

Youth Manifesto for Wild Rivers

Ljubljana, 26th September 2017



Our Vision

Rivers are an essential source of life. They should have space to thrive, free from human intervention and modification that compromises their integrity. They can inspire and teach the present and future generations about the innate beauty of the natural world.

We are the Youth Network for River Action, a group of individuals and organisations from across Europe with a passion for water. As young people, we all care about rivers, enjoy engaging with them and the freedom they provide us. We therefore have a responsibility to take action to protect wild rivers and to enhance those rivers already degraded.

Too often, decisions are not based on facts and do not consider the needs of society and the wider natural environment. Power should be distributed so that all people (including the next generation) and the natural environment are considered in decisions that affect them.

Wild Rivers

A wild river is alive and well preserved. It flows freely and welcomes in its high-quality waters and unmodified banks an exceptional biodiversity. In Europe, most rivers have been heavily modified by industrial development. Thus, very few rivers have preserved their wildness. Population growth and climate change will put even more pressure on the integrity of our last remaining wild rivers.

Our Demands

- **Priority:** The protection of the last wild rivers (or wild sections of a river) should have priority over other uses. They should not be touched or modified by humans in a way that changes or undermines their integrity as wild rivers.
- **River restoration:** Measures to re-wild and restore rivers to a near-natural state should be made compulsory and supported through funding.
- **Independent evaluation:** Every proposal for river modification or other use that potentially undermines the integrity of the wild river must be approved by a transparent and independent body of experts that is free to pass judgement without external influence.
- **Youth participation:** Opportunities should be provided for youth to play a role in decisions around rivers and the development, monitoring and revision of water management plans.
- **Catchment management:** All activities, such as agriculture, forestry, industry, transportation and settlements should be monitored and managed to allow rivers to thrive.
- **Rethinking hydropower:** Due to its heavy ecological impact, hydropower should not be considered as a sustainable source of energy and therefore should also not receive subsidies.
- **River education:** Young people should be taught about the value of rivers and catchments through schooling and have the opportunity to explore rivers and get practically engaged. Open and accessible information must be presented to everyone.

We want to save our remaining wild rivers and to rewild those that have been degraded. We demand the preservation of this enormous heritage for future generations. By maintaining our wild rivers we are contributing to passing on the world's diversity, maintaining a base for sustainable development and preserving the safety of our homes and the health of our children.

Flowing in freedom from mountain to sea, rivers so wild connect nature with me.