



Aiming Higher

International cooperation of municipalities
and Europe for Citizens Programme in Slovenia



EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme

The EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme provides support to international projects, which encourage and enhance active European citizenship. By town twinning across Europe and networking non-governmental organizations and other non-profit organizations, the European Union wishes to improve the cooperation of civil society at shaping the common European future.

Priority Themes:

- Future of the European Union and its basic values
- Active European Citizenship: participation and democracy in Europe
- Inter-cultural dialogue
- People's wellbeing in Europe: employment, social cohesion and sustainable development
- Impact of EU policies in societies

Programme Europe for Citizens Possibilities

By approving projects, the Programme provides grants for implementing projects.

Action 1 – Active Citizens for Europe

This action aims at promoting town twinning across Europe. Within this action it is possible to apply to undertake town twinning projects, develop thematic networks among twinned towns, and develop support measures for increasing the quality of international networking and citizens' projects which aim at strengthening civil dialogue.

Action 2 – Active Civil Society in Europe

Action 2 aims at promoting the networking of people from different non-profit organizations and so encourage them to play an active part in civil society. This action provides structural support to European political research organizations, and non-governmental and non-profit organizations on a European level. It also provides financial support to projects, initiated by civil society, institutes, foundations and other non-profit organizations of the civil society with a legal status.

Action 3 – Together for Europe

Action 3 provides support to different activities carried out by the European Commission, such as high-visibility events, studies, and the creation of information and dissemination tools.

Action 4 – Active European Remembrance

Projects within this action should ensure the preservation and commemoration of the victims of Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism in Europe.

Who Can Participate?

The programme 'Europe for Citizens' is targeting; municipalities, non-profit organizations, and twinning committees with a legal status, (legal personality), who represent; local authorities, unions or unions of local authorities, civil society organizations, foundations, research centres and institutes, think tanks, trade unions, religious organizations, amateur sport organizations, museums, associations of survivors, associations of families of the victims, and other non-profit organizations.

More Information

For more information about the EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme visit the webpage http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.htm or http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/citizenship/index_en.php, where you can find the Programme guide or contact your local information point.



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Preface

The Europe for Citizens programme largely carries on the Town Twinning initiative of the European Commission which was born in 1989. Support for fostering cooperation between twinned communities has remained until now – at least from the point of view of available funding – the most important element of the “Europe for Citizens” programme. Within Action 1 there were as much as 45% of all resources earmarked for Town twinning citizens’ meetings and Networks of twinned towns. Moreover, the Programme also supports projects without the participation of municipalities that are based on partnerships between civil society organisations. The fact that the Programme dealing with active European citizenship largely addresses the local communities is not a coincidence since these communities form an environment, in which borders between national citizenships of EU member states are – formally speaking – being erased most efficiently. However, it is not the formal dimension of European citizenship that matters but the dimension defining the substance of the community called the European Union.

One of the essential assumptions of the European Union as community is enforcement of the solidarity principle. Especially meetings of “quite ordinary” inhabitants of local communities supported by the Programme contribute significantly to discovering the realities of each other and offer us the chance to pinpoint the reasons of diversity and similarity. Simple human ties foster mutual solidarity and respect more than any resolution of the European institutions.

The processes which the Europe for Citizens programme wishes to stimulate are complementary to the formation of intergovernmental community. These processes increase our awareness that we are actually dealing with the same or similar challenges and are looking for solutions to them jointly. The Programme fosters activities, in which foreigners from places that may only be a point on the map for us become real images that we can share life with within the same community.

Encouraging the participation in activities supported by the Europe for Citizens programme also poses a great challenge since we need to be aware of the real situation of Slovene municipalities when it comes to their existing resources or their stance towards cross-border cooperation between towns and municipalities. Therefore, our aim is not only to increase the success of applicants from Slovenia within the Europe for Citizens programme but to foster cross-border cooperation of local communities that involves – to the greatest extent possible – inhabitants from local communities thus giving a human face to the process of institutional integration taking place within the European community.

In order to achieve this objective, this brochure offers an overview of the international cooperation of Slovenian municipalities and a compilation of project descriptions in the framework of the Europe for Citizens programme.

Janez Škulj
Director
Institute MOVIT

2. Town Twinning

2.1 A short history of town twinning in Europe

The history of town twinning and local and regional cooperation has a long tradition dating back to the 9th century. There are documents proving that the city of Paderborn (Germany) and Le Mans (France) already cooperated as they were twinned in 836 A.D. After the end of the World War I there was an appropriate momentum to revive ties between cities that had been broken during the war. The first modern agreement of town twinning after World War I, was signed between the city of Keighley (Great Britain) and Poix-du-Nord (France), (Ivanović. 2009. p.7). But the concept of town twinning as known today was fully developed after World War II. The reason was to form ties between cities with the intention to mitigate the old tensions and resentments. People became aware that they could not live any longer as one particular country, but that they would have to cooperate with their neighbours. As a gesture of reconciliation, many ties were formed between the old enemies, for example; France and Germany. Looking from one countries perspective, the town twinning process may be seen as of marginal importance, however looking from the European perspective the town twinning process amounts to a movement of considerable substance, (Lücke and Bellocchi. 1997. p.10).

The spiritual father of the 'town twinning' concept was Jean Bareth. In 1951, 50 mayors of different European cities gathered to establish a new organization, called The Council of Municipalities and Regions – CEMR. They believed that the international cooperation of local communities was the most appropriate and effective way to promote the European identity and deepen the European consciousness. They helped to revive Jean Monet's vision of Europe: "We are not forming coalitions between States, but union among people." Many new European and international organizations and associations were formed with the aim of bringing local people from different European countries together. Since this process brought very positive outcomes, the European Commission started financing the programme of town twinning in 1989, (i.e. European Commission grant for Twinning), on the basis of the European Parliament twinning report from 1988. All these local and regional activities and efforts contributed to the setting up of an organized and systemized programme called, 'Community Action Programme to Promote Active European Citizenship', which started to operate in 2004 and lasted until 2006. Because that programme was successful, the European Commission introduced in 2007 the programme called 'Europe for Citizens' with the aim to promote the active European citizenship. The total budget for this Programme is 215 million Euros, for the period 2007 to 2013.

2.2 Positive effects of town twinning

Every local community is trying to make the best out of the cooperation it has with its international partners. Town twinning as one of the possible forms of cooperation has many positive effects on local communities. The Slovenian EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme Contact Point, has from its own experiences and on the basis of Marjeta Babić

statistical survey from 2009, interpreted the multiplicity of positive effects of town twinning. The first most visible effect is that town twinning provides municipalities with a platform for international cooperation. It contributes to exchanging experiences in the fields of policy planning, economy, tourism, environment, education, research, and culture, etc. It allows for the comparing of statistics, for better understanding of European and global standards, the gaining of new managerial skills, the acquiring of new knowledge in specific areas, and the exchanging of good practices in general. Twinning can be a useful tool for local communities to explore a particular topic or theme, share resources and interests or face common challenges. Towns that cooperate with the twinning partner, also quite often work with the partners of their partner towns as well. Thus towns can use the power of networks to discuss and share their ideas, interests and good practices and to transfer them into their own local environment.

Positive effects are visible and tangible also among local inhabitants. As Lücke and Bellocchi (1997. p.10) pointed out: "One of the cornerstones of democracy is precisely the freedom of citizens to participate in managing the affairs which most directly concern them /.../. This is why local autonomy is absolutely essential if a town and its inhabitants are to flourish." The town twinning process accelerates tolerance, solidarity and mutual understanding. It is a very strong tool in the promotion of intercultural dialogue and in the overcoming of cultural barriers and prejudices. It is a good way to get to know new

Each twinning is a mini-Europe in itself

cultural environments, to form new friendships – not only official contacts, to exchange personal and professional experiences, and develop joint projects on issues of common interest. Since town twinning citizens' meetings involve large numbers of citizens, it helps the citizens from the different Member States to create a strong feeling of belonging to a common community and to deepen the European consciousness. People involved in town twinning projects have a great opportunity to experience non-formal and informal learning, and to gain new competences, knowledge and skills. Young people especially can benefit from town twinning since this can be the first opportunity for them to travel abroad and to get in touch with other cultures and languages. This is crucial for the Europe of the 21st century since the youth are the key pillar of the new common European future. There are also other positive effects such as promoting dialogue in a community, shaping European identity, maintaining and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, developing tourism and economy, and so on...

In both the previous paragraphs, we were discussing about the building, promoting and shaping of a common European identity and European consciousness. According to the Babić analysis (2009, pp.72–3), statistical results show and confirm the positive effects and the contribution of such international cooperation. More than two thirds

of the Slovenian local communities that were researched recognized international cooperation as a very important factor in the building of a common European identity.

We could best encompass all the positive effects of town twinning by saying what Lücke and Bellocchi (1997, p.11) concluded: "Each twinning is a mini-Europe in itself"

3. Town Twinning in Slovenia

3.1 A history of town twinning in Slovenia

The history of Slovenian town twinning dates back to the 1950's, i.e. the time of the Yugoslavia. According to Babić, (2009, p.54), the first Slovenian town twinning agreement was signed between Kranj and La Ciotat, (a community in France), in 1958. It has to be mentioned here that a lot of Slovenian towns had already cooperated before that date with partner cities abroad, but did not sign the town twinning agreement. According to available data of the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia, the next two oldest town twinning agreements were signed between Lenart and Mureck, (Austria), on March 16, 1964 and at the same date between Ljubljana and Pesaro, (Italy). Statistics also shows that the intensity of the Slovenian town twinning process was at its highest after Slovenian independence in 1991.

