



Creativity and Innovation
in Town-twinning Initiatives
in Europe and South-eastern Europe



Education and Culture DG

'Europe for Citizens' Programme

PRESS RELEASE

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION TO GIVE NEW LIFE TO TOWN TWINNING

On 13th January in Dordrecht, The Netherlands, CITIES project final conference. Six workshops and exchange of experiences at the International Conference on Town-twinning Initiatives

ALDA, together with the Municipality of Dordrecht, the Netherlands, and its partner BMC has organized the CITIES final conference taking place in the City Hall of Dordrecht on Thursday 13th January 2011. CITIES (Creativity and Innovation in Town-twinning Initiatives in Europe and South-eastern Europe) is a EU-funded project, led by ALDA, aimed at revitalizing and creating town-twinning relationships through innovative methods in Europe.

“ Twinning between cities and towns across Europe has existed successfully for a good many years but lately a certain “twinning fatigue” has set in. The more traditional culture and sport elements of a partner relationship between cities seem to have lost their attraction – has stated Per Vinther, ALDA President – and the injection of new life – and purpose – into Town Twinning is clearly needed. Joined by a number of dedicated partners the Association of Local Democracy Agencies has taken up this challenge within the EU Programme “Europe for Citizens” with the objective of identifying new ways and skills of co-operation between partner cities which bring together all players in the community: local authorities, business and civil society.

ALDA has been working in the Balkans for more than ten years in a bottom-up approach to encourage local authorities and civil society organisations to co-operate about improving living conditions in their community, involving also transfer of know-how and best practices from international partners in what could be called multilateral twinning. Based on this experience – has pointed Per Vinther – ALDA plays a relevant role in promoting city-to-city co-operation drawing on its members and partners in the rest of Europe. Town Twinning is but one component of the effort to bring EU populations closer together and embrace the objective and values of a united Europe so the inclusion of cities and national associations of local authorities from South East Europe in the CITIES project has been an important element for ALDA.

Dissemination of the ideas and suggestions which have been tabled during various conferences in the partner countries and in the concluding international conference in Dordrecht – has declared ALDA President – should encourage other cities across Europe to engage in Town Twinning as a means to share experience and learn from each other, to bring the countries of South East Europe closer to the EU and to promote active citizenship in general.”





The project is based on a partnership of six associations of municipalities in Albania, Slovakia, Macedonia, two in Bulgaria and Lithuania. During the past two years the partners have organized national workshops aiming to identify innovative tools for town-twinning and the variety of fields in which such a relationship can develop. This final conference taking place in Dordrecht will gather twinning experiences from Dutch municipalities and best practices from all over Europe from the partner countries and ALDA.

To the Conference will take part approx. 45 foreign representatives part originating, inter alia, from Albania, Lithuania, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Further participation will consist of representatives of Dutch municipalities, the foundations town twinning and the COS Zuid Holland (Centre for International cooperation).

Six workshops will take place in smaller groups allowing concrete discussions and encounter of many municipality representatives, in order to conclude on new cooperation projects, that could lead to future town-twinning agreements. The International Twinning Conference for Innovation provides information on international cooperation at local level today, and shows the possibilities that the 'Europe for Citizens' programme of the European Union offers.

The Cities project is implemented by the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) in cooperation with the Association of Municipalities from Albania, the Regional Association of Municipalities "Central Stara Planina" and the Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities from Bulgaria, the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, ECOVAST –National section for Republic of Macedonia, the International Co-operation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, and the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia.

The project was launched on 1st February 2010 and will finish on 31st January 2011.

Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 13th January 2010

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CITIES - Creativity and Innovation in Town-twinning Initiatives in Europe and South-eastern Europe

The project aims at promoting “innovation and creativity” in the framework of town-twinning, both in Europe and with a special focus on South-eastern Europe, as a way to revitalize and develop town-twinning relationships and thus strengthen cooperation among “old”, new and forthcoming Member States.

More specifically, the project aims at:

- Promoting the concept of town twinning;
- Starting, revitalizing, and developing town twinning relationships;
- Improving the quality of the activities within existing twinning relationships, especially by means of developing thematic cooperation;
- Developing new skills amongst those who are responsible for twinning activities at a local level;
- Promoting exchange of good practices in the field of town-twinning.

The general objectives of the project are to:

- Give citizens with the opportunity to interact and participate in constructing a tighter-knit Europe, which is democratic and world-oriented, united and enriched by its cultural diversity, thus developing citizenship of the European Union;
- Develop a sense of European identity, based on common values, history and culture
- Foster a sense of ownership of the European Union among its citizens:
- Enhance tolerance and mutual understanding between European citizens, respecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, while contributing to intercultural dialogue.

