

# The Magazine

EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN EUROPE

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**Belonging to the European Union**



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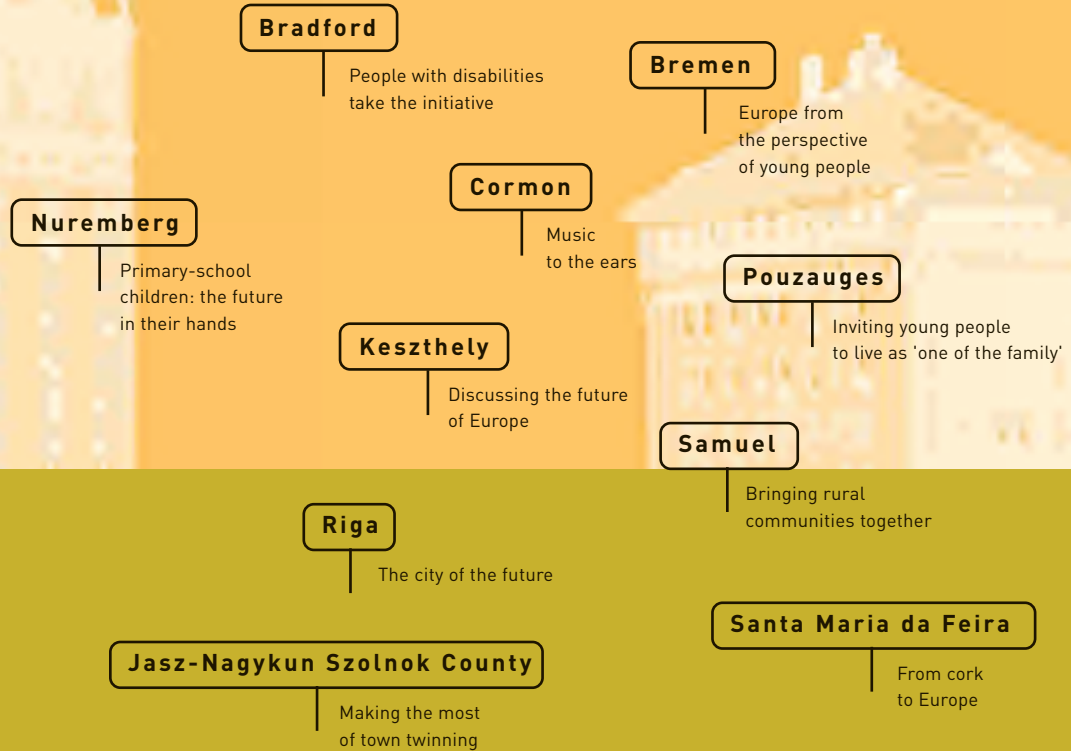
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# Foreword

**T**he European Union is much more than an increasingly large single market with a single currency, designed to benefit businesses and consumers. It is also a political project, built on democratic, educational and cultural values, in which everyone should be able to participate.

At a time when the articles of a future EU constitution are being drafted, this edition of *The Magazine* focuses on the role of civil society in networking at local level.

European integration and the enlargement of the EU could not have progressed so far without the willing efforts of individuals at grass-roots level who dedicate their time to establishing partnerships with people and organisations in other EU Member States. Town twinning is a tradition that goes back to after the Second World War, when the people of war-torn Europe, especially in France and Germany, first began to build partnerships between cities, towns and municipalities.

**The European Union,  
a community of peoples,  
a community of values**

peoples

community

European Union

values



**Viviane Reding,**  
*Member of  
the European  
Commission,  
responsible  
for Education  
and Culture.*

Since 1989, the European Union has supported town twinning to strengthen existing links and encourage new ones. So far, more than 11 000 towns have benefited from EU grants. This year the EU is funding about 1 400 town twinning partnerships worth EUR 12 million in which two or more towns or cities from different countries share ideas, explore solutions to common problems, discover each other's cultural heritage and simply enjoy getting to know each other. These town partnerships offer people practical opportunities to participate in the European integration process, especially in the countries about to join the EU, allowing them to develop a sense of European identity. Special emphasis has been put on town twinning projects that involve smaller municipalities or young people.

The Europe of education, culture and citizenship will be built primarily at local level, in encouraging exchanges and joint projects. I am committed to making it a reality in bringing people closer together. In that sense, town twinings are a great tool in bringing forward the integration of Europe.



Town twinning is a simple but effective concept requiring two or more municipalities from different countries to make a formal agreement to twin and to meet regularly to share experience, information and ideas.



## Town twinning, a simple but effective concept

**W**hen two municipalities embark on a twinning agreement – a commitment that culminates in a formal ceremony for the signing of a twinning oath – they establish a framework that encourages:

- mutual understanding between citizens;
- the exchange of experience of managing local affairs;
- tolerance between diverse groups;
- sharing solutions to problems;
- increasing local autonomy;
- launching initiatives in such fields as employment or conservation;
- celebrating diverse cultural heritages.

A key feature of twinning is that local people of all ages and from all walks of life are involved in a variety of ways: through cultural experiences, school exchanges, sporting events and exchanges of experience in concrete issues such as environment or local services. Furthermore, twinning emphasises the importance of local democracy – of involving citizens in the decision-making processes that will shape the institutions and systems that affect their daily lives.

Twinning, ranging from villages to major cities, now often involves more than two partners, a development that has given the scheme new flexibility. Twinning today allows networks of regional and local authorities to share experience and pool information. Such networks can safeguard local autonomy and the participation of individuals.

In fact, town twinning is a good and concrete instrument to strengthen European identity. In this perspective, the European Parliament created in 1989 a budget to promote twinning actions. Since then, the European Commission has been managing a grant scheme that has become an important tool for the whole town twinning movement in Europe.



### Contact

Annemarie Bruggink  
Head of sector Town twinning  
Directorate-General for Education and Culture  
Tel. (32-2) 295 26 85  
Fax (32-2) 299 23 89  
E-mail: [Towntwinning@cec.eu.int](mailto:Towntwinning@cec.eu.int)



It is often people, either individually or in a group, who are behind town twinnings. They give the lead and the local authorities follow', says Ruth Hieronymi, MEP and one of the most enthusiastic advocates of twinning at the European Parliament.

This is demonstrated by the origins of the *Association Échanges sans Frontières*, the kingpin for several twinning arrangements between municipalities in the Vendée region and the Romanian regions of Gorj and Vrancea (see also our article on page 11). 'It is a mixture of personal commitment and chance that led to the setting up of our association', explains the association's treasurer Annette Rousseau. 'At the time, in the 1990s, the Headmaster of the Antoine Saint-Exupéry secondary school in Pouzauges, now the Chairman of the association, was organising trips to Greece. He wanted to broaden pupils' horizons. On one of those trips, we stopped over in Romania. Links were established then. Exchanges took place, initially between schools, and then the process was extended to the rest of the population.'

That ability to extend cooperation in a clearly-defined field to establish an overall partnership is one of the characteristics and strengths of twinning. Two schools, two football clubs, two local associations meet, and a snowball effect is created.