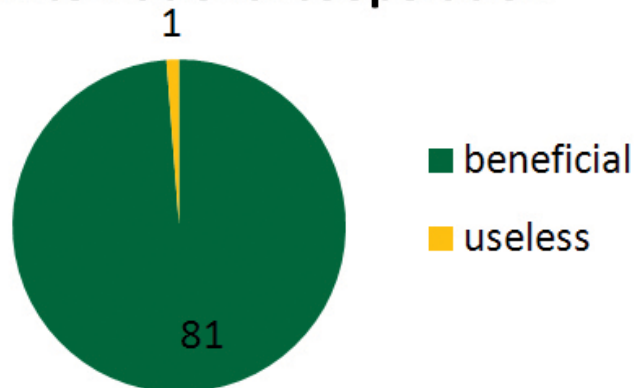
3.2 Statistical results

Marjeta Babić, (2009), conducted a statistical survey about the international cooperation of Slovenian communities. The statistics presented below refer to the Slovenian twinning agreements with partners abroad. The information includes; evaluation of the importance of international cooperation for Slovenian communities, and the reasons for twinning agreements and international cooperation in general.

Slovenian communities strongly rely on local and regional cooperation, which can be proved by the numerous town twinnings: 87 of 210 Slovenian communities have more than 300 twinned partner communities in 35 countries around the world. These statistics are the combination of a survey of the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia in 2008 and The Slovenian EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme Contact Point in 2010. Most of the town twinning agreements are made between neighbouring

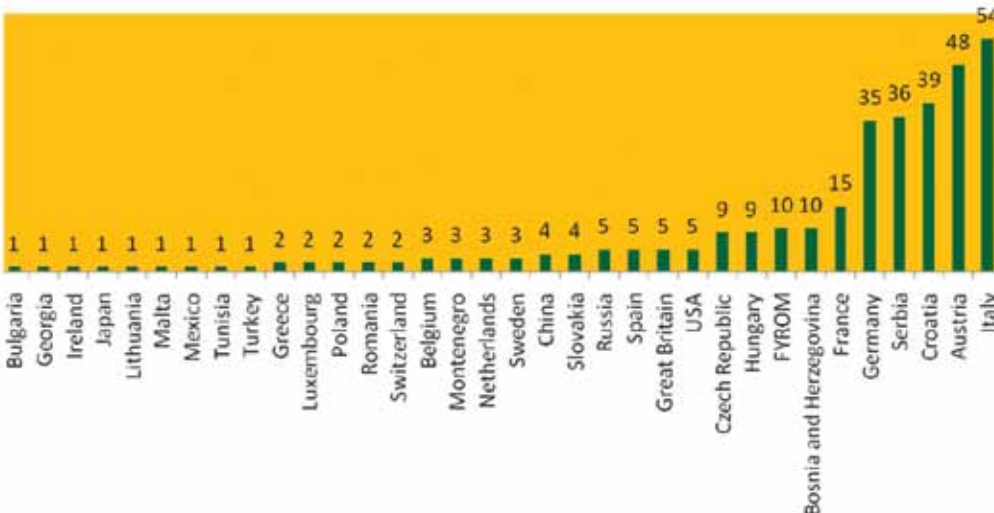
countries, (Italy, Austria and Croatia). As we will see further, the geographical proximity is one of the reasons why local communities decide to cooperate.

International cooperation



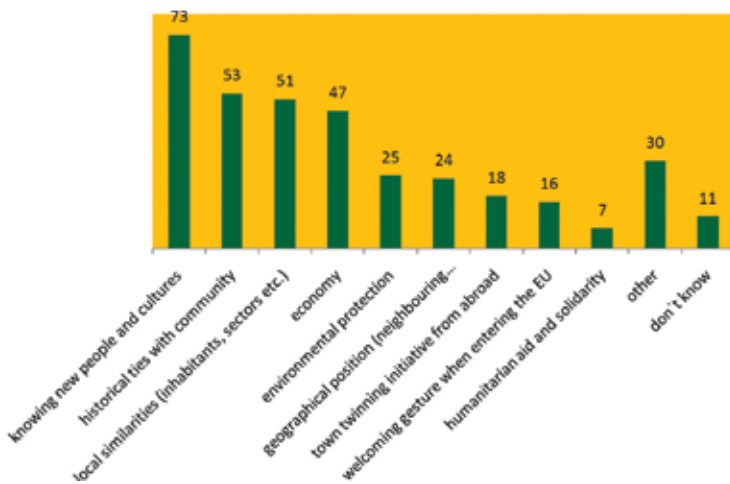
Almost all of the local communities involved consider town twinning of great importance for their international cooperation. This is not surprising if we take into consideration the reasons why they want to be twinned and what are positive effects of international cooperation. We should not exaggerate if we say that we can generalize these results to all Slovenian municipalities.

Town twinning initiatives for the international cooperation of Slovenian municipalities were put forward in most cases by municipality representatives, but in some cases they were initiated by civil society, schools, or development institutions, etc. In most cases the participants in the projects come from civil society organizations and schools, etc. This is normal if we take a look at the aims and objectives of the Programme Europe for Citizens, which are to involve citizens from the local environment. Reasons why local communities want to cooperate are numerous. Due to European cultural and linguistic diversity it is not surprising that the most common reason for town twinning is the wish to meet and get to know new people from different cultural and linguistic environments. Due to a rich European history, many European cities share the same historical background, have the same historical cultural or religious similarities, customs, or historical destiny. This is the second most common reason why local communities decide for twinning. The third most common reason is the local similarities. Many towns decide for twinning on the



base of a comparable number of inhabitants, size of the area of the town, local development indicators or local particularity, (for example; the Slovenian town Krško and the Romanian town Cernavodă – both towns have a nuclear power plant). Even though the statistics do not show it explicitly, the geographical proximity is a very strong reason for town twinning. This is clearly visible in the first table, where we can see that most of the Slovenian local communities have their

twinning partners in neighbouring countries. Geographical proximity makes it possible for tighter and more intensive relations and cooperation. The reason for twinning can also be very thematic, like environmental protection, agriculture or tourism, (for example; between the municipality Moravske Toplice and municipality Biograd na Moru, Croatia). There were also many town twinning agreements signed as a welcoming gesture when Slovenia entered the European Union. A lot of municipalities, towns and local communities have signed the town twinning agreement with a partner abroad with the intention to closely cooperate, exchange experience and share knowledge in a variety of fields; local development, research, education, youth, social affairs, sport, art, and culture. In the table below, you can find Babić statistical data from 2009, about town twinning reasons. It is worth mentioning here that these projects are financially mostly small scale – up to EUR 10,000 and are mostly supported by local communities or co-financed from other sources, (EU grants, participation fees, national support, etc.) (Babić 2009, p.65).



4. Europe for Citizens Programme

4.1 Europe for Citizens Programme in Europe

By Decision 1904/2006/EC of 12th December 2006 the European Parliament and the Council adopted the 'Europe for Citizens Programme' for the period 2007-2013. This put into place the legal framework to support a wide range of activities and organisations promoting 'active European citizenship' and therefore the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in the process of European integration.

Europe for Citizens is therefore primarily dedicated to the co-financing of international projects which aim to promote and enhance active European citizenship. Nowadays it is of crucial importance for Europe to reduce the democratic deficit not only on the institutional level, but also between the European institutions and its citizens. This is where the Europe for Citizens Programme is playing one of the key roles through town twinning.

On the European level, the amount of money granted for town twinning for 2010 is 20,400,000 Euros. The number of projects submitted to this programme has been

constantly increasing during over the last three years, (i.e. from 2007 on).

4.2 Europe for Citizens Programme in Slovenia

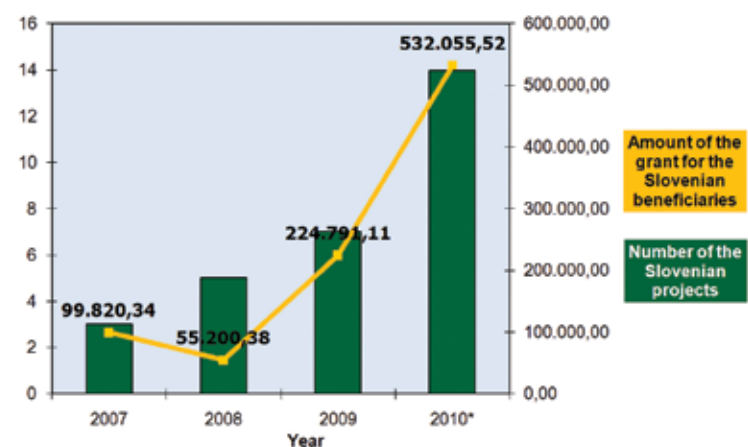
Within the frame of the Europe for Citizens Programme there are 2 specific measures which relate directly to town twinning. These are Measure 1.1: 'Town twinning citizens' meetings' and Measure 1.2: 'Networks of twinned towns', within Action 1: 'Active Citizens for Europe', Measure 1: Town Twinning.

