

CURRENT TRENDS IN TWINNING COOPERATION OF TOWNS AND MUNICIPALITIES



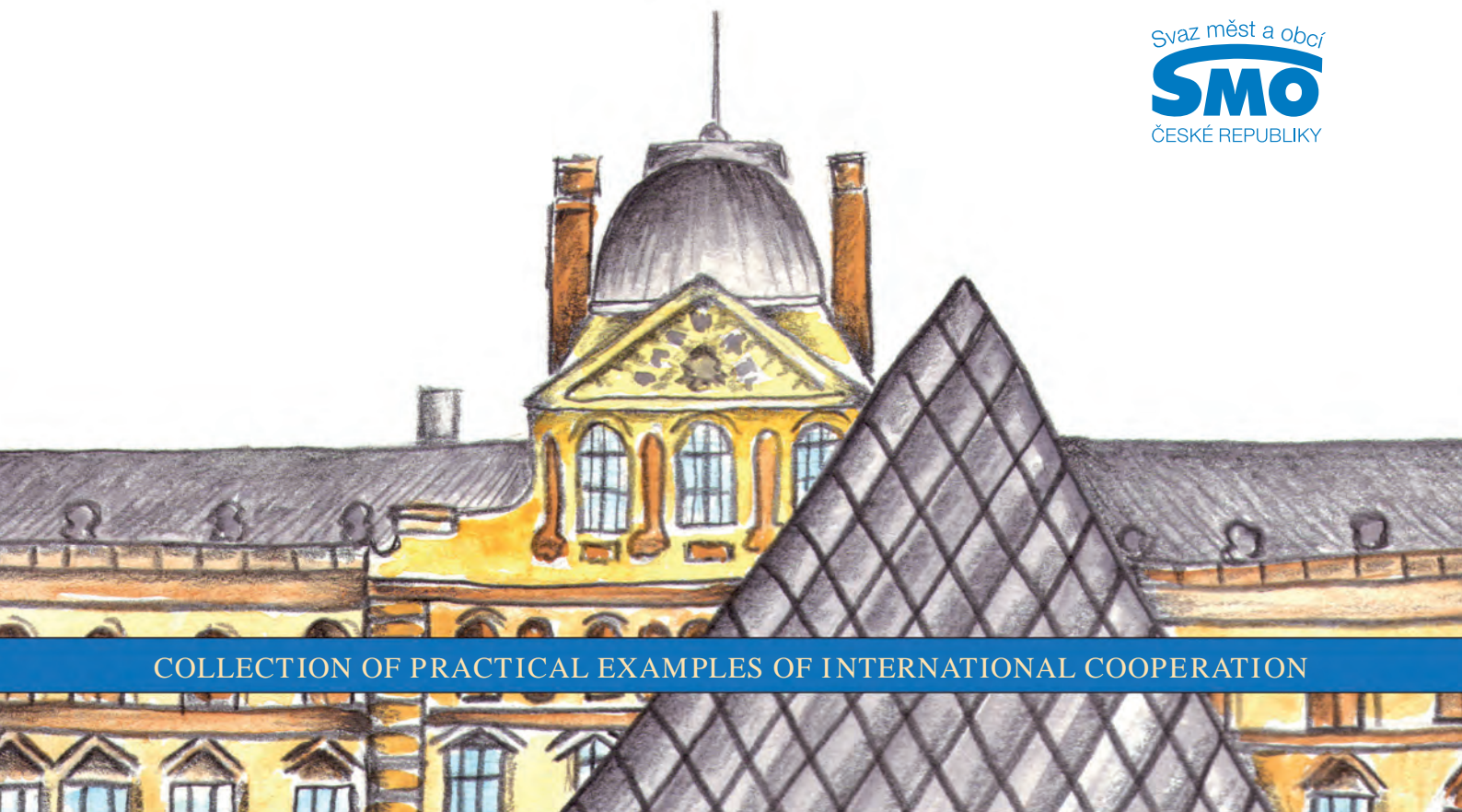
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ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY



COLLECTION OF PRACTICAL EXAMPLES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Foreword

Dear friends,

More than fifty years have passed since the first twinning partnerships between European towns were created as an expression of renewed peaceful co-existence of the nations of Europe after World War II. Since then, town-twinning has evolved into a movement, which links together local governments not only across Europe, but also around the world. Thousands of municipalities and towns have become involved in twinning cooperation encompassing thousands of different activities representing millions of personal contacts, small pieces making up a colourful mosaic, which forms the solid foundation of the entire European edifice, the European Union and Europe in the broader sense of the word. It is a useful tool facilitating mutual understanding among nations and cultures, helping to share experience in all areas of the life of the community and its citizens and promoting municipal development.



The publication you have just opened maps out the situation of the town-twinning movement in the Czech Republic. The analysis you will find there shows that this form of international cooperation is very popular among Czech municipalities and towns and that the number of twinning projects realised after 1989 is continuously growing. As the Mayor of Kladno, a town with a longstanding tradition of active cooperation with the towns of Vitry sur Seine (France), Bellevue (USA) and Aachen (Germany), I can confirm that those

twinning partnerships offer substantial benefits not only to the town itself, but also to its citizens, in different areas, such as mutual exchanges of children and students, music bands, sportspeople, healthcare workers and expert members of the administration staffs of the local authorities.

Our objective was to create a publication that will provide Czech municipalities, towns, elected and non-elected representatives responsible for twinning cooperation in their municipalities, organisations entrusted with twinning activities, enthusiastic citizens involved in those activities and all those interested in the movement, with interesting and new information about the situation and trends in town twinning cooperation in the Czech Republic. The second half of the publication lists examples of recently concluded projects, which bring new approaches and methods to this traditional form of cooperation and which may serve as an inspiration for other municipalities and towns.

The publication was created under a project in support of the twinning cooperation of towns and municipalities in collaboration with the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and the Association of Towns and Communities of the Slovak Republic, with support from the Europe for Citizens Programme.

I wish you interesting and inspiring reading.

Dan Jiránek
President of the Union of Towns and
Municipalities of the Czech Republic

Information about the Project

Support of the partnership cooperation of towns by the national local government associations of the Slovak and the Czech Republics

This publication is one of the outcomes of a joint project between the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and the Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia. The project was aimed at supporting the creation and maintenance of international partnerships (town-twinning) of Czech and Slovak towns and municipalities. The goal of the project was to broaden the services currently provided by the Union and the Slovak Association ZMOS to municipalities and towns in this field.



Project outputs that you too can use:

- **Updated database of the functioning partnerships of Czech towns and municipalities.**

The database provides the Union with a better overview of the current situation as regards international twinning projects of Czech towns and municipalities. Thanks to those data we'll be able to provide more accurate and more detailed information and services to local governments, to communicate with the specific employees in charge of twinning, etc.

- **New website www.partnerskamesta.cz**

The new site provides all information about the possibilities of establishing cooperation, about how to finance those activities and everything else related to twinning. In addition, there is an interactive map clearly displaying the twin-towns with which specific Czech towns or villages cooperate.

- **Publication devoted to town twinning with examples of successful twinning projects**

Primarily, this publication contains examples of successful projects and forms of cooperation realised as part of town twinning programmes. It is very important to share examples of good practice, since this helps people realise the importance of international partnership and the benefits it brings to the participating town or municipality. The publication also includes an analysis of the current situation and trends in the area of town twinning and the international cooperation of Czech local governments.

- **Consultancy services for municipalities concerning town twinning**

The aim of the project is to enhance the services provided by the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic, such as information and consultancy services to town and municipality representatives wishing, for example, to set up a partnership with a foreign town, or looking for information about how to finance the twinning activities of their town/village.

Main Project Partner: The Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia (ZMOS)

Partner: The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic (SMO ČR)

Implementation Timeframe: February 2011 – April 2012

Financing: Co-funded by the Europe for Citizens 2007-2013 Programme

About Partnership Cooperation or What is Town Twinning?

Partnership cooperation between towns, also called town twinning, is a form of long-term international cooperation between local governments consisting of regular meetings between town representatives and their citizens, usually supported by an official document (twinning agreement) or a resolution of the communal bodies.

Throughout its longstanding existence, town twinning as a natural instrument of international cooperation between towns has proven its worth in promoting mutual understanding among nations and cultures. Its added value is not limited to mere intercultural dialogue between ordinary citizens and the overcoming of prejudices between nations; in addition, it strengthens the citizens' involvement in public life. And, last but not least, town twinning contributes towards greater integration within the European Union and the strengthening of the sense of identity and citizenship.

Town twinning is a multi-layered, multi-faceted international activity encompassing all aspects of the life of the community and its citizens. It is of paramount importance for the exchange of experiences in a wide range of areas, whether this concerns the life of the town and its citizens, town development, social issues, education, the environment and tourism, or the functioning of local governments.

Through town twinning, local governments as the natural coordinators of economic development in their areas of competence can promote economic links between businessmen (entrepreneurs) and their counterparts in the partner towns and regions.

The twinning movement is unique in that it is open to all groups of citizens – from ordinary citizens, including experts, entrepreneurs, employees of different organisations and people of all ages and of both sexes (young people, economically active citizens, seniors, people with a handicap, etc.), to civic associations and organisations pursuing different objectives. It helps forge lasting friendships and professional ties among citizens, organisations, authorities, schools and so on, through which useful experience can be shared. Town-twinning also significantly helps reinforce the sense of civic responsibility and the involvement of citizens in the life of the community.

Town-twinning is not reserved exclusively for large and rich towns, which can afford investing hundreds of thousands or millions. This form of cooperation is equally popular and successful with small towns and municipalities, which carry out very interesting projects. The absence of the administrative apparatus and lack of funding are often balanced out by creativity and the enthusiasm of volunteers.

History

The beginnings of the town-twinning movement can be traced back to the period shortly after World War II as an initiative taken by several town mayors, inspired by the idea of the peaceful reconstruction of Europe. Friendship between citizens based on mutual understanding and cooperation was intended to prevent the recurrence of the horrors of war in Europe. The first partnerships were entered into especially between French and German towns, but this initiative soon spread to all European countries, with

dozens of partnerships emerging throughout Europe. The descending of the Iron Curtain, which divided Europe into the democratic and the communist parts and remained in place for forty long years, prevented local governments in the eastern Communist Bloc from starting twinning cooperation with their western counterparts.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, town-twinning underwent immense development. Countries that had been enchained for years by the totalitarian regime opened their borders and the towns and municipalities immediately took the opportunity to join free international cooperation. Hundreds of new partnerships were established between towns in the European Community and towns and municipalities in the former Eastern Bloc. In a span of just 15 years, the number of partnerships in Europe rose by more than 50%, from 8,500 in 1991 (source: *Twinning for Tomorrow's World – Practical Handbook*, published by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions).

Town-twinning has played a significant role in promoting democratic principles, integrating towns from the post-communist countries into democratic Europe, and not lastly in supporting them on their way to the full membership of the European Union. There are currently more than 17,000 partnerships between local governments of a total of 35 countries, not only in Europe, but also throughout the world (see *Twinning for Tomorrow's World – Practical Handbook*, published by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions).

In the Czech Republic, too, town twinning has become a very popular and natural form of international cooperation of towns and municipalities.

Another Face of Town Twinning

Town twinning in its "traditional" form continues to put emphasis primarily on cultural exchanges, on getting to better know the neighbours and sharing experience in different areas of the life of the community/town. Many West European towns, however, (for example in the Netherlands, Great Britain and France), as well as towns in overseas countries (for example the United States of America, etc.) are increasingly focusing their interest on developing countries and other cultures and continents, from Asia to Africa and South America. This type of cooperation takes on the character of development cooperation with a charitable dimension. At the same time, it is an important instrument for civic diplomacy, the aim of which is the non-violent 'export' of democratic values and governing principles to countries with different cultural traditions.

An equally important aspect is the establishment of economic links and the creation of opportunities for foreign investment, which could be termed a soft form of foreign policy. Therefore, it is not uncommon for towns to become twinned with counterparts in China or Africa. And just as the USA or Great Britain are aware of the role they play on the global stage, the towns too have come to understand that helping the weak may one day bring benefits, be it in the form of transferring democratic principles to those countries or building economic ties with them.

Ten Recommendations for Successful Twinning Cooperation

In the second part of the publication, examples of projects from different Czech towns and municipalities are accompanied by recommendations, which can also be used as an inspiration for successful project implementation and, in the broader sense of the word, for cooperation with partner towns. We have therefore summed up certain principles, which may contribute towards successful twinning, into several points, and will be happy if they can serve as an inspiration for you.

1. Define Expectations and Benefits

First and foremost, it is essential to thoroughly and responsibly consider what is to be expected from cooperation, in which areas we would like to cooperate and what types of benefits should the cooperation bring to the municipality and its citizens. It is better to define the areas of cooperation in advance, as this can greatly facilitate our search for a twin town. For instance, it is also a good idea to take into account the strategic municipal development plan and get as many representatives as possible involved in the debate already at this stage, irrespective of their political orientation, as well as entities active in the municipality that could later become potential participants in the project.

2. Determine the Prerequisites and Requirements for Ensuring Partnership Project Success

Equally important as defining the expectations is the need to realise what potential the town/municipality has for starting a twinning project. This may con-

cern, for example, the cultural, historical or economic potential of the municipality, the attractiveness of its geographical location, the people's language skills, etc. Simply, it is necessary to pinpoint our strengths and what we can offer the potential partner. It's also important to realise that initiating and above all maintaining good twinning cooperation requires human and financial resources.