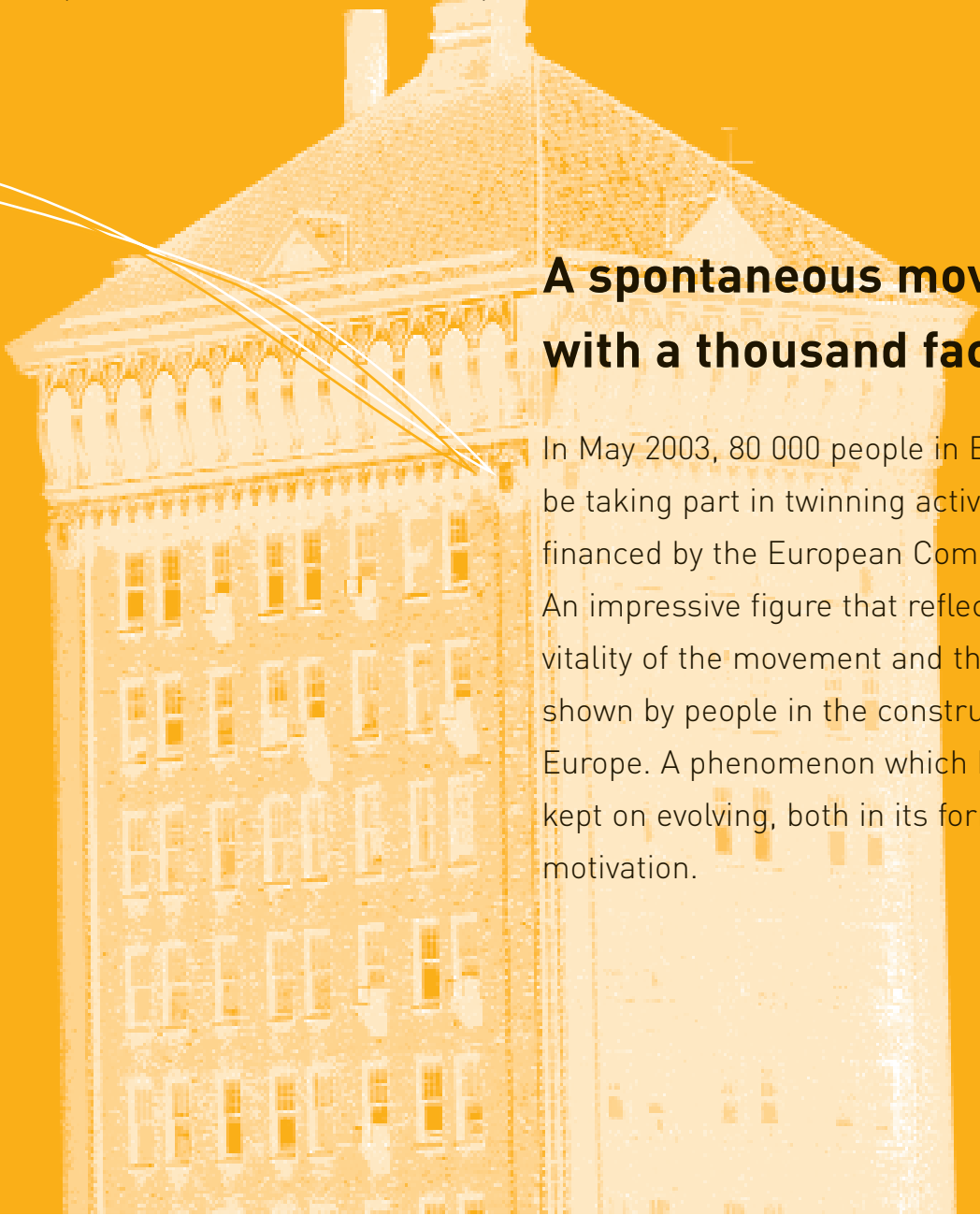
The strength of twinning can also be measured by the duration of the ties. Many of them have been in existence for over 20 years.

A period of time that has enabled them to increase the range of exchanges and common experience. Experiences which sometimes emerge from a tragic context. The British and German cities of Bradford and Hamm, for example: 'Our twinning arrangement dates back to 1976. It was based on sporting exchanges, especially football tournaments', says Tim Hirst, responsible for twinning at Bradford City Council. 'Then there was the tragic accident at Bradford City football ground on 11 May 1985. A fire broke out and 53 people died. At that time, a delegation of footballers from Hamm was in the city. A monument was erected in memory of those who died. It was a sculptor from Hamm, Joachim Reisner, who created it and a replica was also installed in Germany. Our friendship was strengthened by that terrible event'.

'For a twinning arrangement to work', says Philippe Tarrisson, responsible for twinning at the French section of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, 'it is necessary for a real network to be established and mobilised to reach practical objectives, such as cooperation between schools, road safety or town planning, and for the people to be involved as much as possible. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the payback of twinning is not measured so much in financial terms: a young person whose horizons are broadened and later goes to work in another country, company managers who become aware of situations in other regions, etc. — these are tangible benefits, but very difficult to incorporate into a balance sheet'.

## A spontaneous movement with a thousand faces

In May 2003, 80 000 people in Europe will be taking part in twinning activities co-financed by the European Commission. An impressive figure that reflects the vitality of the movement and the interest shown by people in the construction of Europe. A phenomenon which has just kept on evolving, both in its form and its motivation.



# Twinning in figures

## Participation in the EU scheme

Since 1990, more than 11 000 towns and municipalities have participated in twinning actions funded by the European Commission. The biggest Member States of the European Union make the top five of the overall participation as well as of the annual statistics from the year 2002. Poland and Hungary are on the top of the candidate countries.

1 NUMBER OF TOWNS WHICH PARTICIPATED IN TWINNING ACTIONS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION SINCE 1990.		2 NUMBER OF TOWNS WHICH PARTICIPATED IN TWINNING ACTIONS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN 2002.		3 INTRODUCED AND SELECTED PROJECTS PER COUNTRY IN 2002.		
				Country	Introduced projects	Selected projects
France	2 804	France	630	France	613	319
Germany	2 327	Germany	462	Germany	528	267
Italy	1 054	Italy	275	Italy	298	173
United Kingdom	1 050	United Kingdom	164	United Kingdom	183	88
Spain	557	Spain	136	Spain	122	79
Belgium	316	Belgium	55	Poland	122	75
Austria	246	Austria	40	Hungary	91	47
Netherlands	237	Netherlands	31	Belgium	70	40
Greece	196	Greece	50	Austria	48	19
Sweden	189	Sweden	34	Sweden	40	23
Finland	162	Finland	33	Greece	39	30
Ireland	162	Ireland	36	Ireland	33	17
Denmark	161	Denmark	23	Romania	29	19
Portugal	148	Portugal	27	Finland	28	21
Luxembourg	32	Luxembourg	6	Netherlands	27	13
<i>Subtotal, Member States</i>	9 641	<i>Subtotal, Member States</i>	2 002	Czech Republic	25	13
Poland	477	Poland	144	Portugal	21	12
Hungary	292	Hungary	81	Bulgaria	13	10
Romania	231	Romania	67	Denmark	13	7
Czech Republic	172	Czech Republic	47	Slovakia	10	4
Slovakia	66	Slovakia	25	Estonia	9	4
Estonia	63	Estonia	12	Latvia	8	6
Bulgaria	51	Bulgaria	11	Lithuania	8	5
Lithuania	41	Lithuania	14	Malta	8	5
Latvia	40	Latvia	9	Cyprus	4	4
Slovenia	32	Slovenia	9	Luxembourg	4	3
Turkey	32	Turkey	6	Slovenia	4	2
Cyprus	26	Cyprus	5	Turkey	3	1
Malta	22	Malta	8			
<i>Subtotal, candidate countries</i>	1 545	<i>Subtotal, candidate countries</i>	438	<b>Total</b>	<b>2 401</b>	<b>1 306</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11 186</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>2 440</b>			



