



Courtesy of euswim.org

## School Project Becomes an International Incident

Most school projects end up in a box in a parent's basement, but not **Julia Galan's**. Her latest is now a five-year-old international swimming event. Galan, 27, a member of Potomac Valley Masters, founded the all-ages European Union Swimming Invitational in Paris in 2006 while she was there studying at Sciences Po as part of a joint-degree program with Johns Hopkins University.

Since then, the mobile event has taken place in Belgium, Poland and Switzerland. Each year, she serves as the meet director while finding time to finish a master's degree and begin work on a law degree.

Galan's brother **Peter**, 21, also swims for the Potomac Valley Masters, and he helps out as web-master and general technical volunteer at the event. He publishes the event's



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newsletter and swims in the event as well. Both Galans have been swimming for most of their lives. But why an annual international event?

As Galan explains it, the mission of the EU Swimming Invitational is to provide old and young swimmers the opportunity to compete on a world stage while getting to know the languages, cultures and athletic achievements of their fellow swimmers in an immersive social and physical experience.

Using sport as a bridge to connect countries and individuals despite cultural differences is not a new idea, but it certainly never gets old and may be needed more today than ever. Since Paris, the competition has expanded to include swimmers from all over Europe and

the world, including the United States, Israel and Moldova.

2009 was the event's breakout year, and some fast times were posted, particularly in relays. Swimmers formed new friendships and traded caps and T-shirts and stories. The 2010 competition built on that success and attracted over 400 swimmers from Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland and the United States.

"As an international event open to all ages and levels of swimmers, the EU Swimming Invitational encourages the cele-

bration of swimming as more than just a sport, but also as an integral part of many individuals' lives," Galan writes in an email.

Although Galan and her brother were the only Americans competing, they are confident they will have comrades as the event grows and more U.S. Masters swimmers learn of the opportunities the meet provides.

"I'd like to ... foster transatlantic relations at the grassroots level between swimmers from Europe and the United States," Galan says.

>>> For more information, visit [euswim.org](http://euswim.org).

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2011 VOL. 7, NO. 1

# SWIMMER

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