

DEF Bulletin

The Danube Environmental Forum Newsletter



2 / 2004



***Danube Art Master
Danube Day
News***

IMPRESSUM

DEF Bulletin is the official publication of DEF, Danube Environmental Forum



The bulletin assists the DEF to fulfil its mission: "To protect the Danube river with its tributaries, their biodiversity and resources, by enhancing co-operation among governments, NGO, local people and stakeholders towards the sustainable use of natural ecosystems".

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Cover photo: *The Winning piece of art from Czech Republic*

In this issue

Editorial	3
Danube Art Master 2004 A. Fekete	4
Construction of large dams in Bosnia and Herzegovina V. Bjelić	4
Illegal tree cutting threatens the Bulgarian capital's water supply system S. Boshnakova	5
Protest against the construction of Bystroye Channel in the Danube Delta in Moldova L. Curchi	6
Danube Day celebrations in Romania R. Feraldi & P. Moisi	6
Danube Day 2004 in Ukraine P. Hrytsyshyn	7
Carp Wins School Competition M. Husták	8
Belene nuclear power plant: Communism is Back in Bulgaria Fifteen Years After Its "Death" P. Kovatchev	9
Ljubljana moor (Ljubljansko barje)- the biggest wetland in Slovenia S. Osole	10
Celebration of Danube Day in Croatia I. Popović	11
Rafting on Mura? D. Reeder	11
Danube Day in the Czech Republic J. Ungerman & P. Pribyl	12
News	12
Big jump S. Scheuer	13
DEF National Focal Points and DEF speaker	13

Dear readers, friends and colleagues!

Danube Day 2004, which we celebrated for the first time this year, was a major success in most countries of the Danube River Basin. Thousands of people participated in the many activities that were organised at the local, national and international levels. Celebrations took place starting along the springs of the Danube River in Germany, continued along the main and smaller tributaries of the Danube River and came to an end at the Danube Delta located in Romania.

One aspect of the Danube Day celebrations was entirely devoted to schoolchildren; the "Danube Art Master 2004" competition. Thousands of children from all countries of the Danube River Basin contributed their many diverse sculptures and pictures. National winners have already been chosen and international Danube Art Master will be subsequently chosen in December. In my opinion, however, all participants of this competition are winners!

Those of us working with DEF are proud of the work we have done together and with those of you supporting and participation in our activities and events. We also look forward to seeing more participation from outside of our organization next year!

In this issue of the DEF Bulletin, you will find further reports on Danube Day and on the Danube Art Master competition. In addition to this, the Bulletin also includes interesting news from Viktor about hydroelectric power plants in Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Petko about nuclear power plants in Bulgaria. Both these articles are worth reading!

Yours,



Danube Art Master 2004

How can art and science be mixed? Well, one of the main activities of the Danube Day celebrations of June 29th, 2004 achieved just that. The "Danube Art Master" competition was an activity in which all countries, holding Danube Day celebrations, were involved. School groups or individual students participating in this competition were expected to use materials provided by the Danube River itself, to create innovative and artistic masterpieces. This competition not only encouraged children, and in some cases teachers, to look at nature from a new perspective, but it also increased their awareness of and appreciation for one of the most important water bodies in Europe.



Sculpture „Danube underwater man“. Primary School Davorina Jenka, Cerklje, Slovenia

dominated by both governmental and non-governmental bodies, thus strengthening cooperation and communication among them. DEF Hungary, for example, was able to forge a successful communication with the Hungarian Hydrological Society, something that will remain valuable in the future.

All national Art Masters have been invited to attend the Danube Countries' Ministerial Meeting, which will take place in Vienna on December 13th, 2004. All masterpieces created by these students will be displayed and admired by all governmental and non-governmental officials present at this meeting. This is an important step in the context of this competition to

give it an international flavour and therefore to symbolize the unity between all countries of the Danube River Basin. The presence of these masterpieces and their young creators will remind those present that the full beauty of our natural surroundings cannot be fully appreciated without acknowledging both its artistic qualities just as well as its scientific qualities.

This Danube Day activity was very successful and the schools and the children themselves expressed much enthusiasm with regards to their participation. The number of participants was impressive considering short notice given to them for the preparation and coordination of a field trip to the river, necessary for the creation of their artistic masterpiece. Romania received all together 245 pieces of art and all countries initiated valuable communication with different schools.

