

Brussels, 3 February 2005

Town Twinning : Commissioner Figel awards “Golden Stars” today to ten projects involving 27 towns

The “Golden Stars of Town Twinning” are awarded today in Brussels in the framework of a Consultation Forum on the future action programme to promote active European Citizenship. The Forum – which takes place in Brussels on 3 and 4 February - gathers over 300 participants - representing local and regional authorities, NGOs, trade unions, associations, federations and other umbrella organisations - to discuss orientations of the future programme.

“Town twinning is an excellent example of what, by sharing their different experiences, citizens can do at a local level to bring about greater integration of Europe”, said Ján Figel, European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism, at the opening ceremony of the Forum.

Ten outstanding town twinning initiatives have been selected by the European Commission, based on the following criteria: pedagogical merits of the project, visibility, active participation of the local population, concrete results and potential for further developments.

- In the category of “**conferences and seminars**”, the **3 winners** of the Golden Stars of Town Twinning are:

Dordrecht (NL) for organising a conference, where the town presented its revised policy on disabilities. The Dutch organisers had invited their partner towns of Hastings (UK), Recklinghausen (DE), and Varna (BG) to exchange experiences and best practices.

Orimattila (FI) for organising a conference to discuss the issues that affect today’s young people. Comparisons were made with Orimattila’s twin towns from Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden, all actively involved in the project.

Specchia (IT) for organising a conference on three key topics: alternative energy, environmental protection and bio-agriculture. Other participants came from Specchia’s twin towns Busko Zdrój (PL), Haukipudas (FI), Stenheim (DE) and Szigetszentmiklós (HU).

- In the category of “**citizens’ meetings**”, the **24 winners** of the Golden Stars of Town Twinning are:

The **city of Basingstoke** (UK) with its twin city **Alençon** (FR) for an exchange between French and British high-school students. The key theme of the event was the professional and educational mobility of young people. The programme included recruitment workshops, visits to local companies and job interviews.

Alhama de Granada (ES) for inviting young people from **Bagnères-de-Bigorre** (FR) for a series of meetings and visits to address such issues as immigration, the needs of the elderly, dangers of drug taking, environment and civil protection.

Moldovita (RO) and **Kruibeke** (BE) for a meeting of young people and youth workers. The purpose was to facilitate the exchange of best practice and experiences with regard to youth movements and activities. A youth camp was built up to put theories into practice.

Wuppertal (DE) for a joint artistic project (theatre and dance) under the general theme "Strange" with young people from **Košice** (SK).

Braunfels (DE) for a meeting with a network of the following twinned towns: **Bagnols sur Cèze** (FR), **Carcaixent** (ES), **Eeklo** (BE), **Feltre** (IT), **Kiskunfélegyháza** (HU), **Newbury** (UK), and **Korond** (RO). The event focussed on the role of the young citizens in creating the future of Europe.

Šiauliai (LT) for a forum where "Sport as a tool for social integration of young people" was discussed with representatives from **Czestochowa** (PL), **Etten Leur** (NL), **Fredericia** (DK), and **Jelgava** (LV).

The town of **Montgeron** (FR) for a meeting with its twinned towns of **Povoa de Varzim** (PT) and **Eschborn** (DE) to discuss the integration of people with disabilities into the heart of local communities.

For more information on town twinning :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/towntwinning/index_en.html

For more information on the Forum :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/activecitizenship/index_en.htm