Town twinning citizens meetings, (Measure 1.1), consist of bringing together a wide range of citizens from twinned towns, taking benefit of the partnership between the municipalities for strengthening mutual knowledge and understanding between citizens and between cultures. Applicants have to be municipality or a non profit organisation or a twinning committee with a legal status, (legal personality), representing local authorities.

Local authorities are regularly confronted with new issues and are involved in the implementation of a variety of policies, which are often linked to policy developments taken at a European level. The networking between municipalities on issues of common interest appears to be an important means of enabling informed discussions and exchange of good practices. Measure 1.2 (Networks of twinned towns), supports the creation of and the further development of activities of the networks of twinned towns.


It has to be mentioned that municipalities are entitled to submit the projects also in other Actions and Measures, which do not directly support or refer to town twinning. These are Measure 2 within Action 1, and Action 4.

If we take a look at Slovenian involvement in the Europe for Citizens Programme, we can see that it is becoming ever more active. According to Slovenian EFC statistics, the number of Slovenian municipalities involved in the programme is increasing as well as the amount of grants. This is clearly visible on the graph below:



4.3 Obstacles and suggestions when applying for EFC project

At the same time, everything is not as perfect as it seems when communities try to submit a project. Local communities, municipalities and towns are also faced with



obstacles when trying to twin with other communities or to organize an event. According to Babić statistical analysis in 2009 and the Slovenian EUROPE FOR CITIZENS Programme Contact Point in 2010, the Slovenian local communities face different obstacles. They can have financial or administrative problems, lack of staff, or problems finding a partner. Not every town, municipality or local community provides enough financial resources to cover all project expenses, although they could be financially supported by national or European grants. At the same time they cannot afford to financially cover the project in advance, although all expenses can be reimbursed at the end of the project by a national or European grant. Another obstacle is lack of personnel. A lot of Slovenian municipalities are too small to afford to organize an international event, because they simply do not have enough employees. As far as the personnel is concerned, we can find also other reasons, such as lack of motivation, lack of experiences or poor team working. Sometimes administrative obstacles prevent local communities submitting a project. The application forms can be too complicated and not comprehensive, there can be too many additional documents needed before the application can be submitted, etc. The reasons can also be about a lack of information or no information. Not everything is up to the town, municipality or local community when submitting a project. It is not always easy to find an appropriate and reliable partner. Sometimes the problem is to find a partner, which is willing to cooperate in the project. There are many cases when a partner has resigned from cooperation and the project was not carried out. All the above obstacles can be smoothly resolved. Below are some possible solutions on how to handle and tackle these problems.

Exact information is the key for success. Information offices offer all the information needed on how to apply for town twinning or citizens projects. The Slovenian information office 'Europe for Citizens', organizes workshops on how to apply before every deadline for the submission of a project. This is a good opportunity to get all the information needed. Every potential applicant is asked to read the Programme Guide before submitting the application. Presentations of good practices can encourage people to organize projects. Good practice examples are also a good way to get new ideas. Before the project submission the applicant is consulted along with the partner about what would be the desired outcomes of the project. Local communities should be more involved in networking, getting information, motivating people, organizing seminars and round tables, disseminating good practices and informing the wider public. In Slovenia it is not uncommon for towns, municipalities or local communities to authorize a non-profit organization or a twinning committee to have legal status to represent that local authority. This is particularly good in cases where the local authority is too busy to carry out the project on its own or is facing a lack of employees. As far as the financial part of the project is concerned, it is recommend that potential applicants apply for more grants, look for donors or sponsors, and try to find the money on a national level or to share the expenses with partners.

Another topic worth deliberating is why potential applicants rarely decide to apply for European grants. Through communication with local authorities we found out that potential applicants have some reservations when they hear that it is a 'European' grant and therefore application. The notion is that 'European' has a little bit of a negative connotation because this raises up in potential applicant's minds the feeling of something really complicated. But in fact, this is far from being true. European application forms, (like this one within the Programme Europe for Citizens), can be much easier than national equivalents. This is what Slovenian applicants usually say, when everything is completed. Nothing is better than to see afterwards that the project was successfully carried out.





Project examples of Slovenian Applicants



Municipality of Celje

Institute for Cultural Events and Tourism Celeia Celje

TOWN TWINNING FOR FUTURE TRAVELLER TRIBES

Project Duration

1st January 2009 to 31st December 2009

Participating Municipalities

Celje, Slovenia
Koszeg, Hungary

Themes

- Cooperation between Celje and Koszeg in the field of tourism
- Development of interactive presentations of both towns with a view to long-term impact
- Exchange of know-how and experiences
- Development of new project initiatives

Activities

- Insight into the tourist policies of both towns through delegation visits
- Implementation of the activity: 'Postcard from Celje'
- Simulation exercise: Playshop: Is Celje a Tourist Friendly City?
- Workshop: Town Marketing – Part 1
- Implementation of the activity: 'Postcard from Koszeg'
- Simulation exercise: Playshop: Is Koszeg a Tourist Friendly City?
- Workshop: Town Marketing – Part 2
- Production of two films: 'Postcard From Celje' and 'Postcard From Koszeg' for interactive promotion purposes

Participants

- The project group consisted of 10 participants composed of representatives of the municipalities of Celje and Koszeg. They gained experiences in how tourism policies are created in other towns, they also developed new joint initiatives.
- Through the presentation of the films 'Postcard from...' and the workshops 'Town Marketing – Part 1 and 2' the general public and the specialised target group could get to know the two towns. There were 30 participants in Celje and 35 in Koszeg.

Visibility

- The relevant logos were used on all means of communication (letters, invitations etc.)
- Relevant flags were displayed at meetings and seminars
- Press releases about the project were sent to the local media
- There is a presentation of the project on the website www.celeia.info

Results

- Active cooperation between the two towns
- Production of two films that will be used by both towns for promotional purposes
- Transfer of good practices through the 'Town Marketing' workshops
- The combining of efforts between public and private tourist endeavours and businesses
- Public awareness-raising about the 'Europe for Citizens' programme

Follow-Up Activities

Further joint projects are planned between the towns of Celje and Koszeg. One example currently being planned is on the topic 'Medieval Days', this will take place in 2010 and will also be in cooperation with the Croatian town of Senj.

Methods Applied

A simulation exercise was produced in order to test the response of the local inhabitants regarding tourism offers and services in their respective towns. This proved to be highly efficient and effective. It was titled 'Playshop'.



A Word from the Project Leader

"The idea of the project derives from the actual situation identified in the field of tourism by town-twinning projects (hereinafter: TT-projects). Unfortunately town twinning has mostly been 'overlooked' as an efficient means of promoting tourism in local environments. With this project we aimed to show that the development of tourism may also be fostered through TT-projects. The project was envisaged as cooperation between the towns of Celje (Slovenia) and Koszeg (Hungary). The two towns exhibit similar key features (rich history, lake tourism, nature) and a high potential for successful development of tourism. The key activity of the project was the creative design and implementation of 'Postcards from the EU'. It was planned as a unique multimedia event, the inhabitants of Celje and those of Koszeg were able to simultaneously follow the events in the hosting town. The two activities 'Postcard from Celje' (July 2009) and 'Postcard from Koszeg' (November 2009) were successfully implemented. During the implementation we produced two films for both towns. In addition to the promotional activities, we also carried out the so called 'Playshop' to test the response of the local inhabitants of Celje and Koszeg to tourists' questions."

Urša Dorn
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www.celeia.info

Municipality of Ig

DIVERSITY THAT UNITES AND OPPOSITES THAT ATTRACT

Project Duration

Official cooperation began on 27th September 2007 after the signing of the Town Twinning Charter. In 2009 there was a meeting held from 1st to 6th July in the Municipality of Ig, Slovenia.

Participating Municipalities

Ig, Slovenia
Escacena del Campo, Spain
Paterna del Campo, Spain

Themes

Apart from the general objectives laid down in the programme, the meeting in July of 2009 was used to intensify cooperation and present the views of the general and specific objectives of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme. This was achieved through workshops and courses which included the following subjects:

- The Future of Europe and its Fundamental Values
- Intercultural Dialogue
- Creativity and Innovation
- Intergenerational Solidarity
- Voluntary Service
- Non-Formal Learning

Activities

- Workshops on the topic of 'Europe for Citizens'
- Workshop about the European Year of Creativity and Innovation in the Field of Education – visit to the Primary School Ig and the Centre for Training, Work and Care of Mentally Handicapped Children (CUDV Dolfke Boštjančič Draga)
- Excursions to natural and cultural sites of special interest within the municipality
- Visit to an Agro Tourism farm, with a subsidiary occupation of small livestock breeding, as a good practice example

Participants

There were 58 participants in total from the twinned municipalities:

- Local communities and municipal officials
- The Cultural Society and the Society of Slovenian-Andalusian friendship 'Elsolvenia'
- The Cyclists Club
- Social institutions – Association of Rural Women and Craftsmen
- Public institutions – primary and secondary schools

The participants were aged between 10 and 67 years of age and gender distribution was 35 females and 23 males.

Visibility

The project was originally promoted in the local paper Mostiščar and on the regional radio station Zeleni Val in Slovenia. Later on, all press and electronic media in the surrounding areas and in the City of Ljubljana were sent press releases. At all locations of joint meetings, both local Slovenian and Spanish flags were displayed. The Spanish Ambassador to Slovenia Mrs. Anunciada Fernandez de Cordova and the

Slovenian MEP Mr. Lojze Peterle responded to an invitation to visit the project and make a speech. The project was also published in the renowned Slovenian magazine Obrazi.

