



# BIG JUMP CHALLENGE 2015 - small acts of concrete solidarity in times of European crisis

16. 10. 2015



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# 1. SOLIDARITY, or borrowing water from future generations

On the Monday morning of 13 July, 2015, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Holland left Brussels after a record 26-hour EU-summit. The agreement prepared the way for a third bailout of Greece, which would keep the country in the Eurozone but meant that Tsipras had to concede further austerity measures, contrary to what he had promised the Greek citizens in the last election. Accordingly, the atmosphere at the summit was tense. There was talk of Tsipras being subjected to “mental waterboarding” in closed-door meetings, and the Financial Times called the agreement the “most

intrusive economic supervision program ever mounted in the EU.”<sup>1</sup>

Europe is in a political crisis, and the signs of this were clear that same Monday morning when a public bus of young river ambassadors arrived in the centre of political Brussels. Or rather, arrived late. Due to police roadblocks, it was not possible to get there directly. The bus had to take a detour and the river ambassadors arrived an hour later.

They were travelling to the European Parliament following a trans-European water conservation campaign, the Big Jump Challenge (BJC). The youth campaign brought together young water conservation activists who shared their experiences of local river action and, on this basis, prepared a youth manifesto for water protection to present at the European Parliament.

This 2015 is the goal year of the European Water Framework Directive (EWFD), the big European effort for water conservation. The EWFD goals will not be achieved by 2015, especially when Europe is in crisis. Yet, as Jean Monnet put it, “Europe will be forged in crisis.” In light of all this, what are the demands of the young river ambassadors for water conservation in Europe? And what can the theme of water teach us about innovative action in Europe more generally?



On the way to the European Rivers Parliament in Brussels.  
© Big Jump Challenge

# YOUTH MANIFESTO FOR WATER PROTECTION 2015

*Brussels, July 13th 2015*

We the youth, care about the planet; and as water is the most important compound on our planet, it is significant to us. Our planets' well-being depends on our actions and because water is an essential part of all life, we have to take responsibility for its future. Our freedom from seeing boundaries and limits allows us to solve problems and make new developments with creative and innovative approaches. We present to you with these words our commitment to the task.

## **Water protection in 2015:**

- The Water Framework Directive states that water is not a commercial product like any other but rather a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such.
- The Water Framework Directive (WFD) will not be implemented by 2015, its original goal year
- The implementation of the Directive has therefore become an intergenerational task which requires the inclusion of younger generations who will inherit this responsibility to carry the WFD forward.
- Youth and future generations are not specifically considered in the directive.

Thus, our role as youth needs to be considered with regards to water management. This manifesto collects our experience and the local water issues we see as urgent for the sustainable management of water (section 1) and specifically proposes ways to better include youth as a party to which water as a heritage has to be passed on (section 2). Both sections reflect on how we could borrow water from future generations.

## Section 1 - Sustainable management of water

### Ecology

1. Water is a heritage for all living beings. The preservation of remaining wild rivers and no go areas.
2. Laws against pollution have to be better enforced (with effective penalties). This requires putting in place the necessary staff and infrastructure.
3. A healthy river for humans and other living beings needs space, and thus where possible the removal of dikes and dams is necessary as well as allowances made for adequate floodplains and flood forests.
4. Entire ecosystems, and the embedded economy, depend on a healthy flow of water therefore it is crucial that minimum environmental flow standards should be established and enforced along with the provision and protection of routes for spawning fish.

### Social

5. Water must be available for everyone. This requires a public, non-commercial provision of drinking water and sanitation as a human right.
6. Cultural and recreational spaces of living with rivers (such as swimming possibilities in rivers, including in cities) need to be preserved or created to promote a change in attitude in the general public with respect to garbage and other ways of polluting rivers.
7. Information about water must be available to the general public in a language that avoids manipulation and is easily understood by all, youth included.

### Economics

8. Agricultural policy should promote the respect water needs in river ecosystems (for example via buffer zones and reduced use of fertilizers) and provide incentives not to pollute water.
9. Hydropower should be considered as an energy source with very high environmental impact that should be removed or avoided where alternatives are available.
10. Providing space for healthy rivers and environmentally sound infrastructure should be used to create jobs for the local population.



## Section 2 - Youth and water heritage

Drawing from our experience with local water action, we have identified ways to foster space for youth in water protection with regard to education, communication, water management and finance. This space is better fostered via voluntary options rather than obligatory measures.

### Education

1. Learning how to borrow water from future generations starts with education from an early age up to University.
2. Education should essentially include learning from volunteers, including young activists who share their experiences and act as role models with practical solutions.
3. Education should include civic engagement around the organization of local actions (such as river clean-ups) as well as information on how to claim one's rights or advocate for those of others.

### Information and communication

4. Information should be actively brought to us. It should be written in a language that is clear and understandable, provide relevant information early on and draw on communication technologies we use.
5. We recommend the use of social media, partly of our own production and in a way that communicates objectively. It should be inspiring and provides space for interaction as well as inform early on about decisions in process. For this, youth ambassadors should be present in relevant working groups at the European level with the important role of ensuring that information is communicated to youth across Europe and beyond.
6. A European TV and radio channel with a youth environmental section where we ask the questions and propose the topics could also play a role in communication.

### Water Management

7. There is a need for additional bottom-up approaches that provide a space for youth' ideas to be listened to and taken seriously.
8. A starting point would be youth river parliaments – that so far only exist in some river basins (such as The Scheldt) – where youth can discuss water management in their river basins and develop ideas.
9. These parliaments should be linked to the development and implementation of the water management plans.
10. A natural extension would be a European youth river parliament based on participants from the river basin youth parliaments, and again linked to relevant decision processes at the European Parliament and European Commission.

### Financial support

The above ideas and recommendations need to receive adequate financial support. Small and nonbureaucratic grants are particularly important for making local and concrete actions possible.

**We do not inherit water from our ancestors;  
we borrow water from future generations.**

*The Participants of the Big Jump Challenge – Youth Campaign for Water Protection*

## 2. AIM AND FOCUS OF THE REPORT

This report seeks to document the Big Jump Challenge, and asks what it can teach us about social innovation for a more sustainable Europe. Reflecting on the current European crisis, the report focuses on *solidarity*, specifically on what Jean Monnet called the *method of concrete solidarity*. As we will see for this sustainability challenge, the existence of a youth public sphere is very important, as well as how the participants perceive Europe and how they interact across Europe (and beyond).

