Development) is a key partner of M'illumino di Meno. Research and outreach institutions, such as planetariums, have also joined the effort. Since 2024, PLANit (Italian Planetarium Association) has aligned its National Day of Light Pollution, traditionally held in October, with the National Day for Energy Saving and Sustainable Lifestyles. Other institutions, including the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (which hosted a special Caterpillar episode for M'illumino di Meno's 20th anniversary), INAF (Italian National Institute for Astrophysics), INFN (Italian National Institute for Nuclear Physics), IIT (Italian Institute of Technology), and CNR ISP (Institute of Polar Sciences of the National Research Council), also support the campaign.

Numerous Third Sector organizations participate, including national groups like Intercultura, which promotes intercultural learning through student exchanges, FAI (the National Trust for Italy), the Italian Red Cross, and AGESCI (Association of Catholic Guides and Scouts of Italy). They organize events such as torchlight processions, bike rides, candlelit dinners, and zero-impact acoustic concerts.

M'illumino di Meno also engages businesses, from small family-owned companies to multinational corporations like Loacker and Leroy Merlin. Participation includes "Bike to Work" days, sustainability competitions among employees, and customer awareness campaigns.

Lights off: Trajan's Market in Rome - Mole Antonelliana in Turin



Results

Over the past twenty years, participation in M'illumino di Meno has steadily increased, peaking at 6,000 registrations via the online form. Engagement has grown so significantly that many initiatives are no longer formally tracked, demonstrating that the February 16 event has evolved into a widely recognized celebration of environmental respect and resource efficiency, extending well beyond the original Caterpillar audience.

The climax of this journey was the official recognition of February 16 as the "National Day for Energy Saving and Sustainable Lifestyles" by the Italian Parliament in 2022, supported by all political parties (Law No. 34/2022). In recognition of this institutional endorsement, on February 16, 2023, Caterpillar was broadcast live from the Quirinale Palace.

Since 2017, M'illumino di Meno has been awarded the Medal of the President of the Italian Republic. The campaign also enjoys the patronage of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Senate of the Republic, the Chamber of Deputies, and several ministries. As a show of support, Italy's highest institutions switch off the lights on the facades of their buildings, while the Ministry of Culture dims the lights in museums and archaeological parks, starting with the Colosseum.

M'illumino di Meno also enjoys the High Patronage of the European Parliament. In 2024, Caterpillar aired a special episode dedicated to M'illumino di Meno from the European Parliament in Brussels.

A Model in Italy and Beyond

In Italy, M'illumino di Meno stands as a unique example of a radio campaign that led to the creation of a National Day. It has become a model for other public environmental awareness campaigns, offering a key lesson: the defining feature of M'illumino di Meno is its ability to actively involve citizens, who in turn become creators of awareness events. Participants in M'illumino di Meno are not passive recipients of messages about environmental issues; they are active agents who (1) share their experiences of ecological transition with the program and the community of listeners, and (2) promote good environmental practices in their own public or private spheres. In this way, citizens become true agents of change.

Internationally, the M'illumino di Meno campaign was selected and presented as a case study by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) at the EBU Sustainability Summit, a conference on sustainability in public media, on April 16, 2024.

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Lights off: European Parliament in Brussels - Sanctuary of the Holy House of Loreto

