

Diplomacy This Week



The Nord-Zilla dragon boat team. Embassy Photo: Sam Garcia



The triumphant EU team, with EU Ambassador Marie-Anne Coninx, front left, and Portuguese deputy head of mission João Sabido Costa, front right. Embassy Photo: Sam Garcia



The EU dragon boat team. Embassy Photo: Sam Garcia

What an oar-deal

EU, Nordic dragon boat teams battle it out.

CARL MEYER

Chatter House

Every summer, thousands of people in Ottawa head down to the river, pile in to long, narrow boats and subject themselves to repetitive strain injuries and relentless drumming in their ears.

It's all part of a curiously much-loved tradition called the Ottawa Dragon Boat Festival, and it involves around 200 teams in a series of races that occur throughout a weekend celebration flush with food and entertainment. The festival raises money for dozens of local charities.

For this correspondent, the best part of the festival is usually the names of the competing teams. Some are puns, like Ready Oar Not, and some are more literal approaches, like My Arms Hurt. The best ones are the double entendres: for example, a team of real estate agents calling themselves We're Listing.

This year, *Chatter House* had something closer to home to cheer on. Two diplomatic-focused teams, one centring around the European Union and the other on the Nordic and Baltic countries, got in on the fun, both for the first time.

At 2 p.m. on June 21, the EU boat, made up of delegation and individual embassy representatives as well as European expats and Canadians, managed to row themselves past the fearsome Nord-Zilla, made up of members of the Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Latvian embassies.

After blowing past two other competitors—the alumni group for the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme, and an Ottawa Chinese students group—the EU team could rightfully claim the Embassies and Foreign Missions Challenge Cup.

It was the first time the team had joined the festival, said **Diodora Bucur**, press officer at the European Union Delegation. EU Ambassador **Marie-Anne Coninx** was in the boat paddling, while **Petra Auster**, third secretary and head of administration was the team captain.

European Union dragon boat team

Representatives from the EU Delegation and the Austrian, Belgian, Portuguese and Romanian embassies, Europeans living in Canada, Canadians

Drummer: Chantal Drouin
 Captain: Petra Auster
 Active rowers:
 Marie-Anne Coninx
 Cassandra Auguste
 Manfred Auster
 Silvana Bolocan
 Chanty Chou
 Melina Chimal Pilon
 Claudiu Cojocaru
 Annkathrin Diehl
 Francisco Gomez
 Annegret Hayward
 Elisabeth Hundhammer
 Marius Ivan

Wolfgang Lassl
 Karsten Mecklenburg
 Olivia Podmore
 Guillermo Renna
 João Sabido Costa
 Raul Sanchez Pascual
 Steven Teskey
 Alternates:
 Ulrike Butschek
 Diodora Bucur
 Marine de Clarens
 Audrey Macleod
 Jonas de Meyer
 Vera de Meyer
 Jose Antonio Torres Lacasa

Nord-Zilla dragon boat team

Representatives from the Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish and Latvian embassies, Canadians

Drummer: Brian Cruickshank
 Steerperson: Sue Holloway
 Active rowers:
 Juris Audarins
 Britt Bengtsson
 Peter Berggreen
 Diane Bienvenue
 Ida Soon Brøther Bergh
 Adam Conter
 Carin Goodman
 Kasper Hansen
 Conner Harris
 Kayla Huotari-Harris

Pia Kristensen
 Helen Lam
 Martin Matoto
 Hallvard Sandven
 Ida Soltvedt
 Peder Soras
 Anni Stahle
 Pia Stenholt
 Ariela Thaw
 Sara Thaw
 Alternate:
 Mona Elisabeth Brøther

Norwegian Ambassador **Mona Elisabeth Brøther** said she was very impressed with the festival, and really happy to be able to participate. Ms. Brøther cheered from the sidelines, listed on the roster as an alternate.

"I said to my employees, 'I think you are all young and strong; I can be an extra,'" she said, chuckling over the phone in a June 22 interview.

It was Ms. Brøther's idea to join the festival in the first place—"I think you can ascribe that idea to me"—although she is a bit hesitant to admit it, since she didn't know it would be as big as it is, or need as many rowers per boat as it does. But she felt it was a good team-building exercise, and it didn't hurt the missions' public image.

"It's important for us in public diplomacy to build up our public profile...this was

about building upon our common Nordic identity," said Ms. Brøther.

Besides: "People got to know each other...they had a great party afterward."

Nord-Zilla placed third in its class in the 500-metre race with a time of 2:42:23, while the EU's first-place time was 2:30:60, according to the Norwegian Embassy.

Nord-Zilla also had two well-known local members of their team. Their drummer was **Brian Cruickshank**, a veteran boater from the Rideau Canoe Club, and their steerperson was Canadian Olympian **Sue Holloway**. The hall-of-famer was the first Canadian and first woman to compete at the winter and summer Olympics in the same year.

Like the EU team, it was also Nord-Zilla's first time—although a few of the teammates had participated in years past.

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