



# The European Water Tower

## Youth Parliament for Water: Source to Delta

5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2003

- I. RELEARNING WATER: Youth Parliaments for Water
- II. The objectives of the Youth Parliament for Water „ Source to Delta “
- III. “What steps would you take in changing the management of your river if you were elected as a parliamentarian?”
  1. The unfolding of the week.
  2. Activities of the week.
    - The workshops
    - Conferences and visits
    - Convivial moments
    - The plenary sessions
- IV. Preparing the young parliamentarians
- V. Expected results
- VI. Follow-up
- VII. Who can participate?
- IX. Funding
- IX. Contact
- X. Current partners

## RELEARNING WATER: Youth Parliaments for Water

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The Youth Parliaments for Water were initiated by Solidarity Water Europe together with its partners in 1999 at Espalion, on the occasion of the first Youth Parliament for Water. Since then, this initiative has given rise to Parliaments being organised on a local, regional and hydrographical basin levels.

The European parliaments for water are part of a democratic process geared at involving the youth in managing their environment, and water in particular. The purpose of these parliaments is to create commitment among citizens, pass resolutions and come up with local initiatives.

The Youth Parliament for Water „Source to Delta “ will bring together in Switzerland, 80 youth and adult participants hailing from the Rhone, Rhine, Danube and Po basins.

### The objectives of the Youth Parliament for Water „ Source to Delta “

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- To awake the youth consciousness as regards their role as citizens and users of water, by involving them in a democratic venture
- To link the youth with international solidarities
- To discover and understand the upstream/downstream interdependencies within a hydrographical basin
- To mobilise the youth in restoring the appropriateness of the river through their involvement and participation in local activities such as swimming, maintaining the water quality, cleaning the river banks etc.

“What steps would you take in changing the management of your river if you were elected as a parliamentarian?”

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## 1. The unfolding of the week.

### 1<sup>st</sup> stage

Mr. Pascal Couchepin, president of the Swiss confederation will preside over the official opening ceremony and launching of the parliamentary week in Bern.

This will be an occasion to formalise the status of the young parliamentarians (debates with adult politicians) and to give practical information regarding the unfolding of the week's events.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> stage

For two and a half days, the youth will be grouped according to hydrographical basins in different Swiss cantons, and basing on the real situation in their localities, they will present problems and solutions regarding their rivers and/or streams (the water quality , river development, cross-boarder management, and water use; for agriculture, industry, navigation, power, etc.)

### 3<sup>rd</sup> stage

The participants will afterwards meet under the Grisons canton in order to:

- Share the result of their deliberations.
- Debate and pass action commitments within the framework of the parliamentary session.

(Provisional programme)

Day	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Venue
Sunday 5 October	Arrival of the delegation		Intercultural evening	Berne
Monday 6 October	<p><b>Opening ceremony</b></p> <p>Meeting and debates with the young and adult parliamentarians.</p> <p>Swearing-in the young parliamentarians.</p>	Transfer of the delegations to each canton	<b>Conference</b> on the hydrographical basin : Pô, Danube, Rhine, Rhône	Berne (opening ceremony)
Tuesday 7 October	<b>Workshop</b> presentation of local experience on water management	<b>Visit</b>	<b>Conférence</b>	Cantons
Wednesday 8 October	<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Workshop</b>	Documentary movie	Grisons (Samedan et Disentis)
Thursday 9 October	<b>Workshop</b> Elaboration of recommendations and river initiatives	Transfer of the delegations in the canton of Grison	<b>Conférence</b>	Valais (to be confirmed) Tessin (Bellinzona)
Friday 10 October	<b>Plenary session :</b> sharing the workshop results	<b>Visit</b>	Local show	Grisons (Samedan)
Saturday 11 October	<b>Plenary session</b> Rehearsal for the Parliament	Parliamentary session	Closing show	Grisons (Samedan)
Sunday 12 October	Departure of the delegations			

## 2. Activities of the week.

The programme was established to involve the young people in a democratic process of local water management, initiating new local projects and enhancing knowledge on the theme of water, and the meeting of other cultures.