## Geographic tendencies

Key:	COUNTRY	MAIN PARTNERS (%)				
		OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF TWINNINGS				
AT ▷ Austria	Belgium	FR	DE	NL	IT	UK
BE ▷ Belgium		41.4	19.6	7.4	6	4.3
BG ▷ Bulgaria	Bulgaria	EL	FR	DE	TR	IT
CH ▷ Switzerland		18.9	13.9	9	6.6	5.7
CZ ▷ Czech Republic	Czech Republic	DE	PL	CH	AT	NL
DE ▷ Germany		30.7	12.9	9.9	8.3	7.4
DK ▷ Denmark	Denmark	FR	PL	UK	HU	AT
ES ▷ Spain		37.2	10.5	8.2	6.2	6.1
EE ▷ Estonia	Estonia	SE	NO	FIN	PL	DE
EL ▷ Greece		19.4	16.6	14.8	12.4	11.6
FR ▷ France	Finland	FIN	SE	DE	DK	NO
FIN ▷ Finland		50	26.9	5.2	4.6	3.8
HU ▷ Hungary	France	FR	IT	DE	PT	UK
IT ▷ Italy		58.4	11.9	7.8	7.5	2.5
IS ▷ Iceland	Greece	SE	EE	NO	DK	DE
LT ▷ Lithuania		26.3	22.2	15.1	12.2	6.9
LV ▷ Latvia	Hungary	DE	UK	IT	ES	BE
NO ▷ Norway		39	19	11.4	7.8	5.1
NL ▷ Netherlands	Ireland	IT	FR	DE	BG	SE
PT ▷ Portugal		27.5	16.5	11.9	10.6	6.4
PL ▷ Poland	Italy	RO	DE	SK	AT	PL
RO ▷ Romania		28.5	21.2	13.7	9.7	4.6
SE ▷ Sweden	Lithuania	FR	UK	IT	DE	BE
SK ▷ Slovakia		61.9	11.4	6.4	5.1	2.1
TR ▷ Turkey	Latvia	FR	DE	ES	HU	EL
UK ▷ United Kingdom		38.4	20.3	5.3	4.4	3.7
	Luxembourg	SE	DE	DK	LT	NO
		24.3	15.4	10.7	10	7.1
	Malta	PL	DE	SE	LV	DK
		30.5	13.2	10.2	9.5	7.5
	Netherlands	FR	DE	BE	IT	AT
		21.2	19.2	10.6	10.6	6.7
	Poland	IT	UK	DE	PL	SE
		68.8	12.5	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Portugal	DE	PL	CZ	BE	UK
		31.8	20	10.3	6.7	5.2
	Slovakia	DE	FR	NL	CZ	DK
		30.2	11.4	7.9	7.1	6.4
	Sweden	FR	ES	DE	IT	UK
		44.9	21.5	8.6	3.9	3.9
	United Kingdom	HU	PL	CZ	DE	IT
		44.6	20.5	12.9	5.2	3.5
	Finland	FIN	NO	DK	EE	PL
		25.5	16.6	15.5	11.6	6.5
	France	FR	DE	PL	IT	CZ
		52.9	24	5.9	2.3	2.2

A priori, twinning seems to be mainly for neighbouring countries. A closer look at the statistics makes it clear that such a statement needs to be qualified. Of the twinning arrangements recorded in the European Union and applicant countries, 34.6 % concern towns from countries that are not neighbours <sup>(1)</sup>. The extension of the area of mobility of Europeans, individuals, businesses or authorities, recorded since the end of the Second World War certainly has something to do with this situation.

Four tendencies emerge. First of all, towns in the countries of the Baltic region mostly team up with each other. Then the five 'large countries of Europe' (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom) have their main partner from one of the other large European countries (Germany with France and vice versa, France with the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy). Thirdly, towns in peripheral regions of Europe often tend to prefer twinning with partners from the central countries rather than with their direct neighbours. Finally, it should be borne in mind that there are relatively limited links between the towns in countries in northern and southern Europe, which shows how far there is to go to strengthen these relationships within the European Union.

The case of Portugal illustrates the importance of factors like migration in twinning. 'Immigration is the key factor in understanding the importance of France in twinning arrangements involving Portuguese towns. It is often Portuguese immigrants themselves who initiate the procedures with their municipalities to establish a twinning arrangement with their town of origin', explains Sandra Ceciari, official at the Secretariat-General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.


Another example of concentration is France's success with Ireland, which is explained by a will to learn languages: one of the main driving forces of the twinning movement. 'In Ireland, it was the schools that played the lead role in the twinning movement. In the context of language-learning programmes, they sought twinning arrangements with the nearest natural partner: France, and particularly Brittany', says Mark Callanan, responsible for twinning at the Institute of Public Administration in Dublin. 'Other factors such as the cost of transport also contributed to this tendency. During the boom in twinning in Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, Brittany was one of the most accessible destinations for schools. Today, the travelling costs to other destinations have fallen and we are promoting a diversification of twinning, especially as the relationship with France is almost at saturation point. It is a purely mathematical phenomenon. There are many more French towns than Irish towns and we cannot respond to the excessively high number of requests emanating from French towns'.

<sup>(1)</sup> This data comes from statistics supplied by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). In this case, neighbouring countries are deemed to be those whose frontiers are less than 300 km apart, so as to consider countries that are separated by expanses of water as neighbours, like Denmark and Sweden or the United Kingdom and Belgium.

# An old phenomenon

expanding fast

Historians often cite the twinning of Orléans (France) and Dundee (United Kingdom) in 1946 as the first modern twinning arrangement. The twinning was based on the wish to strengthen the European idea as well as to revive a 700-year-old alliance between the two cities, described as the 'Auld Alliance' (1). It was followed by twinning arrangements between Bordeaux and Bristol, and Velettes-sur-mer with Greenock in 1947. Twinning between French and German towns followed suit in 1950.

