



Danube Day 2009 in Slovakia

Bringing the Danube peoples together to plan a positive future

As this year's Presidents of the ICPDR, the Slovakian capital held both a public Danube Day celebration and also hosted the highlight of Danube Day 2009: the ICPDR Stakeholder Forum. Young people were the focus for two other initiatives: the Danube Challenge boat trip and the Green Bikes for Peace 5-country environmental cycling tour.

Bratislava celebrated Danube Day with an **official celebration and fun day** on the Danube Beach. Viliam Turský, Environment Minister, kicked off proceedings by leading a press conference, where journalists were informed about Danube Day and flood issues – particularly pertinent as parts of Slovakia were flooded at that time. Soon afterwards, school children began to gather on the Danube Beach for a day of competitions, quizzes, boat trips, sports and beach activities, as well as lectures on looking after water resources. A highlight of the day was a treasure hunt with a difference, where the children passed through checkpoints for each Danube country, learning from experts as they "travelled through the Basin". In the afternoon, Viliam Turský presented prizes to the most successful teams and crowned this year's young Slovakian Danube Art Master of 2009.

Across the Basin, Danube Day 2009 did more than ever before to engage the wide variety of people whose everyday actions affect the Danube rivers and the communities that rely on them. Only through joint understanding and mutual respect can a positive future be forged. A major contribution to this at a regional scale took place in Bratislava: the **ICPDR's second Stakeholder Forum**. Bringing together a wide range of key Danube people and organisations from across the agricultural, industrial, commercial and environmental sectors, current and future management of the Danube rivers was discussed. The focus for the event was the draft Danube River Basin District Management Plan, a landmark document and key requirement of the EU Water Framework Directive.

50 miles south-east of Bratislava, Danube Day was also celebrated by children from Komarno who enjoyed a great **trip to the Danube island of Velky Lel**, a NATURA 200 site, near Zlatná na Ostrove. Once there, they took part in environmental games and lectures. Prior to Danube Day, school children and business students had the chance to travel to Devin, west of Bratislava, on an Environment Ministry organised **boat trip**.

Young people looking for excitement took part in the **Danube Challenge** for Danube Day. Children from schools across Austria and Slovakia took part in a Danube adventure onboard the "Schrauberl Claudia" as it cruised down the Danube, joined by the 2000 Austrian Olympic champion, Christoph Sieber. Selected from thousands of entries, two teams from Slovakia joined youngsters from across Austria. During the trip from Linz to Bratislava, the young sailors competed in a series of aquatic challenges including one task which tested everyone to their limits: pulling the ship over the Austrian-Slovak border using just ropes and teamwork.

Young people saluted the Danube with pedal power in the **Green Bikes for Peace** extravaganza, which arrived in Bratislava on July 8th. The 30-day, 5-country, Italy to Hungary cycling extravaganza organised by the Hungarian Cyclists' Club (MK - Magyar Kerékpárosklub) drew attention to sustainability issues.

In another special event, the sound of ship horns once again reverberated across the Danube Basin at 14:00 on Danube Day, as Danube workers paid a very special tribute to their river. The **Greet the Danube horn blast**, organised by Global Water Partnership, saw ships along the Danube from Germany to Ukraine simultaneously sound their horns in a salute to the rivers.

"The Danube is a symbol of European integration. It connects inhabitants of neighbouring countries and, at the same time, is one of main pillars forming cultural, social, economic and business relations".

Viliam Turský, Slovakian Minister of the Environment.

Danube Day Partners

Ministry of Environment; JD Production Agency Ltd; Ministry of Education; Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute; Slovak Water Management Enterprise; ICPDR; Coca-Cola Slovakia; Global Water Partnership (GWP); Bratislava City Zoo; Bratislava Regional Protection Association; Dunajske Luhy Protected Landscape Area Administration; SITA Press Agency; Radio Slovakia; TA3 TV; Magazine for XXI Century; Extraplus; Slovenka; web portals and other media.

Shared Waters – Joint Responsibilities

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