3. Careful Choice of Partner

A careful choice of the twin town is one of the keys to success. We must not underestimate the phase of getting to know one another, based on several meetings involving not only municipal representatives, but also other entities and the people. In the course of those meetings, municipal representatives should be able to answer a variety of questions, such as: Do we have similar expectations when it comes to cooperation? Can we expect our cooperation to be mutually beneficial? Are we able to agree on the areas and priorities of cooperation? Is it realistic to pursue lasting cooperation (geographical distance, language skills, personnel and financial backing)? Thorough discussion of the plans and areas of cooperation, as well as the setting of short- and long-term objectives, should be standard procedure. Certain towns choose to start cooperation in the form of a memorandum, usually limited in time. It is a sort of "trial twinning". Once cooperation proves to be a good idea, the towns proceed to signing a twinning agreement. In most cases, the agreement is for an indefinite period of time, but it is also possible to renew it after some time.

4. Evaluation and Definition of the Further Course of Cooperation

After the successful start of twinning cooperation, it is necessary to actively influence its further development. It is useful for the representatives of the twin towns to meet on a regular basis to assess the progress made and to set the goals for the period to come. The towns' objective should be to build a sustainable form of cooperation – a task that is difficult to achieve without regular planning.

5. Political Support

Gaining broad support from the town representatives and the municipal council is no less important. In this way, twinning cooperation will not be dependent on the particular political set-up in the town hall and the situation, where the new local government will cease to support the twinning project, or even suspend it after the new elections, will be avoided.

6. Broad Involvement of Entities Operating in the Town

Twinning cooperation is not the concern of the town representatives alone, on the contrary. Twinning cooperation is like a tree with a dense, richly branched crown. The town plays an important role as the proponent of cooperation, which acts as an “umbrella” spread over the twinning projects and provides sufficient support. Entities operating in the town or the municipality, such as schools, non-profit organisations, interest groups and societies, entrepreneurs, etc., must also become included in those activities, depending on the nature of cooperation. Cooperation between the town and the other entities is essential if success is to be achieved.

7. Active Involvement of the People

When in the previous paragraph we compared twinning cooperation between towns to a tree with a richly branched crown, it is appropriate to compare the town's citizens to its roots, without which twinning could not prosper. Their participation in the activities is a prerequisite for establishing individual friendships, as well as personal and professional links between the citizens of the twinned towns, which form a solid basis of lasting partnership. A very efficient tool for establishing personal links is private accommodation of visitors from the twinned town in the families. A sign of spontaneous twinning is when the town authority itself has no knowledge of the friendly contacts existing between the citizens of the partner towns, who visit each other on their own, and often at their own cost. The important thing therefore is to get as many people of the town – from children and youth to people of active age and with different professional interests, to seniors, involved.

8. Securing Financial Resources

As any other activity, twinning cooperation, too, requires funding. The budget for these activities varies from municipality to municipality and from town to town. Procuring funds is not easy and for most towns the lack of financing presents the main obstacle to twinning cooperation, especially if there is not enough money for other, far more essential municipal investments. Therefore, all possible sources and resources must be exploited – from national and European grant programmes and sponsorship from local businessmen and entrepreneurs to the municipal budget.

9. Human Resources

The need to provide funding is closely linked with the need to have sufficient human resources, ideally a whole team, to take care of the administration and organisation of the activities and projects. A team made up of people working both inside and outside the town hall, including political representatives, clerks, various entities based in the town and the citizens. Many towns have set up twinning cooperation committees, which act either as part of the town's structure or as civic organisations cooperating closely with the municipal office.

10. Volunteering and Enthusiasm for the Cause

Although this paragraph has been left until the end of this concise guide, it is by no means because it lacks importance. Quite the opposite. One of the most important prerequisites of viable twinning cooperation is the existence of enthusiastic people who put their energy, creativity, their heart and voluntary work into twinning cooperation. They are the essential driving force keeping twinning cooperation alive and prospering.

Options for Financing the Twinning Activities of Towns and Municipalities

The analysis we made and the results of which you will find in this publication indicate that the towns and municipalities most often rely on their own budgets to finance their twinning activities. Our research also showed that the lack of funding is the most commonly cited obstacle to developing twinning activities.

In the text below, you will find information about other funding possibilities offered by certain grant programmes. The list of those programmes is not exhaustive, and is rather an overview of the most advantageous or the most commonly used options. We would like to take this opportunity to give you at least a brief survey of how to finance twinning activities without putting too much burden on municipal budgets.

In this connection we would like to add that intensive preparations and discussions are currently (1Q2012) in progress on the future form of the programmes in the forthcoming programming period of the European Union after 2013. As a result, the form and rules of some of the programmes covering the current period (2007–2013) may undergo certain changes and cannot be anticipated at the moment.

EU Community Programmes

Europe for Citizens 2007–2013 Programme

This is one of the programmes specifically “tailored” for twinning activities. It is one of the community programmes administered directly by the European Com-

mission, i.e. by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Its rules for 2014 – 2020 are currently under preparation. This programme is the only one of its kind, which explicitly supports both small and large-scale projects to be carried out as part of town-twinning cooperation.

Its chief objective is to strengthen the awareness of European citizenship and to contribute to European integration. The programme strives to achieve this, among other things, by targeting all projects at the citizens themselves, who become actively involved in these activities.

What can programme funds be used for

- **Meetings of citizens from twinned towns**

- The towns and municipalities can draw funds directly to organise meetings with their twinned counterparts.
- The grant is calculated from flat rates based on the number of participants and the number of days for which the event will last.
- The meeting should concern itself with a specific topic, aim at achieving a joint solution to the particular problem, make suggestions for the promotion of mutual cooperation, etc.
- The project (meeting) must involve municipalities from at least two of the participating countries, of which at least one is an EU member state.

• Creation of town twinning networks

- This form of cooperation has a long-term character and always deals with a specific subject.
- The projects focus on subjects of common interest or on common problems and can be accompanied by thematic seminars or conferences using various communication means to spread knowledge about the projects, etc.
- Municipalities from at least four participating countries, at least one of which is an EU member state, must participate in the project.
- The projects may last for up to two years.
- The grant is calculated on the basis of flat rates, depending on whether it involves a foreign or a local participant and where the event takes place.

The programme also supports activities conducted at the initiative of civic societies and projects, which recall and spread knowledge about the countries' shared European history.

All information about the Europe for Citizens Programme is available at the EACEA website (<http://eacea.ec.europa.eu>), which is in charge of the administration and evaluation of grant applications.

Contacts for consultations and additional information:

National Contact Point for the Europe for Citizens Programme

Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
Kateřina Hamplová, 224 002 645, 725 755 503,
hamplova.katerina@vlada.cz

Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic

External Relations Department
Gabriela Hůlková, 234 709 724, hulkova@smocr.cz

The Comenius Regio Partnerships Programme

Twinning activities need not be limited to “conventional” meetings of citizens or networks of twinned towns. Cooperation is frequently linked to different subjects, for example education. The Comenius Regio Twinning Programme forms part of the Lifelong Learning Community Programme, which focuses on the mutual exchange of experience and cooperation at the municipal or regional level in the sphere of education. The activities may include project work, study trips to partner municipalities and regions, exchanges of school teachers and students, or joint educational events, as well as seminars, surveys, studies, etc. The general aim of the programme is to enhance opportunities in the field of school education.

Funding applications are to be filed by the school founder, i.e. the municipality, municipality association and the regional office. The school founder is also the project manager responsible for the fund grant and administration of the accounts. Apart from schools, other organisations concerned with education (e.g. cultural and recreational institutions, pedagogical and psychological advisory centres) can also participate in the projects.

Detailed information, deadlines for submitting applications and advice for grant applicants are available on the website of the National Agency for European Educational Programmes at www.naep.cz/comenius.

Culture 2007

The programme is aimed at supporting cultural and language diversity. The funds go towards cultural projects (cooperation projects spanning over several years, cooperation undertakings and special events), towards entities operating in the field of culture at

a European level or studies, analyses, and the collection and dissemination of information in the field of cultural cooperation.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are eligible to apply for funding, as are non-profit organisations, alliances, local and regional governments, state authorities, agencies, chambers, associations, schools and educational institutions.

More information about the programme can be found on the websites of the Czech Office of the EU Culture Programme at www.programculture.cz.

Youth in Action

The programme is geared towards young people between the ages of 13 and 30, as well as youth workers. The programme's principal activities include youth exchanges, volunteering service, involvement in programmes to support democracy, training and seminars for youth workers, etc. Above all it offers young people from the participating countries the chance to meet up and pursue their common interests/projects/problems. The participation of non-profit organisations, associations based in the country of the programme or local, regional and public entities, possibly informal groups of young people, is also possible. More on the websites of the Youth in Action Programme at www.mladezvakci.cz.

Progress

The Progress Programme focuses on employment and social affairs. Funding is distributed among five areas with a different share of the total resources available. Those areas are: employment (23%), social protection and integration (30%), working conditions (10%), diversity and fight against discrimination (23%), and equality between women and men (12%).

Non-profit organisations, research centres, regional or national administration bodies, universities, schools and educational centres may apply for funding.

More information can be found on the websites of the European Commission concerning the Progress Programme: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=cs> or <http://www.mpsv.cz/cs/3452>.

Cross-border Cooperation Programmes

These programmes fall under the EU Structural Funds and are financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). They focus on the promotion of relations between the Czech Republic and neighbouring countries. They are relatively widely used for the support of the partnership activities of towns and communities situated on the opposite sides of the border and are very popular with Czech local governments. The projects focus on specific issues or on resolving common problems of the partners.

Each programme has its specific orientation and priorities, but in general it can be said that the programmes pursue similar objectives. Funding applications may be filed by municipalities, regions, community associations, Euroregions, non-governmental non-profit organisations, educational and research institutes, etc.

Examples of supported areas:

- Support of tourism, development of cross-border transport and the tourist infrastructure, environmental protection, business promotion, common cultural projects, mutual promotion of the participating local governments, etc.

A separate area of support of this operational programme is the **Micro-Project Fund**, which is admini-

stered by the particular Euroregions and serves to support non-investment and small-scale projects with financial support from the EU, ranging between 2,000 and 30,000 euros, with maximum total project costs of 60,000 euros. However, each Euroregion may have its own size and rules stipulated. In general, the Micro-Project Fund (or the Small Project Fund) serves primarily to finance smaller local initiatives. Its main objective is to promote and support cooperation between communities on both sides of the border, focusing on the common improvement of social, cultural and economic relations. More detailed information is available on the websites of the different Euroregions, an overview of which can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/ceskarepublika/cr_eu/euroregions/index_cs.htm

For more information about the Cross-border Operational Programme see www.strukturalni-fondy.cz. The Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic also provides information on the subject.

Transnational Cooperation Operational Programme - Central Europe

In the framework of this operational programme, the Czech Republic comes under the Central European Zone and shares the programme with Austria, Poland, a part of Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, a part of Italy, and among the non-EU member states, with a part of Ukraine.

The programme focuses on cooperation between public authorities and institutions having the character of public authorities for the purpose of exchanging and transferring experience, particularly in the fields of innovation, transport accessibility, the environment and enhancement of the attractiveness of towns and regions.

The programme is divided into the following five priorities:

- **Facilitating innovation in Central Europe** (for example, support of transnational cooperation between training centres and organisations operating on the labour market, cooperation between incubators in regions where industry is on the decline).
- **Improving the accessibility of Central Europe** (for example by supporting the use of multimodal transport and the possibility of using the combination of different transport systems and their parts (road, rail, river/sea, air transport), raising the quality and attractiveness of public transport, supporting the development of modern technological solutions for transport management).
- **Responsible utilisation of the environment** (for example, revitalisation of former mining regions, contaminated sites and abandoned town peripheries, preparation of investment projects in water management and support of communal technologies in the area of waste management and water supply).
- **Raising the competitiveness and attractiveness of towns and regions** (for example by creating a supranational cooperation network between towns and regions in order to optimise the joint use of the infrastructure, providing opportunities for the use of leisure time and recreational facilities, establishing cooperation between historical sites and museums, supranational cooperation in preparing investment projects to enhance cultural values in Central Europe).
- **Technical assistance** (designed for ensuring activities connected with programme management)

More detailed information about the programme, including contact data, is available at www.strukturalni-fondy.cz.

The Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic acts as the National Coordinator of those activities in the Czech Republic.

Additional Programmes

Partnership Fund as part of the Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme

The Swiss-Czech Cooperation Programme is one of the complementary programmes attached to EU funds and national resources. Its main purpose is to help reduce the undesirable differences between the Czech Republic and the more advanced EU countries.

The Partnership Fund constitutes one of the components of this programme and funding may be requested from it for town-twinning activities. The supported activities have the character of experience exchange, exchange of good practices and know-how transfer between entities in the Czech Republic and Switzerland. A condition for filing a grant application is that the project will be realised in cooperation with a Swiss partner.

Examples of supported activities:

- Seminars, study trips, assistance of Swiss experts in transferring and exchanging experience, etc. A specific example may be a project aimed at improving social communication in the framework of elementary education drawing on Swiss experience.