In the wake of the reconciliation, the idea of the European construction came about. This was a real catalyst for the twinning movement. It was an active step taken by local elected representatives. It was the era of large European projects and manoeuvres at the highest political levels. Fifty mayors joined forces to integrate the local dimension and the reality at grass-roots level into the construction of Europe. In January 1951, they set up the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (see box) and adopted the idea of twinning that Jean Bareth, the first General Secretary of the CEMR defined as 'the meeting of two municipalities that wish to proclaim that they are associating together to act from a European perspective, to confront their problems and to devote increasingly close ties of friendship (2)'.  


The countries of central and eastern Europe have been increasingly involved in twinning since the 1990s as municipalities in these countries started to actively seek contacts with their counterparts in west European countries. At the same time, the scope of activities within the twinning movement has also widened to encompass new exchanges across virtually all civic activities: economic, social, environmental, technical and cultural.

As the EU of 12 became the EU of 15 in 1995, with Austria, Finland and Sweden as new members, and now, with the prospect of further enlargement – as the countries of central and eastern Europe together with Cyprus and Malta prepare to join – it has repeatedly faced new opportunities and challenges. Town twinning, in forging local-level partnerships, continues to make an important contribution to this dynamic process of bringing European people together.

## Local authorities represented at the European level

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions is a voluntary organisation created in 1951. It works in favour of local freedom and the contribution from local and regional authorities towards European construction. Currently chaired by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the CEMR gathers 44 national associations in 31 European countries.

Its main objectives are to:

- develop a European spirit among local and regional authorities in Europe;
- contribute to the reflection of local and regional authorities on the EU's main political dossiers which affect them directly;
- encourage dialogue, exchange of experience and cooperation between its members;
- disseminate to its members the information from the EU institutions;
- help make the voice of its members heard by the representative institutions and bodies.

Contact  
Sandra Ceciari  
Secrétariat Général du CCRE  
15 Rue de Richelieu  
F-75001 Paris  
Tel. (33-1) 44 50 59 59  
Fax (33-1) 44 50 59 60  
E-mail: [cemr@ccre.org](mailto:cemr@ccre.org)  
Internet: <http://www.ccre.org>

According to Tommy Holm from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities, this is also visible in the Nordic countries: 'I would like to point out three important trends in town twinning in Sweden: firstly, the geographic scope has widened up. The development has been from the traditional Nordic cooperation to the Baltic Sea area and more recently towards almost all EU Member States and the candidate countries. Secondly, twinning has developed from assistance – which was the origin of Nordic twinings and very characteristic for the first wave of twinings with Baltic countries – towards cooperation based on mutual interests. Finally, there is also a clear trend from more symbolic and cultural twinning actions towards more goal-oriented cooperation between the municipalities.'

(1) A mutual assistance pact between Scotland and France, which can be traced back officially to 1295; under this alliance, France and Scotland undertook to invade English territory if either country was attacked by England (Source: BBC, Timeslines, History, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/scotland/auld\\_all.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/timelines/scotland/auld_all.shtml)).

(2) Cited in *L'art du jumelage*, Association française du Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe, 1997.



# The Golden Stars Award

In recognition of the importance of town twinning in bringing the people of European countries together, the European Commission launched in 1993 an annual prize, the Golden Stars of town twinning, for outstanding EU grant-aided projects carried out by twinned towns in the previous year. Poznań, a city of some 600 000 inhabitants located in the west of Poland, is the host to the Golden Stars event in 2003.

The Golden Stars, vintage 2002, recognise projects that, at one extreme, have featured major and well-known European cities – Riga, Bradford, Nuremberg – and, at the other end of the scale, a network of rural communities meeting for a conference in Portugal.

What this year's awards also display is just how varied and innovative town-twinning projects have become. One project concentrated on study visits, sports and cultural activities for people with disabilities; another was concerned with the factors that contribute to the modern city and the city of the future; yet another involved a group of the very youngest European citizens – primary schoolchildren in the Czech Republic and Nuremberg.

## How the selection was made

Ten outstanding twinning initiatives from the preceding year (2002) were selected by an interinstitutional jury. Alongside the overall priorities and conditions of the grant scheme, the jury rested its choice on several criteria including:

- pedagogical merits of the project;
- visibility;
- active participation of the local population;
- concrete results;
- potential for further developments.

The jury also wanted the awarded projects to reflect, as far as possible, the whole diversity of projects and activities in the field of town twinning.

# And the **Winners** of 2002 are



9

**BRADFORD**

## People with disabilities take the initiative

Bradford, a major industrial town in the north of England, has been twinned with the German town of Hamm, in the Ruhr Valley, since 1976. In 2002, a twinning project concerned a small-scale event focusing on the disabled with a view to developing a programme of events for 2003, the European Year of People with Disabilities.

Between 13 and 15 April 2002, 24 people from Hamm converged on Bradford for a programme of cultural, educational, sporting and recreational events. 'Sport and culture have always been central to our relationship with Hamm as its main promoter here in Bradford was responsible for the sports department of the City of Bradford and was really familiar with the sporting situation in Hamm', comments Tim Hirst, Head of Policy, Research and Development for the City of Bradford.

This twinning project is a good and concrete example of empowerment, fostering the active involvement of people with disabilities. Thanks to this event, the 2003 twinning actions are not only aimed at people with disabilities, but also planned by them.



## Contact

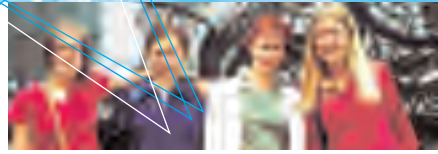
Mr Tim Hirst  
City of Bradford Metropolitan  
District Council  
UK - Bradford BD1 5RW  
Tel. (44-12) 74 75 48 24  
Fax (44-12) 74 75 26 46  
E-mail: [tim.hirst@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:tim.hirst@bradford.gov.uk)  
Internet: <http://www.bradford.gov.uk>

**BREMEN****Europe from the perspective of young people**

Helping young people to understand the role of town twinning and learn how the EU works was the objective, when Bremen together with Szczecin and Gdansk, in Poland, and Riga, in Latvia, organised a special event in Gdansk at the end of June 2002. 'We have had a very special relationship with Gdansk for more than 20 years. We are both part of the Hanseatic Rim, a history we also share with Riga, which joined us later in the town-twinning project', explains Günther Feldhaus, who is responsible for town twinning for the City of Bremen.

The young participants spent a week involved in intensive seminars, discussions and carefully planned role-plays to explore crucial aspects of the EU, its enlargement, citizenship and security. Topics ranged from the legal and economic basis of Europe to its social aspects. The conference was able to provide the young people with a wealth of information about Europe and the process of enlargement so as to allay their fears and give them an opportunity to discuss vital issues. It also covered European action programmes and the regional support centre for non-governmental organisations.

The entire event was an intensive learning experience for the young people who certainly realised that for the EU of the future to work well on behalf of all its citizens, individuals must take an active role.

