

Pressrelease
European Rivers Network (ERN)
17 July 2004
also available in french and german



BIG JUMP 2005 started !

European people swimm for better rivers !

In one year, on July 17th 2005, at 2 PM, more than 100 000 European people will simultaneously jump in their rivers to demonstrate their wish to have their rivers living and clean again ! Europe will swim for better rivers !

To announce this big event, numerous actions have already taken place this weeks in different European countries.

European Rivers Network, the french-based organization who is launching the BIG JUMP project is asking citizens, towns and NGOs to participate in the 2005 BIG JUMP to celebrate our recovering rivers with the biggest river celebration ever organized!

To swim in our rivers ? Yes it is possible, and it is more and more true every day. This is not usual, but we can announce a positive environmental news: years of investment, development of wastewater treatment plants, efforts of the industry, growing consciousness of people and politicians begin to have an effect. In many rivers, water quality is improving and is reaching the European standard for swimming. It is not true everywhere and all the time but things are getting better!

It is now high time to put all our rivers and lakes in a good stat : we owe this to future generations, for a sustainable water management and the conservation of aquatic ecosystems.

This is duty is even written in the European Water Directive that demands that all surface waters should be in a good ecological state by 2015 ! It is because of this that ERN is asking for BIG JUMPS in 2005, 2010 and 2015 to celebrate achievements, encourage citizens and authorities and to finally give hope to our youth.

The BIG JUMP project is not only these events but includes water quality monitoring campaigns, pedagogical programmes, thematic exhibitions as well as regional swimming days. These actions will take place between each BIG JUMPS.

The big return of Man to River is beginning; the recovering and re-appropriation of this extraordinary environment are taking place, bit by bit, everywhere in Europe.

People can now swim in the Isar in Munich, right in the centre of Zurich, in the Spree and the Havel in Berlin, in the Rhine in Basel ...

Two years ago, on August 14th 2002, ERN initiated the First International Swimming Day in the Elbe River *) . It gathered more than 100 000 people along the river, from the spring in the Czech Republic to the estuary in Hamburg. 55 swimming spots had been identified, controlled and temporarily opened to the public. 13 years ago, when the two Germanies were reunified, the Elbe river was the most polluted river in Europe. Today salmon and ... Man are back. What has been made possible for the Elbe river is possible everywhere.

To announce the first BIG JUMP in 2005, ERN initiated numerous actions everywhere in Europe during summer 2004. The main events are:

- This week-end, Austrian NGOs have organized the first austriawide swimming day in the Danube river and its tributaries.
- Sunday 18th of July, the town of Karlsruhe organizes the first swimming day in the Rhine river. Thousands of people are expected !
- On July 14th, 60 young people from 10 different European countries and the french national Handball Team have announced the BIG JUMP by swimming in the cleaned Lot river in Southern France
- Last week-end, 15 regional swimming days took place along the Elbe river in spite of a very cold weather !
- On the Ebro river in Spain, 400 people and 230 canoes have brought the message from village to village.
- In August, other "pre-swimming days" are announced on the Loire, Garonne, Drava and Vistula rivers.

A website is already available in three languages: www.bigjump.org . You will find news as well as general information on the BIG JUMP project.

From September on, you will find information on the procedure to participate in the BIG JUMP as well as comparisons of the water quality of the different rivers

*) initiated by ERN Founder Roberto Epple and organised by Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH) and Gruner+Jahr

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- **local contacts** : see www.bigjump.org chapter „ Events “ **Photos and Videos** on demande