The report focuses on the Big Jump Challenge campaign, which officially started with the Day of

Water on 22 March 2015, and lasted up to 12 and 13 July 2015, with the European Big Jump and the European Rivers Parliament, respectively. The report was prepared by members of the social-ecological research group GETIDOS, which together with the European Rivers Network, the European Environmental Bureau, Good Planet Belgium and further national partners organized the Big Jump Challenge in 2015.

This report is written in the context of the EU-Project CrESSI, which studies the economic underpinnings of social innovation in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

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## 3. LOOKING BACK: the method of concrete solidarity

In response to World War II and the most severe European crisis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jean Monnet developed what he called the “method of concrete solidarity” and directly put it into practice. He thereby became one of the architects of post-WWII Europe.

Roughly put, the method of concrete solidarity seeks to bring people together and get them to see their common interest, particularly their common interest beyond national perspectives.<sup>3</sup> This works especially well, Monnet proposed, if people are united in the face of societal challenges. As he put it: “L’europe se fera dans la crise.” People should not just exchange views; they should work together on concrete projects that offer options of something to be done with a view to the common interest. Furthermore, Monnet focused on elites; in practice, he brought together leaders after WWII, from national parties

and trade unions for example, to work together on concrete projects such as the European Coal and Steel Community. Monnet conjectured that such practical, in this case economic cooperation would create the “solidarity of fact” that eventually leads to political union and a stable peace.

Monnet was very successful with his method in the post-WWII period. However, the focus on ever-greater economic union created its own problems. A European Coal Union has a different sound today and the issues of economic growth and unsustainability, and with it social and ecological questions, are not sufficiently dealt with in the present European Union (EU). To the contrary, part of the European crisis is due to a weak common will to deal with economic inequality across the EU, to deal with refugees in a fair way etc. It is time to rethink and rediscover the method of concrete solidarity.





Bottles with River Water from Participants' Countries.  
© Justus Lodemann

## The Big Jump Challenge: Small Acts of concrete Solidarity?

The Big Jump Challenge is the European-wide youth campaign for water conservation. Its focal point is the Big Jump – an annual event initiated and organized by the European Rivers Network (ERN).<sup>4</sup> On the same day and at the same time, European citizens jump into their rivers and lakes to express their concern for their rivers and lakes, and to rediscover bonds: “[The] Big Jump aims at reconciling people with their rivers. This project will induce the citizens to reconquer their rivers and lakes and will revive the powerful links that used to bind people to these spaces. Reconciliation is an essential element to gain people’s support to the big European restoration effort for rivers and wetlands, this huge project being expressed in the Water Framework Directive of the European Community.”<sup>5</sup>

The European Water Framework Directive (EWFD) aims to achieve the good ecological status of European rivers and lakes by 2015. This goal will not be achieved. More than 50% of rivers and lakes are still far away from this goal. This huge project is a multi-generational project that will require the active participation of several generations of Europeans.

Accordingly, the idea of the BJC is to provide a space specifically for youth groups to learn about water conservation in Europe, to organize their own actions and to develop partnerships with other youth groups.<sup>6</sup> It is the daughter-project of the Big Jump. With a view to the official goal year of the EWFD, a network of national partners was established in 2014 to invite youth groups from all over Europe to participate in the BJC 2015. The groups could register themselves online, receive modules via an online “river action toolbox,” collaborate with other youth groups and prepare for the 2015 Big Jump. Especially active groups could join for a week of discussion and learning in Brussels, which culminated in a European Rivers Parliament on 13 July 2015.



*The Big Jump is a project of the European Rivers Network.*

The BJC seeks to foster a shared, post-nationalistic perspective via its focus on water conservation across Europe. With a view to a central sustainability challenge – the sustainable use of freshwaters in Europe – it offers concrete action possibilities to do something together as part of a network of young Europeans.<sup>7</sup> The goal is not to create a new, big European project; rather, the goal is to advance together good projects that are already there but that have not been sufficiently implemented so far, such as the EWFD. The BJC rediscovers and adapts parts of the methods of concrete solidarity: while it shares the focus on a joint problem, there is no focus on elites or central organizations; while it shares the focus on concrete actions, there is no goal to create “grand European projects.” The goal



The Big Jump Challenge 2015.  
© Big Jump Challenge

instead is to create attention and contribute to a European public sphere for the implementation of existing projects.<sup>8</sup> To mark this adaptation, we speak here of a method of *small acts of concrete solidarity*.

How was this method used in the design of the BJC? First of all, participants were invited to take a European perspective on a shared challenge via online modules on EU water policy (Module: “Water Policy in Europe”), water solidarity and ethics (Module: “Water Ethics”), and to learn about social-ecological systems that the EWFD seeks to restore and protect (Module “Social ecological systems”). Second, participants were invited to do something around a shared challenge together with other Europeans:

- to jump together as part of the European Big Jump event; and in preparation for this as well as accompanying this,
- to have a partner team from another country,
- to write letters to one’s own water authority or that of the partner as well as to participate in a trans-European campaign *Save the Blue Heart of Europe* (Module: Writing Cross-Country Authority Letters),
- to participate in a creative dialogue such as the exchange of river art (Module Creative Intercultural Dialogue),

- to organize and participate in stakeholder workshops – first locally (Module: Non-violent communication and stakeholder dialogue) and then in Brussels (European Rivers Parliament), and
- to launch practical actions such as river clean ups (Module: Practical Water Protection)

In this way, the Big Jump Challenge seeks to create space for nature conservation action as a trans-European experience of small acts of concrete solidarity. It seeks to create a thematic trans-European public sphere via the campaign and its open-access homepage as well as associated social media (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter) and via the organization of a European Rivers Parliament. These are the aims of the BJC and now we can look at the results.



Pre-Jump on 22.3.2015 (Day of Water), Austria.  
© Valentin Lechner



## RIVER ACTION TOOLBOX

The River Action Toolbox will help you  
to find the answers  
and put your ideas into action.

A green square with the word 'go!' in white, bold, lowercase letters.

### GETTING STARTED

You want to be part of  
the Big Jump Challenge?  
Find some advice for the  
first steps...



### WATER POLICY IN EUROPE

You already know what  
WFD stand for? Learn  
some more details ...



### WATER ETHICS AND WATER SOLIDARITY

You want to help your  
partners? Find some  
good idea, how ...



### WRITING CROSS-COUNTRY AUTHORITY LETTERS

You want to help your  
partners? Find some  
good idea, how ...