**Contact**

Mr Günther Feldhaus  
Freie Hansestadt Bremen  
Osterdeich 6  
D-28203 Bremen  
Tel. (49-421) 361 25 07  
Fax (49-421) 361 44 53  
E-mail: gfeldhaus@lzpb-bremen.de  
Internet: <http://www.bremen.de>

**CORMON****Music to the ears**

Encouraged by the cultural association Mitteleuropa, Cormons, a city of 7 500 inhabitants in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of Italy, invited its twinning partners from Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia to take part in a conference on music led by eminent experts on a range of musical styles and disciplines. Some 60 participants from the twinned towns attended the three-day conference in August 2002, which concluded in a concert attracting an audience of thousands.

It was an opportunity for towns – such as Tokaj (Hungary), Friesach (Austria) and Brda (Slovenia) – who have established a long relationship based on their common interests in viti-viniculture to discover what they share beyond their economic activities. The theme of this conference reflected the unifying effect that music – truly a common language – has on all nationalities, despite their different native tongues. The participants, many of whom were speakers of minority languages, were able to unite around the musical heritage that has bound Europeans from time immemorial.

**Contact**

Dott. Maurizio Celotti  
Comune di Cormons  
Piazza XXIV Maggio  
I-34071 Cormons (GO)  
Tel. (39-481) 63 71 03  
Fax (39-481) 63 71 12  
E-mail: [affari.generali@com-cormons.regione.fvg.it](mailto:affari.generali@com-cormons.regione.fvg.it)

**KESZTHELY****Discussing the future of Europe**

Keszthely, on the shores of Lake Balaton in the Zala region of Hungary, organised an event in June 2002 to share the reopening, almost 20 years after its closure, of its Balaton Congress Centre and Theatre – a good opportunity to invite twin towns from the Netherlands, Germany and Poland to share their perspectives on Europe.

The core of this four-day event was a day of Europe, including conferences and an open debate forum on the future of Europe. The point of view was concrete: how the participating towns – Boppard (Germany), Hof Van Twente (the Netherlands), Stary Sacs and Jedrzejow (Poland) – can contribute to it.

The events, prepared in cooperation with local, regional and national key players – regional EU information centre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cultural centres, local associations – gathered a crowd of 3 000 local people and were widely covered by the local media.

**Contact**

Dr Imre Szabo  
Municipality of Keszthely  
H-8360 Keszthely  
Tel. (36-83) 50 55 00  
Fax (36-83) 50 55 01  
E-mail: [keszt@axelero.hu](mailto:keszt@axelero.hu)





## NUREMBERG

### Primary-school children: the future in their hands

# 5



#### Contact

Ms Silvie Preusser  
Municipality of Nuremberg  
Weinmarkt 4  
D-90403 Nuremberg  
Tel. (49-911) 231 5048  
Fax (49-911) 231 5052  
E-mail: [ib@nuernberg.de](mailto:ib@nuernberg.de)

The Bavarian town of Nuremberg organised a week-long meeting in April for two primary school classes: one of 27 children from the host town and the other of 25 children from the twin town Prague in the Czech Republic. The two schools have had a partnership since 1992. A varied programme of learning, play, excursions, music and theatre was built on themes of mutual interest.

Stressing both the importance of local culture and the wider significance of the two towns in Europe as a whole, this event gave children a unique opportunity to celebrate both their national identity and their contribution to the diversity that makes the EU so rich.

Overall, this week provided an opportunity for children to live and learn together; to get to know children from the same school year, but from another country, and cooperate with them in learning situations. In pedagogical terms, the purpose was to help the pupils realise the importance of language for mutual understanding, have a sense of the shared history of the two countries and towns and learn to respect and tolerate cultural diversity.



## POUZAUGES

### Inviting young people to live as 'one of the family'

Pouzauges and surrounding communes in the Vendée played host in July 2002 to 53, mainly young, Romanians from six different towns. This was an exchange based on conviviality, with the guests staying in homes of host families and sharing the experience of daily life in this area rich in natural and cultural heritage.

Beyond the warm spirit of friendship lay an awareness that the different peoples of Europe need to get to know each other on a personal basis – to learn about each other's lives and to consider common concerns, such as environmental protection, local economies, the richness of Europe's cultural diversity, the lessons of history. Undoubtedly, the keen interest that the Romanian visitors showed in this 'French experience' and the curiosity they evoked in their hosts about their own country helped lay foundations for mutual understanding of this kind. 'This is the future. We must learn to open our doors. We Romanians must teach our children what Europe means and what the purpose is of all these exchanges', commented Adina and Liviu, two of the participants.

A concrete lesson on active citizenship was also drawn during this grassroots event: the participants decided to write an essay on the future of Europe and to send it to the President of the Convention (for the Convention, see p. 16).

# 6



#### Contact

Mr Léon Jauzelon  
Association Échanges  
Sans Frontières  
Bel-Air de Linaudière  
F-85700 Pouzauges  
Tel. (33-2) 51 57 03 31  
Fax: (33-2) 51 57 03 31  
E-mail: [echanges85@hotmail.com](mailto:echanges85@hotmail.com)

11

Town twinning

#20

## RIGA

## The city of the future

Riga, capital city of Latvia, organised a high-profile international conference in September with the theme 'the modern city'. With around 300 participants from 15 different countries, the conference focused on the strategic planning of cities. Two crowded days of plenary sessions, workshops, a virtual exhibition and a simultaneous youth conference allowed key aspects of city planning for the future to be addressed.

The conference aimed to develop cooperation and exchange of experience between twinned towns, European institutions, local governments and entrepreneurs. Beginning with a plenary session and continuing with workshops, the conference covered a range of topics including strategies and actions affecting young people's health, drug prevention in Riga and visions of the city of the future.

The simultaneous youth conference stressed the importance of involving young people in the process of planning cities for the future. A very well-orchestrated public relations campaign assured a high visibility of the events, including the creation of a virtual exhibition that invited the population to participate in the debate through an online forum.

**Contact**

Mr Mareks Zeltins  
Riga City Council  
KR. Valdemara Str. 3  
LV-1539 Riga  
Tel. (37-1) 702 61 43  
Fax (37-1) 702 63 86  
E-mail: mareks@rcc.lv



## SAMUEL

## Bringing rural communities together

Samuel, a rural Portuguese town, hosted a conference in July for the 15 members of the Charter of Europe network of rural communities. Delegations, 179 people in all, comprised representatives of the professions and young people from the communities concerned. The conference topics addressed the issues of migration and of the voluntary sector, topics currently on the local agenda in these rural communities.

Each of the communities – drawn from Belgium, Ireland, France, England, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Luxembourg and, the hosts, Portugal – gave a presentation on the current situation of their town or village. The floor was also given to immigrants, as well as employers with immigrants in their companies. The conference turned out to be a particularly successful forum for exchange of experience based on concrete examples.