While the "Danube Art Master" competition will appear again for Danube Day 2005, there will be some minor adjustments made to improve this activity even more. Calls for art creations, and therefore promotion of the competition, are scheduled to appear in springtime in order to give, to all those interested in participating, adequate time to prepare. That means that competition will be even tougher this time around so get your creative capacities about you, or encourage others to do so, and head down to the river to enjoy its beauty and its complexity. You might just be the next "Danube Art Master".

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Construction of large dams in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In a very short period of time, the Government of the Republic of Srpska (RS) announced a decision on the conditions of concession for financing and planning, constructing, use and maintenance of hydroelectric power plants (HPP) on the River Vrbas, announced tender for the concessionaire, formed a working group, and

sent a draft of the contract for concession to the Committee for concession of RS. On the November 3rd, the Assembly approved the contract, completely neglecting public and NGOs disagreement.

The River Vrbas HPP project proposes the construction of two hydroelectric power plants - HPP Krupa na Vrbasu and HPP Banja Luka. This implies significant migrations and the relocation of a part of the road M-16. Since the riverbed will change and the water will overflow, great environmental impacts are to be expected. The microclimate conditions of the Banja Luka region will also be altered as a consequence of two artificial lakes, which will be formed. The river flow will be interrupted twice, which will influence flora and fauna of both water and land ecosystems. In addition to this, the level of water will decrease, causing significant negative impacts to the quality of water in protected water supply areas. The construction costs of the two HPPs on the River Vrbas are estimated to amount to 164.722.000 EUR.

According to the Framework Environmental Law, public participation in decision-making is obligatory. More than 250 000 people of Banja Luka, local communities, NGOs, associations and other stakeholders were not appropriately informed about the projects and their negative environmental impacts.

In October 2004, the Coalition for the protection of the River Vrbas was formed, gathering various experts, NGOs and public together. The Coalition recognized the importance of matters related to public participation in decision-making, and launched a campaign for increasing public awareness on the possible consequences of constructing large dams on the River Vrbas as well as the dam on the River Drina (HPP Buk Bijela). The main idea behind the campaign was to communicate that public voice has to be heard and that all economic potentials of the Vrbas River should be carefully and properly considered. Such potentials include tourism, energy, water supply, agriculture, sport, and biodiversity among others. The reason for which projects for constructing large dams on the River Vrbas date back 30 years, but still exist because there are no adequate development strategies in the energy sector. The Coalition collected 6500 signatures from citizens of Banja Luka against

the HPPs, but the Assembly of RS approved the project stating that the whole idea of a petition is amateur.

This is not the only government initiative for constructing large dams in Bosnia and Herzegovina that was supported by world's energy and construction lobbies. These lobby groups do not hesitate to destroy even protected areas such as the Canyon of the Tara River (UNESCO Heritage list). The HPP Buk Bijela project is even more controversial because of its transboundary character.

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Illegal tree cutting threatens the Bulgarian capital's water supply system

"The illegal tree cutting taking place in the vicinity of Samokov, a town close to the National Park Rila, seriously threatens the water supply system of the capital Sofia", says Vladimir Topchiisky, a member of the local NGO "Eco Rila". Ever since the local Roma population began the uncontrolled destruction of the beech and oak forests located near Iskar Dam 3 years ago, the entire region has been experiencing an extensive tree loss without precedent. According to Konstantin Dichev from the "Green Balkans Federation", the water supply and anti erosion functions of the forests surrounding the Dam have been weakened because of the clear cutting exercised by Roma people. The local NGOs set up a coalition for monitoring any violations made, and have since received reports stating that several forested areas near Iskar Dam had been clear-cut. All together, the land that has been clear-cut amounts to 6-7 acres.

The officers of the local National Forest Service, an establishment in charge of forest protection, are powerless, as the violators outnumber them greatly. Despite that since August 2004 the service has issued 700 bills of indictment and has confiscated various cutting tools and vehicles, the criminal acts persist. The local NGOs consider civil control and collaboration between the forest service and the police, the

only possible solutions to this problem. The impact that the clear cutting of these forests will have on the water quality is also an issue being considered by the Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water Sofia and the Regional Forest Service.