Applications may be filed not only by local governments, but also by universities, schools, non-governmental non-profit organisations, chambers, unions, social partners, etc. Applications may be filed in fixed terms until 2015.

The contact place for more detailed information about the programme is the Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic, specifically its Centre for Foreign Assistance. Information is also available at www.swiss-contribution.cz.

The International Visegrad Fund

The objective of this fund is to support close cooperation between countries of the “Visegrad Group” (V4), i.e. the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. It provides funding for joint cultural, scientific, research and educational projects, and serves as a means of support of the mutual exchange of young people, tourism and cross-border cooperation. The most frequent beneficiaries of this support are non-governmental non-profit organisations, municipalities, universities, schools and other public institutions, as well as citizens. In the field of cross-border cooperation, the activities receiving the most support are those of special importance for the development of the particular area.

More information about this programme is available at <http://visegradfund.org>.

How to Find a Twinning Partner

When searching for a suitable town or municipality abroad to establish twinning cooperation, several ways and tools may be employed:

- Take advantage of the services offered by the External Relations Department of the Office of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic, where the Union's **twinning coordinator** will help you find a suitable partner, mediate the initial contact and offer advice in the field of establishing cooperation and financing.
- Consult the website www.partnerskamesta.cz, where you will find offers posted regularly by foreign towns and municipalities interested in cooperating with towns in the Czech Republic.
- Register your town/municipality on the web portal www.twinning.org, devoted to twinning cooperation between towns. This site, administered by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), will make it possible for you to post your interest and help you search out a twin town using different criteria (country, number of inhabitants, areas of cooperation, etc).

Contact:

Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
Mgr. Gabriela Hůlková
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Analysis of Twinning and the International Cooperation of Towns and Municipalities in the Czech Republic

1. Introduction

An important part of the life of the municipalities and towns in the Czech Republic is participation in international activities comprising work in the framework of town twinning, or the realisation of international projects. Town twinning became a highly popular form of cooperation, especially after 1989, in which hundreds of local governments in the Czech Republic participate. Ever since it resumed its activities, the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic has been supporting municipalities and towns in their efforts to establish twinning cooperation. The Union is running a database of twinned towns, and is doing its best to keep it updated. Town twinning, however, is a highly dynamic area, where the municipalities establish new twinings spontaneously and independently, without having to register anywhere. Therefore, it is difficult to keep the surveys fully updated. Furthermore, a mere list of twinings does not make it possible to monitor all the aspects of cooperation, the frequency of activities or the specific projects being realised.

Therefore, the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic decided to conduct a survey and to map out the partnership network of Czech local governments, update the databases and track current trends in the international cooperation of towns and municipalities in the Czech Republic. The survey was carried out as part of a project promoting twinning cooperation among municipalities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, which was co-financed from the Europe

for Citizens Programme. In this part of the publication we are presenting the results of the analysis.

1.1 Survey Methodology

In our survey we opted for the questionnaire method. The questionnaire was posted on the website www.partnerskamesta.cz and the towns and municipalities had the opportunity to complete it online in electronic form.

The survey focused on two community target groups. The first group included 388 towns and municipalities with extended responsibilities and an authorised municipal council (municipalities type II and III). In the second group, we contacted 5,861 municipalities type I.

The questionnaire designed for towns was more detailed and contained 22 questions which, aside from twinning cooperation, also focused on other forms of international collaboration. In the case of towns, additional aspects of international town cooperation were examined, such as cooperation going beyond the scope of town twinning, the conceptual framework for international cooperation, its future orientation and administration, and human and financial backing. The questionnaire for municipalities was more concise and comprised only 13 questions limited to information about twinning as such.

When we were preparing the questionnaire we had to solve the basic issue concerning the definition of

“international cooperation of towns”. In the end, the term was defined as follows:

1. Partnership cooperation with foreign towns (town twinning) on the one side, and
2. Other forms of cooperation beyond the scope of town twinning (e.g. as part of international projects, foreign development assistance, etc.) on the other side.

On the basis of this definition, the questionnaire designed for towns comprised two tables - in the first table Czech towns were asked to complete the names of foreign towns with which they had already established twinning cooperation, and in the second table the names of foreign towns with which they cooperated beyond the scope of town twinning.

It was left to the consideration of the particular towns to decide in which table the foreign towns would be entered. In the case of the questionnaire for the municipalities no division was provided for.

1.2 Data Collection and Evaluation

The collection of data took place in the period from September to November 2011. The questionnaires were distributed in two phases. In the first phase, all the selected towns were contacted by e-mail with information about the online questionnaire. Several weeks after the questionnaires had been completed the remaining towns were contacted by phone. In the second phase, all the remaining municipalities in the Czech Republic were addressed in the same way.

2. Towns – Results of the Questionnaire Survey

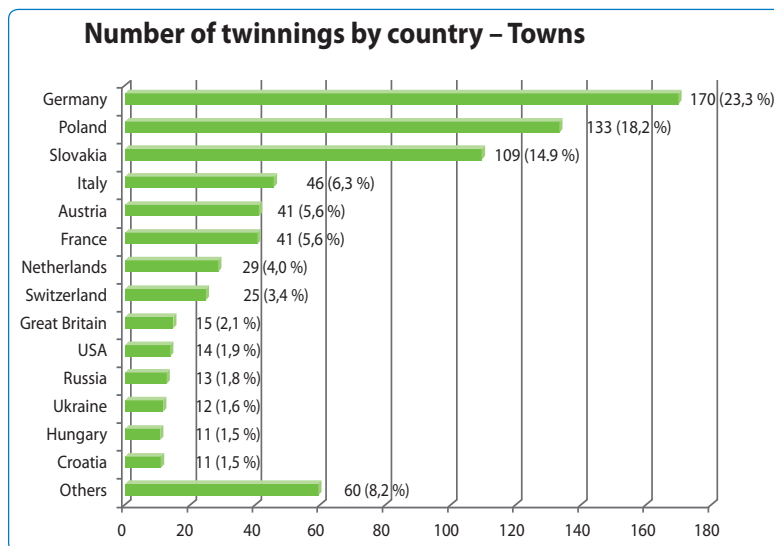
The first part of the analysis is devoted to the results of the survey covering towns, i.e. municipalities type II and III.

2.1 Basic Statistical Data

Altogether 388 towns were addressed as part of the survey. Completed or partially completed questionnaires were returned by 283 towns, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of all the towns addressed. Of the 283 towns, 234 (over 80%) participate in some form of international cooperation, leaving 49 without cooperation.

Total number of towns addressed	388
Number of questionnaires returned/return rate	283 (72,9%)
Number of towns with international cooperation	234 (82,7%)

Graph No. 1



2.1.1 Statistical Data on Town Twinning Cooperation

The following part of the analysis first presents the separate results concerning **cooperation in the framework of town twinnings**. A total of 229 towns in the Czech Republic have established twinning cooperation with 730 towns in 36 different countries. The cities with the highest number of twin towns are Brno (14 partner towns) and Prague (13 partners). Of the 730 twinnings, 616 (84.4%) were backed by an official document (municipal council resolution, cooperation agreement, etc.).

The first indicator to be examined is the **geographical distribution** of twinned towns, i.e. countries, where the twinned towns are located. Graph No. 1 clearly indicates that Czech towns most often cooperate with towns in neighbouring countries, i.e. Germany,

Country	Number of twin towns	Country	Number of twin towns
Lithuania	7	Romania	2
Belgium	7	Finland	2
Slovenia	6	Bosnia	1
Denmark	5	Montenegro	1
Sweden	5	Estonia	1
Japan	5	Cameroon	1
Greece	3	Kazakhstan	1
Serbia	3	Latvia	1
Belarus	2	Nicaragua	1
Bulgaria	2	Israel	1
Philippines	2	Taiwan	1

“We cannot imagine Aš developing as a town at all without cross-border cooperation. We have a lot of partners across the border that we can turn to and rely on at any time, knowing that they will help us and meet us half-way.”
 Town of Aš

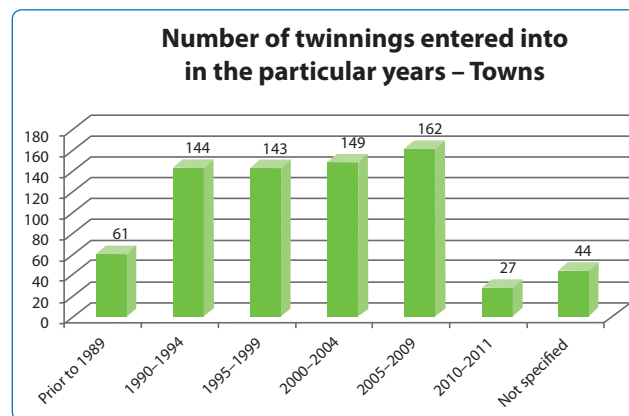
Poland and Slovakia. These partnerships taken together account for more than one-half of all the twin towns. The next group, accounting for nearly 18%, comprises three countries: Italy, France and Austria. The number of twin towns in the Netherlands and Switzerland (just under 8%) is also significant.

Of the countries less strongly represented (marked in the graph as “others”), we can name Lithuania and Belgium (each with 7 twinned towns), Slovenia (6), Denmark, Sweden and Japan (5 each). The remaining countries were represented by an even lower number of twinned towns, as can be seen in the table below.

In the questionnaire, we also examined, **when the individual twinnings had begun**. The following graph is divided into the period prior to 1989, and then into five-year periods starting from 1990. The last column shows the number of twinnings entered into in 2010 – 2011 alone. Two key pieces of information can be derived from the collected data:

1. The majority of twinnings, altogether 90% (after deducting the “not specified” value) were established between 1990 and 2009.

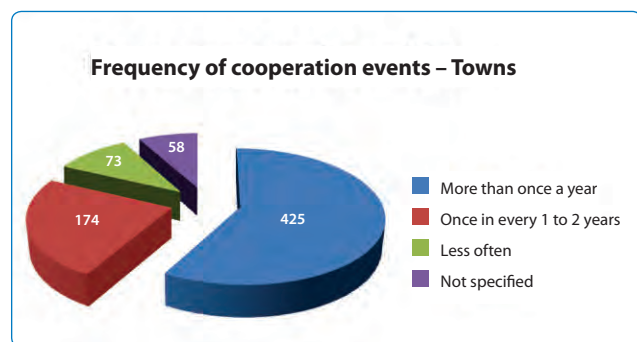
Graph No. 2



2. The number of twinings entered into before 2009 was showing slight growth (the years 2010 – 2014 are not complete).

The oldest twinning cooperation project is between Ostrava and Volgograd, dating back to 1949. Traditional twinings include cooperation projects between Hradec Králové and Alessandria (1961), Znojmo and Pontassieve (1963), Brno and Rennes, Karlovy Vary and Locarno, Plzeň and Liège (all since 1965), Kopřivnice and Trappes and Pardubice and Skelleftea (both since 1968).

Graph No. 3



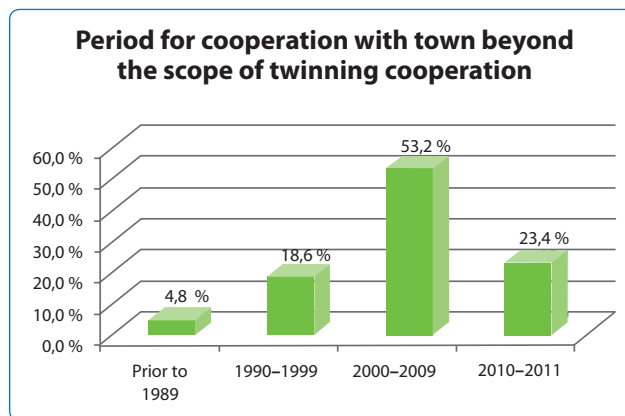
As part of the survey, we also tracked the **frequency of cooperation**, in other words, how often the twinned towns pursued their activities. One of the positive results was that in more than three-fifths of the twinings (after deducting the “not specified” value), cooperation events took place more than once a year, with more than 25% of the twinings organising cooperation events once in every 1 to 2 years – such twinings may be considered active. Only 10% of twinings organise cooperation events less frequently.

2.1.2 Statistical Data Concerning Other Forms of International Cooperation

As mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, the survey involving towns also monitored broader international cooperation pursued by towns **beyond the scope of twinning cooperation**, such as cooperation in the framework of international projects, foreign development aid, etc. There are altogether 186 towns pursuing this kind of international cooperation in 35 different countries, while the **geographic distribution** of the cooperating towns in the particular countries practically copies the statistics obtained in the framework of town twinning.

This form of cooperation is most frequent with partners in Germany (44 towns/23.7%), Poland (32 towns/17.2%) and Slovakia (21 towns/ 11.3%), followed by Austria, which has a lower, but still a significant representation (16 towns/8.6%), France (11 towns/ 5.9%), Italy and Hungary (with 9 towns/ 4.8% each).

Graph No. 4



Interesting results were obtained from answers concerning the time, **when this form of cooperation was**

established. Whereas in the event of town twinning cooperation, the establishment of cooperation after 1989 was spread evenly over the 5-year periods, in the case of cooperation going beyond the scope of twinning more than three quarters of the cooperation projects were started between the years 2000 and 2011 and they are showing a clearly rising trend.