Results

This cooperation has been going on for less than two years, significant results are therefore limited. However, knowledge and experiences have been gained in how to apply to the call for proposals. The partners are working on establishing a joint web portal. There is significant ongoing cooperation between the following actors:

- Two primary schools – Ig in Slovenia and Escacena del Campo in Spain
- The Cyclists Club, the Pensioners Organisation and the Association of Rural Women and Craftsmen

Follow-Up Activities

There are ongoing meetings being held between individual target groups. Furthermore, there are arrangements being made to establish cooperation in the fields of sport and culture. The families where the guests stayed during their visit to Spain also formed a mutual bond. Since this is the beginning of the cooperation, it is envisaged that each following year will bring about fresh experiences to the Municipality of Ig as well as to the twinned towns. This presents a new challenge which will be met and which will continue to bring mutual benefits.

Impressions

Despite many similarities that bonded the participants, it was also observed that opposites exist – Andalusia with flamenco, the sun and its lively spirit on the one hand, and the green Slovenia with snow and calmness on the other. However, this is precisely what makes this project so attractive, the diversities in culture, language, cuisine, life-style etc. are what actually bring the people together





A Word from the Mayor

"During this town twinning, the municipality expects to build up strong connections between different organisations in the fields of culture, sports, tourism etc. The cooperation will gradually expand into the areas of economy and agriculture, since there

are many similarities in those areas. Moreover, the decision in favour of the partnership was also founded on similarities that connect us (size of population, geographical position, similar interests etc.). We have high aspirations also in the field of natural and cultural heritage preservation. Since this is an important European project, we expect development opportunities for the twinned municipalities to arise as a result of this cooperation."

Janez Cimperman, Mayor



A Word from the Project Leader

"The project with the title 'Diversity That Unites and Opposites That Attract' carried out between the Municipality of Ig and the twinned towns of Escacena del Campo and Paterna del Campo in Spain was initiated two years ago. First of all, the purpose of the partnership is related to the fundamental European objective, which is fostering integration of the European nations. However, our cooperation went beyond that – municipal institutions and individuals are already forming close bonds.

The responses from our side on the occasion of visiting Spain in 2008 were very positive and our Spanish friends also showed great enthusiasm during their visit to our municipality in July 2009 (e.g. the participants were able to see over 100 photos of this meeting on Facebook including their positive commentaries).

The implementation of such a project, especially if you have never done it before, is an extremely demanding task since it requires much organisation and coordination. The application submitted to the call for proposals within the 'Europe for Citizens' programme asked for a 'scenario' of the meeting to be prepared months in advance, meaning that the programme with full descriptions of events for each separate day of the meeting had to be decided well in advance. If you follow the instructions of the call for proposals, the application alone is not so hard to make."

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Municipality of Krško

THE POWER OF ENERGY CONNECTS US

Project Duration

From 15th to 19th July 2009

Participating Municipalities

Krško, Slovenia

Cernavoda, Romania

Themes

- Training and competitions between male handball teams and female volleyball teams
- Excursions to cultural sites and places of interest in Krško and its surroundings as well as in the rest of Slovenia
- Cultural gatherings with all the guests and townspeople
- Round table on the issue of coexistence with energy generating facilities, an issue that links the twinned municipalities
- Meeting with the Ambassador of Romania
- Official signature of the Charter of Friendship with Cernavoda

Activities

The participants used the first day of the meeting to visit the town Kostanjevica na Krki and its art gallery, and the village Podbočje and its renovated infrastructure. Then there was an official reception for the guest participants in the Primary School of Jurij Dalmatin. Here they witnessed a folklore show, a brass band and were treated to a tasting of the local cuisine. In the evening there was a night tour of the town and the gymnasiums.

On the second day, the members of the official delegation were taken on an excursion through the Municipality of Krško including a visit to the Wine Cellar Krško. The sports men and women did a training session in the Primary School of Jurij Dalmatin in Krško. After the training they took a swim in the swimming pool Brestanica. The official delegation including business partners paid a visit to the Krško Nuclear Power Plant (NEK) and in the evening met with economic and business partners at an Agro tourism farm. In the evening both groups were able to enjoy a concert at the swimming pool Brestanica.

On the third day an excursion to Ljubljana and a visit of the Postojna Cave was organised. In the evening the official delegation was also greeted by the Romanian Ambassador to Slovenia, Mrs. Dane Manuele Constantinescu. Afterwards, there was a ceremony for the signing of the Letter of Friendship and Cooperation between the Municipalities of Cernavoda and Krško in the Park Hall. This was followed by the concert of Peter Dirnbek. On the last day the sports men and women staged an event called 'Games with no Limit' at the swimming pool Brestanica, while the official delegation visited the wine press at Senovo and took a mountaineering expedition to Bohor. The sports programme ended with final competitions watched by the official delegates and the townspeople. There was a closing event with the awarding of the sports trophies, followed by dinner in the courtyard of the Brestanica Castle. This was for the official delegates, sports men and women, economists, councillors and the local community.

Participants

From the twinned town Cernavoda:

- Representatives of the local community



- Municipal councillors
- Economists
- Representatives of the worlds of sports and culture

There were 47 participants in total. The gender distribution was 32 males and 15 females, there were 31 people under the age of 25, 15 people aged between 25 and 65, and 1 person older than 65 years. The Municipality Krško ensured the participation of more than 90 volunteers in various fields.

Visibility

The event experienced very good media coverage with announcements in the local paper Posavski Obzornik and on the local television station TV Novo Mesto. The local websites www.lokalno.si, www.eposavje.com and the website of the Municipality Krško were regularly updated throughout the event. The media were continuously informed about each individual event and invitations were sent to various groups of people. Reports were drawn up about each individual event in order to publish them.

Results

During their stay the sports men and women from Cernavoda were able to find out what are the most popular sports activities for the sports men and women in the town and how they are implemented. Together they examined the training conditions and did several rounds of training and competitions, (handball, football, basketball, and fun competitive games). The two hosting coaches and the representatives of the local community from the Municipality of Cernavoda held meetings with the local trainers and coaches, thus exchanging experiences as regards pedagogical methods, ways of motivation, education and schooling of sports men and women.

The members of the official delegation (representatives of the local community, the Mayor and economists) also took part in all the envisaged activities. The round table on the energy sector, which was organised in the premises of the Krško Nuclear Power Plant (NEK), was attended by the Mayor of the Municipality Krško, the Mayor of Cernavoda, the director of the Radioactive Waste Management Agency from Ljubljana and the representatives of the Krško Nuclear Power Plant. The main objective was to understand better the different ways of coexistence with energy facilities and the possibilities such coexistence offers for establishing sustainable development.

The main ceremony of signing the Charter featured the Ambassador of Romania. This provided opportunities for forming new friendships, immediate exchange of



experiences and cooperation possibilities in the areas laid down in the Charter: local public administration, education, young people, sports and culture, trade and industry, tourism, agriculture etc. The event was also attended by the representatives of the local community, municipal councillors, economists and the townspeople. During the main ceremony, presentations were made to the townspeople on the culture of the two nations, their folklore and traditional cuisine. Field trips to a number of companies were made, including Kostak and Numip. There were also visits to the Brežice Hospital, a private health care centre, and numerous cultural sites of special interest including the Capuchin Library and the estate of Janez Vajkard Valvasor. There was a trip to the Postojna Cave and to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. The group also visited the building site of the Hydroelectric Power Plant Krško and the already functioning Hydroelectric Power Plant Blanca. Visits were made to the state of the art Evrosad apple orchards and to the business zones with its shopping centres etc.

Follow-Up Activities

In the future there are plans for further exchange and transfer of good practice in the social and economic fields. Cernavoda is currently in the process of establishing sustainable development around its nuclear facility. This is important in order to ensure sustainable employment for the people of the local communities. The Municipality of Krško already practices this kind of cooperation; therefore, the administration



A Word from the Mayor

"The twinned municipalities, in practicing mutual respect, are united by common interests. Friendship and cooperation is an important element of mutual understanding that consolidates ties, ensures peace and equality between nations and cultivates

amicable relations. In particular, we aim to foster cooperation between young people in various areas and the exchange of good practice between economists. The municipalities provide each other with assistance in establishing direct connections between various institutions, societies, organisations and corporations.

We practice town twinning with the Municipality of Obrigheim in Germany – 1982, the Municipality of Cernavoda in Romania – 2006, and the Municipality of Bajina Bašta in Serbia – 1975."

Franc Bogovič, Mayor

of the Municipality Cernavoda will be able to benefit from these experiences and this approach. In October 2009 a local folklore group participated in a folklore festival in Cernavoda. In November 2009 the Women's Choir Prepelice took part in the singing festival organised in the twinned town.

Impressions

This meeting was used to explore the diversity of the cultural and social lives of the people and to ponder on common values and issues. Young people met to carry out various activities. The sports coaches, representatives of the education sector and youth representatives also exchanged their views on pedagogical methods, ways of motivation, education and schooling of sports men and women. The meeting provided opportunities for informal learning and strengthened the spirit of friendship.

