

European Youth Water Summit 2010

Decision makers of today meet decision makers of tomorrow

The first European Youth Water Summit took place in the European Parliament in Brussels (Belgium), 16-18 March 2010, giving the floor to young citizens from 16 European countries to discuss European water challenges, their visions and ideas for sustainable water management in Europe and their experiences gained in this field.

The European Youth Water Summit, a three days conference, included 43 youngsters into debates and discussions on current water needs and priorities at international and local levels, enabling an active exchange with European decision makers. The City of Brussels welcomed the participants, aged between 15 and 25, in the heart of Brussels: the magnificent City Hall on the famous Grand Place. The following two days, the youngsters met Members and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament (among others Ms. Isabelle Durant and Mr. Rainer Wieland) to gain a better understanding of the role and functioning of EU Institutions and the daily life of European representatives. Additionally, they discussed the main pillars and the functioning of the European Water Policy as well as available funding instruments for water projects with representatives of the European Commission.

Simulating the debates and decision making process of the European Parliament young Europeans worked out practical ideas on actions needed to realize the aims of the Water Vision for Europe.¹ This European Youth Water Declaration² provides concrete policy recommendations, enhancing active youth participation in the European decision making process and improving youth education on water and water-related issues.

The declaration writing process was accompanied by artistic workshops. In small groups, the participants produced collective works: a photo book with tips to save water, a drop of water with messages on what the youngsters want and what they will do to support sustainable water use and a poem on wasting of water induced by flushes. Presentations of artistic photographs and a musical performance dealing with the world water crises enriched the artistic part of the European Youth Water Summit.

Two elected European Youth Water Ambassadors, Mr. Bart Devos and Mr. Mathijs Mul, represented the European Youth during the Aquawareness Policy Forum 2010 "Water 2030-who cares?" in Brussels, 22nd of March 2010. As panelists, both presented the main Summit outcomes and the European Youth Water Declaration to the audience, emphasizing the need for youth involvement in European water issues.

The European Youth Water Summit was enabled by the Coca Cola Foundation. It was organised by the European Water Partnership in cooperation with Solidarity Water Europe. Other supporters and sponsors included the City of Brussels, Green, MEP Dr. Seeber, the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Partners for Water, Partenariat Agence de l'Eau, STIB and the Finish Water Association.

¹The Water Vision for Europe was initiated by the European Water Partnership in 2008 through a multi-stakeholder approach. The Vision contains clear objectives and commitments and serves as guidance towards sustainable water management. To read more about the Water Vision for Europe, please visit: <http://www.ewp.eu/vision>.

²Please follow the link to read the European Youth Water Declaration: <http://www.ewp.eu/events/eyws/declaration>.