### FRESHWATER ECOSYSTEMS AND SOCIAL ECOLOGY

Have you heard of  
meanders, meadows  
and biodiversity before?  
Become an expert ...



### CREATIVE INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

You want to bridge  
language barriers  
between you and your  
partner team? Find some  
ideas ...



### PRACTICAL WATER PROTECTION

You want to improve  
the status of your  
river? There is always  
something you can do ...



### NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION AND STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

You've always wanted to  
meet with a politician or a  
river activist?  
Prepare for it ...



### VISIONING AND SYMBOLIC ACTION

You've always wanted to  
change the world?  
Ok, let's start ...



### BIG JUMP ORGANIZATION AND PR

You have already ideas  
for your Partner Jump?  
So it's time to get the  
event started ...



### SOCIAL INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION

You want to become a  
social innovator?  
So you should know the  
basics ...



## 4. RESULTS

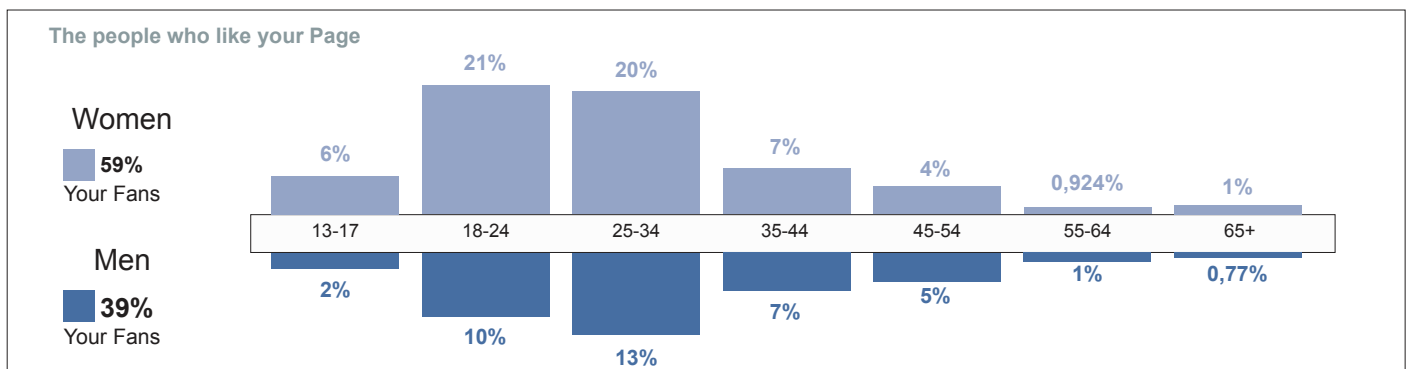
Three sources are used for this section:

1. An online survey in English, German and Georgian was sent to registered teams prior to the Big Jump in June (n=69, of which 51 would later join for Brussels), and then again after the Big Jump and the Brussels week in September (n=43, of which 37 had participated in Brussels),
2. Participant observation from Brussels and local big jumps,
3. Data from homepage use and the BJC Facebook.<sup>9</sup>

In total 128 teams registered from 27 countries, of which 22 were EU countries. Groups came from the following countries: Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Most

participants came from Central or Eastern Europe. The country with the most groups was Georgia (36 registered teams). No teams registered from the Scandinavian countries Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark. As this list also shows, groups beyond EU boundaries were allowed to participate if they wanted to. This resulted in notable Big Jump contributions from Georgia, Israel, Palestine and Jordan, as well as river art sent as a contribution to the BJC from Russian schools.<sup>10</sup>

The BJC Facebook page reached fans from 33 countries, with most fans coming from Germany and Georgia – but this time also some fans from Sweden and Finland. Of these, 59% were female and 64% were between 18 and 34 years of age. According to the participants, the best way to get informed about the BJC is Facebook (26%), followed by the homepage (24%) and email communication (21%).



Big Jump Challenge Fans on Facebook.  
© Big Jump Challenge

Not all teams who registered actively participated. Those that did get active reported the following activities:

- Preparatory actions such as water sampling and river quality analysis.
- Awareness and education sessions in schools and universities, including essay and poster competitions.
- Practical actions such as river clean up actions: one group even participated in

poacher enforcement where anglers illegally hunted fish; yet another group engaged in a river revitalization project (the creation of a public park).

- Various activities to bring the issues to the attention of citizens, the media and politicians: demonstrations, film clips in relation to water conservation, giving interviews on TV, and interviewing stakeholders.
- Art was also an important vehicle in the form



of song writing, river art such as paintings of one's river, as well as the creative preparation of one's Big Jump with banners and costumes (such as traditional clothing from the past).

Big Jump team partnerships were established between the following groups: 1) Jump Armenia (Armenia) & Super Salmons (Latvia), 2) Jean Zay à l'eau (France) & Regenbogen Jumper (Germany), 3) Lycée Fustel de Coulanges (France) & Georg Jumps (Germany), 4) Morgentau Litauen (Lithuania) & Let's Jump Together (Germany), 5) Jumping Beavers (Latvia) & H2O (Georgia), 6) Eco-Peace (Palestine) & Eco-Peace (Israel) & Eco-Peace (Jordan), 7) Creative Champions (Georgia) & Aizeko (Latvia), 8) Dobrieskow Jump Team (Poland) & Water Drops (Latvia), and 9) ESWF (Latvia) & Fultmngzd (Latvia).



Jordan River Big Jump 2015 Video.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yd4UPbVdOA>

The Morgentau Litauen team wrote: “we... shared all the experiences by writing letters to each other (for e.g. we do some module from the Big Jump website and write about our difficulties or the opposite - fun time we spend with our team, then our partner team does the same); we have been in touch for all the time of this project.”

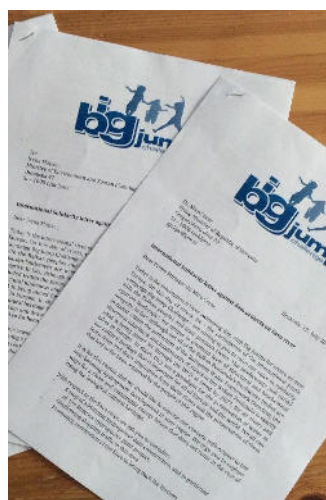
As these numbers show, however, many teams established no partnerships (128 teams, 7 partnerships). As a result, the Brussels week acquired special importance for bringing participants from different teams together and for exchanging experiences beyond the homepage and social media.



River Art Posters.

