



# TOWN TWINNING GOLDEN STARS AWARDS



**Ján Figel,**

Member of the European Commission responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism.

**The European Union** brings together 450 million citizens from twenty five different countries, reflecting a great cultural, historical and linguistic variety. They experience Europe in different ways according to their local environment and cultural background.

How can a synergy between all these individuals be created?  
How can a common feeling of belonging be stimulated?

By making people meet, by giving them the opportunity to get acquainted with people from other countries, their cultures, ways how they live, and languages which they speak, by becoming friends or partners, by exchanging experiences, by working together by setting up common projects.

Local communities are particularly important actors for organizing such meetings. They can provide the grass root support to European policies and strategies that are conceived at a higher level and therefore not always well understood.

Local communities have assumed this role from the beginning. By setting up twinning with towns in other Member States they have played an active role in developing the mobility of European citizens.

Town twinning has developed into a strong tool to create active European citizenship. Since 1989 the European Commission provides financial support to town twinning projects all over the European Union.

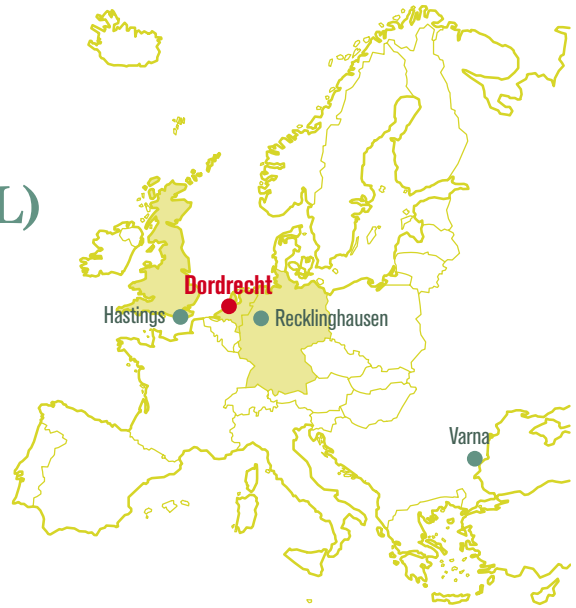
Hundreds of thousands of Europeans have thus been able to meet fellow Europeans and develop contacts in many areas of their life - in culture, social services, administration, sports, education, economy etc.

Every year the Commission selects a number of outstanding twinning projects that have contributed in a special way to European integration. The following ten projects are the winners of the Golden Stars of Town Twinning awards this time.





# DORDRECHT (NL)



## Disabled people in a town - Revised policies

- The conference organised within the framework of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003 between Dordrecht (NL), Hastings (UK), Recklinghausen (DE) and Varna (BG).
- The participants: representatives of local administrations from twinned towns directly dealing with the policies regarding disabled people.
- The programme included presentations of Dordrecht's revised policy on disabilities, methodology of its implementation, exchange of best practice with contributions of local experts from participating towns.
- Subjects discussed: impact of disabilities on the every-day life of people, in particular concerning housing, work, support care and welfare.
- Study visits to several local support organisations helping disabled people gave the opportunity to see the theory being implemented in practice.
- Follow-up: establishing of a new centre for disabled people in Varna.

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### PARTICIPATING TOWNS

Hastings (UK)  
Recklinghausen (DE)  
Varna (BG)



# ORIMATTILA (FI)



## Young citizens - Exploring ways to influence local decision making

- Conference involved young representatives from the twin towns: Orimattila (FI), Durbuy (BE), Kobylnica (PL), Östhammar (SE), Uusikaupunki (FI), Valga (EE) and Weissenburg (DE).
- Subject: Young people-young citizens – their living conditions and opportunities of influencing and active involvement in the decision-making at the local level.
- Composition of the conference: raw of seminars on topics such as active local participation, support networks for young people, measures to help educational drop-outs, racism, extremist movements, including presentations by experts and by the young participants.
- Presentations of examples of successful co-operation at the local level between twinned towns and comparison of the living conditions of young people in the countries involved in the project.
- The conference showed to the young people the significance of the influence they may have on their own future through the local active participation.

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### PARTICIPATING TOWNS

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Östhammar (SE)  
Uusikaupunki (FI)  
Valga (EE)  
Weissenburg (DE)





# SPECCHIA (IT)



## Start for a new twinning-co-operation on environment, alternative energy and bio-agriculture

- Conference between Specchia (IT), Busko Zdrój (PL), Haukipudas (FI), Stenheim (DE) and Szigetszentmiklós (HU) in the framework of a new twinning.
- Key topics: alternative energy, environmental protection and bio-agriculture discussed during a plenary session with contributions of qualified speakers and experts.
- Each session followed by a thematic study visit in the region, which gave the participants an overview of the implementation of the discussed policies in the local municipalities. Study visits encouraged an informal exchange of ideas between participants and opened up possibilities of future co-operation.
- The institutional session brought together local and regional representatives as well as representatives from the Polish and Finnish embassies to discuss town twinning in the context of EU enlargement.
- The conference was a starting point for a new more strategic co-operation between five municipalities including traditional town twinning.