**Contact**

Mr Augusto Jorge Rainho  
Junta de Freguesia de Samuel  
Duques de Aveiro  
P-3130 Soure  
Tel. (351) 239 58 72 10  
Fax (351) 239 58 00 03  
E-mail: a.c.r.samuel@mail.telepac.pt



## SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA

### From cork to Europe

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For a strong and lasting relationship cities need an effective start, an official event that will lay the foundations of the town twinning and open up the initial debate. This is why Santa Maria da Feira (a town situated between the Douro and Vouga rivers in northern Portugal), which embarked on a new twinning partnership with Targovishte in Bulgaria, decided to mark the occasion of the twinning ceremony in October with a conference on twinning and on EU enlargement. As well as 43 representatives of Targovishte, the conference was attended by 27 people from the town's French twinning partner, Joué-les-Tours.

But how did two cities so distant from each other decide to twin? 'It all comes from the links one of the companies in Santa Maria da Feira built with Targovishte', explains Maria Rosário, from the twinning committee of Santa Maria da Feira. 'Subearus, a medium-sized company specialising in the production of cork for bottle stoppers, established relationships with Targovishte wine producers. As a consequence of their decision a few years ago, to create a joint venture with partners from Targovishte in the field of bottling, the mayor of the Bulgarian city wrote to try to set up even closer cooperation. The twinning ceremonies firstly took place in Bulgaria, in May 2002, then here, in Santa Maria da Feira. As for the future, we have already planned a youth exchange in July 2003 and we are also preparing a business trip to Targovishte'.

The well-planned programme, with active contribution of different local players, provided the Bulgarian delegation with profound knowledge on local administration (finances, public services), local business, local culture and traditions in their new twin town, which constitutes a solid starting point for this new twinning.



#### Contact

Mr Alfredo Oliveira Henriques  
Municipality of Santa Maria da Feira  
Praça da Republica, Apartado 135  
P-4520-909 Santa Maria da Feira  
Tel. (351) 256 37 08 87  
Fax (351) 256 37 08 04  
E-mail: santamariadafeira@cm-feira.pt



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## JASZ-NAGYKUN SZOLNOK COUNTY

### Making the most of town twinning

European citizenship and identity, national and regional cultures in the European Union, good practice in environmental protection and the management of town twinning were leading topics at a training seminar bringing together representatives of 39 towns from nine European countries in Szolnok, Hungary on 22–23 September 2002.

The issues tackled were based on concrete examples from the participating towns and regions. With experts present, the programme provided all participants with new ideas for action in their own towns. A signing ceremony for four new twinning charters, an exhibition on all the twinning activities of the towns in the host regions and various cultural programmes gave extra interest to the event.

The seminar – widely covered by local media – demonstrated how a regional authority can offer towns and municipalities practical help in developing their twinning activities and creating new twinings.



#### Contact

Mr István Tokár  
General Assembly of  
Jasz-Nagykun Szolnok County  
2, Kossuth Lajos Ut.  
H-5000 Szolnok  
Tel. (36) 56 50 52 52  
Fax (36) 56 50 52 53

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#20 Town twinning

# 'Man plays the most vital role'



↪ Interview with Ryszard Grobelny,  
Mayor of Poznań



**'Mr Grobelny, as Mayor of the city, Poznań – host to the ceremony of the Golden Stars Awards – how do you understand the significance of town twinning?'**

'I think that the partnership of cities plays a fundamental role especially now, when the new members are about to join the European Union. Town twinning brings our future European partners closer to us. It gives us a foray into the structures of the European Union and a chance to learn what we can expect when we become members. Through the realisation of joint projects we learn to cooperate, trust and support each other. Our partners get to know us, and our expectations, and they can see for themselves what we really are like.'

To my mind, in view of the unprecedented scale of enlargement of the European Union, town twinning plays a historic role and it is an excellent tool, not only because of its popularity, but also because it is implemented at grassroots level – among the citizens of our cities.'

**'And from your personal point of view?'**

'In all our contacts, man plays the most vital role. It is crucial to get to know and to understand one another, and partnerships constitute an excellent basis for the process of familiarisation. Thanks to such contacts, we are able to refute commonly believed myths and negative stereotypes. The crucial processes in this respect take place especially within direct exchange programmes concerning the youth and citizens of our towns. Youth exchange has another significant aspect: it is 'an investment in the future of a common Europe'. Young people who have a chance to participate in exchange programmes today – and, as a result, to get to know their peers in Europe better – will in future decide upon the shape of Europe. I am strongly convinced that, thanks to the experience gained, and the friendships established, it will be much easier for them to build our common European home, free from all prejudice, xenophobia and hatred, and based on the understanding and respect for various cultures.'

**'Poznań has been collaborating with many twin cities. What are the main achievements of this cooperation?'**

'Poznań has concluded 11 partnership agreements, eight of which are with European cities. Obviously the dominant, and concurrently, a very crucial aspect of partnership cooperation is realised through educational, cultural, and most recently, sports exchanges. Another important element of our cooperation is the barter of experience in the sphere of the functioning of local government and the provision of city services.'

**'Can you cite the most intensive contacts Poznań had in the context of town twinning?'**

'I would point to our partners from Hannover, Nottinghamshire and Rennes. Hannover has been our reliable partner for 25 years now. The most important spheres of cooperation have been, and still are, the cultural exchange and youth exchange programmes, as well as the collaboration between institutions taking care of the people with disabilities. Most recently, lots of joint activities in the domain of environment protection have also been taking place.'

At the moment, the majority of projects have been undertaken in cooperation with Nottinghamshire. Let me underline specifically the exchange programme between the two town halls that originated in 1999. The programme concerns exchange of experience in such spheres as office management, ISO standards, human resource management and internal office control.'

The projects in cooperation with Rennes are also very interesting. Since 1993 the House of Brittany has been operating very efficiently in Poznań. Through numerous events organised there, the inhabitants of Poznań can get to know the culture of Brittany and France. A very significant and measurable effect of our cooperation is the Polish-French Postgraduate School of Management, or the annual apprenticeship courses for the employees of local government institutions effected within the framework of the so-called Summer University. Our mutual contacts in the sphere of health protection and welfare institutions are of equal significance.'



# Comenius Week 2003

## A celebration of cooperation in school education



### Contact

Alison Crabb  
Directorate-General for  
Education and Culture  
Tel. (32-2) 295 92 23  
Fax (32-2) 296 86 02  
E-mail: Alison.Crabb@cec.eu.int

From 8 to 12 November, Brussels will reverberate to the sounds of over 180 enthusiastic children and their teachers taking part in the central event of the Comenius Week 2003. Hailing from all corners of Europe (30 countries in all), they will descend upon the Belgian capital to present their projects and work together with other children, some of whom are from vastly different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

This year's Comenius Week, organised under this specific action of the Socrates education programme, aims not only to celebrate European cooperation in school education already underway, but also to make new applicants aware of the possibilities on offer. European Commission project coordinator, Alison Crabb, pointed out that while the Brussels get-together was the 'headline' event, activities being undertaken by schools at local, regional and national levels are of just as much, or even greater value in highlighting the activities which can be supported.