The members of the official delegation exchanged their experiences in the economic field by focusing on the common issue, namely the energy sector. The main message that came out from these meetings was on the need for the development of a system of coexistence between the local community and the nuclear facility at Cernovoda. Modelled on the practice of Krško they are striving to get funds in order to foster sustainable development in the environment. This was also the issue that the Mayor of Cernavoda openly addressed in her interview given for a regional newspaper.



A Word from the Project Leader

"The realisation of such an event certainly represents a challenge by itself. We have attempted to bring the project close to the townspeople of the Municipality of Krško. The actual realisation of

the event was based on the assistance of numerous volunteers responsible for certain parts of the programme (Voluntary Fire Brigade Krško, School of Sports Posavje, Primary School of Jurij Dalmatin in Krško, Basketball Club Krško and Handball Club Krško). The young sports men and women from the twinned town were included in various sports events and social activities in order to get to know each other, their ways of thinking and living. Socialising in such a way certainly fosters the exchange of experiences. We tried to make the delegation familiar with our culture, customs, good practice examples and our economy in order to initiate as many economic contacts as possible. The feedback was very positive, delegations from our companies are already visiting Cernavoda and vice versa.

The organisation of such a project involves quite a lot of expenses. We managed to cut down the costs by accommodating our guests with the local people, and took advantage of the regular concerts and events taking place nearby in order to enrich the social programme."

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Municipality of Slovenj Gradec

MEETING OF FOUR PARTNER TOWNS IN SLOVENJ GRADEC

Project Duration

From 19th to 21st September 2008

Participating municipalities

Slovenj Gradec, Slovenia

Vöcklabruck, Austria

Hauzenberg, Germany

Česky Krumlov, Czech Republic

Themes

- The future of the European Union and its fundamental values
- Active participation of European citizens
- Intercultural dialogue
- Sports for active citizens

Activities

- Meeting of the representatives of the local authorities
- Sports event: tournaments in volleyball and bowling
- Meeting of representatives of youth organisations
- Meeting of primary school teachers and pupils
- Stands with tourism promotions and local cuisine on offer
- Photo exhibition with the title 'Another's perspective' featuring photographers from all the partner towns
- Sightseeing tours in Slovenj Gradec and its surroundings
- Closing social evening event featuring pupils from the partner towns

Participants

The meeting was attended by a total of 91 participants from the three town-twinning partners of Slovenj Gradec.

The following fields of work were represented:

- Primary school pupils and young people (representatives of youth organisations)
- Members of sports organisations (volleyball and bowling)
- Cultural workers (photographers)
- Representatives of local authorities (municipalities)

There were 17 participants younger than 25 years, 65 aged between 26 and 65, and 9 older than 65 years. Gender distribution was 37 females and 54 males.

Visibility

The meeting coincided with the events celebrating the municipal holiday, this provided the townspeople of Slovenj Gradec an opportunity to get acquainted with the participants of the meeting and their activities. The meeting was promoted in all the local media. An announcement of the meeting was also made in the municipal newsletter Glasnik which is sent to all the households in the municipality. In the Regional Museum of Carinthia in Slovenj Gradec the photo exhibition 'Another perspective' was put on display, introducing the visitors to images from partner towns in a special way.



Results

- Strengthening of friendships between the representatives of different nations and establishing amicable relations between the representatives of different interested parties, (young people, sports men and women, municipal officials, etc.)
- Cultural exchange and discovery of the diversity of cultural heritage
- Active cooperation of all participants in individual activities
- Defining future cooperation in various fields of work
- Each participant received a remembrance folder with photographs of the meeting

Follow-Up Activities

As a result of the meeting the following activities have been envisaged for the future:

- The four partner towns will intensify their future cooperation in the following areas: culture, sports, economic cooperation – with an emphasis on tourism, and the youth field
- Local communities need to encourage cooperation between institutions, societies and individuals in various fields
- Youth organisations have laid down the basis for joint projects in the future
- The photo exhibition will be put on display in the other partner towns
- The date of the next meeting in the Austrian Vöcklabruck has already been agreed



A Word from the Mayor

"In Slovenj Gradec we are aware of the significance of intercultural dialogue and cooperation with towns from various countries of the world, which is why we have entered into different Town Twinning during recent years to ensure a wider visibility of

our town. Since it is easiest to begin cooperation on the basis of sports and culture, the municipality has constantly fostered activities of various institutions and societies in order to establish partnership relations abroad. This cooperation often led to intensified contacts which finally resulted in the signature of Joint Declarations of Cooperation between the Municipality Slovenj Gradec and the towns of Vöcklabruck (Austria), Hauzenberg (Germany), Český Krumlov (Czech Republic), Gornji Milanovac (Serbia), Myoko (Japan) and Morphou (Cyprus). In the light of peacekeeping activities and with the efforts to establish intercultural dialogue between different nations of the world, we like to place particular emphasis on our active participation in the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities (IAPMC). Slovenj Gradec as the only representative from Slovenia in IAPMC has also taken up the role of Secretary General in recent years."

Matjaž Zanoškar, Mayor



A Word from the Project Leader

"Being a place of culture and rich historical heritage, the Municipality Slovenj Gradec has in recent years signed Charters of Partnership with numerous European towns. Active

partnerships have been established between four towns, in particular, that meet annually in order to exchange experiences. The participants of the meeting in Slovenj Gradec were especially pleased to find out that representatives of various institutions (not only of the Municipality) had been invited, which enabled social networking and created opportunities for further cooperation."

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Municipality of Škofja Loka

SMALL EUROPEAN TOWNS – LIVELY, CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE TOWNS FOR LIVING AND WORKING

Project Duration

From June 2009 to May 2010

Participating Municipalities

Škofja Loka, Slovenia
Maasmechelen, Belgium
Tabor, Czech Republic
Carlow, Ireland
Medicina, Italy
Varaždin, Croatia
Freising, Germany

Themes

- Natural and cultural heritage management
- Corporate social responsibility in the local environment
- Town for the young – the young for the town

Activities

There were three international conferences which brought together members of local communities from various parts of Europe. These were opportunities to share and exchange experiences through plenary sessions, workshops and the transfer of good practice.

There were talks given by; renowned lecturers from Slovenia and other countries, directors of Slovenian companies, representatives from various Ministries of the Republic of Slovenia, members of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, and the Representative of the European Commission in Slovenia, etc.

The programme included the organisation of a public tribune, press conferences, surveys, field trips, cultural events, and

excursions to natural and cultural sights of the applicant municipality.

The topic of the first conference held in June 2009 was culture and cultural heritage, the topic of the second conference of September 2009 was economy, and the third conference of May 2010 discussed the youth field. Each conference included the examination of good practice with visits to institutions in the field of culture and a visit to the international trade fair MOS in Celje. Special emphasis was put on the search for adequate solutions to issues identified in the partner municipalities. From the methodological point of view the workshops provided basic tools for leading discussions with the interested parties. This led to a better estimation of the needs of the local inhabitants. Their great value was that people with practical experiences gave their opinions on the theoretical analyses that had been presented in the morning parts of the programme.

Participants

The programme was designed for the townspeople, the Mayors, and experts from the social and cultural fields of economy, traffic and environment. The events organised in the framework of the conference were attended by representatives of companies, members of economic associations, chambers of craft, cultural organisations, young people from the local environment, various societies, and vulnerable population groups. Each conference hosted approximately 80 – 100 participants.

The programme of individual conferences not only attracted the townspeople of Škofja Loka, but the Slovenian experts and the experts of our partner towns, as well. The project also featured prominent political representatives on the national and municipal levels as well as renowned academic lecturers.

Visibility

The project was presented on the website of the Municipality of Škofja Loka. It was promoted in local, regional and national media. Press conferences were held at which detailed presentations of the project were given. Promotional folders, pencils and posters were produced and disseminated.

Results

In the phase of project conclusion the participants assessed individual aspects of the event (the activities, conference material, themes and lecturers as well as duration of the conferences). The project schedule was broken down into the three topics of the three conferences and was published on the website including the contents of individual lectures, the conference programme and a photo gallery. In addition, the production of a publication and of a DVD has been envisaged. The purpose of the conferences was to improve the awareness of the local populations on their environment and foster cooperation between



local enterprises, inhabitants, cultural workers, young people and other actors from the local environment.

Follow-Up Activities

In the future, more projects will be developed in cooperation with the existing partners. Their aim will be on the development of medieval towns and the revival of old town centres.

Methods Applied

In the project the following methods were applied:

- Mobility – international training and exchange of experiences by renowned lecturers
- Partnership – drawing up joint analyses during workshops and public meetings
- Transfer of innovations and development of the European dimension in the fields of cultural management, corporate social responsibility and social responsibility of young people



A Word from the Project Leader

"In recent years the Municipality of Škofja Loka has intensified its international cooperation, enabling bilateral exchange of know-how, experiences, practices and policies between twinned and partner

municipalities. However, rather than focus on traditional topics, we wished to apply a different approach, one more focused on the so called know-how activities. It is a fact that the number of less traditionally-oriented activities is on the increase, which goes to show that many innovative projects may be included into the concept of town twinning in response to social changes and to the development of international relations.

The programme of the project 'Small European Towns – Lively, Creative and Innovative Towns for Living and Working' addresses urgent issues of the present time. The cooperation of such a variety of partners offers the possibility to discover more about their everyday lives in other countries. The main themes of this project are: cultural management, economy and young people.