As part of the analysis, we also monitored the **time distribution of cooperation** and compared the data on the newly established cooperation projects in the particular countries over two decades after 1990 (1990-1999 and 2000-2011). The data cover both twin towns and towns cooperating beyond the scope of town twinning. The following findings have emerged from this comparison:

1. A massive growth of cooperation in the second decade was observed with towns in Poland and Slovakia. While from 1990 to 1999 cooperation was established with 45 towns in Poland and 31 in Slovakia, between the years 2000 and 2011 the number of cooperating towns in Poland soared to 102 and in Slovakia to 69, an increase of more than 100%.
2. The number of newly emerging cooperation projects with towns in Germany and Austria has remained stagnant. Between 1990 and 1999, cooperation was established with 86 towns in Germany and 22 towns in Austria, and between 2000 and 2011 with 86 towns in Germany and 20 in Austria.
3. On the contrary, a noticeable decline in terms of the number of new twinings and other forms of cooperation took place in the case of Switzerland and the Netherlands. While between 1990 and 1999, cooperation was established with 22 towns

in Switzerland and 31 towns in the Netherlands, between 2000 and 2011 only one new partnership was established with a Swiss town and none with any town in the Netherlands

4. The intensity of cooperation with towns in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe increased, but the number of cooperating towns is still very low. For instance in Ukraine the number of partnerships between towns increased from one to 12 and in Croatia from two to nine.

2.2 Further Aspects of International Cooperation and Twinning

The following part of the analysis of international cooperation between towns deals with further aspects, in particular:

- Areas of cooperation
- Target groups at which international cooperation is aimed
- Financing sources
- Benefits and obstacles

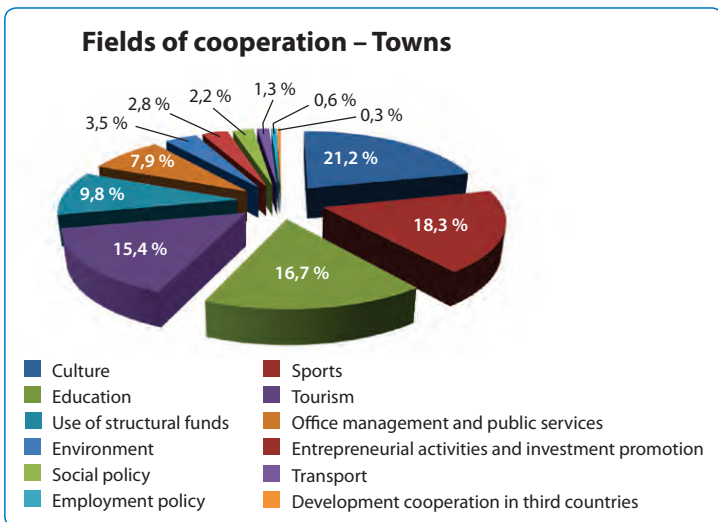
“Every town twinning project is greatly dependent on personal contacts and personal friendships. For this reason, it is necessary for the towns to build foundations on which the partnerships of clubs, alliances, schools, groups and individuals can develop.”

Town of Beroun

In this section, we were primarily interested in determining the most popular **areas of cooperation**. The most preferred areas included culture, sports, education and tourism, which, taken together, account for 72%. This was followed by the use of structural funds, office and public services management (altogether

just under 20%). The least frequent areas of cooperation included the environment, social policy, transport, economic development, etc. (1 – 3%).

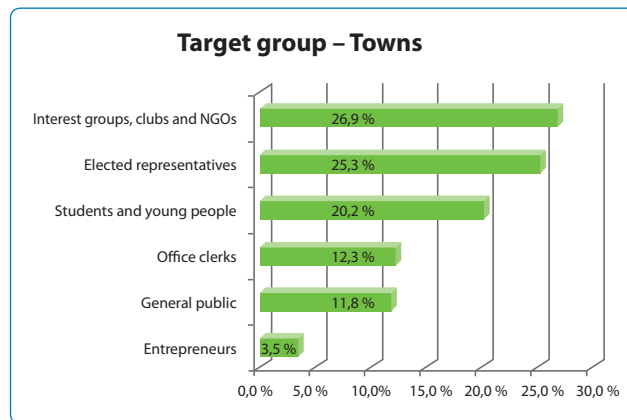
Graph No. 5



The survey also examined, which **target groups the twinning and international cooperation** were aimed at. The results showed that the largest groups were the representatives of interest associations, clubs and NGOs (almost 27%), followed by elected representatives (roughly one-quarter), students and young people (20%), and finally, with approximately the same percentage, office workers and the general public (each group accounting for more than 10%)

The survey also concerned itself with the sources of international cooperation financing. The results revealed that more than half of the towns (57.2%) rely on the town budget for their international activities financing. As regards external public grant sources, the towns usually take advantage of some of the cross-border

Graph No. 6



cooperation programmes (27.7%). The Europe for Citizens programme, which was specifically designed to support town twinning activities, is used by a mere 7.2% of towns.

Regrettably, for the whole duration of my being in charge of twinning cooperation I could not find a single grant programme that we could use to co-finance our twinning projects. Everything is set so as to suit big financial projects or cross-border cooperation. No one is interested in small interesting projects that mean real cooperation.”
Jaroslav Parma, Town of Boskovice

The last areas to be monitored were the **benefits and obstacles** in pursuing international cooperation. The greatest benefit of international cooperation, according to the towns, is the opportunity of sharing experience in a variety of spheres concerning town life (21.4%). Town promotion is at about the same level of importance (18.6%), as is the brightening of the everyday life of the town (18.5%). Another benefit is the positive influence of twinning on the language skills

of the people participating in international activities (14.6%). Many towns also place emphasis on the chance to learn from the more experienced partners (12.2%).

On the other hand, the greatest obstacle to international cooperation, according to the towns, is the lack of financial resources (45%). The second most frequently stated reason was the complaint that other activities have a higher priority and are more in the focus than international activities (22.5%). As their third grievance the towns mentioned the great administrative burden accompanying the realisation of international projects. (14.6%). Only 26 towns, or 11.1% of all towns, found no obstacles in pursuing international cooperation.

3. Municipalities – Results of the Questionnaire Survey

Altogether 1,082 of the total number of 5,861 municipalities that were addressed took part in the survey and completed the questionnaire. The response rate in the case of municipalities was low (19%) in comparison with the towns. Of those taking part in the survey, a total of 204 municipalities are pursuing twinning cooperation with 290 partner municipalities in 20 different countries. Altogether 200 partnerships (68.9%) are supported by an official document certifying the twinning.

Total number of municipalities addressed	5861
Number of questionnaires returned/return rate	1082 (19 %)
Number of twinning municipalities	204 (18,9 %)

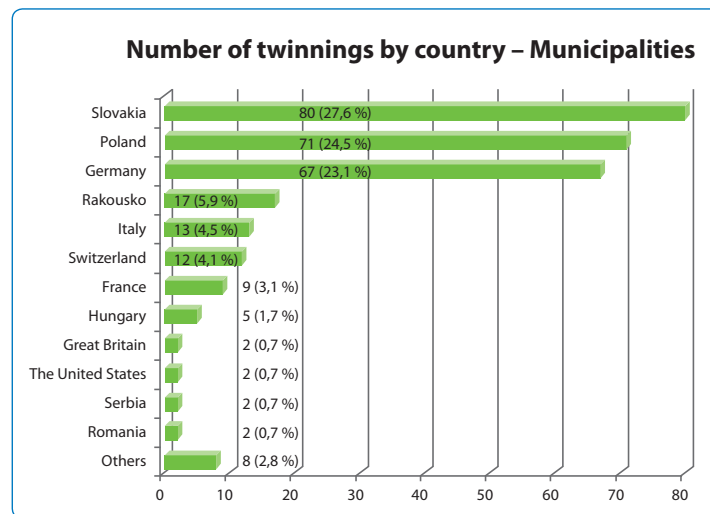
In the case of municipalities, the same basic statistical data were examined as in the case of towns – i.e. countries, where the twin towns are located, number

of twinings entered into in the particular years and the frequency of cooperation. As mentioned above, the questionnaire for municipalities was more concise and did not cover broader international cooperation.

3.1 Statistical Data on Municipality Twinning

The results concerning the geographical distribution of twin municipalities are similar to those concerning the towns. The first three places are held by the same trio of countries – Slovakia, Poland and Germany – with only a slight difference in their order. In general, these countries account for more than three quarters of all twinings. More than 10 partner municipalities in one country are also to be found in Austria, Italy and Switzerland.

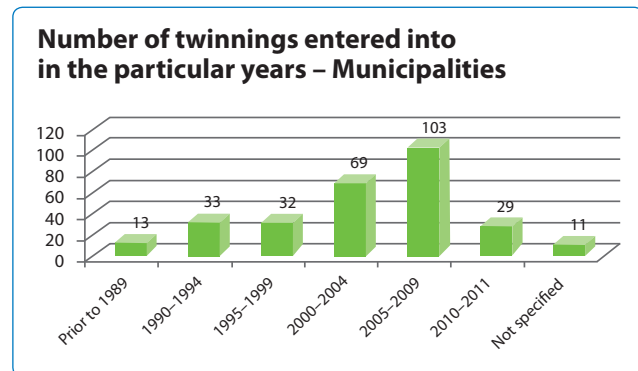
Graph No. 7



Unlike the towns, the number of twinings entered into by municipalities over the past few years is showing a distinctly rising trend. Between 1995 and 1999,

32 new twinnings were set up; this figure more than doubled (69) between 2000 and 2004, and between 2005 and 2009 it amounted to 103 new twinnings.

Graph No. 8



Such municipal twinnings are relatively active. The majority of municipalities (57%) organise twinning activities several times a year, almost 34% meet once every 1-2 years, and just under 9% of them meet less often.

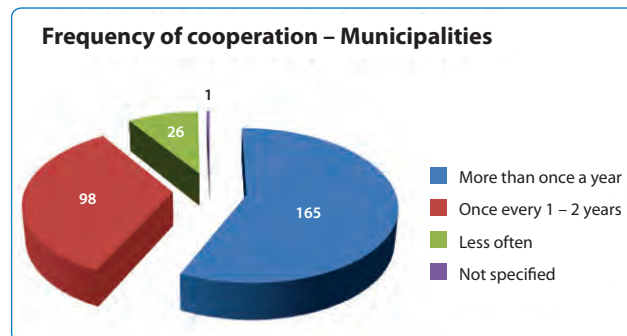
“Any form of cooperation always enriches both sides, and this is the basis and the driving force of our work!”
Municipality of Hvozdná

3.2 Further Aspects of Twinning Cooperation between Municipalities

The second half of the questionnaire intended for municipalities examined data concerning the areas of twinning cooperation, financial sources, benefits and obstacles.

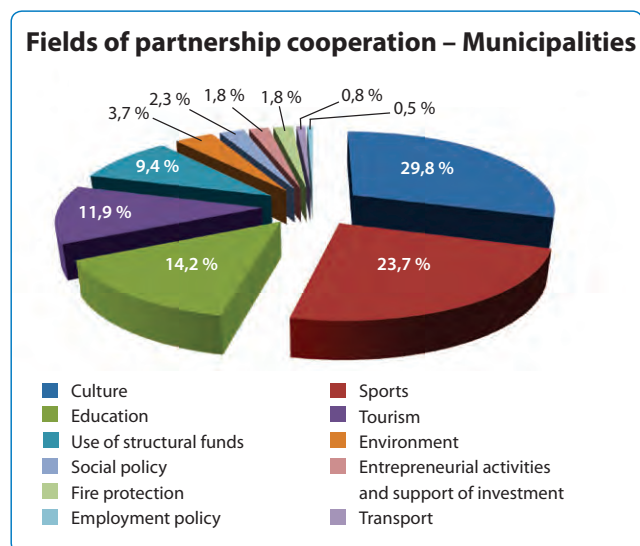
As in the case of towns, the four most preferred areas of cooperation are culture, sports, education

Graph No. 9



and tourism. Cooperation in these areas accounts for nearly 80% of all activities. The use of structural funds is also strongly represented (nearly 10%).

Graph No. 10



Another area monitored by the survey was the identification of resources used by municipalities to finance their international activities. As in the case of towns,

municipalities, too, draw most (54%) of their resources for these activities from Public Budgets. Approximately one-third (33%) of municipalities take advantage of grants or subsidies, with 13.3% of them relying on sponsoring.

“Contracts for financing their projects from structural funds are incredibly complicated and cooperation based on them is dissuasive rather than encouraging.”
Municipality of Mošnov

In terms of **benefits and obstacles**, we arrived at results similar to those revealed by the town survey. The five most commonly listed benefits show values of approximately 10-25%, so that none of them surpasses significantly any other indicator. For municipalities the greatest benefit of twinning cooperation is the enrichment of peoples' lives, accounting for 23%, whereas in the case of towns this indicator only occupied third place. This is followed by the opportunity to pass on experience in a number of areas of the life of the municipality (19.7%) and to learn from the experience of the twinning partners (17.5%). Gaining publicity abroad was cited by 17% of municipalities, whereas in the case of towns this benefit ranked second in the survey in terms of importance. As regards language skill building, this benefit was appreciated by more than 12% of municipalities.