Comenius School Partnership projects cover a wide range of topics, from getting to know different languages, music and traditions to studying environmental or social issues in school neighbourhoods. Other Comenius actions allow for networking the results, and address European teacher training.

To take part in this kind of partnership, schools make an initial contact with their Socrates national agency, which can help them find like-minded schools in other participating countries. Regular communication between these schools is typically by e-mail, with actual project meetings and exchange visits also taking place. The languages used in the individual project are decided by consensus, with pupils in some cases making their first contact with less widely-used European languages.

In 2002, Comenius School Partnerships attracted over 10 000 schools. Other Comenius actions provided more than 6 000 individual mobility grants for in-service teacher training and funded over 1 000 language assistants.

Anyone involved in school education and who would like to know more about Comenius and the Comenius Week 2003 should contact their Socrates national agency; details available on <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/socrates/nat-est.html>



## Art — a mirror of our feelings

### How one Comenius project uses art to teach creativity

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Town twinning  
#20

'Hug me, Face your fears and Funny face' is the eye-catching title of one successful project carried out by four partner schools under the Comenius action of the Socrates education programme, where children experimented with using art as a medium to expose and express the feelings of pupils from different countries.

The project, pioneered in Finland and coordinated by the school Siekkilän koulu in Mikkeli, showed many children believe that only by being good at the sciences can they solve problems and that the solution must be the right one. Project coordinator Marja-Leena Bilund believes that there are hundreds of right ways and that artistic expression helps all children to gain a better understanding of alternatives.

In a three-part mission which started in 1999 and ended in the summer of 2002, children from four schools in Austria, the

Czech Republic, Finland and France worked under the themes Hug me, Face your fears and Funny face and let their art express their thoughts.

In the first stage ('Hug me'), they put together an art exhibition of paintings, sculpture, songs, videos and books to demonstrate how children live in their different countries. In the second stage ('Face your fears'), art was used as a matrix for children to expose their worries in the face of recognised terrors such as violence, war, crocodiles, spiders, darkness, the unknown and loneliness. To make the subject seem even more real, teachers suggested the children work with fragile materials, commonly, glass. The third level ('Funny face') suggested that if you smile, then the world will smile with you and children found that visual expression could be just as imaginative and useful as words.

The exhibition was shown at each of the participating schools and demonstrated that art, at the very least, appeals to all age levels, promotes understanding and does so by bypassing the language barrier.



### Contact

Marja-Leena Bilund  
Siekkilän koulu  
Siekkilänkatu 8-10  
FIN-50120 Mikkeli  
Tel. (358-15) 194 28 98  
Fax (358-15) 194 28 21





# The man — and woman — on the street have their say

Everywhere, and at all levels, organisations representing ordinary people are making themselves heard and felt. In Europe, certainly, it is now almost inconceivable for businesses, and more importantly, governments, not to consult representatives of civil society over major new projects.

Basically, civil society constitutes an important mechanism for debate between those in a position to take decisions and those who are going to be affected by them. This is abundantly clear in the building of Europe, where a tribute to its status is enshrined in the European treaties with articles obliging the Commission to consult civil society early in the process of certain legislation making.

Civil society appears in all sorts of guises. It runs the gamut of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), grassroots movements, trade unions and special interest groups and it embodies a certain type of activity that operates somewhere between the government, the business world, and the family. Beyond that, it includes social and political movements and furthers involvement and social commitment.



## The Convention: an open process for drawing up a constitution



In response to charges from its citizens that the European Union is too opaque, EU leaders decided to go back to the drawing board and establish a body that would set out just what the European Union is about. The Convention on the Future of Europe was given the task of drawing up a clear and understandable constitutional treaty for a Europe of 25 members or more.

Under the terms of the so-called Laeken Declaration (named after the place where the European Council was held at the end of 2001), governments acknowledged that one of the main challenges was 'how to bring citizens, and primarily the young, closer to the European design and the European institutions.'

So, with the first proper session of the Convention in March of last year, began one of the most open processes ever for drawing up a constitution. The monthly (now twice a month) plenary session of the 105-member body, with observers from civil society, national and European parliamentarians and government representatives,

has been open to all from the beginning. It is chaired by former French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who, along with his 12-member presidium or steering committee, guides the work of the Convention now in the article-making phase of its work.

Civil society was involved from the very beginning. Called the 'listening phase' by Mr Giscard d'Estaing, representatives from civil society, including NGOs, business people and academics all had a chance to put their views to the Convention. There was also a special Youth Convention, composed on the same model as its 'older' counterpart, which met over a four-day period in July 2002.

Much of the forum input from civil society is through the internet. As well as being able to attend the plenary sessions, interested observers can also submit ideas, suggestions and propositions to the Convention. They are available for all Convention members to see; and some of the organisations who took an active part were consulted by the specialised working

groups in the Convention tasked with looking at particular aspects of the Future of Europe debate, such as Social Europe or the role of national parliaments.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable things the Convention has done so far is to agree about how to simplify EU law. It may not sound like the most interesting of topics, but EU legislation, notorious for its utter complexity, will be far clearer and more concise in the future. This, and other suggestions that are being acted upon, have come about as a direct result of taking citizens' needs into account.

The Convention is due to finish its work on the draft constitutional treaty in June. From there it will go to governments for fine-tuning at an intergovernmental conference.



# With a little help

from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture

The European Commission, which has the job of proposing all EU law, is well aware of its responsibility towards civil society and the importance of the Europe of tomorrow being built by its citizens. This is particularly true for the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.



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**T**he Directorate-General for Education and Culture naturally comes into constant contact with all sectors and age groups across Europe and thus regularly promotes dialogue with civil society. Indeed, a specific unit is dedicated to civil society inside the Directorate-General. Its core activities are financing information and communication projects on European issues proposed by NGOs. The selected projects have to fall within the requirements of the calls for proposals that the unit makes each year to three sectors of civil society: NGOs, federations and associations of European interest, and trade unions.

The Directorate-General also takes the initiative in organising special events on civil society. A prime example of this practical work was the evaluation meeting with civil society organised by the Education and Culture DG in October of last year. This brought together some 180 representatives from non-governmental organisations and trade unions at the European level to discuss the role of civil society in a future EU.

To help civil society organisations better inform themselves about other like-minded groups and activities, the Commission has set up a service called Consultation, the European Commission and civil society or Coneccs for short. This database, managed by the Commission's Secretariat-General, has two strands – a list of consultative

bodies in which civil society organisations take part and a list of civil-society organisations themselves.

The Coneccs web site <sup>(1)</sup> was set up in response to a goal the Commission set itself in the 2000 paper on 'reforming the Commission'. Its overall aim is to make dialogue with civil societies more transparent. It provides basic necessary information, such as how often the consultative bodies meet, who is chairing the group and contact details. Only consultative bodies involving civil-society organisations are used.