### The workshops

During the parliamentary week, each young Member of Parliament will present to the work commission, a testimony of their daily experience on the water theme. All the experiences put together will form the basis for debate, as well as the sharing of ideas and local skills, so that each and every one grasps the sense of belonging to a common hydrographical basin and a necessity for a putting in place a downstream/ upstream solidarity.

These workshops will be run by educators and experts from the private and public sectors, and from associations. Professionals in water issues will be present to answer questions and to awaken the young people's curiosity. An educator will lead the debate and ensure that the speeches are compatible with the young peoples understanding.

### Conferences and visit

Cultural and technical visits as well as conferences and debates led by experts will help enhance knowledge in water and the environmental issues.

### Convivial moments

One of the objectives of this gathering is to encourage conviviality. On top of the numerous informal occasions for making acquaintances during the debates and workshops, a special programme for meeting and exchange has been put in place:

An intercultural show has been organised to take place at the beginning of the week. This will be an opportunity for each delegation to present their culinary specialities, dances, songs and traditional handicrafts from their respective countries. This occasion will enable the participants to experience the cultural diversity along the rivers and across Europe, and meet other cultures in a festive atmosphere.

### The plenary sessions

At the close of the week the participants will meet several times as group in order to:

- Elect their representatives: the young people will adopt a democratic process for electing their co president
- Share and debate the results of the workshops carried out at the beginning of the week.
- Come up with ideas regarding partnerships for setting up solidarity projects in Eastern Europe.

The parliamentary session is the climax of the entire week of activities. The young people from each workshop will form commissions and present the results of their discussions following the format they will have chosen and debates will ensue.

The young people will deliberate, pass citizen commitments, adopt resolutions and define actions for the future of water and solidarity within the different hydrographical basins of Europe.

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## Preparing the young parliamentarians

Accompanied by adults, the young people will be the main actors in the parliament "From the source to Delta". They have to prepare their journey, their participation, and their intervention during the debates and workshops.

Each delegation will therefore have to:

- Organise their trip (Visas: some delegations will have to start the process as early as possible)
- Prepare an evocation of their country (culinary speciality, dances, songs, costumes, handicrafts etc.) for the intercultural show which will be an occasion for discovering each other's culture.
- Prepare a testimony daily experiences ( photos, an account) on the theme of water.
- Be equipped with general knowledge pertaining to the water, rivers, Europe and parliaments.
- Make an inventory of the old and new swimming areas around their homes in order to work around the theme of water and swimming (action by European Rivers Network) (\*)
- To take water samples in order to assess the quality of their water at a local level (\*)

(\*) NB: A detailed form on the preparations will be issued early August

## Expected results

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- Commitment and recommendations regarding water in Europe
- Local projects
- Strengthening the youth network, organisations and adults involved in the water management
- New partnerships across Europe.

## Follow-up

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On returning home each young person, will be a representative of the Youth Parliament for Water. As an ambassador he will have the responsibility of:

- Informing his school, association, friends, family, etc, on the results of the parliament and his personal commitment
- To come up with an initiative on a local level that is in line with the commitments taken
- To present the parliamentary results to the local/regional and national authorities, and to sensitise them on the concern and demands of the young people.

Solidarity Water Europe together with the youth parliament representatives will present the results of this meeting to the European and international authorities in view of promoting the participation of the youth in the environmental and water policies in Europe.

Solidarity Water Europe will set up a discussion forum such that each person can inform the other parliamentarians about their follow-up action, the unfolding of their projects etc.

Solidarity Water Europe will follow up projects discussed in the parliament: assistance and advice for the projects, local visits, support for realisation of the initiatives etc.

## Who can participate?

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- The youth hailing from the Rhine, Rhone, Po and Danube basins, who are either members of a school, an association or family, aged between 14 and 18 years in delegations of 2 to 4 youths accompanied by one adult. Ideally, each river will be represented by a delegation from each of these areas: the source, the stream, the lakes and the delta.
- The adults will be professionals from the private or public sectors, or associations having a stake in water issues.

## Funding

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The organisers will meet the expenses for accommodation, meals, and activities on the premises. The transport costs to and from Bern however, will be met by the delegations themselves.

In case you are interested, please contact:

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## Current partners

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www.wasser2003.ch



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