© Mircea National Romanian scouts from Ramnicu Valcea

A related result obtains for letter writing, be it to one's own authority or to that of a partner team or an especially endangered river elsewhere. According to our participant survey in June, around 32% of participants sent a letter to their own authority or that of their partner team; only 5% sent a letter in support of the Save the Blue Heart of Europe Campaign. Again, the Brussels week proved important. Following a presentation on the Save the Blue Heart of Europe Campaign by Slovenian BJC participant Neža Posnjak in Brussels, joint letters were sent to the Slovenian and Albanian governments. The first response arrived on 21 August 2015, from the Slovenian Ministry of Infrastructure. BJC coordinator Léa Bigot took it to the Balkan Rivers Conference in October to discuss a response with Neža Posnjak and her colleagues from the Balkan countries.



Big Jump Letters in support of Save the Blue Heart & Reponse of the Ministry of Infrastructure, Government of Slovenia. | © Big Jump Challenge

## More about the BJC participants

The age and gender distribution of our participants of our first online survey roughly correspond to the distribution of Facebook users: about 55 % of participants were between 18 and 34 years old, about 85% between 13 and 34; about 65% of survey participants were female<sup>11</sup>. As far as their more general political and economic self-assessment is concerned, the survey asked for their individual risk assessment of them falling into poverty, about 28% agreed that there is such a risk, 26.3% neither agreed nor disagreed and 42.1% disagreed; this compares to 32%, 23% and 42%, respectively, in the last Eurobarometer asking the same question to European citizens in general.<sup>12</sup> To the question “does your voice count in the EU?,” 45% said yes, 46% disagreed; this compares to 42% and 52%, respectively, in the Eurobarometer. To the question “does your voice count in your own country?,” 58% agreed, 35% disagreed; this compares to 55% and 42%, respectively, in the Eurobarometer.

The BJC participants took a green & solidarity perspective as a priority for the EU: Responding to the question whether the main objective of the EU should be a) sustainability, b) peace and solidarity or c) economic development and growth, 45% opted for sustainability, 40% for peace and solidarity, and 12% for economic development (the rest did not respond to the question). A pro-green attitude was confirmed by 54% of participants, stating that they were already active in water and nature protection prior to the BJC; 36% found their way to these themes via the BJC (the remaining 10% said that they did not know or did not respond to the question).

In addition, the participants tended to take a pro-European perspective. This attitude is indicated by their response to the question what kind of image the EU conjures up for them: For 64% of BJC participants, the image was positive, for 28%

it was neutral and for 3% it was negative; this compares to 35%, 38% and 25%, respectively, in the Eurobarometer. Complementing this positive perception of Europe, 87% “totally agreed” that the BJC should take place not just in their own country but in all European countries as a joint action (7% “tended to agree,” and no one disagreed). In response to the statement that rivers and water protection are a topic that can bring the people of Europe together, 77% agreed, 15% neither agreed nor disagreed and 3% disagreed.

About half of the survey participants said that the authorities did not provide them with water protection information appropriate for them; a further 30% said that the information provided was only “a little bit” appropriate (12% found the information appropriate). A majority (65%) said that the authorities did not invite young people to participate in discussion, 19% said that they did so “a little bit” and 7% felt invited by the authorities. Likewise, 61% said that the authorities did not provide practical ways to get active for water protection, 23% said that they did so a “little bit,” and 9% felt that they were provided with practical ways of getting active.



Brussels Big Jump Challenge Participants.  
© Justus Lodemann

## Brussels week

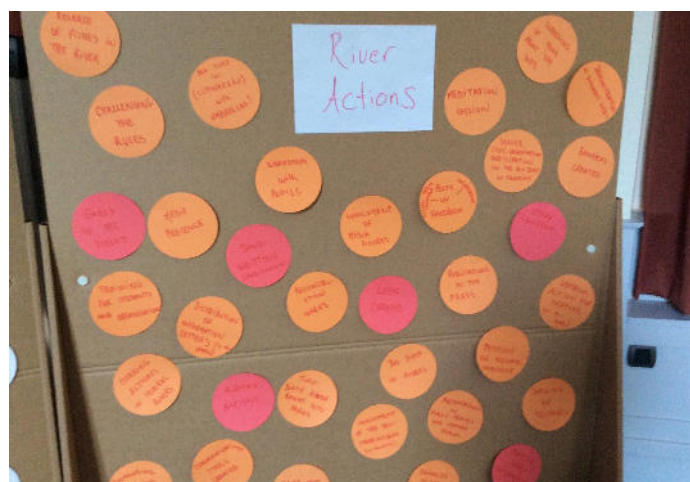
Over 68 river ambassadors and BJC coordinators from 16 countries participated in the Brussels week from 8-14 July 2015. During the week, participants presented their local river actions



and listened to lectures about environmental activism at the European level, the Scheldt Youth River Parliament as well as the Save the Blue Heart of Europe Campaign. On 12 July (the Big Jump Day), all participants joined a Belgium Big Jump Team for the Big Jump in Oostende.

In addition, the Brussel participants formed three BJC groups during the week:

- 1) The Expo-group created an open-air expo for a Brussels park and for the Oostende Big Jump. It included a photo exhibition from Big Jumps, collected from the teams over the course of the campaign. A survey engaged passing pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition, pedestrians were invited to leave messages and wishes for the rivers written on paper fish, which were directly put on display. A symbolic Big-Jump “blue dive” experience was staged as a physical invitation to join the jump. The river ambassadors tested the riparian area located next to the site of the expo for water quality and the results were directly displayed as part of the exhibition.
- 2) The Manifesto-group gathered all the experiences from local BJC teams along with the results of the first survey. On this basis, they drafted the Youth Manifesto for Water Protection 2015.



River Action.  
© Big Jump Challenge

- 3) The Theatre group reflected on the local experience of local BJC teams so as to

prepare an opening performance for the European Rivers Parliament. This resulted in a Theatre parcours to get parliamentarians and EC-water experts into the topic of water. For this, there were the following different stations:

- a) A person drowns in a dirty river and has to be saved
- b) A person talks to carton politicians, trying to get them to listen
- c) A lottery where you can win water: water rich or water poor as a matter of luck
- d) A water quality measurement machine
- e) Clean-up actions that have to be repeated time and again as garbage is thrown back onto the ground.