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Protest against the construction of Bystroye Channel in the Danube Delta in Moldova

On September 21st 2004, over 100 representatives of NGOs of the Republic of Moldova gathered at the office of the local Ukrainian Embassy in Chisinau, and protested against the construction of Bystroye Channel in the Danube Delta. During the 4 hours of manifestation, organized by the Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM), the Danube Environmental Forum's Moldova National Focal Point, created banner bearing some of the following slogans: "Bystroye Threaten Danube Delta", "Danube Delta - Paradise for Birds", "Danube Delta - UNESCO Patrimony". An hour after the protest began, representatives of the Ukrainian Embassy invited the protesters, Alecu Renita, president of the EMM, and Valentin Bobeica, vice-president of the EMM, to discuss the issues at hand.

Petro Cealii, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Ukraine informed citizens, taking part in the protest, that the Government of the Ukraine has employed experts from the Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine to refer to the construction of the Bystroye Channel and to assess its potential environmental consequences. Upon his return from the Embassy, Alecu Renita stated, "In his interventions, Ambassador Petro Cealii said that for Ukrainians, Chernobyl was a calamity and in its case wrong decisions have been taken. Switching from Chernobyl to the Danube Delta I hope that Mr. Ambassador, as a man shares our point of view, but as a representative of the Ukrainian Government has to agree with the so called necessity of constructing

Bystroye Channel"

According to Petro Cealii, the area where the Channel Bystroye is being constructed is very poorly developed from a social point of view; people are so poor that some of them eat pelicans (!) Therefore, this Channel should create a new infrastructure for them. In response to these claims, the President of the EMM declared, "Our arguments were that the local population can get much more money from the rural and ecological tourism practice. Danube Delta is the richest natural reserve of Europe. And if Ukraine would open doors for thousands of tourists from the West, they could earn more money than from the Channel. They estimate that the Channel will bring them only 2 million dollars per year"

The Ukrainian Embassy promised the protesters to send the Declaration of the Ecological Movement of Moldova to the Ukrainian authorities.

According to the ecologists present at the discussions held with the Ukrainian representatives, their Government still intends, at least at this moment, to continue the construction of the Channel in the Danube Delta. However, as the protesters mentioned, the solidarity of the ecologists of Moldova and of other European countries could influence some decision factors of the Ukraine. The Ecological Movement of Moldova will present the Ukrainian Embassy with copies of the name of those supporting this protest action to stop the Ukrainian Government's plans to construct a channel in the Danube Delta thereby preventing the destruction of this world patrimony protected by UNESCO

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Danube Day celebrations in Romania

On Tuesday morning, June 29th 2004, the Ecological Counselling Center Galati (ECCG) worked in tandem with the Ministry of Environment, the National Water Authority, the Galati Administration and the Prut River Basin Committee, in forming an opening seminar and press release for the first time celebrated



International Danube Day. The opening presentations put the Galati Danube Day celebrations in an international context and emphasized the importance of setting a good example for, and cooperating with, surrounding basin countries. Everyone gathered on the River walk below the main stage to witness the opening of Danube Day and awards being given out by the UNDP Ambassador of Bucharest, Soknan Han Jung. The ECCG and guests convened for the "International NGO Partnerships" seminar, which consisted of presentations, information pamphlets and books being given-out to the public.

The ECCG staff presented the works and awards to the winners of the "Danube Art Master" National School Competition, which were then displayed at the ECCG's information tent near the main stage. On this day, ECCG's Green School Pontoon provided children of all ages with a Danube River cruise and an Educational Adventure. Children were then invited to design 'Danube Day Celebration' drawings on the sidewalk and later the Children's Palace French Club and local schools performed a musical fanfare about the river and solutions to pollution.

The evening festivities and musical performances took place along the embankment and continued into the evening ending with a gorgeous fireworks display.

Thousands of citizens enjoyed the Danube Day Festivities organized at Galati, all generating the 'Danube Awareness' and 'Danube Identity' so sought after and wished for. We can only hope that the 2004 Danube Day event becomes tradition for the many generations to come. We all live downstream! The Danube River is our common asset! Let's protect it!

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Danube Day 2004 in Ukraine

Danube Day was a very active event in the Ukraine. Activities were organized in the two regions of the Ukraine connected to the Danube River: the Carpathian region and the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta.

In the Carpathian region, some of the Danube's river tributaries, such as the Tisa, the Syret and the Prut rivers can be found. NGOs in the Carpathian region, "Rutenia" (Uzhgorod, Agency of regional development (Rakhiv)), took an active part in the "Danube Art Master" School Competition. The event "From clean Tisa to clean Danube" was another event coordinated particularly in the Rakhiv region (Transcarpathians) in which the participants were schoolchildren and members of the scout organization "Plast". Over a period of two weeks, as well as part of this competition, they took trips along the Tisa riverbank and inflowing streams to collect any garbage they came across.