The lectures, the comparison of experiences and discussions allowed us to gain a deeper insight into those issues in order to be able to find more effective solutions for them. All our partner towns are medieval towns with rich cultural heritage; therefore, we wished to discuss such topics that would foster further development of those towns in the spirit of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation. Likewise, we wished to dwell on such issues with the help of our renowned lecturers that encourage preservation and revival of old town centres and develop joint marketing. It is true that the towns are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that preservation of cultural heritage can contribute to their economic and social development.

After each conference we carried out a survey to measure the satisfaction of our partners in terms of the contents, the organisation and the methods applied. Its results clearly showed that the participants were mostly satisfied with the contents and the organisation but were bothered by the overfilled schedule.

It is important to emphasise that the project addressed European topics and town-twinning issues, at the same time promoting further cooperation between the partners."

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A Word from the Mayor

"Town-twinning projects are a useful tool for intensifying relations between partner towns from various countries. Although this is not the only channel of cooperation available on the sub national level, its advantage lies in the combination of amicable

relations with extremely variable forms of exchange. The common experience of European standards may foster improved mutual understanding and tolerance among people, which is why town twinning projects also have to keep pace with the times and be given fresh impetus, where necessary. Town twinning projects provide opportunities for a detailed insight into the activities of citizens in other European countries, leading discussions and exchanging experiences with them and implementing projects of joint interest.

This enables exchanges in the fields of education and economy, cooperation in various R&D projects, European cultural exchanges following the 'bottom-up' principle of the European integration movement, and introduction to international experts. Establishing networks between twinned towns provides more opportunities for activities and encourages good relations between the towns involved. This functional approach equals the one used in the construction of the European Union, only on a different level.

The partner towns of the Municipality of Škofja Loka are: Freising in Germany; Maasmechelen in Belgium; Tabor in the Czech Republic; Savogna d'Isonzo in Italy; Medicina in Italy; Zell in the Austrian Carinthia; Obervellach in Austria; Smederevska Palanka in Serbia; and Carlow in Ireland."

Igor Drakslar, Mayor

Municipality of Žalec Savinja Development Agency

CARE FOR ENVIRONMENT – COMMON VALUE AND GOAL OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS OF ALL GENERATIONS (YOUNG, ACTIVE ADULTS, ELDERLY)

Project Duration

The conference was held from 13th to 16th September 2006 in Žalec, Slovenia. Together with the preparatory phase, reporting and dissemination of results, the total duration of the project was 4 months (from August until November 2006).

Participating Municipalities

Žalec, Slovenia
Bad Kissingen, Germany
Westport, Ireland
Žatec, Czech Republic
Kruševac, Serbia

Additionally, the representatives from the following towns and municipalities responded to our invitation:

Graz, Austria
Partner municipalities from the Savinja Region, Slovenia

Themes

- Presentation of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme – Town Twinning
- European, national and local environmental protection strategies
- Presentations of good practice examples from partner towns in the field of environmental protection:
 - Waste water treatment in Westport, Ireland
 - Agriculture in the Žatec area of the Czech Republic and its environmental impact under EU conditions
 - Experiences of Bad Kissingen in Germany in how to achieve a golden award in the European competition Entente Florale
 - Experiences with successful incorporation of an environmentally-friendly flood protection system
 - European support to NATURA 2000 projects: Eco-tourist enrichment of the Vrbje Pond in Slovenia
 - Young people and ecology:
 - EKO school in Slovenia
- Civil society and environmental protection, tourist associations, huntsmen and horticultural societies within the project, 'My Country – Beautiful and Hospitable'. The Third Age University of Slovenia and a project about the culture of hop growing

Activities

- Plenary meeting – the main part of the conference 'Care for Environment – Common Value and Goal of European Citizens of all Generations'
- 4 workshops for 4 target groups on the topic of: How can being an EU member state help us protect the environment better?
- Field visit to see good practice examples: Energetika Vransko – Innovation centre for the development of alternative energy sources; Feniks Žalec – a case of investment into the cleaning of harmful effluences on the environment; JKP Žalec – communal infrastructure in the Lower Savinja Valley; the Vrbje Pond – a case of sanitation

- Supporting programme: cultural and social events; the exhibition 'Green Gold – Bitter Flower'; visit of the International Trade Fair MOS Celje

Participants

It was originally envisaged that there would be between 80 and 90 participants from the partner towns across Europe, plus Serbia and the Savinja Region attending the conference. In reality, this aim was exceeded since there were in total over 115 participants attending the activities of the three-day conference. Of these, 22 came from abroad; 8 from Žatec, 6 from Bad Kissingen, 4 from Kruševac, 3 from Westport and 1 from Graz. Other participants included; local school pupils (presentation of the Eco School, participation in workshops), the active adult population (plenary meeting, workshops, field trips, cultural exchanges and social events), and members of the Third Age University of Slovenia (presentation of the project 'Green Gold – Bitter Flower', participation in the plenary meeting and in the workshops).

Visibility

- Extensive media promotion of the event before, during and after its implementation (announcements, articles in the local press, radio and TV broadcasts)
- Distribution of the conference publication, CD and DVD after the event
- Website www.towntwinning.si

Results

- Increased level of knowledge and raised awareness on the significance of environmental protection as a common European value
- Improved awareness of European values and mutual understanding between the six partner towns involved
- Improved knowledge of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme, social networking and the creation of friendships
- Promotion of sustainable development and of the TT-programme through the website, the conference publication and CD's/DVD's, all of which act as promotional materials



informing the general public about the project and continue to do so after the conclusion of the project

Follow-Up Activities

Based on the positive experience of involving different generations, the participating partner towns unanimously agreed at the conference in 2006 to hold another conference in Žalec in 2007 on the topic of intergenerational cooperation. In parallel, bilateral partner meetings on the subject of environmental protection were convened (Westport–Žalec, Žatec–Žalec, Kruševac–Žalec).



A Word from the Mayor

"We are pleased to say that in 2006 we managed for the first time to hold an international Town Twinning conference titled 'Care for Environment – Common Value and Goal of European Citizens of all Generations (young people, active adults, elderly)', which took place

between the 13th and 16th September 2006 in Žalec. The conference was funded by the European Commission as a Town Twinning (TT) project. The project engaged representatives from three of our European partner towns: Bad Kissingen in Germany, Westport in Ireland and Žatec in the Czech Republic. In addition, we also invited partners from the Municipality Kruševac in Serbia, from Graz in Austria and last but not least our partner municipalities from the Savinja Region.

With this project we managed to intensify some amicable relations with our partner towns that we had already cooperated with in the past. Moreover, we used this opportunity to establish new relations and in particular, to discuss the burning issue that is of common concern to all European citizens – environmental protection and sustainable development. We were especially pleased to see different generations participating at the conference – from our youngest kindergarten children to members of the Third Age University. Stimulated by the positive experience of intergenerational cooperation at the first conference, we agreed upon this being the main topic of the next conference in order to apply to the call for project proposals for the year 2007."

Lojze Posedel, Mayor

Methods Applied

- Information and communication technology, lectures, discussion of issues
- Workshops (group work)
- Field trips to examples of good practice

The working methods of the meeting were successfully combined with non-formal ways of socialising including dancing and singing thereby discovering the cultural diversity.



A Word from the Project Leader

"On the last day of the conference all the participants were pleased to conclude that our expectations and envisaged objectives had

been surpassed by:

- establishing new, and strengthening the existing relations between the local communities and the citizens from partner towns in as many as six European countries
We hosted 22 representatives from abroad. The conference events together with side activities offered more than enough opportunities for setting up solid foundations for long-term cooperation, this is something that the participants pointed out on many occasions.
- establishing a dialogue and exchanging experiences in the fields of environmental protection and sustainable development as our common value; The whole conference was dedicated to environmental issues, these varied from looking at the strategic perspective of sustainable development to exchanging experiences based on good practice examples, which all the participating towns could take pride in.
- meeting citizens from the partner towns and representatives of all generations (young people, active adults – from the public administration, expert public, companies and societies, the elderly). During the conference presentations and during the workshops, we managed to identify almost 50 key environmental protection issues and ranked them by significance thus creating a basis for further work.

We will be able to deal with some of these issues together through joint efforts in the future (e.g. working on issues of low awareness and lack of knowledge about environmental protection with individuals, families and in society as a whole). Some of the issues will have to be dealt with on our own. Yet with the exchange of experiences they can be resolved faster, more efficiently and cheaper and above all for the benefit of sustainable development in Europe as a whole."

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Municipality of Žalec Savinja Development Agency GENERATION SYMBIOSIS

Project Duration

The conference was held from the 19th to 21st September 2007 in Žalec. Together with the preparatory phase, reporting and dissemination of results, the total duration of the project was 4 months (from August until November 2007).