Active participation was required in each station of the parcours. The performance culminated in a choir shouting “listen to us!” After a silent break, three river ambassadors from Austria, Georgia and Slovenia read the Youth Manifesto for Water Protection, which was followed by a discussion. The event was hosted by MEP Bas van Eickhout, moderated by Pieter de Pous (Environmental European Bureau) and was attended by, amongst others, delegates from the DG Environment (Water Framework Directive, Bathing Directive) as well as from European environmental NGOs, including Roberto Epple, the director of the European Rivers Network.



Brussels Big Jump Challenge Participants.  
© Justus Lodemann

## Brussels week participants and impact of the Brussels week

This section is based on the comparison of arithmetic means and pooled standard deviation that is used for groups of different sizes ( i.e. here the difference between survey participants who went to Brussels and those who did not) so as to measure differences in correlation and effect (“Cohen’s d”). When we speak of small, medium or large difference this corresponds to “Cohen’s d” effect size where 0,2- 0,3 is a “small effect”, around 0,5 a “medium effect” and larger than 0,8 a “large effect.”<sup>13</sup>

While the BJC participants already tend to have a positive image of the EU, the Brussels participants tend to be more pro-European (Q1, medium difference: +0,61, for this and the following questions see Figure 1). They also tend to be more self-confident (Q2, medium difference, 0,51); this difference is supported by their estimate that their voices count more in the EU (Q4, small difference: 0,21). Non-participants put a greater emphasis on local level water protection, the groups are similar for the national and European level, but the Brussels group is more cosmopolitan in the sense that it gives greater weight to the global level (Q5, medium difference: 0,66).

Figure 1: Results from the Survey	Q1: In general, does the EU conjure up for you a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image?	Q2: Do you feel confident to get active for society and for nature?	Q3 Does your voice count in your country?	Q4 Does your voice count in the EU?	Q5 On which level should we work on water protection issues? Local watershed/region	Nation state	Europe	Worldwide	Q6 I am interested in news and reports on water protection.
Has the Brussels week had an effect on participants?	5-scale: Very positive(5)...very negative(1)	4-scale: Yes very much so(4)...No not at all(1)	4-scale: Totally agree(4)...Totally disagree(1)	4-scale: Totally agree(4)...Totally disagree(1)	5-scale: totally agree(5)...totally disagree(1)	5-scale: totally agree(5)...totally disagree(1)	5-scale: totally agree(5)...totally disagree(1)	5-scale: totally agree(5)...totally disagree(1)	2-scale: Yes(2)//No(1). Don't know option
Standard deviation	0,61	0,50	0,68	0,81	0,55	0,64	0,59	0,61	0,19
Participants BEFORE (N=51)	3,86	3,69	2,65	2,4	4,74	4,6	4,7	4,78	1,93
Participants AFTER (N=37)	3,89	3,59	2,7	2,59	4,81	4,58	4,63	4,62	2
Effect size	0,05	-0,18	0,08	0,23	0,12	-0,03	-0,13	-0,26	0,35
Is there a difference between participants and non-participants (first survey)									
Standard deviation	0,69	0,49	0,68	0,77	0,54	0,63	0,59	0,61	0,25
Non-Participants (N=16)	3,44	3,44	2,50	2,31	4,93	4,60	4,70	4,78	1,93
Participants (N=51)	3,86	3,69	2,65	2,40	4,74	4,60	4,63	4,62	2,00
Effect size	0,61	0,51	0,21	0,12	-0,35	0,00	-0,13	-0,26	0,35

Figure 1: Results from the Survey.  
© Big Jump Challenge

As far as the effect of the week in Brussels had on participants, the general image of the EU remained stable (no measurable difference for Q1). The importance accorded to dealing with water protection issues on a global level declined (Q5, small difference: -0,26), whereas there was no measurable impact on the importance accorded to the European, national and local levels.

Following the Brussels week, there was a positive, small effect on participants thinking that their voice counts in the EU (Q4, small difference: +0,23; see Figure 2, next page); there was no such effect on voice at home and on self-confidence. There was a small effect on participants reporting interest in news and reports on water protection (Q6, small difference: +0,35).

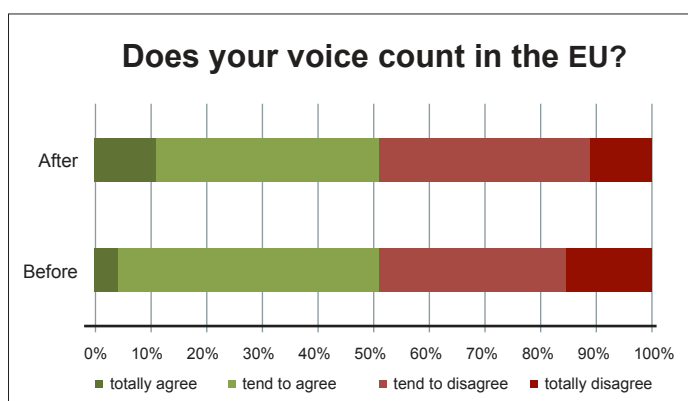
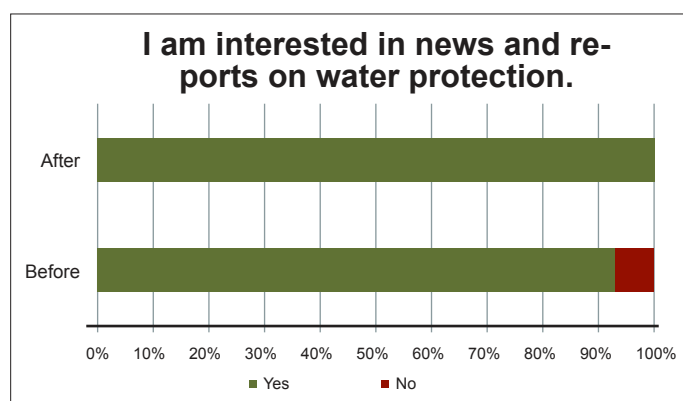


Figure 2: Effects of the Brussels Week.  
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## 5. DISCUSSION

The results show that via the Big Jump Challenge, it was possible to create a thematic, public sphere reaching out to young people across Europe, chiefly via social media and the homepage. It was also possible to activate young people from a large number of European countries - though with much more success in Eastern and Central Europe than in Scandinavia and Western Europe.

Prior to the Brussels week, the participants of the BJC already had a positive image of the EU, especially if compared with the European population more generally. The idea that rivers and water protection brings people together, and that actions such as the BJC should take place at the European and not just national or local levels met with high approval rates. So why do participants think that the BJC should take place at the European level?

