



Marche Européenne de la Jeunesse pour l'Eau Blue Pilgrims

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From July the 12th until July the 19th, 70 youngsters from 13 different countries meet for the « Blue Pilgrims » project to celebrate five years of Youth Congresses for Water. This event is organised in Espalion, France, where the first congress took place in 1999. The purpose was to launch the water parliament process, which resulted in the Declaration of Espalion. The second congress was held in Barcs, Hungary in 2001. In this congress, the theme was the role of rivers in cross border regions and five young people were elected as Youth Water Representatives (YWRs). The third congress – SPLASH! – took place in Geel, Belgium in 2003 and included 29 countries and 400 students. Mainly they worked on *the right to water*. Six new YWRs were elected. During the plenary session, held in the European Parliament in Brussels, the youngsters defended their motions on Water as a Human Right and Consumption. Those were fully accepted by the Members of the European Parliament.

After SPLASH!, the youngsters expressed their need for future co-operation and idea exchange, which gave birth to the Youth Water Network (YWN). Besides the elected YWRs, the network consists of a group of Youth Water Delegates. The mission statement of the YWN is "to increase youth participation in order to achieve sustainable water management through the processes of democracy, education and solidarity".

Following in the footsteps of the pilgrims on the ancient pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella, as 'Blue Pilgrims', we will symbolically build the dream of a new Europe on one of the most significant meeting points of medieval Europe, and continue the tradition of exchanging knowledge and experience. In the concept of "one day walking, one day talking", the youngsters will attend workshops to improve their skills to work on water issues. Specialists like Professor Riccardo Petrella, David Reeder, Roberto Epple and Christian Bernad are invited to learn the youngsters more about water management, water quality and environmental policy making.

Besides the theoretical lectures, the youngsters get the chance to learn some practical skills. The goal is to provide the participants with some knowledge and tools to spread and to raise awareness in their own countries.

In addition to the above, a lot of attention is paid to enforce and enlarge the YWN with new delegates. This is done by exchanging ideas and experiences in between the youngsters.

While walking on the road to Santiago de Compostella, the youngsters have the opportunity to learn about each other's cultures in a relaxing atmosphere. The campaign « Big Jump » is a peaceful demonstration that expresses the demand for cleaner rivers and takes place from 2005 till 2015. In the Blue Pilgrims project it is brought into attention by a "Big Jump". The Greek delegation symbolically gave the Olympic Flame to Jackson Richardson, captain of the French handball team, who will carry the French flag at the olympic games in Greece. Jackson Richardson called up for the Big Jump. All youngsters jumped symbolically in the river Lot after his sign.

The fourth Youth Congress for Water will be organised in Levoca (Slovakia) in July 2005. The topic of this congress will be the impact of human activities on the natural cycle of water, or shortly *the right of water*.

For more information, for example about participants from your own country, please contact us:

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