



BULGARIA: CONNECTING THE PEOPLE AND THEIR RIVER

A whole raft of exciting and varied events in Bulgaria brought connections between people, regions, traditions and cultures all along the Danube. This year's celebrations reached out especially to young people, with their input and involvement in serious political discussions as well as fun events and competitions guaranteed to inspire both young and old to celebrate and protect the river and its environment.

On June 29, the Danube River Basin Directorate - Pleven, together with Persina Nature Park, organised a round table discussion in Belene, which brought together local officials, institutions, school children and cultural clubs to discuss crucial environmental issues, problems, and solutions relating to water and the protection of the river and natural environment. There were also lots of fun activities, like painting the streets, various competitions, including an exciting bicycle race from Sharan to Hisarlaka, and finally a wonderful concert of Bulgarian folk songs and dances.

More international connections were fostered by a major conference on the Danube in Ruse, "Danube: a river's European mission", which brought together Bulgarian regional officials and representatives of international organisations and countries to discuss greater cooperation over Danube policies. The seven Regional Governors of the Bulgarian regions located along the Danube River signed an official declaration of cooperation, and the conference was also addressed by Michael Geier, German Ambassador to Sofia, and Michael Humphries, Head of the Representation of the European Commission to Bulgaria, as well as representatives of various international organisations concerned with the Danube. The conference was presided over by Mariya Dimova – Regional Governor of Ruse, who did much to promote Danube cooperation and connections.

Other Danube Day highlights:

- Vidin, in the northwest, held competitions and exhibitions of photography and paintings, river cleaning projects, street paintings and poster presentations, and environmental messages sent down the river in bottles and even on balloons!
- The experts from the Regional Water Bureau in Vratza organised events on the beach nearby including exhibitions of wonderful photos and paintings dedicated to the Danube River, and the sending of eco-messages in bottles.
- In Kozloduy, the local municipality together with Danube River Basin Directorate-Pleven organized and participated in fun sports and entertainment events, as well as important discussions dedicated to Danube river, with the highlight being a chance to sail on the river with the ship "Radezky".
- In Silistra there was an exciting rowing competition on the Danube for children and young people.

- In Svistov, children took part in a drawing competition on asphalt, while the Association "Zemia za vinagi" organized a bicycle race to the village of Vardim and a visit to Vardim island.
- In the municipality of Tutrakan a photo-competition and photo-exhibition on the topic "Celebration of Danube Day" caught the imagination of local children and adults alike with some inspiring images.
- In the village of Baikal representatives of Danube River Basin Directorate - Pleven, Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Water - Pleven and other institutions were invited to the local school to join in a highly educational discussion with the school children. A highlight of the event was the making and giving out of beautiful souvenirs made from different materials collected from Danube River.

All these many different events, together with the participation of many schools and young people in the Danube Art Master competition, have made Danube Day a huge success this year in Bulgaria, and ensured that more and more people, young and old, are thinking and acting for the Danube and its cultures.

"The power of the Danube is in our traditions"

The slogan for Danube Day events in Bulgaria

ORGANISERS AND PARTNERS

Danube River Basin Directorate - Pleven • Regional Water Bureaus of the Danube River Basin Directorate in Ruse, Sofia, Veliko Tarnovo, Vraza • Regional Administration Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Veliko Tarnovo, Silistra, Ruse • Representative of the European Union Commission to Sofia • German Embassy to Sofia • Working Community of the Danube Countries • International Committee for the Protection of the Danube River • Southeast European Cooperative Initiative • Ruse Municipal Council • Dunav Tours – Ruse/ Bulgaria • Bulmarket DM, Ruse • Port of Ruse • Mayor of village Baikal • Coca-Cola Bulgaria