Here are responses based on comments written in the open comment section of the first survey in response to the question if and why the BJC should take place on the European level. A first reason is *environmental*. "Rivers must be clean everywhere as they have no borders and flow through many territories." In addition to this trans-boundary quality of rivers, one participant added the *economic* point that resource management requires cooperation among all countries. A third

set of reasons with many comments concerns *politics and youth*. Participants commented on the beneficial effects of information exchange about problems and ways of dealing with them between youth of different countries. "By working together we can achieve much more and we can help each other;" also simply because "it is nice to think that other people from other places do something similar at the same time." A European-level campaign helps to "inform people that they have the power to influence decision makers," and the BJC especially creates a "public awareness image for water protection in new ways, which collects positive experiences." Participants stress the benefit of increased impact via a European-level campaign: "The more people/countries strive to improve the environmental state of rivers, the more people will be interested into the goal of the 'protagonists' and will increase the interest of media for this topic - raising the topics on the political agenda." Also, it improves a sense that there are many countries in the EU and that "the situation in each country is different." Another participant stressed increased power through unity in difference: "This project gains more power when more people are involved in it, it generates more discussions and allows for many different points of view." In the light, of the perceived lack of appropriate information

from authorities reported above, as well as the perceived lack of invitations to discuss and join for concrete actions, this indicates much further potential on the EU and national levels for youth information and participation. Fourth finally, participants linked the reason for a European level to *culture* and the way we think about rivers: “The river is not a property of any country.” This point was taken up and radicalized in the closing sentence of the Youth Manifesto: “We do not inherit water from our ancestors; we borrow it from future generations.” This future-oriented formulation avoids a Europe-only perspective that several BJC participants remarked on: “This problem is all over the planet, not just in (my) country”; “We all are living on the same planet. So I care not about only my country, but also about the whole planet.” However, as we saw above, the importance attributed to the global level for solving global water issues slightly decreased (“small difference”) with participants following the action week. One explanation might be that the week was predominantly focused on Europe and the EWFD; another possible reason is that with increased knowledge about watershed and river basins, there is an increased awareness that many nature conservation issues with respect to water are strongly bounded to their place. This realization in turn could explain the slight decrease. In addition, this future-oriented formulation avoids a Europe only perspective that several BJC participants remarked on: “This problem is all over the planet, not just in (my) country”. “We all are living on the same planet. So I care not about only my country, but also about the whole planet.” However, as we saw above, the importance attributed to the global level for solving global water issues slightly decreased with participants following the action week. One explanation might be that the week was predominantly focused on Europe and the Water Framework Directive; another possible reason is that with increased knowledge about watershed and river basins, there is an increased

awareness that many nature conservation issues with respect to water are strongly bounded to their place. This realization in turn could explain the slight decrease.

Thus, the reasons for a European Water conservation campaign are environmental, economic political and cultural. They reinforce the peer-effect of doing things together and seeing that others are also active; for this, they also require an appreciation of the differences among contexts. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the participants formulated this in a future-oriented way: rather than thinking about a property that is passed on, we are invited to think about water as something that we borrow from the future.

## Shared action

These online activities, attitudes and related reasons, however, cannot be equated with shared action. While teams demonstrated a large variety of shared action in terms of local actions, only 18 teams engaged in partnerships with another country. Likewise only 32% of participants reported that they sent a letter to their water authority or the water authority of a partner team, and only 5% reported to have sent a letter in support of the Save the Blue Heart of Europe campaign. In this light, the possibility of face-to-face peer meetings, as in the Brussels week, acquires special attention for shared action across boundaries. It was in Brussels that, following the presentation of a peer, participants were very motivated to send joint letters to the Slovenian and Albanian governments in support of the protection of wild rivers in these countries. Also, as we saw above, the Brussels week boosted the self-assessment that individual voices count in the EU.

The river action toolbox was generally well received by participants as a means to inform and prepare them for their own action; “They



[its modules] were useful in a way of building our team and discussing relevant issues prior to the Jump.” They helped groups to get informed and to prepare concrete Big Jumps. For groups in schools, however, time is a big constraint, as the information has to come early enough so that it can be integrated into the curriculum. For the majority of groups, language is an additional boundary as the river action toolbox was only available in English, German and French. In addition, one participant pointed out that there could be more “advice [on] what should happen after the jump (homepages, social media, contact with authorities)”. This comment points to the need and opportunity to provide groups with tools to go on after their summer action – not only to initiate action but also to provide a framework for continued action, and to do so in a way that is sensitive to the time constraints of the participants.

## RIVER ACTION TOOLBOX



The River Action Toolbox will help you to find the answers and put your ideas into action.

### Barriers and opportunities for doing something together in a European Context<sup>14</sup>

There are economic barriers for organizing a trans-European network. Beyond the costs required for local river activism (for example for lifeguards and for flyers announcing the event), there are travel and coordination costs. While there are EU funds (chiefly via Erasmus+), it seems more difficult to find funding for the less visible costs of coordinating a network, i.e. for ensuring that there is more than the sum of individual actions. Such network creation work

can create significant benefits, as the successful example of the Georgian coordinator Dea Jikia and the Creative Development Center (CDC) shows. In an interview, Jikia outlines the following as success factors of coordination: personal meetings and contact with groups, motivating presentations and details about the practical aspects at each step, use of social networks and media; and finally, in the general background, the creation of space for youth ownership to do what they are passionate about rather than an emphasis on obligation<sup>15</sup>.

Coordination is particularly important in light of the political barriers of such a network. As we saw above, in relation to water authorities, there tends to be a perception of insufficient appropriate information on water protection, a lack of being invited to discussion and of practical ways of getting active. Considering that the survey participants in general belong to the already active groups for water and nature conservation, there is an opportunity here for improved information and action possibilities:

- a) Education and information: This point finds expression in the Youth Manifesto’s demand for an education with civic engagement possibilities and for clear and understandable information. One participant even formulated the following success criterion for the BJC: “When the participants learn something new and worthy.”
- b) Action possibilities: The manifesto demands more space in water management for youth to be listened to and to be included from the bottom up.

These political barriers are linked to cognitive and cultural barriers. Participants pointed out there is a “perception that it is a technical issue for experts only” along with a “sense of limited responsibility” and an associated difficulty of “motivating and informing the public about the problem and the event” where there are “different priorities” and generally a limited time for activism.

Such barriers point to an issue introduced earlier: participation requires that those invited to participate care about the issue, that they have made experiences and established bonds. This reinforces the importance of shared, practical action.