The School Competition "Danube Art Master" took place in 3 schools. A jury selected the best masterpieces, which then advanced to the All-Ukrainian competition.

The School Competition in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta was also well organized. In total, 347 schoolchildren took part in artistic workshops and competitions. In the Reniisk region the "Danube Art Master" competition took place in 14 educational institutions, from which 91 schoolchildren participated.

In the Kilian regional competition, 19 educational establishments were involved and all together, 60 pupils participated; 10 teams with 6 pupils each. In the Izmail regional "Danube Art Master" competition, on the other hand, 52 pupils from 16 educational institutions took part. In the town of Izmail, it was the Station of young naturalists who organized the competition, in which there were 12 educational centers, or 98 pupils, involved. The artistic works were created on the Danube riverbank and children also took part in the nature protection actions, clearing the riverbank from garbage, for example. Two teams, one that included students coming from different schools, and a team of young naturalists represented the educational centers of the town. The children of the Izmail School of Arts in particular prepared many paintings.

On June 22-23, the final stage of the competition "Danube Art Master" was organized in Izmail by the workers of the ecological-natural division, together with the workers of Izmail Station of young naturalist. Representatives of Izmail TV and journalists from the regional newspaper "Izmail reporter" ("Izmailski visnyk") were invited to attend. There were four winning teams; one from the Reniisk region and another from the Izmail region, a team from the town of Izmail itself and, finally, a team from the Izmail Station of young naturalists. These four teams, which in total amounted to 24 pupils, were able to participate in the final stage of the "Danube Art Master" competition.

As the jury was judging the final artistic masterpieces, the team of young naturalists of the ecological-natural division of the "Humanitarian Center of Out-of-School Education and Training", together with a volunteer of "Peace Corp (USA)", Davis Kenneth, organized some fun and educational games and competitions for the children. The winners of these games, as well as those giving correct answers while playing, were awarded small prizes. The prizes were awarded on the spot and therefore directly on the riverbank.

All the participants of the regional stage of the "Danube Art Master" competition, including the young naturalists of the Station of Young Naturalists in Izmail, schoolchildren of Izmail School of Arts and the schoolchildren of other educational establishments of Izmail, were able to admire the exhibit of the competition's best sculptures and paintings.

The participants of the regional competition enjoyed these creative activities and games and hope to celebrate the Danube Day again next year with their friends, schoolmates and colleagues in their villages, districts.



Information about the competition was published in the newspaper "Danube Dawn" (Dunaiska Zoria).

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Carp Wins School Competition

A group of nine pupils of the Stare Mesto primary school in the eastern part of the Czech Republic won the National Prize for the International "Danube Art Master Competition". The group used materials collected from the nearby Morava River to make a collage in the form and shape of a Carp, a well-known and common fish in this region. They later enjoyed, as part of the first prize, a boat trip along the Danube River through the Donau-Auen National Park between Bratislava and Vienna.



Creating a carp

Almost 300 pupils and students from the Danube catchment area in the eastern part of the Czech Republic took part in the school competition. Some activities, in which participants took part, consisted of clearing some sections of riverbanks from garbage, mostly plastic bottles, which turned out to be a very useful for creating various "water ghosts" and other imaginary creatures.

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Belene nuclear power plant: Communism is Back in Bulgaria Fifteen Years After Its "Death"

On November 11, 2004, the High Ecological Expert Council (HEEC) recommended that the Minister of Environment and Water (MoEW) provide his signature representing the environmental consent for the construction of the Belene Nuclear Power Plant (Belene NPP). HEEC is a special committee within the MoEW, which earlier that same day had approved the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on the Belene Project, a report that has described and deemed this project to be unfair, closed, non-transparent, to be tainted by scandals semi-truths and even pure lies, finally to be a source of pressure and manipulation exerted on members of the public in opposition to this project. Authorization of this document has been given even though it states that no specified reactor has been selected for the power plant. This means that, depending on political or economic circumstances, any reactor might be installed including those that are dangerous or that have never before been tested.

