



Press release by ERN, EEB, July 9, 2010

Jump into Europe's waters and call for better implementation of EU water policy

(Brussels, Belgium - 9 July 2010) – This Sunday at 3 pm (15h) GMT+2, hours before the kick off for the World Cup final, thousands of people across Europe will take part in a simultaneous "Big Jump" at selected points into rivers, lakes and the sea to claim the right of all European citizens to have access to clean waters, living rivers and lakes. The event, organised by the European Rivers Network (ERN) and supported by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and WWF, marks the 10th anniversary of the EU's Water Framework Directive. With the adoption of the Water Framework Directive in 2000 EU countries committed themselves to achieving the goal of a healthy aquatic environment by 2015. 10 years later, this goal seems as far away as ever.

The second Europe-wide "Big Jump" takes place during the International Year of Biodiversity in which Europe had committed itself to halt the loss of biodiversity but has failed to come even close to this objective. A striking example of this is the worrying state of many rivers and lakes which, despite some improvements, are under continued pressure due to pollution and over-abstraction by industries.

"The role of citizens and citizens' groups is crucial if we are to get all of Europe's rivers and lakes clean again. The Big Jump is a huge, wet wake up call that people from all across Europe want all rivers and lakes back in a good ecological state; as time has come to adopt an ultimate rescue plan", says Roberto Eppe, Big Jump Initiator from the European Rivers Network (ERN).

A report published a few days before the "Big Jump" by environment group EEB, reveals that European governments are doing very little to protect and restore Europe's waters [2]. The report, "10 years of Water Framework Directive: a toothless tiger?", provides an insight into the low level of ambition countries have for implementing plans to improve the state of rivers and lakes. Based on eight river management plans around Europe, it was discovered that despite eight years of preparation and planning there appears to be little improvement forecast in the coming years. The findings revealed River Basin Management Plans - national plans for protecting and improving water - are showing little or minimal success.

Indeed, many of the plans delay any improvements until 2027, suggesting a widespread abuse of the exemptions the law provides. *"This is unacceptable given how important water is to our livelihood and how we're still polluting it",* said Pieter de Pous, Senior Water Policy Officer.

"Europe's rivers, lakes and wetlands provide us with services that have social and economic value, and should be preserved for future generations. These include natural flood control and water purification as well as groundwater recharge. With timely and efficient implementation of the Water Framework Directive, Europe will be able to keep on benefiting from such services, save money, create new jobs and grow in a sustainable manner.

This second "Big Jump" includes 250 official and up to 400 private actions at more than 40 rivers in over 20 countries from Finland to Croatia, from Portugal to Poland. All events are managed by over 350 regional partners and coordinated by ERN. For information on your nearest "Big Jump" see: www.bigjump.org.

You can join the NGOs' call for more action to protect Europe's water by signing the petition at: <http://www.eeb.org/> under 'take action'.

For further information:

- **Website:** www.bigjump.org (English, French German)
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- [Notes to editors \(next page\)](#)

Notes to editors:

- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) entered into force in 2000 and aims to protect all European waters (inland surface waters, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater). Under the Directive, Member States committed themselves to prevent further deterioration and to enhance and restore the status of its waters. The purpose is to achieve “good status” by 2015.
- For the first time an EU Directive has addressed not only the chemical aspects of water protection but also its ecological aspects, such as flow regime, composition and abundance of aquatic organisms, etc. This means, for example, that the WFD will help rivers to function like rivers, instead of being mere transport canals, as they have become in many parts of Europe. The Directive thus promotes integrated river basin management – considering the balanced use of all waters draining into a single point from the hills to the sea - as the most efficient way to achieve sustainable water use. This, in turn, requires coordinated planning for using land and water resources within the entire river basin covering all surfaces, coastal and ground waters as well as land-use activities.
- Socio-economic benefits from Water Framework Directive implementation include: protection of human health through better quality of drinking and bathing waters; lower costs for water uses by reducing treatment and remediation costs (e.g. drinking water supply); mitigation of impacts from climate change and ensuring security of water supplies; sustainable flood risk management; promotion of new sustainable jobs (e.g. in ecotourism, fisheries and nature conservation sector); and improvement of the quality of life by increasing the recreational value of surface waters (e.g. for water-sports).
- Link to the EEB report ‘10 years of Water Framework Directive: a toothless tiger?:
<http://www.eeb.org/?LinkServID=B1E256EB-DBC1-AA1C-DBA46F91C9118E7D&showMeta=0>
- An overview of the state of implementation is provided by a Commission implementation report and can be found at:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/implrep2007/index_en.htm#first