

**On expedition with the Austrian Ministry of Environment and Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria**

## **Successful project brings Danube into Austrian classrooms: Danube Challenge 2011**

Millions of people in Central and Eastern Europe will be brought together for common cause on 29 June, when 14 countries mark the seventh annual 'Danube Day' by celebrating the famous river, its tributaries and the areas through which they flow. At the heart of the annual celebrations will be Coca-Cola Hellenic which, as a founder member of the Green Danube Partnership – alongside The Coca-Cola Company and the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) – is behind an increasingly broad series of activities to preserve and protect the precious resource. 22,000 school kids across Austria have already participated in the "Trinkpass" (Hydration Check) campaign. Over 200 of them also took part in this year's Danube Challenge which took place at the Donau Auen National Park on June 22. At various knowledge and adventure stops, the young participants learned important facts about and increased their awareness for water as a resource. The Danube Challenge was initiated by the Austrian Ministry of Environment and Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria in 2007 and this year took place for the 5th time already.

Eight school classes from the eastern part of Austria received the opportunity to spend an adventurous day on the Danube after successfully applying for it in the Trinkpass campaign of the Ministry of Environment, which is supported by Römerquelle. "The Danube Challenge uniquely combines adventure, fun and knowledge transfer on the important topic of water. This project is among the most successful campaigns, which my ministry organizes for young people every year. This makes me very proud and is of great significance for raising awareness for the topic of water," said Environment Minister Berlakovich, patron of the Danube Challenge. "I congratulate the winners and thank the many young people who submitted their "green job" proposals and who had an eye on

their drinking behavior for two weeks. The best submissions were invited to partake in the Danube Challenge, but in my opinion, all of the enthusiastic participants in the campaigns are winners.”

Apart from Minister Berlakovich, also Barry O’Connell, the director general of Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria, congratulated the winning school classes. He said that „the Danube Challenge creates a sense of enthusiasm that wouldn’t come about in a class room because it takes place out in nature. And the teenagers get a new awareness for water as a habitat as a ‘side effect.’ Each year, the Danube Challenge shows how important it is to offer age-adequate initiatives for youths. They are the decision makers of tomorrow and will be responsible for our environment in the future. This is why we see it as part of our social responsibility to impart knowledge about the environment and resources to them.”

“We are happy that the Danube Challenge once again took place at the Donau Auen National Park. Showing young people in a fun way how important the floodplain forest as a habitat and its protection are, is also one of our key tasks,” said National Park Director Carl Manzano.

This year’s adventure day was packed with many interesting, fast and fun challenges. The classes, for instance, designed a poster made from natural objects, wrote a little rap song or created a “green job.” In addition to that, they got to know the floodplain forest and their inhabitants by looking at water micro-organisms: they pulled some animals out of the water, observed them and of course eventually let them back into their natural habitat. The youngsters had to give their all in the action challenges and also used their brains and savvy for the knowledge challenges about Austria’s most important river system.

### **Trinkpass campaign**

The participants in the Danube Challenge were chosen from thousands of submissions of the Trinkpass campaign. The Trinkpass (Hydration Check) helps school kids to observe their drinking pattern. The Trinkpass initiative has been successfully realized in cooperation with Römerquelle and the “Generation Blue” water platform for the young generation of the Austrian Ministry of Environment. Over 22,000 school kids have already participated. The second leg of the Danube challenge took place in the Milser Au along the Inn river, one of the primary tributaries of the Danube. There, the ministry and Coca-Cola Hellenic Austria welcomed the participants from the western provinces.

*Further information and the diaries of the participants are available at [www.generationblue.at](http://www.generationblue.at).*