Officially closed in 1992, the Belene NPP project was newly dug out by the present government of Bulgaria in 2002, and used to counter the political forces that aroused "citizen's protests" against the closure of units 1-4 at the Kozloduy NPP. The project was immediately considered by the world nuclear industry to be potential evidence for the so-called "nuclear renaissance". The EIA's involvement in and investigation of the Belene project began in late 2003 and has been associated with scandals ever since the very beginning. The chosen company received about € 4 million for the EIA study and the feasibility study. Nevertheless, the quality of the EIA study is quite poor and the feasibility study is not even accessible to the public.

The main issues or questions that EIA does not answer or deal with or for which it provides misleading evidence in the report are as follows:

1. Environmental consequences of constructing the power plant: For example, the problems related to a temperature increase in the Belene channel and in the Danube River (cooling effect), the potential negative effects on the Persina Nature Park and

on the wetlands of the Persina Island, and finally, the release of radio nuclides (similar to those released by the Kozloduy NPP).

2. Health risks the power plant would pose to the human population both on a daily basis and also in the case of a serious accident (an over-projected accident). Since there is no reactor selected it is hard to make any preliminary predictions of possible accidents. Some of the reactors - such as VVER - 1000 or CANDU have well known deficiencies while others are new (and sometimes even with no prototype). In order to deal with a potential accident occurring in the nuclear power plant, there is no action plan for the people to follow (similar to Three Mile Island or to Chernobyl).
3. Seismic risk: The EIA undermines the seismic risks posed by the power plant Vrancea (Romania) and of some local earthquake centers.
4. Spent fuel and other radioactive waste management: In this regard, there is no long-term solution envisaged for Belene NPP. During the meeting of the HEEC, the leader of the EIA team said that this question represents a political issue and as a result, is not a subject of the EIA report.
5. Regional economical decline: It is very possible that the example presented by the Kozloduy region, a region where there is no diverse economy and the traditional agribusiness has been declining steadily for long time, could be repeated in the region of Nikopol-Belene-Svishtov.
6. National economic problems: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) already warned that issuing state guarantees for Belene NPP would be very dangerous for the macroeconomic stability of Bulgaria. Independent Bulgarian economists also questioned the various schemes that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Resources (MEER) suggests for the economical set up of the project, such as merging Kozloduy 5 and 6 with Belene 1 and 2.

There is even more evidence, though still "confidential", that Belene NPP would have several negative impacts on the surrounding region if it were indeed constructed. In 1998 the Todor

Jivkov's Council of Ministers issued a secret decision that declared the region of Nikopol-Belene-Svishtov a "zone with fading functions". Sixteen years later, the present government of Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotta still denies both opening this document and withdrawing it. This therefore means that the Government of Bulgaria is aware of the fact that the construction of Belene NPP will predestine the entire region to a slow death but at the same time, refuses tell the truth to the people. Did late 1989 happen in Bulgaria at all?

WISE/Greenpeace investigation into Belene EIA hearings conclude active manipulation, http://bluelink.net/belene/e_index.shtml section "News and links"

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Ljubljana moor (Ljubljansko barje)- the biggest wetland in Slovenia

In the past

The Ljubljana moor extends across an area of 160 km² and lies 287-290 m above sea level. It is covered with meadows, fields, shrubbery and human settlements. Among them run hedges and melioration canals.

The moor itself is a tectonic hollow between the Dinara mountains on the south and the Alps on the north. It has been sinking slowly, one mm per year for the last two million years. After the last ice age there was a lake in place of the moor that exists today. Archaeological finds have shown that people were living on the lake since the end of the Stone Age throughout the copper age when settlements ceased to exist.

The largest river on the moor is the Ljubljanica River, which passes through Ljubljana and has several larger and smaller tributaries as it passes through the moor. When the waters are high they start to overflow, but when they are low, Ljubljanica pours away most of the water into the Sava river.

Efforts to drain the moor and to prevent flooding date back to the year 1554. Therefore, over the course of the last almost 500 years, there

have been many attempts made and different theories developed related to the moor's water control. The most famous product in this domain was the Gruber trench (Gruberjev prekop), whose construction was completed in the year 1780. It did not succeed, however, in putting an end to flooding, just in reducing it a little.

Moor today

Today the best part of the moor is covered with meadows and cornfields, intertwined with hedges and a network of draining ditches. At first sight there are no wetlands to be seen. Only after abundant rain, do the waters flood the low lying parts of the moor, a sight reminiscent of the shallow lake that once existed but that is now long; transformed into a moor. There is very little peat left today, as it was exploited and used as fuel in the past.