The greatest obstacle to the promotion of twinning cooperation between municipalities is once again lack of funding (46.4%), the same as in the case of towns. Another fact that prevents municipalities from furthering their international activities – in contrast to towns – is the large amount of administrative work linked with the projects. An explanation may be the fact that

municipalities have less funding and fewer human resources at their disposal.

4. Conclusion

The results of the questionnaire survey were based on answers sent by 283 towns and 1,082 municipalities. The overall questionnaire response rate for the first group was almost 73%, which is a sufficiently large sample to allow certain general conclusions and comparisons to be made. An encouraging result, apart from the high response rate, is the large number of towns participating in international cooperation projects - as the returned questionnaires showed, more than 80% of the towns were involved in this kind of cooperation.

The number of municipalities pursuing twinning cooperation is incomparably lower, amounting to 204 of a total of 1,082 municipalities which took part in the survey. The return rate for completed questionnaires was also low (a mere 19%) compared to towns. The reasons for such a low response rate may be the fact that very small municipalities do not have sufficient funding and human resources to participate in any of the international forms of cooperation, and they probably did not even take part in the survey, despite repeated requests to do so, because of the administrative burden the completing of the questionnaire would mean to them.

As expected, twinning cooperation in the Czech Republic witnessed a massive development in the 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain. At that time, Czech local governments started taking full advantage of the opportunity of establishing international relations, and twinning cooperation became a very popular form of renewing ties, especially with West

European countries, severed during the Cold War era. The number of new twinning projects entered into during the first decade after 1990 grew five-fold compared to the period from 1945 to 1990. For comparison: prior to 1989 we had 74 twinned towns, whereas since 1989 a total of 891 new twinning projects have been realised. This statistical overview is based on the current analysis and is highly relevant in the case of towns (municipalities type II and III). When it comes to municipalities, the overall number of twinning projects may differ from reality given the low number of the questionnaires returned. Nevertheless, these figures are clear evidence of the massive development of twinning cooperation after 1989.

A surprising finding is that the newly established twinings between towns have been showing a rising tendency even in the last decade after the year 2000. As for municipalities, the growth after 2000 is still more pronounced and is obviously due to the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union and the opening up of EU grant programmes, from which municipalities could draw funds for their international projects. Of some importance may be the fact that, after the renewal of their self-governing functions in the 1990s, the municipalities were better prepared to cope with their own administration and felt the need for further development through international cooperation.

Other forms of international cooperation between towns going beyond the scope of traditional twinning also underwent an important development, especially after the year 2000, when the Czech Republic joined the European Union. This fact again is linked with the possibility to use EU programmes and their actual setting (the condition of getting partners from

more than one country involved in the project). Towns, which are already engaged in twinning cooperation, feel the need to target their cooperation at the solution of specific problems and find the form of one-off projects more suitable than long-term, wide-ranging partnership cooperation commitments.

On the other hand, the number of new twinings with countries such as the Netherlands and Switzerland witnessed a marked decline after 2000, or, as in the case of Austria and Germany, remained at the same level, although the interest in cooperation with those countries on the part of Czech towns and municipalities lasts. This indicates that the capacity for cooperation on the part of those countries has been saturated - this may also be due to the different structure of their local governments - and the towns are no longer seeking further twinning partners in the new EU member states.

As expected, the survey showed that the towns and municipalities are primarily interested in cooperating with towns in neighbouring countries, such as Slovakia, Poland and Germany. The natural reason for this situation is their geographical, cultural or language proximity, and it can be assumed that EU membership and the availability of grant programmes in support of cross-border and supranational cooperation also play their role. This assumption is backed by figures, which prove that after the year 2000 the number of new twinings began to rise massively specifically with Slovakia and Poland, both between towns and municipalities.

The number of twin towns and cooperation projects with countries in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, as well as in the developing world, continues to be low. Nevertheless, a slight growth of these

twinning has been observed over the past decade, which suggests that a certain part of Czech local governments has come to see yet other twinning possibilities (development and economic cooperation), showing their readiness to share experience and help partners in less developed countries.

A positive finding is that in the case of most of the towns and municipalities twinning has become very intensive. Local governments organise joint activities even several times a year. This high frequency is evidence of the fact that their twinning cooperation is by no means a formality, but has become a living and spontaneous international movement of the local governments and their citizens.

The survey also showed that for Czech towns and municipalities sport and culture remain the most popular areas of cooperation with foreign partners. Czech local governments thus continue to prefer the traditional forms of twinning cooperation. Nevertheless, other areas, such as education, tourism, the use of structural funds and office management, are also strongly represented, accounting for almost 50% of all areas of cooperation in the case of towns and just under 40% in the case of municipalities.

Another positive finding is that education is one of the very popular ways of realising partnership activities, especially as regards the exchange of pupils, students and teachers and their meetings, which signifies the involvement of the young generation in international projects, thus improving their language skills and broadening their openness to other cultures. Municipalities and towns also frequently cooperate in the field of tourism, where they see an opportunity to promote themselves abroad and help towards attract-

ing foreign tourists to their regions, and in the final analysis support their economic development.

In connection with the preferred fields of cooperation, target groups have been defined, on which international cooperation is focused. The survey has revealed a wide-ranging involvement in those activities. The group most massively involved in international cooperation comprises representatives of special-interest associations and clubs (sports, culture, etc.), and non-governmental non-profit organisations, as well as elected community representatives. A very positive finding is the high involvement of young people and schools (over 20%). Other groups of citizens also occupy a significant place in twinning cooperation, including members of the general public, experts from a variety of fields, entrepreneurs, office clerks and employees of various organisations. Thanks to the active participation of different groups of citizens lasting friendships are being established, and professional links are built between the citizens, organisations, offices and schools, which form the basis for more profound, thematic cooperation.

The analysis has confirmed that town twinning creates a unique environment for partners to exchange their experience and to learn from each other in all the areas of cooperation. It presents a unique opportunity for the enrichment of all the participants involved, based on professional and personal relationships, which subsequently have a positive influence on the quality of municipal administration. The towns and municipalities have both identified further benefits, especially the brightening up of social life in the community, which is very important for community life building and greater participation of citizens in the functioning of the community. An equally important benefit of

twinning cooperation is the opportunity to promote the municipality and the town at home and abroad – a certain form of town (municipal) marketing.

The last finding to be mentioned is the financing of international cooperation between towns and municipalities. In more than 50% of cases, towns and municipalities finance their international cooperation from their own budgets, and the lack of financial resources is singled out as the greatest obstacle to international cooperation. From this it ensues that the towns and municipalities need to ensure the financing from external, public sources. The question for further, more profound research remains, whether the towns and municipalities know about any further sources, whether they know how to use them and whether there exist suitably targeted programmes in support of international and partnership cooperation between towns and municipalities. The current survey, however, has yielded one unequivocal finding, namely that the administration burden and the complexity of most of the grant programmes are disproportionately high and that most towns and municipalities do not have sufficient administration and personnel capacity to monitor the grant opportunities, prepare the applications and ensure the subsequent project management.

In conclusion it may be said that twinning and international cooperation between towns and municipalities are important and widely pursued activities of Czech local governments, in which more than 80% of towns participate, and in the case of municipalities their involvement has a strongly rising trend. Sharing experience in different fields and pursuing contacts on a personal and professional basis supports the social, cultural and economic development of Czech

local governments. Town and municipality twinning helps build civic cohesion at the community level and is an important tool for citizens to become actively engaged in local public life. Thanks to the international dimension of these activities, twinning also strengthens the understanding and cooperation among citizens and towns in Europe and the whole world.

For the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic the results of this analysis are a valuable source of information, which it will use in its further activities and in particular in promoting the services aimed at supporting the involvement of towns and municipalities in twinning and other international cooperation projects. The Union would like to target this support at several areas, which we have identified as important on the basis of the data and suggestions we received from the communities participating in this survey. Therefore, we would like to direct our activities, whether informative or educational, more widely towards supplying information about the possibilities of financing international cooperation between towns and sharing experiences, as well as showing good examples of the work of the municipalities. Another area deserving greater attention is the support of cooperation with towns in countries, where cooperation is not very popular on the part of Czech municipalities, and the support of cooperation having the character of development aid. We want to show that this form of cooperation, too, can be interesting and beneficial for Czech towns and municipalities. There is also a great potential worth exploiting in areas aimed at improving the administration and development of municipalities as natural social, cultural and economic centres providing a good life for the citizens.

Bohumín – Krzyżanowice (Poland)

Rivers divide, rivers connect – Construction of boarding points on the Rivers Odra and Olza

Implementation Timeframe: 6/2010 – 10/2011

About the town: The town of Bohumín lies in the Moravia - Silesia Region at the confluence of the Rivers Odra and Olza. It has 22,000 inhabitants.

Twinned towns: Prudnik (Poland, 2000), Gorzyce (Poland, 2007), Racibórz (Poland, 2009), Krzyżanowice (Poland, 2010)

Project Description

The town of Bohumín and the Polish municipality of Krzyżanowice cooperate on a long-term basis in the field of tourism and support of cultural and sporting events. The project links up with the “Silesian Venice – Boating and Rafting on the River Olza” feasibility study. The idea to build the boarding points emerged in connection with the traditional Plavidlo water sports event (Pływadło in Polish, meaning water craft), which boasts a thirteen-year tradition. In 2012, Bohumín will participate in the event for the seventh time. The aim of the project was to promote the natural attractions of the Odra River Border Meanders Nature Reserve.

The town of Bohumín, the municipality of Krzyżanowice and the Poseidon Civic Alliance (Dolní Lutyně-Věřňovice) commissioned the preparation of project documentation to build five paddle boarding points, three on the Czech side and two on the Polish side. The completed project covers the stretch between Věřňovice and Kopytov with an extension to the con-



fluence of the Rivers Odra and Olza and linking up with the navigable stretch of the Odra from its confluence with the Ostravice, further on to its confluence with the Olza and on to Poland. By character, the project is a water management structure - with access to the riverbed, concrete steps forming two staircases or just one row of steps.

Part of the project, in addition to the purchase of water sports equipment for the already functioning boat rentals, was the organisation of various water events, such as Plavidlo 2010 and 2011 on the Olza or the Locking of the Odra Border Meanders in 2010 and 2011.

The leading partner of the project was the town of Bohumín, with the Krzyżanowice municipality acting as its partner. The project was prepared jointly by both partners. Their cooperation was facilitated by the practical absence of any language barrier. Other participants in the project were members of the Poseidon Civic Alliance and volunteer fire-fighters from Starý Bohumín. Municipal officers and employees of Bohumín

and Krzyżanowice were in charge of filing the applications and the actual realisation of the project. Both partners had their own project manager, and one person from the investment department was responsible for actual construction. The chief project managers were the Deputy Mayor of Bohumín and the Mayor of Krzyżanowice.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

Hundreds of people participated in the water events. As a follow-up to the previous water project and thanks to the already existing boat rental, 2,500 people cruised along the meander during the construction of the project. In 2011, the comfort of the passengers during the boarding and unboarding was greatly enhanced by the construction of new boarding points, which were entered in the map of Bohumín as an additional tourist feature. In addition, wooden benches and an information board have been installed at each point, providing information about local flora and fauna and becoming an instructional “water trail”. The project also promotes places of interest and activities in Bohumín and Krzyżanowice.

Recommendations for Others

It is essential not to underestimate the risk of unfavourable weather conditions and pay attention to the preparation of alternative solutions. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that preparing projects involving the territories of two countries is time-consuming. Also, it is necessary to think about separating activities being performed under different legislations – such as tenders or the constructional part of the project. It is better not to connect these activities and let each partner carry them out separately. On the other



hand, when organising events for the public and having publicity materials prepared, the closest possible cooperation is recommended.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The source of financing the project was the Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme. The budget was EUR 150,000 for the town of Bohumín and EUR 91,000 for Krzyżanowice.

Project Website

<http://www.mesto-bohumin.cz/cz/o-meste/pre-shranicni-spoluprace/8570-reky-rozdeluji-reky-spojuji-vybudovani-nastupnich-mist-pro-vodaky-na-odre-alsi.html>

Contact Person

Ing. Věra Vzatková (vzatkova.vera@mubo.cz)

Brno – Rennes (France)

MINIWASTE ProjectImplementation Timeframe: 1/2010 – 12/2012

About the town: The statutory city of Brno is the centre of the South-Moravia Region and the second largest city in the Czech Republic. Almost 400,000 inhabitants currently live in the city.

Twinned towns: Rennes (France, 1965), Poznań (Poland, 1966), Voronezh (Russia, 1967), Leipzig (Germany, 1973), Stuttgart (Germany, 1989), St. Pölten (Austria, 1991), Dallas (United States, 1991), Utrecht (the Netherlands, 1993), Kaunas (Lithuania, 1994), Vienna (Austria, 1998), Leeds (Great Britain, 2003), Moscow (Russia, 2006), Kharkov (Ukraine, 2008), Bratislava (Slovakia, 2012)

Project Description

The project was started on the basis of close cooperation with the twin town of Rennes. The common objective of the two towns was to reduce the volume of communal waste and support the sustainable handling of bio-degradable waste at the producers' end – the citizens and institutions. With this objective in mind, a project consortium was created, in which the Brittany branch of the Irstea research institute, the LI-POR waste handling company in the Porto Region in Portugal and the ACR+ European network based in Belgium became involved, in addition to Brno and Rennes.

