



Fifteen-year-old Daniel Korčák, from Ostrava, Czech Republic, has won the Universal Postal Union's 42nd International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People with his letter to the central European river the Oder.

Recalling the current International Year of Water Cooperation, the 2013 contest asked budding writers to explain why water is a precious resource.

"I thought that many students would write a letter to a person, so I decided to write my letter directly to water," says the gold-medal winner, who captivated the international jury with his simple, creative and innovative prose.

"In the river you create, we bathe, fish, children play with you when building stone dams, athletes on boats struggle against your power, and many seek peace and quiet in your whisper... near your river, there is your sister, healing water, which... waits to be carried to the nearby spa where it helps heal our ailments," wrote Daniel.

The jury said the Czech's writing gently brought home the need to respect water to ensure sustainable use. "Daniel reminds us just how much we depend on water, too often taken for granted. His letter, tender and universal in its appeal, portrays the Oder as a symbol of water everywhere," declared the jury. "Describing the life cycle of the Oder, he personifies water, which mimics our journey as human beings and therefore deserves our utmost respect."

Congratulating this year's winners, UPU Director General Bishar A. Hussein said: "Communication is at the heart of the postal activity and, in a sea of digital messages, it remains critical for young people to understand the importance of the written word and the structured composition and recognize the emotions and call to action good writing can elicit. Postal services support literacy and communication, and we are delighted that our competition touches so many young people."

An estimated 1.5 million young people from 60 countries participated in this 42nd letter-writing contest, which aims to raise awareness of the role postal services play in our societies, help young people develop their skills in composition and the ability to express their thoughts.

Second and third prizes

The silver medal goes to 14-year-old Nazifa Farhat Hye from Sylhet, Bangladesh, who described why water is even more precious than diamonds. "If you are in the middle of a vast desert... and there is no water,... then you will feel like offering all your valuable diamonds in return for that water."

The jury liked the clear and simple style Nazifa used to show that money can save no-one in such a situation, illustrating that water is every bit as precious as life itself.

The bronze medal goes to 13-year-old Gabija Petrauskaitė from Sventoji, Lithuania. According to the jury, her poetic letter "is a mixture of the joy Gabija feels while contemplating the rain outside her window and the seriousness of the water challenges we face, in terms of climate change, drinking water shortages, and others."

The jury also awarded special mentions to young writers from the following countries, in this order: Cy. M. Rodriguez, Philippines; Priya-Vani Heera, Trinidad and Tobago; and Dao Thuy Thuy Duong, Viet Nam.

The international jury was composed of Ivan Draganic, specialist with the United Nations Development Programme in Geneva; Stéfanie Neno, communication manager with UN-Water in Rome; Adrián Puigarnau, programme manager with the Stockholm International Water Institute; and Ryan Rowe, communication specialist with the Water Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Winners will receive their prizes on 9 October 2013, World Post Day.

Note to editors:

To read the 2013 gold, silver and bronze-medal compositions, please go to: www.upu.int/en/letterwritingcompetition

Want to take part in next year's competition?

The theme selected for the **2014** competition is: "Write a letter describing how music can touch lives."

The communication supports include a poster and a flyer, which are being updated to reflect the 2014 theme. They will be made available to member countries shortly.

The best letter from each country must be submitted to the International Bureau no later than 30 April 2014.

- [Learn more about the competition and other discover more UN Competitions](#) .

About the UPU

Created in 1874, the UPU, based in Berne (Switzerland), is an intergovernmental organization and the primary forum for cooperation between governments, Posts and other stakeholders of the worldwide postal sector. In addition to maintaining a genuinely universal network that provides modern products and services, it establishes the rules for international mail exchanges among its 192 members and makes recommendations to stimulate mail volume growth and to improve the quality of service for customers. In 2011, some 5.4 million employees processed and delivered 364 billion domestic letter-post items annually, as well as some 4.7 billion international items and over 6 billion parcels. Many postal services also offer expedited mail, financial and electronic services. Some 670,000 postal establishments make the postal network the largest physical distribution network in the world. The UPU is a specialized agency of the United Nations since 1948.