The biggest asset of the moor today is the surrounding cultural landscape that is partly still traditional since past the water regime prevented the agriculture from being taken over completely. Extensive meadows have been preserved where marsh-marigolds *Caltha palustris*, ragged-robins *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, Cotton-gras *Eriophorum* spp., valerian *Valeriana* spp. and even orchids *Orchis* spp. and fritillaries *Fritillaria meleagris* still grow and bloom.

A census of bird species began in 1989. The analyses of data showed that there were 106 species of birds nesting on the moor and a further 100 species that visit during the winter or during their migration. Among these species is the Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata*, a species that has its only Slovene nesting site here, and the Corn crane *Crex crex*, which is a globally endangered species. Some other interesting species include the Common quail *Coturnix coturnix*, the Lapwing *Vanelus vanelus* and the Red-backed shrike *Lanius collurio*.

The Ljubljana moor occupies less than 1% of Slovenia, yet here 20 species of birds have more than 10% of their Slovene population, 10 species even have 25%. Therefore, the moor should be managed on principles of sustainability to protect these species or there will be damaged at the national level.

Communities that share the moor have decided to unify their forces in protection of the moor. In the year 1998, they issued a statement of intention to found the Ljubljansko barje regional

park. From these actions taken, new hope arose for this threatened landscape and its plants and animals.

Since Slovenia joined the EU, it has become significant that the EU legislature actively protects the waters and also the plant and animal species that live on the moor. (Water directive, bird directive, habitat directive) As a result of this, possibilities for financial support can be found in the Life program, and promotion of Natura 2000.

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Celebration of Danube Day in Croatia

On June 29th 2004, the 10th anniversary of the Danube Convention was celebrated in all countries of the Danube River Basin. This celebration is now known as Danube Day.

In Croatia, the Danube Day celebrations were held on Saturday, July 3rd in the village Zlatna Greda located in the Kopački rit Nature Park. The NGOs Zeleni Osijek and Zelena akcija organized events and activities related to Danube Day celebrations and 10 other NGOs, specializing in issues such as freshwater protection, also participated. In addition to this, many local government officials, state institution officials, local inhabitants and members of faculties and schools were also present to take part in Danube Day activities.

The pleasant atmosphere was flavoured with the sounds and smells of cooking such delicacies as fish soup and wild boar and even the buzzing of mosquitoes added a nice touch. Besides enjoying this ambience, however, Danube Day participants also had the opportunity to listen to many presentations being given about the Danube convention, the Danube Environmental Forum, the Danube River's environment state according to IAD, and about the Eco Center Zlatna Greda - center for education and protection of the Danube River. Subsequently, 3 Danube Art Masters were awarded fine prizes including a new PC for the first place winner, a digital camera for second place and a digital photo camera for third place. Other art works were presented at the on-site exhibit.



Celebration of Danube day in Croatia. Photo: Vjieran Gomzi

During the afternoon, most of the participants went for a boat tour on the Danube River while others went for a tour around the local village, Zlatna Greda, in a horse-drawn carriage. Meanwhile, a traditional dinner, consisting of local wine, goat's cheese, sausages and other specialities from Slavonja and Medjmurje was being prepared for the return of the participants.

In the light of a small bonfire that made especially to keep away the mosquitoes, a short presentation of traditional costumes and music was given by a lady bagpipe player (unique in this area). She played some traditional songs and explained different elements of the costume she was wearing. Some even tried to play the bagpipe but most attempts were unsuccessful. The festivities continued the whole night long with singing, dancing and more musical entertainment, in part provided by a local accordion player. Danube Day 2004 was a very special event and there is every intention to make this an annual celebration, in Zlatna Greda, in which all lovers of the Danube River and its natural surroundings can come together.

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Rafting on Mura?

I was really looking forward to the planned rafting trip on the Mura with our Slovenian colleagues, despite the recent heavy rains. But when I arrived on the riverbank and saw the swollen brown flood-

waters rushing past at a dizzying speed, it was clear that it was much too dangerous to attempt the trip. I was reminded once again that our lives and plans are subject to the mighty forces of nature - even those of us who work for the protection of nature sometimes forget that. Anyway, we made the best of the situation and held an NGO round table meeting on the banks of the Mura, on a river island at Ižakovci, commonly known as the Island of Love, as it has been identified as a focus of natural 'earth energy'. It was a very useful and productive meeting, bringing together many people actively engaged in nature protection in Slovenia and allowing them to exchange their views, ideas and experiences. As for myself, I enjoyed the meeting very much, but I'm still hoping for a rafting trip on the Mura some time!



