



The transfer of cultural values from one generation to the next is a major precondition for the survival of any culture, and the participation of children and young people alongside adults and established artists in cultural activities stimulates them in their creative urge. Acting upon these ideas, it was decided to set up The International Panevezys Region Children and Youth Arts Festival, in Lithuania. The main goals were to improve the artistic level of the young performers, to bring European culture to the city and the region of Panevezys, the fifth largest city in Lithuania, as well as making Lithuanian art and culture available to a wider audience throughout the rest of Europe.

With the support of local businesses, the City Municipality, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture and the EU funding for town-twinning, the festival succeeded during a short week in May 2001 to bring together more than 2500 young and established artists and performers from European twin-towns as diverse as Nyiregyhaza (Hungary), Kristianstad and Kalmar (Sweden), Kolding (Denmark), London (UK) and Lunen (Germany), as well as from the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius.

On different venues, in conference halls, galleries and theatres around the city, activities took place involving music and song, photography, painting, literature, videoart and theatre. And at The Panevezys Music Conservatory a conference entitled "Cultural Education of Youth in Countries of Europe: Differences and Similarities" took place. And at the closing concert, about 600 musicians from all the participating countries joined each other on stage, performing everything from Bach, Beethoven and Elgar, over Gershwin and gospel spirituals to Otis Redding and Freddy Mercury.

The festival was by everyone deemed to be a tremendous success, and the organisers and the city mayor promptly invited all groups and artists to take part in the second edition of "We are Coming" festival in 2003, which is scheduled to coincide with the 500th anniversary of Panevezy. Thus, apart from forming a new permanent institution in the cultural life of Panevezy and Lithuania, it also succeeded in establishing a stabile framework for co-operation between the city of Panevezys and its partner cities in Europe. "We are joining Europe by bringing in beauty, arts and creation," was the joyous reaction of one local organiser.

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Countries involved : Lithuania, the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary and Germany

Persons involved : 2500