Participating Municipalities

Žalec, Slovenia

Rommerskirchen, Germany

Westport, Ireland

Žatec, Czech Republic

Kruševac, Serbia

Partner municipalities from the Savinja Region, Slovenia

Themes

- European, national and local strategies in the field of care for the elderly and intergenerational cooperation
- Presentations of good practice examples from the partner towns in the field of generation symbiosis:
 - Programmes/forms of promoting the civil initiative for assuring equal opportunities in the example of intergenerational cooperation within the project 'Young Researcher', carried out in the Municipality of Žalec, Slovenia
 - Rommerskirchen's Voluntary Fire Brigade, Germany – an opportunity for mutual intergenerational assistance and work
 - Civil initiative in the town of Žatec, Czech Republic – opportunity for socialising between different generations
 - Integration programmes for quality ageing in Ireland with the emphasis on specific target groups, for example: Irish emigrants
 - Non-governmental organisations in the Municipality of Kruševac, Serbia – an opportunity for faster development
 - The Third Age University of Žalec, Slovenia – an active way to achieve generational symbiosis

Activities

- Plenary meeting – the main part of the conference 'Generation Symbiosis'
- 3 workshops for different target groups with 3 different topics:
 - How to prepare a good strategy for generational symbiosis on a local level and a presentation of the lifelong learning centre as one of the forms of its implementation
 - Healthy way of living – how to change ones attitude to health
 - How our grannies cooked – insight into practices with presentation of a school research project
- Field trips to examples of good practice:
 - Visit of the Nina Pokorn Home in Grmovje
 - Presentation of the project 'Social Care – Employment Opportunity'



- Visit to a farm with traditional hops production
- Presentation of the Ethnological Society Hmeljarska vas Ponikva
- Supporting programme: cultural and social events, exhibition with motifs from Žalec and an exhibition of works of art prepared by members of the Third Age University

Participants

Throughout the three-days of bringing participants together from five European partner towns, there was an opportunity to build on the concept of the European citizenship during the events. There were 20 guests from abroad with over 70 Slovenian participants on average every day.

According to the conference programme all generations were included in its implementation – ranging from children and young people from the kindergarten and schools to the active adult population representing the local communities, experts in the field of social integration of elderly people and members of the Third Age University.

Visibility

- Extensive media promotion of the event before, during and after its implementation – announcements, articles in the local press, radio and TV broadcasts
- Distribution of the conference publication, CD and DVD after the event
- Website: www.towntwinning.si

Results

- Increased level of knowledge and raised awareness on the significance of generational symbiosis and the inclusion of elderly people into the active life of local communities. This is a common European concern and value for all the participants
- Improved awareness of European values and mutual understanding between the five partner towns involved
- Encouraging the inclusion of elderly people into active life, fostering generational symbiosis and promoting the 'Europe for Citizens' programme through the website, the conference publication and the CD/DVD. All of these are promotional materials informing the general public about the project and continue to make an impact even after the conclusion of the project

Follow-Up Activities

The partner towns will provide initiatives in their environments for ensuring equal opportunities for elderly people and generational symbiosis in order to continue addressing this topic from an expert insight as well as from the point of view of the laic civil society.

We will broaden the cooperation between the partner towns. The next project, within the 'Europe for Citizens' programme, is expected to take place in Žatec in the Czech Republic.

In Žatec, premises had been arranged for the Third Age University, for the socialising of elderly people. This had been modelled upon the Slovenian example and was considered to be a significant, although not envisaged, outcome of the conference.

Following this conference – just like in the previous year – bilateral partner meetings between the towns that have a long tradition of cooperation were convened: Westport–Žalec, Žatec–Žalec, Kruševac–Žalec.



A Word from the Mayor

"We are pleased to have successfully concluded the international conference titled 'Generation Symbiosis', which was held in Žalec from the 19th – 21st September 2007. For the second year in a row, Žalec was the only Slovenian town to have

organised a thematic conference and hosted its partner towns supported by European funds from a special programme.

In accordance with the tender specifications the conference was attended by representatives from our three European partner towns: Rommerskirchen in Germany (who joined us after the representatives from Bad Kissingen in Germany had found out they could not attend the conference this year), Westport in Ireland and Žatec in the Czech Republic. The partner from the Municipality Kruševac in Serbia also joined and, of course, our partner municipalities in the Savinja region.

In the closing part of the conference the participants evaluated the results of the project from three different perspectives: from the point of view of organisation, the achievement of thematic goals of the conference, and from the perspective of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme objectives.

To our mutual satisfaction we found that all the envisaged objectives had been achieved, some of them even surpassed."

Lojze Posedel, Mayor



A Word from the Project Leader

"By summing up the conference we could agree that the issue of generational symbiosis is of a common concern to all our partners throughout Europe because:

- the population in Europe is ageing, which leads to the problems of intergenerational cooperation and inclusion of elderly people into active life in all countries
- there are financial difficulties being experienced, all the countries exhibited a lack of resources, knowledge and competences of people to implement a whole range of programmes for active ageing
- all municipalities are trying hard to ensure a quality and active third age for the elderly generation by including all aspects of the society: welfare within the public sector, civil society in the form of different associations, third age universities etc. thus preserving the vital link between the elderly and the active younger populations
- everybody tries to mitigate the problems of free-time with the younger generations by directing them into positive activities where they acquire knowledge and experiences; however, this can only be built on intergenerational trust and role models

The synergies between the knowledge of the younger generations and the experiences of the elderly generations can be used to create or contribute towards a healthy society in this fast-paced modern world of various pressures and negative influences. This society will strive for a better quality of life while ensuring equal opportunities for all European citizens in a democratic society. This contributes to the development and dissemination of positive values.

All participants pointed out that during the three days of the conference they were able to exchange many valuable opinions and good practice examples, the positive effects of which will be introduced into their home environments.

In the light of the objectives of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme, the conference 'Generation Symbiosis' contributed to:

- awareness-raising about the significance of equal opportunities (with emphasis on equal opportunities for the elderly) as a common European value
- discussions and exchanges of opinion on European citizenship, sharing our common values, history and culture
- encouraging intercultural dialogue, tolerance and understanding of our cultural and linguistic diversity

At the end of the conference we could understand what J. M. Barroso meant by saying: "We can only love the ones we know!"

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INNOVATIVE CITIZENS CREATE THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

Project Duration

The conference was held from 26th to 28th August 2009 in Žalec. Together with the preparatory phase, reporting and dissemination of results, the total duration of the project was approximately 5 months (from mid July to the beginning of December 2009).

Participating municipalities

Žalec, Slovenia
Westport, Ireland
Žatec, Czech Republic
The region Campagna, Naples, Italy
Varaždin County, Varaždin, Croatia
Kruševac, Serbia
Partner municipalities from the Savinja Region, Slovenia

Themes

- European, national and local strategy in the field of creativity and innovation
- Thematic networking of partner towns – presentations of good practice examples in the field of creativity and innovation
- Forms of promoting creativity between people on the local and regional levels (Regional Development Agency Celje, Slovenia):
 - Innovative people create the future of the Lower Savinja Valley – the role of the Municipality Žalec, Slovenia in encouraging long-term creativity of the townspeople
 - Irish approach towards stimulating business start-ups and innovations, Westport, Ireland
 - Active civic education – presentation of the policy strategy to encourage creativity of young people in the Campagna Region, Naples, Italy
 - Innovation in tourism, Žatec, the Czech Republic
 - Innovative regional projects in Varaždin, Varaždin County, Croatia
 - On the way to innovative practice in central Serbia, Kruševac, Serbia

Activities

- Plenary meeting – the main part of the conference 'Innovative Citizens Create the Future of Europe'
- Two workshops for various target groups of participants:
 - innovators, economists and the civil society: a practical approach towards stimulating the introduction of innovation in enterprises
 - students, tutors, representatives of the civil society (young as well as elderly people): an innovative and creative approach in the field of arts – experiment through history and practical work
- Field trips to examples of good practice: visit to the company UNIFOREST; the Podpečan Farm; discussions with the representatives of the Žalec Regional Chamber of Craft and Small Business; presentation of the activities of the Žalec Institute of Hop Research and Brewing – including inspection of the glasshouses and sampling at the brewery
- Supporting programme: cultural and social events, exhibition

of paintings by the Cultural and Arts Society KUD Žalec, visit to the birth house of the composer Risto Savin

- An important new introduction was the participation of young people from partner towns at the international art school Chiaroscuro led by the painter Rudi Španzl, which ran parallel to the conference

Participants

The conference was attended by 25 participants from abroad. The townspeople from Žalec were joined by the representatives from the neighbouring municipalities of the Savinja Region. During the three-day conference the 25 participants from abroad and more than 60 participants from Slovenia participated in the project activities. This does not take into account the participation of many inhabitants in the numerous side activities, such as the CHIAROSCURO art school featuring also two young artists from Ireland.

All generations were involved in the realisation of the conference and of the side activities. They ranged from young participants of the art school, to active adults representing local communities, to experts in the field of innovation. There were economists and there were elderly representatives of the civil society, such as the painters of the Cultural and Arts Society KUD Žalec.

Visibility

- Extensive media promotion of the event before, during and after its implementation, including announcements and articles in the local press as well as radio and TV broadcasts
- Distribution of the conference publication, CD and DVD after the event
- Website www.towntwinning.si

Results

- Increased level of knowledge and raised awareness for all the participants in the significance of innovation and creativity as competitive advantages on which the development of communities are based
- Improved awareness of European values and mutual understanding between the five partner towns involved



- Increase in the number of partner towns due to the ability to extend the long-term partnership to new partners from Italy and Croatia in 2009
- Fostered sustainable regional innovation and creativity which is linked to EU strategies and supports the policies and programmes in the field of creativity and innovation
- Promotion of the 'Europe for Citizens' programme
- An important outcome of the conference is also the promotional material: DVD with an overview of all activities; conference publication with summarised presentations and good practice examples; and the website www.towntwinning.si, which not only provides an insight into the conference but also enables all interested parties to build upon common European values through their contributions in the future

Follow-Up Activities

- In the field of promoting innovation and creativity, the partner towns will start initiatives for further discussion of this topic in their home environments
- Some specific projects will be realised, these will include: an exchange of young people from Italy coming to work for Slovenian companies; participation of young people from each partner town at the international art school in Žalec; a development of common projects and joint applications to various European calls for project proposals in the fields of creativity, culture, innovation in economy, tourism, etc.