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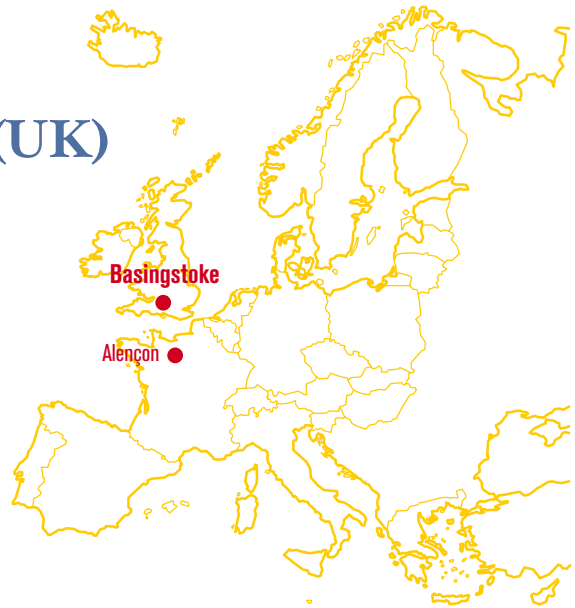
### PARTICIPATING TOWNS

Busko Zdrój (PL)  
Haukipudas (FI)  
Stenheim (DE)  
Szigetszentmiklós (HU)



# BASINGSTOKE (UK)

## Alençon (FR)



### Town twinning - Contribution to mobility of young people

- The project organized in the framework of a school exchange between students from last grade of the secondary school from Alençon (FR) and college students in Basingstoke
- The overall theme: mobility of young people in view of their education, professional career and cross-cultural awareness
- The programme composed of wide range of activities encouraging active participation and providing information in the foreign language particularly interesting for young people:
  - joint classes in the British college (comparison of school systems)
  - recruitment workshops and real job interviews in the Recruitment Office of the City Council
  - interviews with the Council employees
  - study visits in local companies in view of a future job search
  - visits in the recruitment agencies (searching for job advertisements)
  - photographic project – exploring local culture and sights
- The students were encouraged to communicate in a foreign language through accommodation in the host families and joint interactive projects.
- The project was an opportunity for young people to explore the labour market and to experience real working conditions in a foreign country and an encouragement to mobility in the professional career.

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# ALHAMA DE GRANADA (ES) Bagnères-de-Bigorre (FR)



## Young people – Global Social Issues

- Project that brought together young people from Bagnères-de-Bigorre (FR) and Alhama de Granada (ES) for a series of discussions, meetings and study visits to deal with issues such as immigration, elderly, environment, drugs, civil protection, role of NGOs with specific focus on global social issues.
- The participants visited an immigration centre to meet with some detainees that have fled illegally across the Straits of Gibraltar.
- Young people visited an environmental protection organisation to find out more about the variety of flora and fauna in Spain, and a retirement home to learn the emotional needs of the elderly.
- A meeting with a drugs awareness group was organised to discuss the danger of the drug consumption among young people, particularly of the “recreational” type of drugs.
- The programme included also a meeting with a group of volunteers active in Civil Protection to learn how they help people in the local community.

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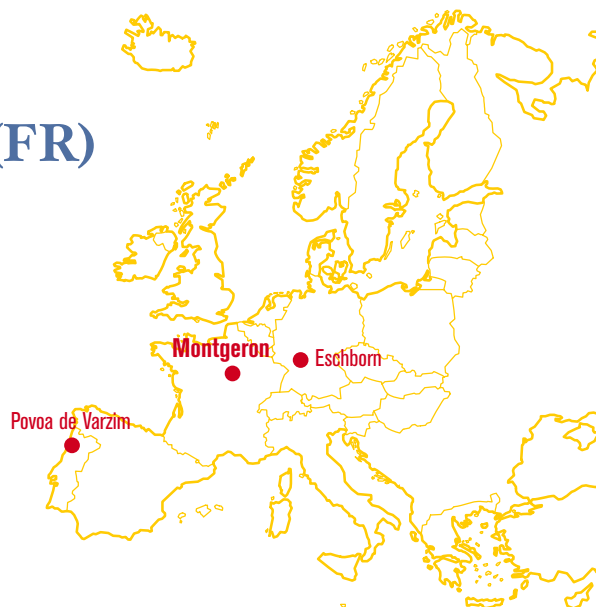
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# MONTGERON (FR)

## Povoa de Varzim (PT)

## Eschborn (DE)



## Integration of disabled people within local communities

- Meeting between Montgeron (FR), Povoa de Varzim (PT) and Eschborn (DE) organised in the framework of the European Year of People with Disabilities (2003) regarding the integration of disabled people into the local communities.
- The aim of the project was to raise awareness among people concerning the problems a physically or mentally disabled person has to cope with in their every-day life, such as low accessibility of public transport or buildings.
- The project was composed of round table debates, workshops and thematic visits focused on the social integration of disabled people at school or in the workplace. Each town presented the regulatory and legislative situation in their country as well as common projects and shared experiences.
- The programme included also accompanying measures related to the theme "people with disabilities" such as involvement of the local cinema and organisation of an exhibition prepared by disabled people from all three twinned towns. Both events ensured active participation of local population in the project.
- One of the achievements of the meeting was to establish professional relations between the institutions of the twinned towns responsible for disabilities.