For the composting pilot project, Brno selected the Žebětín city district due to the character of its built-up area (mainly family houses) and good cooperation



with its citizens and the political representation. The main activities in Brno covered by the project are:

- Preparation of a plan to reduce biodegradable waste
- Instructional programmes for the public (information stands, events for schools, preparation of a questionnaire survey, leaflets and guidebooks for the citizens of Žebětín)
- Setting up presentation points (at collection centres)
- Purchase and distribution of composters
- Communal waste analyses
- Organisation of cooking courses with the objective of preventing food wastage

The project was prepared in conjunction with all the project partners. On behalf of Brno, the participants in the project are the Department for the Environment and the European Funds Department. The coordination and management of the project was entrusted to the Brno City Foreign Relations Department.

The MINIWASTE project is intended for the people of Brno, who are entitled to obtaining a composter free of charge, plus information about correct composting, ecological cooking and reducing the volume of organic waste in the dustbins. The Brno municipality, which is responsible for the disposal of household waste, expects the project to reduce the amount of organic waste ending up in the incinerator.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The main outcome and benefit of the project is the reduction of the amount of biodegradable waste in mixed communal waste, as well as the reduction of costs for its disposal. An additional benefit is the opportunity to try out the processes and methods used in implementing the pilot project on a smaller scale, with the possibility of its future use on a larger area of the city, or in its other parts.

Another significant benefit of the project is raising the citizens' awareness of the importance of environmental protection, above all the importance of waste sorting and reuse. Documentation has already been prepared to continue the project by supporting individual composting on the territory of the city of Brno.

Recommendations for Others

Of key importance for the involvement of the general public in the project is communication with the citizens, as well as instruction and campaigns in support of the project. An equally important element for the



realisation of the project is political support of the idea of the project and its management at the local level and in relation to the leading partner.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

EC LIFE+ programme, the overall project budget for the city of Brno is EUR 124,100, with a contribution from the European Commission amounting to EUR 60,800.

Project Websites

www.miniwaste.cz, www.miniwaste.eu

Contact Persons

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Laurence Galon (l.galon@agglo-rennesmetropole.fr)

Bystré – 11 European Municipalities

Cultural Village of Europe

Implementation Timeframe: from 1999 to date

About the town: The town of Bystré lies in the Pardubice Region set in the beautiful landscape of the Svatka Highlands. It has approximately 1,620 inhabitants and its history dates back to 1012, when the first mention of the town appeared.

Twinned municipalities: Tommerup (Denmark), Wijk aan Zee (Netherlands), Mellionec (France), Pergine Valdarno (Italy), Aldeburgh (Great Britain), Paxos (Greece), Killingi Nõmme (Estonia), Ströbeck (Germany), Palkonya (Hungary), Porrúa (Spain), all since 1999), Kirchheim (Austria, 2003)

Project Description

The main initiative came from the Dutch municipality of Wijk aan Zee, specifically its representative and founder of the project, Bert Kisjes, in 1998. Bert addressed ten European municipalities with an offer of cooperation under a project to be called Cultural Village of Europe. The year 1999 climaxed with a joint meeting of the mayors of all the twelve villages in Wijk aan Zee and the formulation of a common Village Charter. The town of Bystré was among the first to join the founders and project organisers.

The project has the form of various activities taking place throughout the year and involving representatives from all the twelve villages. Each year, a spring conference of the mayors is held as part of the project, focusing on a topic announced by the host country.



The project continues with a meeting of young people at the Youth Camp. Generally, 5 or 6 young people from each country take part in the Youth Camp. This is followed by the Festival of European Culture, which usually lasts three days and is attended by 30 to 40 participants from each country. In the autumn, a conference of mayors is held to evaluate the activities of the previous year and prepares the plan for the year to come.

The main topics of the project are the support of the villages and their development, the preservation of traditions, exchange of experiences, keeping young people from leaving the villages, etc. Each year, the meetings are organised in another country, thus providing an opportunity for the people to travel abroad, make comparisons and gain experience from other countries.

The town of Bystré hosted the event in 2001. It organised the opening and the closing conference of the mayors, who discussed the possibilities of sustainable life in the countryside and the development and benefits of the Cultural Village Project. An exchange visit

involving 52 young people from 11 European countries was also arranged. These activities climaxed with the Festival of European Culture attended by 378 participants from the twinned municipalities. About 1,000 local citizens from the micro-region of the Svatka-Křetín triangle, which also includes Bystré, took part. Bystré will be the main organiser of the event again in 2012.

Such wide-ranging cooperation involving 12 European municipalities requires a very good organisational background. For the purpose of planning and preparing the programme, an organisational committee - a Task Force – has been set up, which usually meets twice a year, each time in the locality of one of the partners. Each municipality is represented by one elected representative and other representatives of the municipality, who are responsible for the programmes and the accompanying activities. The Task Force deals with issues relating to both the short-term programme (spreading over two years) and the long-term cooperation programme with a ten-year outlook. The meetings of the Task Force, usually lasting three days, also deal with other subjects concerning the life and the situation in the countryside, its development and identity. These issues are debated in the form of presentations, discussions and seminars.

The entire project is designed for all age categories of the people of the twinned municipalities and is open to other partners taking part in the project activities.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The main sense and objective of the project is to make the society and the representatives of the national and European governments and structures aware that the countryside and the villages are very important for national and European identity. The countryside is the

producer and manufacturer of the substance of life, standing at the very beginning of the existential chain of humankind. Agriculture, landscape architecture, relaxation and nature itself are inconceivable without the countryside. We are persuaded that the countryside can have an immense influence on the successful future of Europe and that it should be given the best opportunities and the greatest support. It must be pointed out that more than half of the population live in the countryside and that the towns cannot do without them. The identity of the countryside, which is the bearer of traditions, history and the ancestral heritage, is irreplaceable in the view of mankind.

Recommendations for Others

The recommendation for municipalities considering some kind of partnership project is simple. It is essential to set out the targets, to choose the partner for cooperation, preferably a town you already know, a municipality of a similar size, with something that will bring you together (history, culture, interests, problems, aims, etc.). One thing, however, is obvious: without enthusiasm, zeal, self-discipline, perseverance and volunteering it will not work.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

One of the most important and most frequently used programmes is the Europe for Citizens Community Programme. The budget for the festival, which took place in Bystré in 2001, was more than CZK 1.5 million.

Project Website

www.cultural-village.com

Contact Persons

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Čermná nad Orlicí – Kruščica – Česko Selo (Serbia)

Development Cooperation with Serbian Partner Municipalities

Implementation Timeframe: 2004 – to date

About the municipality: The municipality of Čermná nad Orlicí is located in the Rychnov nad Kněžnou District, Hradec Králové Region. It spreads along both banks of the River Tichá Orlice and has approximately 1,000 inhabitants.

Twinned municipalities: Česko Selo (Serbia, 2004), Kruščica (Serbia, 2004), Spišské Tomášovce (Slovakia, 2009)

Project Description

The idea of long-term development cooperation emerged in 2002 during the signing of the cooperation agreement between the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia and the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic. In the same year, contacts were established between the municipalities of Čermná nad Orlicí, Kruščica and Česko Selo, which were confirmed in 2004 by the signing of the Declaration on Mutual Cooperation at the Embassy in Belgrade. One of the reasons for establishing cooperation with those municipalities was their large Czech ethnic groups.

The cooperation focuses on several areas: education and sports, public administration, healthcare, humanitarian aid, economy and culture. Both Čermná nad Orlicí and the Hradec Králové Region participate actively in specific projects; the latter, for example, contributed



to the repair of a school in Kruščica and the purchase of machines for maintaining public greenery in the same municipality.

The municipality of Čermná contributed financially to the reconstruction of the municipal office in Česko Selo and the conversion of a former school into a museum and lodging house. Another joint project was the reconstruction of a football pitch, which was provided with public lighting and a part of which was turned into a children's playground. The municipality of Čermná also helped to build a network infrastructure (Internet and telephone system) in Česko Selo, and together with the Czech Embassy in Serbia it supports the construction of a water supply system in the community.

The twinned municipalities organise regular meetings, during which they exchange their experiences in the management and functioning of the municipality and plan joint events. Cooperation is also developing in the field of culture, specifically during mutual visits, concerts and folklore group performances. Each year,

children from both Serbian municipalities take part in summer camps organised in Čermná nad Orlicí by the Brontosaurus movement.

The events taking place in the framework of cooperation are supervised by the Mayor of Čermná nad Orlicí and the chairmen of Kruščica and Češko Selo.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The main purpose of cooperation is the assistance provided by the municipality of Čermná nad Orlicí to its Serbian partners during the transformation and democratic reform process. Primarily the assistance takes the form of sharing both good and bad experiences of the Czech Republic and minor investment assistance. The purpose, however, is not to enforce the knowledge and results achieved during transformation in the Czech Republic upon the Serbian partners – the experience is shared on a voluntary basis and serves as an inspiration. Thanks to this cooperation, the municipalities of Češko Selo and Kruščica are one step ahead of other municipalities in the Serbian region.

A great benefit rests in the perception of this cooperation by the citizens of all the twinned municipalities, among which cordial relations prevail, and the citizens of Čermná are aware of the usefulness and desirability of their assistance to their Serbian compatriots.

Recommendations for Others

The Declaration on Mutual Cooperation was signed in the spirit of mutual and true assistance, not merely on



the basis of formal cooperation. It is not correct to expect only financial or other gains for the municipality from cooperation. Good cooperation should also comprise the element of mutual solidarity, on which the municipality will be able to rely in case of need. The municipalities should bear in mind the content of the Declaration and its putting to life.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The activities pursued in the framework of mutual cooperation are financed by the municipality of Čermná nad Orlicí – CZK 300,000, and the Hradec Králové Region – CZK 200,000.

Contact person

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Haviřov - Jastrzębie-Zdrój (Poland)

Czech-Polish Meetings of Experts

Implementation Timeframe: 1/2011 – 9/2011

About the town: Haviřov is a statutory town lying in Těšín Silesia in the Moravia-Silesia Region. It has nearly 80,000 inhabitants.

Twinned towns: Jastrzębie-Zdrój (Poland, 1990), Harlow (Great Britain, 1990), Mažeikiai (Lithuania, 1995), Collegno (Italy, 1998), Omiš (Croatia, 2004), Paide (Estonia, 2005), Turčianské Teplice (Slovakia, 2009)

Project Description

The idea to organise expert meetings arose on the basis of existing cooperation between the towns of Jastrzębie-Zdrój and Karviná at the time the “Let’s Meet Across the Border” project was in progress. During the working meetings between the Mayor of Haviřov and the President of the town of Jastrzębie-Zdrój, the idea was conceived to create a platform for establishing and consolidating cooperation between the non-governmental non-profit organisations, town authorities, business entities and territorial self-governing units of all the three towns.

The project was focused primarily on the exchange of experiences and best practice sharing. In its course, three specialised meetings were arranged to deal with the areas of culture, education, sports, tourism and recreation, economics and business, and security. The meetings were held consecutively in all of the participating towns – the meeting on “Culture, education, sports, tourism and leisure-time activities” in



Jastrzębie-Zdrój, the meeting on “Economics and business” in Karviná and the meeting on “Public security” in Haviřov. In the course of those meetings, discussions were held on the possibilities of financing the projects in the areas mentioned above from the Czech Republic – Poland Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme. The participating towns and organisations established mutual contacts and discussed the possibilities of future cooperation and potential joint ventures.

The closing event was the final conference held in the Polish city of Wisla, where the results of the three thematic meetings were summed up. The participants reviewed the course of the project and proposed the directions for the future joint activities, with instructions for the preparation and realisation of future cross-border projects.

The organisation of the project was entrusted to the employees of the Jastrzębie-Zdrój municipality, in cooperation with appointed officers of the Karviná and Haviřov municipalities and the “Olza” Association for Development and Regional Cooperation in Těšín.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The project was evaluated as highly beneficial for all the participants. At the thematic meetings, the project participants established contacts with their partners, with whom they not only exchanged useful information, but also sought additional possibilities for promoting cooperation within the Těšín Silesia region and creating conditions for local and regional development.

A tangible outcome of the project was a publication which, among other things, reviews the well-tried and tested procedures in realising cross-border projects and carries basic information about project financing with an analysis of the obstacles and opportunities for promoting twinning cooperation.

On the basis of previous meetings, two projects are being prepared. The one, entitled “Active Neighbourhood – activities to promote cooperation between three twin towns”, is being prepared by Jastrzębie-Zdrój, and the other, named “Permanent Mining Exhibition”, is being conceived by Havířov (partner Miejski Ośrodek Kultury Jastrzębie- Zdrój).

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The project was co-financed from the Micro-Projects Fund of the Těšín Silesia – Śląsk Cieszyński Euro-region



of the Czech Republic – Polish Republic 2007-2013 Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme. Total costs of the project amounted to EUR 21 804. The grant was worth EUR 16 395,61 (contribution from the European Regional Development Fund) – the grant was obtained by Jastrzębie-Zdrój as the leading partner of the project.