Editorial remark: The rafting trip, planned for participants from Austria, Croatia and Slovenia, was cancelled in July due very high water levels but we have luck in September! Therefore, David and company, you are invited for a rafting trip in July 2005!

David Reeder

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Danube Day in the Czech Republic

The first Danube Day in the Czech Republic - June 29, 2004 - was devoted to the controversial issue of the Danube-Odra-Elbe (D-O-E) canal. As various waterway lobby groups and private companies that might possibly profit from the construction gained ground in recent years, the Union for the Morava River organised a public discussion at a place of a planned port on the canal in the south-eastern part of the Czech Republic on the border with Austria



Excursion to an area endangered by the D-O-E canal

and Slovakia. The public discussion had been preceded by an excursion to the area of the considered port, which has received a lot of media coverage. The participants of the discussion - local inhabitants, representatives of several NGOs, representatives of local authorities and various state institutions were presented with new documentation related to the D-O-E canal and the construction of the port. The discussion demonstrated that waterway lobbying is serious in its efforts to push forward this useless and unprofitable project - they even planned to start negotiations with Austria and Slovakia about the connection of the D-O-E canal to the Danube.

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NEWS

A new publication on experiences of communicating with the stakeholders of environmental initiatives to gain their acceptance and support

The Natura 2000 Network is a European network of sites designed to protect Europe's natural heritage and funded by the European

Commission's LIFE-Nature fund. A new LIFE Focus report published by European Commission, Environment DG, LIFE Unit, examines LIFE-Natures' wealth of experience of communicating with different stakeholder groups and the general public in order to gain acceptance and support for the Natura 2000 Network.

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/info-products/lifenaturepublications.htm>

Milan Vogrin

Big jump

*Dear Waterfriends,
Are you getting tired of official WFD documents?
Are you having trouble with translating the WFD
to the public?
Overall, are you having difficulties staying positive
and enthusiastic about the WFD?
Don't fear! Help is on the way!!*

The BIG JUMP is an inspiring project that holds clear and powerful link to "Making the WFD work". It captures the essence of the WFD in one single act: on one single day, at one specific time, people will jump into rivers all over Europe.

In a nutshell, BIG JUMP is a European river swimming day, where people reclaim their environment and demonstrate their wish to have clean and living rivers again.

The WFD is the legislative tool in a European effort to achieve a good status for all rivers and lakes in Europe. But a legislative tool alone is not enough to reach this goal. It is essential to gain people's support. If the WFD does not have broad public support all over Europe, it might never work! BIG JUMP is an ideal opportunity to get the public involved, to get public support for the WFD.

BIG JUMP is more than a daydream. Two years ago, a similar project was held for the Elbe River. The project gathered over 100.000 people on 55 different identified locations that were controlled and temporarily opened up to the public.

The idea for BIG JUMP comes from the European Rivers Network (ERN), which has taken on the role to be the general co-ordinator of this event. In line with WFD-planning, ERN wants to have a BIG JUMP in 2005, 2010 and 2015, to celebrate achievements and to encourage citizens and authorities to get involved.

The first BIG JUMP has been planned for July 17th 2005 at 14:00. But there is more to BIG JUMP than just jumping in rivers. The idea is to have many side-events including water quality monitoring campaigns, educational programmes, thematic exhibits to name a few.

ERN is calling for NGO support and NGO participation in the BIG JUMP event to help make it a success.

The EEB is already supporting the BIG JUMP and is planning to introduce the concept of this event to European Institutions in order to acquire their support as well.

For you the question is whether you would also like to support this fantastic project by becoming a regional co-ordinator in your country: Already, there are more than 20 regional co-ordinators all over Europe. For all contact-info and more information about BIG JUMP, please visit the website at .

Please also inform the EEB if you are joining the BIG JUMP.

Stefan Scheuer, EEB

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Dear contributors!

To make it easier for all of us (contributors, readers, editor) I shall provide short instructions for which I kindly ask you to follow when preparing a contribution for our bulletin.

In your article please report of your activities, events, actions (not describe your future plans) since these are much more interesting for readers than your future plans (which maybe you will not be able to fulfil). Do not forget to describe the activities, and where, when and who was involved in them.