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# MOLDOVITA (RO)

## Kruikeke (BE)



### Local youth activities - A tool for better future

- Objective of the meeting: exchange of best practice, knowledge and experience in view of local youth activities. Meeting between young people active in youth movements from Kruikeke (BE) and Moldovita (RO).
- The overall theme: "Acquaintance with Europe". The programme included theory oriented morning sessions followed by the afternoon practise oriented activities as well as an exhibition about Europe.
- Important problems discussed: establishing long-term youth movements, improving social structures in Romania, finding solutions to involve actively young people from remote villages of the Romanian municipality.
- Both towns recognized the need to learn from each other and to foster links between their municipalities in order to establish solid co-operation and to motivate the participants to become more active in improving their own future.

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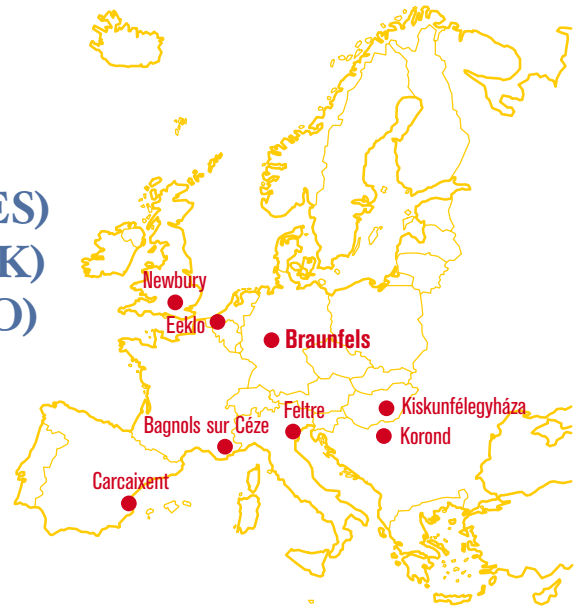
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# BRAUNFELS (DE)

Bagnols sur Cèze (FR), Carcaixent (ES)  
Eeklo (BE), Feltre (IT), Newbury (UK)  
Kiskunfélegyháza (HU), Korond (RO)



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## Citizens' contribution to the future of Europe

- The subject of the meeting: The European Convention - active contribution of citizens to the future of Europe.
- Invited twin towns: Bagnols sur Cèze (FR), Carcaixent (ES), Eeklo (BE), Feltre (IT), Kiskunfélegyháza (HU), Newbury (UK) and Korond (RO).
- Participants in the debates were mainly young representatives from the twinned towns as well as decision-makers at the regional, national and European level.
- The focal point of the meeting was a plenary debate on the role of citizens by creating the future of Europe. The discussions were based on the results of a survey with questions on enlargement and the European Constitution. The results of the questionnaire were analysed followed by an interactive debate between young participants and decision makers.
- One of the highlights of the event was the presentation of an essay on the future of Europe by a young Hungarian student (in German language).



# ŠIAULIAI (LT) Częstochowa (PL), Fredericia (DK), Jelgava (LV), Etten Leur (NL)



## Education and integration through sport

- Meeting organised in view of the European Year of Education through Sport 2004.
- The project involved citizens active in sport and local representatives from twinned towns: Częstochowa (PL), Etten Leur (NL), Fredericia (DK), Jelgava (LV).
- The event took place in the framework of the city festival “Šiauliai Days 2003” that brought together over 1800 people from nine countries.
- The programme included plenary debate on “Sport as a tool for social integration of young people”, a photo exhibition “Sports bridges people”, several sports and cultural events and workshops for young participants.
- Local representatives discussed issues related to the European integration, youth exchanges and planning of the future cooperation at the local level between twinned towns. Particular attention was paid to the role of sport by the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups.
- The project resulted in a positive exchange of specialist views and ideas to be implemented in the coming years.

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# WUPPERTAL (DE)

## Košice (SK)



### “STRANGE” – Theatre, film, dance to tackle intolerance

- The project under the general theme “Strange” involved young people from two twinned towns: Košice (SK) and Wuppertal (DE). It included three subprojects: theatre performance, dance performance and a short video film.
- The project was composed of two phases with the concept: “Košice writes - Wuppertal plays”. Young people from Slovakia wrote scripts in German and the best ideas were implemented by their German colleagues.
- The overall theme of the project was “Strange” in the context of the fight against intolerance and ignorance towards anybody or anything “different”. These topics were followed-up during the joint discussions on fight against racism and xenophobia.
- German students were responsible to turn the scripts into a short video film, theatre play and dance choreography. All students worked actively together in the workshops sharing ideas for preparation of performances.
- The project was an excellent example of a successful contribution to the European integration achieved through joint artistic activities.

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