Project Websites

www.karvina.cz/portal/page/portal/uvodni_stranka/projekty/projekty_EU/polsko-czeskie_spotkania_branzowe

Contact Person

Mgr. Dagmar Mertová (mertova.dagmar@havirov-city.cz)

Cheb – Marktredwitz (Federal Republic of Germany)

Landscape Exhibition without Frontiers

Implementation Timeframe: 2006

About the town: The town of Cheb lies in West Bohemia in the Karlovy Vary Region on the River Ohře. The first mention of Cheb dates back to 1061. The town has a population of over 33,000.

Twinned towns: Hof (Germany, since 2004 to date), Nizhny Tagil (Russia, since 1990 to date), Rheden (Netherlands, since 1990 to date)

Befriended towns with which the town cooperates: Marktredwitz (Germany, since 1989 to date), Waldsassen (Germany, since 1989 to date), Wendlingen (Germany, since 1990 to date), Tirschenreuth (Germany, since 2005 to date)

Project Description

Originally, the landscape exhibition was intended to highlight garden art and landscape creation. Such exhibitions have a long tradition in Germany. In 2006, the organisation of the exhibition was assigned to the town of Marktredwitz. On the basis of this nomination, Marktredwitz addressed the town of Cheb to try a similar project on the Czech side.

The project had two main phases. In the first phase extensive redevelopment and landscaping took place in the castle surroundings and the adjacent areas, including the turning of Císařská louka (Imperial Meadow) into the town's central exhibition area. In the past, that suburban location was neglected and was used more



or less as a through road, although it had an undeniable potential for recreation and tourism, with a link-up to the natural attractions of the Ohře River valley. The second phase consisted of a time-limited exhibition presenting different forms of land art and garden art, accompanied by various complementary events (seminars, theatre performances, workshops).

The organiser of the project was the Cheb municipality, with cultural organisations (West Bohemian Theatre in Cheb, the Gallery 4 Photo Gallery), gardening firms and the media) participating in the accompanying programme.

An interesting dimension was the participation of homeless people in the project. The Plzeň Diocesan Charity - Noclehárna Betlém lodging house - made it possible for its clients to help, at first with preparatory work, such as painting and pruning, and later, during construction, clearing the ground and working as car park attendants.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

After the exhibition ended, the area was turned into an attractive leisure-time zone surrounded by nature not far from the city centre. The exhibition also gave an impulse to the renovation of other areas in the Ohře valley. Approximately 13 ha of surface was turned into recreation areas designed for leisure-time activities. In 2013, the landscaping exhibition will enter into its third stage, in the course of which the left bank of the River Ohře will be revitalised.

Recommendations for Others

For the successful mastering of the project it is essential to have a good and experienced project manager, political support and a reliable project partner or partners. The preparation of the project (defining and setting out the objectives, timeframes, resources and costs) must not be underestimated; another must is to have a good team for the realisation of the project.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The overall budget was approx. CZK 266 million. The



project was financed from the town's budget, other Czech public sources and the European Union.

Project Website

www.krajinnavystava06.cz

Contact Person

Ing. Michal Pospíšil, Deputy Mayor (pospisil@cheb.cz)

Jirkov – Brand-Erbisdorf (Federal Republic of Germany)

Jirkov Charity Advent

Implementation Timeframe: every year since 2007

About the town: The town of Jirkov lies in the Ústí Region in the foothills of the Ore Mountains. It has approximately 20,000 inhabitants.

Twinned town: Brand-Erbisdorf (Germany, 2002)

Project Description

For several years Jirkov has been seeking to build friendly relations between its citizens and the citizens of the twin town of Brand-Erbisdorf, a project with a potential to continue developing. This aim is not limited to meetings between the towns' representatives and it should also include the organisation of various joint events, such as cultural and sporting undertakings, involving the towns' citizens, in particular primary school children.

Pupils from the Jirkov Primary School (at Krušnohorská 1675) have already participated in several joint projects with pupils from schools in Brand-Erbisdorf, during which they struck up true friendships. The children keep up correspondence with each other and even exchange visits. The town wishes to maintain this cooperation and further it in the years to come.

The project being presented focuses on mutual Advent-time visits. First, Jirkov organises a trip to Brand-Erbisdorf, where Czech pupils become acquainted with Advent traditions celebrated in Germany. The



programme includes the festive slicing of a Christmas Stollen accompanied by a cultural programme, in which the Czech pupils participate. After that the Advent celebrations continue in Jirkov, where pupils from Jirkov schools, the Paraplíčko Home for Children and Youth, the Primary Art School and the Town Institute for Social Services sell their products. The sale proceeds are donated to charity organisations, such as the Chomutov "Health for Children" Foundation, or the Prohandicap Alliance. The festivities are wound up with performances by pupils from the Jirkov and Brand-Erbisdorf schools, attended by the mayors of the two twin towns.

The project was prepared and supervised by an organisational team consisting of representatives of the Krušnohorská 1675 Primary School and the Jirkov Cultural, Educational and Information Centre.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The Jirkov Charity Advent has become a tradition (in 2011 it took place for the fifth time) and each year the event was enriched by a new feature (Christmas Cake Parade, Gingerbread Parade, Christmas workshops, etc.). The greatest asset, however, is the event's focus on charity, which brings together all the schools and the Municipal Social Service Institute, based on cooperation. In the course of the event, the Advent traditions on both the Czech and the German side of the Ore Mountains are highlighted and new friendships between the twin towns are struck up.

Recommendations for Others

It is good to plan everything carefully, to secure the funding well in advance and to have one person in charge to coordinate all actions in cooperation with a reliable organisational team.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The project is financed from several sources – the town budget, donations from sponsors and European



subsidies. In the course of the five years of the event the budget ranged between CZK 50,000 and 300,000.

Contact Persons

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Mgr. Eva Vokurková (evavokurkova@seznam.cz)

Kamenický Šenov – Rheinbach (Federal Republic of Germany)

Meetings of Towns and Citizens

Implementation Timeframe: since 2004

About the town: The town of Kamenický Šenov is situated in North Bohemia in the Liberec Region. It lies on the border of two landscape areas – the Central Bohemian Highlands and the Lužice Mountains – and has over 4,000 inhabitants.

Twinned town: Rheinbach (Germany, 2002)

Befriended towns with which Kamenický Šenov cooperates: Weisswasser (Germany, 2004), Frauenau (Germany, 2008), Zwiesel (Germany, 2008)

Project Description

The partnership between the two towns came into being at the time after the Second World War, when the German population transferred from the border town of Kamenický Šenov found their new home in Rheinbach. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, the first contacts were set up and were followed by the establishment of cooperation between the two towns' glassmaking schools. In 2002, the process climaxed with the signing of a twinning agreement between the two towns, and in 2003, the Friends of Rheinbach Association was set up in Kamenický Šenov, starting a period of intensive cooperation.

One of the first joint projects was a meeting of the people of Rheinbach and Kamenický Šenov, who attended a joint seminar on the possibilities of cooperation, joint social activities and volunteering. The participants paid



a visit to the Saxon village of Lückendorf, where they were inspired by its cross-border cooperation with the town of Jablonné v Podještědí. A questionnaire survey was conducted as part of the project among the citizens of Šenov, who were asked about "How people live in Kamenický Šenov". The aim of the survey was to find out how the people live in their town, what they miss and what they are proud of, and what attitude they have towards volunteering, community activities and international cooperation.

The meeting was prepared and supervised by the Friends of Rheinbach Association, and its participants included the Association of Friends and Partners of Kamenický Šenov and its environs and the towns of Kamenický Šenov and Rheinbach.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The main benefit was the laying of firm foundations for further cooperation, which continues with full intensity to this day. The follow-up activities included a similar seminar in Rheinbach (2005) and an exhibition

in Rheinbach about the history of Kamenický Šenov (2006).

Another important act was the setting up of the “Sonow” civic association, to take care of the old glassmakers and tradesmen’s cemetery in Kamenický Šenov. The Association continues its mission to this day. The cemetery, which had long been neglected, is today one of the most visited tourist places in the town.

Recommendations for Others

The most important things are good planning and communication. It is essential to talk about all problems the organisers may think of. Cultural differences still exist between people, towns and countries, and what seems automatic to us need not be automatic to others. To this day we are faced with the need to overcome differences, especially as regards the financing of our events, because there are great inequalities in our possibilities, between both the associations and the project participants themselves. The only way to handle the situation is talking openly about it.

Another good thing is to include in the project not only the official programme, but also activities for relaxation and rapprochement at an informal level, such as sports matches, a special experience or solving problems together. In the past, the projects were realised one-sidedly, but since 2009 the two parties have been working on them together, even if the applicant was only one side. This is much better, because in this way the information and obligations can be shared. As a result, the partnership of the two towns can be pursued also at the personal level and the friendships thus established become totally independent of the towns’ political and financial situation.



Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The total costs of the meeting amounted to CZK 162,000 (excluding transport) and the project was backed by a contribution of CZK 126,000 from the Robert Bosch Foundation. The organisation of the project, interpreting and partly the accommodation of the German participants were arranged on a voluntary basis. The German participants covered their own transport costs and accommodation expenses, unless they were accommodated with Czech families.

Project Websites

www.partnerschaft-steinschoenau.de

www.pratelerheinbachu.estranky.cz

www.sonow.cz

Contact Person

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Most – Bydgoszcz (Poland)

COBRAMAN Project

Implementation Timeframe: 12/2008 – 5/2012

About the town: Most is a statutory town, which lies in North-West Bohemia in the Ústí Region. The River Bílina flows through it. With its 67,000 inhabitants it is the 14th largest town in the Czech Republic.

Twinned towns: Marienberg (Germany, 1992), Meppel (Netherlands, 1999), Bydgoszcz (Poland, 2009), Freiberg (Germany, 2011)

Project Description

COBRAMAN is an international project realised in the framework of the Central Europe Supranational Cooperation Programme. The leading partner in the project is the partner town of Bydgoszcz. Its other participants, besides the town of Most, are Ústí nad Labem, the Italian town of Ferrara, the German city of Stuttgart and the Slovenian town of Kranj.

The main objective of the COBRAMAN project is to define the rules for the professional management of brownfield regeneration in European towns. At the start of the project to help towards the regeneration of currently unused spaces affected by former industrial activities is the creation of the function of Brownfield Manager in the town organisation chart, with the setting out of methodical procedures for brownfield management.

As its pilot locality, the town of Most chose the vast area surrounding the future Most lake heavily affected in the past by massive mining operations.

The Most municipality put in charge of the project the employees of its Development and Grant Department.



All people living in Most will benefit from the project when completed.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

Several studies have been prepared that will serve as a guide to regenerating the town's brownfields, with examples of good practice. It is a series of studies dealing with the problem of brownfields from several aspects – technical and town-planning solutions, economic management of brownfield development, marketing strategies and town development. In future, these studies will serve primarily as a basis for brownfield regeneration planning and for breathing new life into the brownfield sites.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The project is financed from the Central Europe Supranational Cooperation Operational Programme. The total budget of the project is more than EUR 3.5 million.

Project Website

www.cobraman-ce.eu

Contact Person

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Přerov – Bardejov (Slovakia)

Internship Exchange of Town Officials

Implementation Timeframe: (2008 – 2009)

About the town: Přerov is a statutory town situated in the Olomouc Region on the River Bečva. It has over 45,000 inhabitants.

Twinned towns: Cuijk (Netherlands, 1993), Kedzierzyn-Kozle (Poland, 2007), Bardejov (Slovakia, 2008), Ozimek (Poland, 2010), Ivano-Frankivsk (Ukraine, 2010)

Project Description

In 2008, the mayors of the towns of Bardejov and Přerov signed a twinning agreement. This marked the beginning of long-term official twinning cooperation of the two towns, supported by a variety of activities. One of them is the mutual exchange of town officials.

In 2009, two internship exchanges took place in the two towns, with around 15 officials participating.

The subjects for the exchange of experience in Přerov were the tax system, strategic planning, town property administration and the working and social protocol of the secretariat. In Bardejov, the exchange focused on financial management, public order and work of the town police, new social services for citizens, the information system and the efficient use of information technologies by the town authorities.

Aside from the specialised programme, the participants also had an opportunity to become acquainted with the everyday functioning of the offices in the partner town, and they also took part in the accompanying programmes prepared for them – a tour of the cultural landmarks and the tasting of local specialties.



Main Outcomes and Benefits

Important benefits of the project were that the participants became acquainted with office management in the partner town, the division of self-government and the work of the organisations set up by the Bardejov municipality, and with the system of communication between the elected representatives and the clerks; they also learned how the citizens are informed about the Council deliberations by cable television.

The main benefit of the internship exchange, however, was the opportunity to establish cooperation between the individual town officials at an expert level and the possibility of its future promotion. In subsequent years, however, financial resources for further internship exchanges were lacking.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

Partly covered from the budgets of the town of Bardejov and the town of Přerov.

Contact Person

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Slavičín – Dubnica nad Váhom – Horné Srnie (Slovakia)

Flood Protection Measures and the Říka –Vlára -Váh Warning System**Implementation Timeframe: 2008 - 2010**

About the town: The town of Slavičín lies in the Zlín region on the River Říka. It is surrounded by the White Carpathians and the Vizovice Hills and has just under 7,000 inhabitants.