They include both the formal bodies set up by the Commission, such as the advisory committee on Leonardo da Vinci, and bodies that the Commission consults, such as private companies or universities. A lot of bodies are active in the field of education and culture alongside the Leonardo da Vinci programme, for example: the committee for sectoral dialogue 'Culture', the European forum for transparency of vocational qualifications, or the Youth programme committee. Reflecting the changing nature of society itself, the site is constantly updated. New contacts are added, while the information from established contacts is checked and renewed.

Other projects undertaken include the web site for information and exchange, launched in February 2003, with information on Commission initiatives in this area

and links with national initiatives, both public and private. There are also contributions from experts on subjects ranging from 'e-literacy' to the situation in the candidate countries.

Culture and societal exchange is also promoted across all the European Commission services. For example, the energy programme *The city of tomorrow and cultural heritage* encourages the setting up of research networks for safeguarding cultural heritage across Europe.

## Contact

Harald Hartung  
Head of Unit  
Directorate-General for Education  
and Culture  
Tel. (32-2) 296 54 50  
Fax (32-2) 299 45 77  
E-mail: Harald.Hartung@cec.eu.int

<sup>(1)</sup> See: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/civil\\_society/coneccs/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/civil_society/coneccs/index_en.htm).

# Civil society from two viewpoints: parallel interview

The conference 'Citizens, players in European integration', held in Brussels on 7 and 8 October 2002 enabled participants to listen to many speakers representing civil society. Among these were Raymond Van Ermen, rapporteur for the European civil society forum, and Emilio Gabaglio, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), who agreed to explain their perception of this event and the role of civil society in European construction.



Emilio Gabaglio,  
General Secretary  
of the European Trade Union  
Confederation



Raymond Van Ermen,  
rapporteur for  
the European civil society  
forum

## What were your expectations of the conference: 'Citizens, players in European integration'?

Raymond Van Ermen: First of all, to find out whether the European Commission has a single, coherent strategy for its relations with civil society. Moreover, opening a debate with the Commission on the prospects for the Constitution, given that a platform for dialogue already exists and was set up on the initiative of the Economic and Social Committee.

**Emilio Gabaglio:** At the time when the European Convention is in the process of drafting the constitution for the new reunited Europe, it is more necessary than ever to step up the efforts to create a European public area, which is still largely missing. From the outset, the conference, which brings together mainly European networks of organisations representing civil society seemed to me to be a very useful opportunity from this viewpoint.

## To what extent were these expectations met?

**RVE:** On the first point, I regret having to say that I observed that the directorates-general are still operating, in their relations with civil society, like a number of

'cliques' with their own 'devotees'. The debate with Commissioner Barnier (!), a member of the Convention, was interesting. But we cannot yet say that there is a 'common front' between the Commission and civil society on a number of issues.

**EG:** The conference allowed useful exchanges between the participants, as well as sending a message to the Convention (?) on the expectations of civil society for the future of the European Union. The problem is to ensure that it doesn't stop at Brussels, and that organisations are capable to act as information relays all over Europe. As the European Trade Union Confederation, we are in the process of doing this through a whole series of initiatives, including the countries that are accession applicants.

## What are the main concerns of civil society in relation to European construction?

**RVE:** The events associated with the Iraq crisis and transatlantic relations show that a priority is becoming essential: to construct an 'east-west' dialogue within the Union. From this point of view, the October meeting which brought together mostly the 'westerners' of the enlarged Union must be followed by meetings where the participation of players from

civil society from countries that will be members in the years to come is guaranteed.

**EG:** Unlike certain preconceived notions, I remain convinced that citizens want more of Europe, provided that it offers genuine value added for the guarantee of their fundamental rights and the improvement of their living and working conditions. The Europe that is closer to the people, that we talk about so often, is precisely a more efficient, transparent and democratic Union, capable of promoting these advances in everyday life.

## From that viewpoint, do the subjects covered by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture strike a particular chord?

**RVE:** Anything that can contribute to 'reuniting' Europe in terms of vision, culture and hopes is becoming essential. It is obvious that from this point of view, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture has an immense field to cover.

**EG:** All the sectors that come within the scope of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture are of increasing importance for creating a citizens' Europe, as well as enhancing the European identity. It is clear that in this context, the initia-







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tives and programmes in the fields of education and training are essential. Having said that, I think that young people should be targeted more.

**What are the priorities of the organisation that you represent with regard to dialogue between the European Union – and particularly the European Commission – and civil society?**

**RVE:** The project of European participatory democracy remains to be started. The work by the European Commission on governance was a first step, but it is not sufficient. In a knowledge-based, networked society, dealing with transparency (which is important, of course) is no longer enough. The Permanent Forum is proposing an article on participatory democracy to the Convention, which would define multiple projects (public survey, right of evaluation, right of legislative initiative, European referendum, access to justice, right of association, the corporate citizen, the open method of coordination).

**EG:** As a representative of European workers, ETUC aims primarily at a European Union capable of promoting full employment through sustainable economic, social and environmental development. Europe has great economic potential from which it is not yet benefiting. Our efforts are

aimed at coordinated governance of economic, social and employment policy.

The Union is increasingly an integrated economic area, but except for the currency, we do not have efficient instruments to manage it in the common interest.

**Among the instruments that are encouraging dialogue between the European Union and civil society, which are the most promising?**

**RVE:** The system set up by the Directorate-General for Trade for its dialogue with civil society is an interesting benchmark. The Permanent Forum for Civil Society is in favour of replacement of the Economic and Social Committee by a sustainable human development committee. It is a matter of highlighting, on the one hand, that the relationship between the Union and its citizens should not be limited to the market sphere (producer, consumer), and on the other hand, new missions must find a forum for a dialogue with the institutions. We are thinking in particular of evaluations of strategic impact analyses and the evaluation of the implementation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. We should also review the system for management of contracts awarded to non-governmental organisations, companies or associations of companies and researchers. The present system is particularly deficient in terms of 'return of

experience', and 'dissemination of best practice'.

**EG:** There are many channels for dialogue between the Union and civil society. They range from information to consultation and the involvement of civil society in decision-making. This panoply of means allows the necessary adaptation in the various fields of European integration. As a trade union movement, our priority is social consultation with the European authorities combined with the social dialogue between trade unions and employers. Recently Commissioner Reding, responsible for education and culture, and the Greek Presidency took the initiative of broadening the consultation with the social partners in education and training. That is a first in these fields, which I welcome.

(1) Michel Barnier, European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Institutional Reform.  
(2) About the Convention, see article on page 16.





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### The European Commission's support to town twinning actions

Which activities are funded under the Commission scheme?  
Who can submit an application? How to apply correctly for a grant?  
Town twinning user guides, annual calls for proposals  
and other practical information can be downloaded  
from the following Internet site:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/towntwin/call\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/towntwin/call_en.html)

### Education and culture at a glance

Every two months, the online newsletter *Education and culture at a glance* provides an overview of policy developments, programme implementation, key events and publications in all the areas covered by the Directorate-General for Education and Culture.

Available in English, French and German at:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/publ/news/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/publ/news/index_en.html)

