



## Danube Day 2008 in Bulgaria

### **"One River - 14 Countries - One Common Goal"**

Bulgaria spread the Danube Day message far and wide: events were held in every Danube municipality and, for the first time, in Sofia. Activities emphasized the river's importance for every Bulgarian as well as for the national economy. Inspiring youngsters to consider the people and wildlife that depend on the Danube was also a central theme. With a Danube Day slogan of "One River - 14 Countries - One Common Goal," fun educational events highlighted the message that real solutions to the rivers' problems can only be found if all Danube nations work together. Action was also secured through meetings in Ruse, Vidin and Dolna Mitropolia.

Over a thousand people congregated in the Borissova Gardens of Sofia to toast the Danube for the first time. Visitors had a great time testing out their nautical skills with paddle-boat races on Lake Ariana and also had a go at catching their dinner in a fishing competition - experts were on-hand to explain how bountiful the waters used to be and could be again. The "Greet the Danube" exhibition also illustrated how the Danube environment has changed with photographs of river scenes today and in the past. Traditional Bulgarian dances, pipe players and the summer heat created a festival atmosphere that continued well into the night, with a concert and spectacular firework display.

The marrying of the sound of Danube waltzes with the sight of Danube yachts parading along the river provided a feast for the senses for over 200 people in Ruse. Starting with an open-air performance of Danube waltzes by the Ruse Mandolin Orchestra, spectators went on to board the "Rojen" to get a close-up of the yacht parade, where they were also given Danube presents. Ruse was also the location for an international symposium entitled "Potential for Alternative Tourism Development - Danube Regions' Competitive Advantage." The forum presented ideas and good practice in the context of Bulgaria and Europe, and also highlighted a range of EU funding opportunities.

The districts of Belene, Svistov, Lom, Kozloduy and Vidin also celebrated Danube Day. Vidin's events included: a joint meeting with Romanian officials on the sustainable use of the Danube; a "Danube Rhythms" folklore fair in the Danube Park; a river exhibition; clean-up and tree planting action and sports events. Kozloduy residents took to the water with a trip on-board the "Radezky" ship and a canoeing regatta and went on to enjoy a Danube feast featuring traditional delicacies. Discussions on Danube issues, an eco-procession by nature

conservation bodies, pupils and district representatives and an exhibition highlighted the serious message of Danube Day. Lom focussed on children with a carnival featuring youngsters dressed in 'Danube eco-clothes' (outfits recycled from materials collected by the river); an eco-competition - "Mermaid of the Danube" - and a "Calm Blue Danube" dance contest. The competitive spirit was celebrated in Belene with fishing, swimming, running, rowing and bicycle contests, pavement art and a beach clean-up. Svishtov, Silistra, Tutrakan, Nikopol, Oriahovo, Tzenovo, Dolna Mitropolia and Borovo paid tribute to the river with boating, art and sports competitions, exhibitions, eco-games, campaigns, excursions and conservation actions.

Danube Day also resulted in the creation of 240 works of art as part of the international schools competition, Danube Art Master. The national title went to Violeta Kolebanova, age 16, from Silistra Fine & Applied Arts Club. Many projects are on-going: the Danube Bicycle Tour, a travelling exhibition and regional meetings with food producers continued throughout 2008, led by an on-going cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Water, Danube Basin Directorate, local authorities, NGOs and Coca-Cola HBC-Bulgaria.

**"The Danube should no longer be just an alternative. The Danube has to become a priority for all of us."**

Maria Dimova, Regional Governor of Ruse.

### **Danube Day Partners**

Ministry of Environment and Water • Danube Region Basin Directorate of Pleven (DRBD) • DRBD Regional Water Offices in Sofia, Vidin, Veliko Tarnovo and Vraza • Local authorities including the Regional Administrations of Ruse, Vidin, Lom, Kozloduy, Silistra, Belene, Svishtov, Oriahovo and the Mayor of Baikal, Dolna Mitropolia • Centre for Environmental Information and Education (CEIE) - Danube Environmental Forum • Coca-Cola Hellenic Bulgaria • Consultative Council on Danube Issues • Working Community of the Danube Regions (Austria) • Danube International Tourist Commission (Austria) • Bulgarian State Agency for Tourism • Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation • World for All Association • WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme (Bulgaria office) • Bulgarian Environment Partnership Foundation • Ecobulpack company • Regional Inspectorates of the Ministry of Education • Euro-Region Danubius Association (Bulgaria/Romania) • Ruse Regional Historical Museum • Global Water Partnership • Local NGOs • Schools.

## **The Danube rivers: let's use them – not abuse them!**

For general information about the 14-country Danube Day celebrations, view [www.danubeday.org](http://www.danubeday.org) or email the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River: [jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org](mailto:jasmine.bachmann@unvienna.org).