A Word from the Mayor

"We are pleased to have successfully concluded this year's Town Twinning conference titled 'Innovative Citizens Create the Future of Europe', which was held in Žalec in 2009. The conference with its key objectives, the social gathering of participants from

European partner towns and the transfer of good practices in the field of promoting innovation, was financially supported by the European Commission based on our successful grant application. The Municipality of Žalec applied the 'right success formula' again in 2009, namely the cooperation of partners from the local environment, and selected the right theme that complies with the European values and holds relevance for home as well as foreign participants. During the application and implementation phases of the conference our leading partner was the Savinja Development Agency in cooperation with numerous other local organisations and individuals, for whose contribution we are sincerely grateful.

At the end of the conference the organiser of the event, i.e. the Municipality of Žalec, and the participants can declare with great pleasure that we have not only achieved all envisaged objectives but have also superseded them by strengthening our mutual friendship and setting a firm basis for our future cooperation in the European Union!"

Lojze Posedel, Mayor

- The expansion of cooperation with the partner towns
- Mutual help between partners, exchange of experience and above all the motivation to spend a pleasant time together



A Word from the Project Leader

"The international conference 'Innovative Citizens Create the Future of Europe' was the third Town Twinning gathering of partner towns in a row. We have held three conferences to three

different themes that were always very thoughtfully selected. The suitability of our choice is not supported merely by the success of our applications for EU competitions, but primarily by the fact that socialising, discussing and sharing experience on the issues of common European concern, truly bind us! Certainly, it is of no coincidence that some partner relations have developed lasting friendships; moreover, we have managed to attract new partners from Italy and Croatia this year as well.

As in the previous years, we found at the end of the conference that in spite of the difference in approaches towards problem-solving in certain areas, the coming together of people from various parts of Europe provides a wonderful opportunity to exchange experience, upgrade them through discussion and implement them in our home environments. Thus our partners from Žatec in the Czech Republic were pleased to inform us about the successful implementation of the idea of a Third Age University in their home town, which they got during their stay in Žalec two years ago. We are convinced that some of the ideas born at this year's conference will also come to life in a similar way. We may conclude that discovering diversity through the ties of friendship creates the strongest foundation for our unity, interaction and cooperation in a jointly built Europe."

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Appendices

7.1 Organizations and Networks Uniting Local and Regional Authorities

Committee of the Regions

www.cor.europa.eu

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the political assembly that provides the regional and local levels with a voice in EU policy development and EU legislation. Council of European Municipalities and



Regions (CEMR)

www.ccre.org

CEMR works to promote a united Europe that is based on local and regional self government and democracy. To achieve this goal it endeavours to shape the future of Europe by enhancing the local and regional contribution, to influence European law and policy, to exchange experience at local and regional level and to cooperate with partners in other parts of the world.



Assembly of European Regions (AER)

www.aer.eu

The Assembly of European Regions is the largest independent network of regions in the wider Europe, which promote the principle of subsidiary and regional democracy.



EUROCITIES

www.eurocities.eu

EUROCITIES influences and works with the EU institutions to respond to common issues that impact the day-to-day lives of Europeans.



European Network of Cities and Regions for the Social Economy (REVES)

www.revesnetwork.eu

REVES represents, defends and promotes the common values of its members vis-à-vis European and International institutions.



United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)

www.cities-localgovernments.org

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve.



Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS)

www.nalas.eu

NALAS is a network of associations of local authorities of South East Europe.



Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI)

www.iclei.org

ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability is an international association of local governments as well as national and regional local government organizations who have made a commitment to sustainable development.



Energy Cities

www.energy-cities.eu

Energy Cities is the European Association of local authorities inventing their energy future. The main objective is to strengthen the role of local authorities and skills in the field of sustainable energy.



FEDARENE

www.fedarene.org

FEDARENE is the premier European network of regional and local organizations which implement, co-ordinate and facilitate energy and environment policies.



European Energy Network (EnR)

www.enr-network.org

EnR is a voluntary network with responsibility for the planning, management or review of national research, development, demonstration or dissemination programmes in the fields of energy efficiency and renewable energy and climate change abatement.



Q-CITIES

www.q-citiesnet.eu

Q-Cities Network aims to create a joint platform for exchanging experience and expertise on ways of improving systematically the quality of the public services provided to the European citizens.



Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC)

www.ovpm.org

An international non-profit non-governmental organization, the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) was created to assist member cities adapt and improve their management methods in relation to the specific requirements of having a site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.



Metropolis

www.metropolis.org/metropolis

Metropolis wishes to build a global alliance between metropolitan governments and their associates to promote urban sustainability.



European Metropolitan Regions and Areas (METREX)

www.eurometrex.org

METREX, the Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas, provides a platform for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience on metropolitan affairs, and joint action on issues of common interest.





Polis

www.polis-online.org

Polis is a network of European cities and regions from across Europe, which promotes, supports and advocates innovation in local transport.



European Forum for Urban Safety (FESU)

www.fesu.org

FESU network aims to strengthen crime reduction policies and to promote the role of local authorities in national and European policies.



Euromontana

www.euromontana.org

Euromontana is the European multi-sectoral association for co-operation and development of mountain territories. Euromontana's mission is to promote living mountains, integrated and sustainable development and quality of life in mountain areas.



The European New Towns Platform (ENTP)

www.newtowns.net

ENTP works as a platform to exchange information, share good practices and implement common projects.



Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CRPM)

www.crpm.org

CPMR works together to ensure that EU institutions and national governments take account of their common interests, and cooperate on practical projects in order to enhance their assets.



Douzelage

www.douzelage.org

The Douzelage stands for the promotion and support of the development and exchange of inter-European ideas, uniting EU-citizen's opinions.



Balkan Cities Network (BALCINET)

www.balcinet.org

BALCINET is an organization with the aim to promote friendly ties and cooperation between bigger Balkan cities.



TeleRegions Network (TRN)

www.teleregionsnetwork.org

The objective of the TeleRegions Network is to promote the development of Information Society Technologies in European Regions.



Global Cities Dialogue (GCD)

www.globalcitiesdialogue.com

The Global Cities Dialogue is an international network of Mayors and High Political

Representatives (HPRs) who believe that the development of the Information Society should be for the benefit of all the citizens, communities and peoples of the world.



European Stork City Organisation (ESCO)

www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/int-esco.html

European Stork City Organization (ESCO) is an international organization, joining European towns and cities, which have a stork in their coat of arms. The organization has the objective of building a close, permanent and active relationship among towns in Western and Eastern Europe.



Association of European Border Regions (AEBR)

www.aebr.net/en/index.php

The AEBR works on behalf of the European border and cross-border regions with the aim to highlight their special problems, opportunities, responsibilities and activities, to represent their common interests vis-à-vis national and international parliaments, bodies, authorities and institutions.



Adriatic Euroregion

www.adriaticeuroregion.org/index.php

It represents a model of co-operation that includes trans-national and inter-regional co-operation between regions of the Adriatic coastline.



Eurotowns

www.eurotowns.org

Its mission is to develop a network of vibrant, inclusive and sustainable medium sized European cities which will act as a catalyst for urban innovation, creativity and renewal.



City Mayors

www.citymayors.com

City Mayors is an international think tank for urban affairs, consisting of professionals working together to promote strong and prosperous cities as well as good local government.



International Urban Development Association (INTA)

www.inta-aivn.org

INTA is a global membership association where public and private policy-makers and urban practitioners come together to share knowledge, experience and tools for integrated urban development.



7.2 Literature

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The **Europe for Citizens** Programme supports international projects, bringing together people from local communities across Europe to share and exchange experiences, opinions and values, to learn from history and to build for the future, fostering action, debate and reflection related to European citizenship and democracy, and encouraging interaction between citizens and civil society organisations in Europe.



The **Youth in Action** Programme is funded by the European Commission and provides young people aged 15-28 (in some cases 13-30) with a variety of opportunities for non-formal and informal learning with a European dimension. Youth in Action Programme gives young people an opportunity to experience the mobility and to strengthen Key competences which have impact on employability of individuals and their inclusion.

eurodesk

Eurodesk is a permanent support structure for European youth work as part of the Youth in Action Programme. It operates as a European information network dedicated to providing European information for young people and to those, working with young people. Eurodesk offers daily fresh information on European opportunities for young people and information on European youth policy. If you need support at searching European information for young people or international partners for Youth in Action projects, you can always contact Eurodesk.



The **SALTO-YOUTH** South East Europe Resource Centre was set up in 2003 to promote the participation of young people and other actors in the field of youth and non-formal education from South East Europe in the Youth in Action Programme. It acts as a support service for the network of Youth in Action National Agencies in the field of co-operation with SEE, as well as youth organisations, youth leaders, youth workers and other actors in the field who are interested in developing co-operation between Programme countries and Neighbouring Partner Countries in SEE.



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