Twinned towns: Uhrovec (Slovakia, 1964), Dubnica nad Váhom (Slovakia, 2007), Horné Srnie (Slovakia, 2007), Nemšová (Slovakia, 2010)

Project Description

The town of Slavičín is situated in the basin of the River Říka, one of the most important tributaries of the Vlára; the municipality of Horné Srnie and the town of Dubnica nad Váhom also lie on its banks. In the event of massive rainfall, due to the geographical and geological properties of the surrounding surface area high flow rates occur in the region causing flash flooding. The need to deal with the inadequate flood protection in the area and the necessity to install an early warning system to protect the population in case the water level rises was put forward at a joint meeting of the representatives of Dubnica nad Váhom, Slavičín and Horné Srnie in 2008. One of the reasons was the inadequate capacity of the Říka waterbed profile in the urban zone of Slavičín and the inadequate condition of the flood-protection infrastructure built between the 1950s and 1970s. As a result of massive development in the municipalities concerned – all of them partners in the pro-



ject – the infrastructure did not cover the entire endangered area, leaving the new settlements along the Říka and Vlára unprotected.

As part of the project, the town of Slavičín reconstructed the bridge over Příčná Street, which now meets the Q100 water level parameters. A warning system was installed in several places in Slavičín, the same as in the twin town of Dubnica nad Váhom and the Horné Srnie municipality. The facilities now form a comprehensive warning system on the rivers Říka, Vlára and Vána, which can inform, warn and notify all the partners on a two-way basis.

The partners entrusted the construction and publicity of the project to subcontractors. In addition, Slavičín also used the services of subcontractors for preparing the grant application, project documentation, technical and author's supervision and the geometric staking out of the networks. The towns' own employees were responsible for the tendering, coordination, monitoring reports and payment applications.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The project brings benefit to the inhabitants of the border region, whose lives are now much safer and their risk of unforeseeable flood disasters is much reduced. The local governments raised the efficiency of the integrated rescue teams in emergencies. The project is also beneficial for juristic and natural persons, local businessmen, who are saved from financial losses in critical situations. After two years of experience gained during the operation of the warning system installed in the first phase, a proposal was made for its extension. Therefore, the partners from the first phase – the town of Slavičín and the municipality of Horné Srnie – agreed to continue the project and brought in a new partner, the town of Nemšová. The second phase of the flood protection project and the Říka – Vlára – Váh warning system were realised in the years 2010 and 2011. The project provided for the extension of the existing system to cover further localities (the town of Nemšová) lying in the Vlára and Říka valleys.



Project Funding and Approximate Budget

Total costs covered by the town of Slavičín amounted to CZK 11,018,000 and total costs paid by all the partners together to CZK 16,887,000. The source of financing was the Slovak Republic/Czech Republic Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme.

Contact Person

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Valašská Bystřice – Vavrišovo (Slovakia)

Revival of Historical Events and Traditions of Regional Importance in the Vavrišovo and Valašská Bystřice Municipalities

Implementation Timeframe: 3/2009 – 8/2010

About the municipality: The municipality of Valašská Bystřice is located in the district of Vsetín in the Zlín Region. It is surrounded by the Vsetín Hills and is the home to over 2,000 inhabitants.

Twinned municipality: Vavrišovo (Slovakia, 2008)

Project Description

The project was initiated by the Wallachian Portáš Corps Association in the Czech Republic and the Upper Liptov Kuruc Regiment Association in Slovakia. The Portáš Association set itself the aim to recall the unique and rich history of the Portáš Corps in East Moravia, while the Kuruc Association wished to remember the nearly forgotten last battle of the Kuruc uprising against the Hapsburgs in 1709. Both associations gained the support of their two municipalities. The project was prepared by the Liptov Regional Development Agency. The Vavrišovo municipality assumed the role of leading partner, and the partners to the project were the Valašská Bystřice municipality and the Wallachian Portáš Corps.

The goal of the project was to recall the nearly forgotten historical events that took place in East Moravia and the Slovak Liptov Region - the deeds of the Portáš Corps and the Battle of Vavrišovo some 300 years ago. The project included several programmes. The most



costly was the building of a museum featuring the Kuruc Uprising in Vavrišovo; it took two years to reconstruct the battle. On the Czech side, an outdoor amphitheatre was built in the municipality of Valašská Bystřice, where Portáš celebrations were organised. Expert conferences of historians were held on both sides, with the publication of conference proceedings. The Slovak partner built a memorial of the battle and on the Czech side, the statue of a Portáš soldier and new information boards were placed beside the tombstones of the fallen Portáš commanders.

The project was intended for the general public. The reconstruction of the Battle of Vavrišovo was viewed by 8,000 spectators, and over 1,000 people attended the Portáš celebrations. Both structures continue to serve their purpose. Aside from the celebrations, other social and cultural events take place in the amphitheatre in Valašská Bystřice, such as harvest festivals and concerts. The manager of the project was the Vavrišovo Municipality, which used the services of the Liptov Regional Development Agency, responsible

for the project administration. In addition, each partner municipality had its own organisational team.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The main outcomes of the project are the two structures – the museum and the amphitheatre - and the starting of the tradition of the Vavrišovo Battle reconstruction and the revival of the Portáš celebrations. Both events are commemorated regularly each year.

Recommendations for Others

In this case, the preparation of the project and the related approval procedures took a long time, and as time passed, the possibilities of both civic associations and the rules for using the funds changed, which made it necessary to ask permission for changing certain things. Therefore it is good to consider, which activities should be included in similar projects, and preferably refrain from going into great detail – especially in the case of soft, non-investment activities.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

The total budget amounted to CZK 11,258 000, 80% of which was covered from the Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme, 5% from the state budget of the Czech Republic and 15% from the state budget of the Slovak Republic. The rest was contributed by the project partners. Due to formal error in commissioning the construction of the outdoor amphitheatre, the grant to Valašská Bystřice was cut by 10%. For lack of funding, both municipalities took out a loan to cover the investment costs related to the project. By February 2012 the final project report was still not approved and



interest on the loan is unexpectedly raising the costs of the project.

Project Websites

The project partners have their own websites with information about the project:

www.portasi.cz
www.valasskabystrice.cz
www.vavrisovo.sk
www.kuruci.sk

Contact Person

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Všeradice – Gernik (Romania)

Cooperation between Fire Brigades and Other Activities

Implementation Timeframe: since 2009 to date

About the municipality: The Všeradice municipality is located in the district of Beroun in the Central Bohemia Region. It has around 400 inhabitants.

Twinned municipality: Gernik (Romania, 2009)

Project Description

Cooperation with the municipality of Gernik started in an interesting way. Whenever Všeradice wanted to cooperate with a foreign partner, it was hindered by the language barrier, which prevented close relations between the people. That is why it turned to Banat in Romania, which has a large Czech ethnic minority, and, in addition, is faced with similar problems as Všeradice.

The main project was to set up a well-functioning firefighting unit in the Gernik Municipality. The firemen from Všeradice helped the Gernik fire-fighters to put their equipment in operation and explained the basic rules of the fire-fighting profession to them. They trained them in firefighting skills, taught them how to maintain the firefighting equipment and helped them with the organisation of sporting and social entertainment activities.

Other activities include cooperation in applying for European grants. For example, Všeradice helped the Romanian municipality draw up the application for a grant to build a small hydroelectric plant. Another



form of cooperation is the promotion of Banat in the Všeradice gallery and cultural centre with the aim of reviving tourism in the Banat region. The two partners also cooperate in the area of municipality management, where they exchange experiences, for example, in local fee registration and collection and road maintenance.

Their cooperation is aimed at all citizens wishing to find new friends and learn to know new places, while also presenting their municipality and themselves. Approximately 30 citizens from Všeradice and 20 citizens from Gernik are currently involved in the activities.

All the activities are prepared and coordinated by the Mayor of Všeradice, Bohumil Stibal, and the Deputy Mayor of Gernik, Václav Pieček.

Main Outcomes and Benefits

The response to the project is very favourable on both sides. More possibilities of cooperation are envisaged, with a growing number of people becoming involved.

Recommendations for Others

An important thing is the choice of the partner. If the aim is to get a large number of people involved, it is necessary to minimise the language barrier. At first it is better to choose an informal way of cooperation and examine the possibilities of the partners. After that it is good to sum up the main points of potential cooperation and only then sign the twinning agreement. Before signing, it is necessary to have a clear idea of the concept and a sufficient number of people prepared to support the cooperation project. Otherwise it could happen that the cooperation will only be formal and the content of the twinning agreement will never be brought to fruition.

Project Funding and Approximate Budget

From the outset the activities have been financed from private sources. The costs of the official social undertaking range around CZK 30,000 a year.



Contact Person

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The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and its role in supporting international and town-twinning cooperation

The Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic is a voluntary, non-political and non-governmental non-profit organisation, whose members are municipalities and towns in the Czech Republic. The Union associates around 2,500 towns and municipalities accounting for more than 70% of the entire population of the Czech Republic. The Union's activities are based mainly on the work of the mayors and council members, who devote their time to community problems in addition to their duties as community representatives. The Union's main task is to defend the interests of the local governments at a national, European and international level. The day-to-day work of the Union focuses primarily on legislation related to the functioning of local governments in all aspects of their life. As the representative of the interests of the municipalities and towns, the Union analyses, comments on and influences the legislation at both the national and European level. At the European level, the Union collaborates with other national associations of towns and municipalities in defending the interests of local governments, with which it shares information and experience and joins efforts with them in pursuing their positions. This takes place primarily on the platform of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), of which the Union is an active member of long standing. The Union has its representation in the senior management of that organisation in the person of Ing. Oldřich Vlasák, its Executive President. The Union representatives also take an active part in the work of the Committee of Regions (CoR) and the Congress of Local and Regional



Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE). The Union participates in the work of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) World Organisation and the European Social Network (ESN), as well as in various international projects, and its members actively participate in transformation cooperation projects with South-Eastern and Eastern European countries.

The Union's key priorities also include the support of towns and municipalities in their efforts to join the international and twinning cooperation movement and the provision of follow-up services. The Union:

- Informs its members about what is new in the area of town-twinning and further international cooperation;
- Helps with the establishment of new partnerships.
- Provides consulting services in the area of grant possibilities and individual consultations to applicants for grants from the Europe for Citizens Programme.
- Influences the shaping of the European grant programmes so as to enable the towns and municipalities to draw money for their international projects;
- Organises seminars for towns on town-twinning cooperation.

Where to get information about town-twinning and the international cooperation of towns:

Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic
 External Relations Department
 5. května 1640/65, 140 21 Prague 4
 Mgr. Gabriela Hůlková
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 e-mail: smocr@smocr.cz; hulkova@smocr.cz
 www.smocr.cz, www.partnerskamesta.cz

MEPCO – International Municipal Consultancy Centre

The International Municipal Consultancy Centre (MEPCO)  was established in 2004 as a joint venture of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic and the International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG International). Its mission is to support local governments in the Czech Republic in their efforts to raise the efficiency and quality of public administration and help them become involved in international projects and initiatives. As part of its long-term activities MEPCO seeks to offer Czech experience to the developing regions especially in South-Eastern and Eastern European countries in the area of good governance.

MEPCO has been active in the field of international projects ever since its founding. For instance, in its early days its experts took part in the management of the PHARE Public Administration Reform Fund of the Ministry of the Interior in Romania. As part of the LARA Toolbox international programme coming under the INTER-ACT programme, they helped the municipalities with choosing suitable project themes and drawing money from European funds.

Currently MEPCO is in charge of the management of the participation of Czech partners in three projects co-financed by the Supranational Cooperation Operational Programme worth approximately EUR 6.5 million. Its activities are aimed at supporting business projects at the local level, the local employment policy and cooperation between universities and innovation enterprises. Within the PRO 2013+ cross-border project, MEPCO analyses the potential of Czech-Austrian cooperation between various entities in the Vysočina Region. The material will be used as a valuable basis for projects in

the 2014 – 2020 programming period. Together with the Union, MEPCO is the proponent of a one-year project in Moldova, the aim of which is to contribute to the efficient decentralisation of its public administration, strengthen the role of towns and municipalities in the work of local governments and develop a platform managed by the Congress of Moldova Local Authorities (CALM).

Several times a year MEPCO organises study trips to the Czech Republic for Moldovan town representatives, associations, non-profit organisations and ministries. A large part of the international activities are financed by the Czech UN Trust Fund, the EuropeAid programme and other donors.

As regards domestic activities, MEPCO was the first in the Czech Republic to successfully introduce the BSC strategic planning and management system. After the town of Vsetín it continues installing the system in other organisations. It also prepared integrated development plans for several towns and a number of strategic documents linked with the drawing of European grants.

MEPCO is currently realising town projects to introduce the Smart Administration strategy with support from the European Social Fund. It is also one of the authors of the Educated Councillor Project, whose promoter is the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the CR.

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CURRENT TRENDS IN TWINNING COOPERATION OF TOWNS AND MUNICIPALITIES

Collection of Practical Examples
of International Cooperation

Graphic Design and printing: Jiří Kaufner
Cover: Vladimír Spívála
Illustrations: Monika Raisová

The publication was brought out in the framework
of the Project Support of the Partnerships of Towns
by the National Local Government Associations of the Slovak and the Czech Republics,
supported by the Europe for Citizens Programme 2007-2013.

Published by the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic.

Press run: 2000 copies.

The texts have been edited.

First edition, Prague 2012.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication reflects the views only of the author,
and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may
be made of the information contained therein.



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