For a trans-European network, moreover, there is the challenge of linguistic and “cultural differences or ways of thinking, cooperating.” As the uneven distribution of BJC participants shows – no participants from Scandinavia, less from Western Europe than from Eastern Europe – there are also cultural and geographical differences that need to be taken into account. Understanding such differences and understanding them merits further attention beyond this report. There is a challenge to communicate a shared theme in a way that participants from different geographical and cultural spaces will find accessible. Interestingly, participants perceived the campaign as an opportunity to improve understanding of the diversity within the shared challenge.

Finally, there are environmental barriers. The rivers and lakes across Europe are different, and so is their quality. While there is a shared general challenge, there has to be space for the specific and context-dependent water problems across Europe. The EWFD provides such a generic frame with its water management approach that leaves space for differences. The double challenge here is to translate it in such a way that it is accessible to citizens in each basin and to retain a sense of togetherness. A suggestion that emerged with respect to the last point from both the survey and the Brussels week is the possibility to highlight and care for specifically urgent issues as matters of shared concern across Europe. As one participant said, the BJC would be successful “when the EWFD will care for the countries where the most drastic water conditions exist, specifically with regard to pollution.” A topic that emerged during the BJC to illustrate this point are “wild rivers,” rivers of very good ecological status, which are not specifically

recognized by the EWFD. These rivers are now very rare across Europe and are currently under heavy pressure in the EU and neighbouring countries due to the expansion of hydropower.

To sum this up, the discussions of economic, political, cultural and environmental barriers in each case also point to opportunities for solidarity in Europe, such as:

- Offering support for networks and coordinators that, like Monnet many years ago, seek to promote the whole beyond the sum of the individual parts
- Providing accessible and understandable information
- Providing practical possibilities to get involved that create experiences facilitating participation so that, as one participant put it, “people who care about water gather together and try to solve the problems”
- Focusing on urgent issues that call for support beyond national boundaries.

## Social Innovation

Social innovation in the EU is not only about improved outcomes but also about process. It is innovation for and *with* citizens. Citizens participate in the process, in the formulation of goals and ends.

The BJC highlights one important point for social innovation: for there to be participation, there likely have to be spaces that provide citizens with experiences, so as to create a bond for the topic and to develop ownership together with others over how they feel about this topic and what it means together, taking into account the differences.

As a result, there is a challenge to formulate the shared goals in such a way that there is enough space for the diversity of individual places and experiences. On the one hand, participants must have space to bring in their perspectives and develop ownership; on the other hand, the



result should not just be many individual actions without a sense of togetherness. Hence the great importance of coordination, which links

participants to each other and to the European institutions that are responsible for dealing with the respective issue.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

*We do not inherit water from our ancestors; we borrow water from future generations.* The Youth Manifesto for Water Protection 2015 makes the intergenerational task of water protection very clear. Its ecological and economic points became directly evident that same summer when members of European Parliament hotly debated the implementation of the human right to water and its (incompatibility) with freshwater supply privatization (8 September, 2015), and came down on the side of public freshwater supply.

The focus of this report, however, is not on a specific policy issue; rather, it is about the Big Jump Challenge and joint European action. BJC participants gave such action a mandate to continue; only one person in the participant survey did not agree with the idea that the BJC should be continued until the water protection goals of the EU have been achieved. What are the lessons from 2015 for joint action of small acts of concrete solidarity across Europe?

1. Across Europe, there are young people with a positive image of the European Union and a priority for sustainability and peace. Joint actions such as the Big Jump Challenge can bring them together in diversity. Additionally, such actions attract other young people, who are not yet engaged.
2. Social media and the Internet facilitate the creation of a trans-European space for communication. This nonetheless does not guarantee that joint actions are taken.
3. More accessible and understandable information is required, here with respect to water protection in Europe. Such information makes a difference for the individual interest in the topic.

4. Such information should be part of an education that includes learning from peers and volunteers and that engages civically. Such shared experiences have a real effect on the sense that one's voice counts.
5. Social innovation is innovation for citizens and by citizens. For citizens to participate there should be experience possibilities that create the bonds and inspiration for participation.
6. Small acts of concrete solidarity across Europe require coordination, which in turn requires adequate support beyond the support of individual, local actions.

Beyond these specific points, the Big Jump Challenge raises the challenge of thinking about the bigger picture. Is Europe, and its land and water, property to be owned and passed on? Or is it something that we borrow from the future, entailing precaution? If we take the latter approach, how would Europe look?

A surprising aspect of the 2015 Big Jump Challenge was the interest of non-EU youth groups to actively contribute to a European youth campaign. The biggest number of groups was registered in Georgia and a Jordanian-Israeli-Palestinian group joined, even though the Water Framework Directive does not apply for them. Their participation shows that that idea of treating water as something we borrow from the future is not an issue of established EU boundaries. Rather, revisiting boundaries highlights the point that solidarity can spring from a shared perception of problems and opportunities.

This observation points to the relevance of small acts of concrete solidarity beyond the theme of water protection in Europe – in the double sense

of beyond a European focus and beyond the theme of water. As an example, the Berlin based initiative “Über den Tellerrand,” like the BJC, starts from a basic human activity – cooking instead of swimming – as a way to “creat[e] a new togetherness among refugees and locals in which diversity and mutual acceptance is taken for granted and integration is fun.” No doubt, there are many further opportunities for small actions of concrete solidarity.<sup>18</sup>

## Solidarity, or how to borrow water from future generations

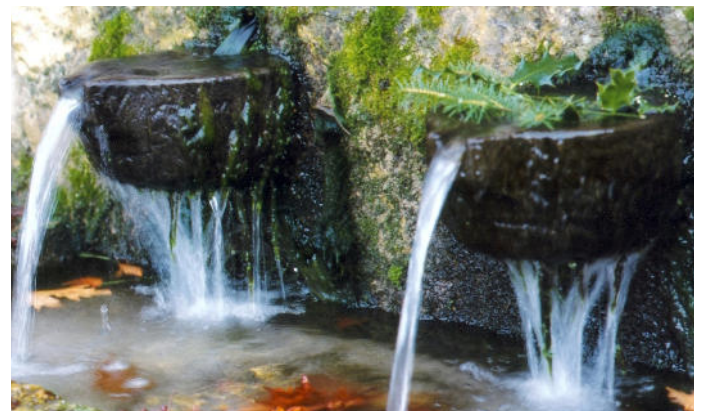
The European Rivers Parliament took place just after a dramatic meeting of European leaders. For many observers these negotiations symbolized the political crisis of the European Union, which beyond market integration, calls for a rethinking of the political union and the way it can promote a peaceful and sustainable Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While media attention focused on the political summit and the debt crisis, another action during the same week sent a different message of shared action and of the need for a change in

attitude. Prior to its Big Jump, the BJC team from Stromi Village in Greece read out the following text from Hesiod in Greek and various other European languages; it was also read out to the BJC participants at the beginning of the Brussels week:

Never cross the sweet-flowing water of ever-rolling rivers afoot until you have prayed, gazing into the soft flood, and washed your hands in the clear, lovely water. Whoever crosses a river with hands unwashed of wickedness, the gods are angry with him and bring trouble upon him afterwards

*Hesiod: Works And Days (ll. 737-741)*



The Spring of Life.  
© BJC Team Stromi, Greece

# APPENDIX

## About the Big Jump Challenge

- Homepage:  
[www.bigjumpchallenge.net](http://www.bigjumpchallenge.net)
- List of partners:  
<http://en.bigjumpchallenge.net/the-big-jump-challenge.html>
- News from the BJC networks:  
<https://www.facebook.comBigJumpChallenge>
- Reflections by BJC participants Mari Gigauri on the BJC for the Intergenerational Foundation - Fairness for Future Generations:  
<http://www.if.org.uk/archives/7242/we-borrow-water-from-future-generations-an-account-of-the-big-jump-challenge>

## Brussels-Videos from BJC participants

- Elina Mari Maksimova, Big Jump Challenge 2015, Oostende:  
<https://youtu.be/YS0j7mDoJf0>
- Laura Pysz, Brussels Blog:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIRO0FsNYVc>
- Guardians of Ecology, Brussels-Video:  
[https://video-frm3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/hvideo-xtf1/v/t42.1790-12/11743255\\_1622993851311405\\_796286555\\_n.mp4?efg=eyJybHliOjIMwMCwicmxhIjo1MTJ9&rl=300&vabr=119&oh=c08f247e126acce67c0263b9a412fe28&oe=55FAB632](https://video-frm3-1.xx.fbcdn.net/hvideo-xtf1/v/t42.1790-12/11743255_1622993851311405_796286555_n.mp4?efg=eyJybHliOjIMwMCwicmxhIjo1MTJ9&rl=300&vabr=119&oh=c08f247e126acce67c0263b9a412fe28&oe=55FAB632)

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## Endnotes:

1. Source: Greek Debt crisis: deal reached after marathon all-night summit, Liveblog, The Guardian, 13.7.2015.
2. More information about CRESSI: <http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/cressi>. The project defines social innovation as “the development and delivery of new ideas and solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes) at different socio-structural levels that intentionally seek to change power relations and improve human capabilities, as well as the processes via which these solutions are carried out” (quoted from Alex Nicholls and Rafael Ziegler (2015) An extended social grid analysis, CrESSI Working Paper No.2, online: [http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research-projects/CRESSI/docs/CRESSI\\_Working\\_Paper\\_2\\_D1.1\\_Chp2\\_18Nov2014.pdf](http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research-projects/CRESSI/docs/CRESSI_Working_Paper_2_D1.1_Chp2_18Nov2014.pdf)). For a discussion of social innovation and evaluation see Alex Nicholls, Synthetic Grid: A critical framework to inform the development of social innovation metrics, CRESSI Working paper No. 14/2015, online: [http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research-projects/CRESSI/docs/CRESSI\\_Working\\_Paper\\_14\\_D3.1\\_10Sept.pdf](http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/research-projects/CRESSI/docs/CRESSI_Working_Paper_14_D3.1_10Sept.pdf), last accessed 1.10.2015.
3. See Jean Monnet, *Memoires*, Paris: Fayard, 1976.
4. The Big Jump is also referred to as the European River Swimming Day. For the history and goals of the Big Jump see [www.bigjump.org](http://www.bigjump.org), last accessed 1.10.2015.
5. <http://www.bigjump.org/en/theproject/>, last accessed 1.10.2015.
6. <http://www.bigjumpchallenge.net/>, last accessed 1.10.2015
7. Beyond Monnet, the focus on concrete actions is inspired by non-violent communication as pioneered by Gandhi and others. See Ziegler, Rafael; Schulz, Sabrina; Richter, Lukas; Schreck, Martin (2014): Following Gandhi. Social Entrepreneurship as a Non-Violent Way of Communicating Sustainability Challenges. In: *Sustainability*, 6 (2) 1018-1036, free online publication).
8. In relation to the concept of social innovation introduced above: the Big Jump and its daughter project the BJC are new ideas that seek to sensitize and empower citizens (Big Jump) and specifically youth (BJC) in regards to the process of water conservation as implemented on the EU-level via the EWFD.
9. The German, English, and Georgian surveys are available upon request from the authors.
10. For some impressions see here: <http://en.bigjumpchallenge.net/news-details/new-art-in-solidarity-from-russia.html>, last accessed 7.10.2015.
11. Likewise for the second survey (n=43), about 62% were between 18 and 34 years old, about 90% between 13 and 34, and about 65% of all survey participants were female. Unless otherwise indicated this section reports the results of the first survey, and the approval/disapproval rate to different questions. The remaining percentages in each case result from respondents who did not respond to a question – for ease of reading, this category has been generally omitted in the main text, and decimal numbers have been rounded to the closest natural number.
12. European Commission (2014) Standard Eurobarometer 81, TABLES OF RESULTS, PUBLIC OPINION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81\\_anx\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb81/eb81_anx_en.pdf), last accessed 7.10.2015.
13. See Jacob Cohen (1988), *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Science*, Second Edition, Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, p. 285 f.
14. This section is based on open comment questions in the first survey regarding the barriers and opportunities of the Big Jump Challenge.
15. Read the full interview here: <http://en.bigjumpchallenge.net/news-details/interview-with-dea-jikia-from-the-cdc.html>, last accessed 5.10.2015.
16. This point is confirmed via a comparison of the youth campaign with the Big Jump for adults. Here too there is only one (Finish) participant in Scandinavia (see map here: <http://www.rivernet.org/bigjump/welcomed.htm>, last accessed 5.10.2015.
17. See for example the work of the youth organization Viva con Agua.
18. See <https://ueberdentellerrand.org/index-en.html>, last accessed 7.10.2015, and put into the context of the current European migration crisis by Ali Guemuesday in “The European” here <http://www.theeuropean.de/ali-aslan-guemuesay/10488-fluechtlinge-und-soziales-unternehmertum>, last accessed 7.10.2015.