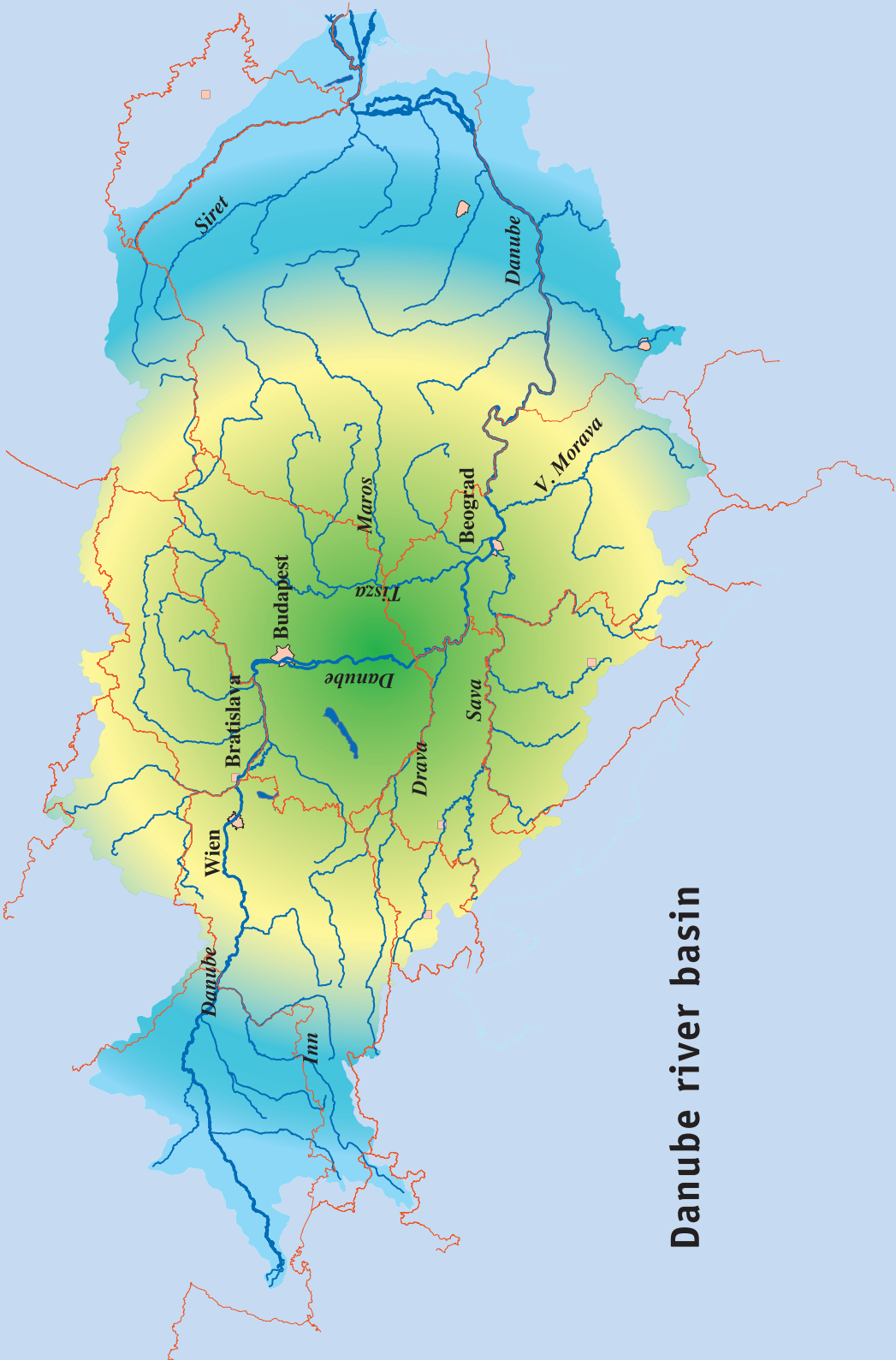
Try to find an attractive title of your article that will draw the readers' attention already on account of the title. Be short! Up to 200 or 300 words should be enough to tell the story. There are, of course, some exceptions possible but in this case please, consult the editor first. If you use any references in the text, please, add them the end of your article, since some of the readers may be interested for more data and further reading. Where useful and possible also web link is recommended.

When possible, add also pictures which are always more attractive to readers than just plain text. The pictures can be in electronic format (jpg.) or are normal pictures or slides.

Please add your name and address and where possible, also e-mail address.

Editor has the right to change the text (e.g. shortening) if this is considered necessary.

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Danube river basin