



ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP GOLDEN STARS AWARDS

SEPTEMBER 2006

The book of awarded projects
Town twinning and Civil society projects



Education and Culture



ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP GOLDEN STARS AWARDS

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The very best way of building trust, understanding and friendship between people in Europe is by meeting together, sharing experiences and learning from each other. This explains why the European Commission has been supporting citizens' activities for a number of years. Europe can also foster European citizens' interest in their community by highlighting examples of positive involvement, initiative and innovation.

This is the reason for making a selection of the best town twinning projects for the Golden Stars award in the past years and for extending this award to civil society projects from now on as well.

This selection demonstrates the importance of fostering synergy and co-operation between various elements of European civil society. This is what the new "Europe for Citizens" programme intends to achieve: to bring together citizens, their organisations and their local representatives in different Member States and to support their aspirations and thereby contribute to the further integration of Europe.

By rewarding those among us who have shown their commitment to the cause of active European citizenship, we remind ourselves of the indispensable value of a strong involvement in community affairs.

The projects highlighted in this brochure have taken a deliberate step to make their community a better place for current and the future generations. They have contributed to the feeling that it is the citizens who are the driving force of social and political changes and that, no matter how far away from the centres of power we feel, we can make a difference.

I would invite you to look at the achievements of these citizens and groups, their enthusiasm, their commitment and the imagination with which they carried the activities we reward. They are a living testimony of the fact that Europe can inspire, lead and contribute to the never-ending struggle for more tolerance and understanding.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the eleven winners of the Golden Stars of Active European Citizenship on their achievements and for setting an example to us all. I am convinced that these projects will not only make an interesting read but will also inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

Prejudices and realities – a multi-annual theatre programme of young Europeans



Participants in this town twinning project learned about drama techniques and about participating in theatre projects together with people of other nationalities and with people with disabilities. They met for an intensive five-day theatre programme and shared the results of their work with the general public.

- The French town of Nancy approached the German town of Karlsruhe and the Polish town of Lublin with the idea of a tripartite town twinning project related to theatre. University theatres from all three towns developed a programme of four meetings, with the first five-day meeting taking place in Nancy in December 2004.
- Ten students from each town, along with people with disabilities from Nancy, participated in this meeting. It consisted of a number of workshops, cultural visits

and theatre performances. The theme was perception of everyday life and how to overcome prejudices towards other European countries, highlighting national stereotypes. On the last evening of the meeting they shared their conclusions with an external audience in the form of a drama performance.

- All 36 project participants worked intensively during this five-day meeting. Drama lessons were organised for three hours each morning and were given successively by French, German and Polish drama teachers and professional artists. The afternoons were devoted to work on the theme of the meeting - "Prejudices and realities" - in order to prepare the performance for the final evening. The result of this common effort, a play entitled "Masquerade of prejudices", staged a television broadcast of a series of prejudices. Work sessions then focused on identifying and performing stereotyped portraits of French, German and Polish

► NANCY (FR) • KARLSRUHE (DE) • LUBLIN (PL)



characters. A short documentary film was made of this meeting.

- Students learned from each other by comparing their national methods of designing a theatre project and staging a play. They never used English as a common language but expressed themselves in French, German and Polish as they believed that language reveals the values of society and ways of thinking. Interpreters were always available to prevent any linguistic misunderstanding.
- The play was further developed during subsequent meetings in Karlsruhe and Lublin in 2005 and 2006. Every time it was staged, it challenged the audience in its perception of national stereotypes with the aim to initiate open debate and a frank exchange of opinion.
- Further dimension was added by integrating in the

project students with disabilities sharing French, German and Polish cultures. Nancy could therefore share its theatrical experience with people with disabilities together with its twinned partners during an afternoon workshop.

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One Europe, one family, together at last



This town twinning event celebrated the enlargement of the European Union in May 2004. A very rich six-day programme was organized to mark this historic occasion. It gave a unique opportunity to approximately 400 school children and young people to meet, live together, and learn from each other through educational, sport and artistic activities.

- This town-twinning partnership involving the four towns has been very pro-active - all partners have been involved in various projects together since 2002. To mark the enlargement of the EU in 2004 an exceptional event was organised the same year with the title "One Europe, one family, together at last". In the words of the organisers, this event brought them together for the first time as "members of one big European family, the European Union".

- Children and young people from schools in Siedlce (Poland), Pescantina (Italy), Sabinov (Slovak Republic) and Vilnius (Lithuania), as well as official representatives from each municipality, gathered in Siedlce for a six-day meeting in June 2004. Many activities were organised including discussions about the diversity of culture and language in European Union countries, musical contests, dance performances, displays of regional traditions, a picnic, sports tournaments and a youth parade. Local citizens participated in the activities in large numbers.
- Children and young people participating in the programme were extremely busy during the six-day meeting, as many activities were organised promoting their different cultures as well as their common European identity. Debates took place in the schools where they discussed their differences and similarities, learned national dances and songs from their twinned partners, and prepared a youth parade and artistic performances. Outdoor events were also organised such as various contests and sports competitions. These games aimed at promoting peace

► SIEDLCE (PL) • PESCANTINA (IT) • SABINOV (SK) • VILNIUS (LT)



and combating violence and aggression. The participants also had the opportunity to meet well-known Polish sports celebrities.

- The youth parade, described by the participants as “the most popular event on the programme”, was a very visible means of expressing the idea of the unity of nations. All 400 participants marched through the streets of Siedlce in a festive, colourful and peaceful demonstration of their unity. At the end of the afternoon, they all proceeded to an outdoor amphitheatre where the pupils performed a concert.
- While children took part in a variety of activities, teachers and representatives of the local authorities from the twinned towns attended a conference on the subject of EU enlargement. They also discussed how due to EU educational programmes teachers can make learning more inspiring.
- Through this educational and festive project, over 400 participants had an opportunity to reflect on the notions of community, solidarity and European identity.

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Yes to sport – No to drugs, violence and racism



This innovative town twinning event was inspired by the “European Year of Education through Sport” initiated and supported by the European Union in 2004.

The project shows the important role youth can play in the (public) life of their communities. This particular event further demonstrates how young people discover and embrace values such as the prevention of violence and discrimination and the promotion of tolerance through sport-related activities.

- The long-term co-operation of the two twinned towns, dating back to 1999, has led to a project involving young people from both communities. Participants from Gattatico (Italy) and Zierenberg (Germany) took part in a meeting, the main objective of which was to discuss how to make sport an attractive alternative to drugs and alcohol, and how to replace racism and violence with fairness and tolerance. The first meeting with a programme of discussions and sport activities took place in 2004 in Zierenberg and the second was organised in Gattatico a year later.
- Among the participants in both meetings were police, community workers, local schools, sports clubs, prevention councils and citizens of the twinned towns. The presence of regional and national politicians gave both meetings a special significance.

► ZIERENBERG (DE) • GATTATICO (IT)



- The main objective of the discussions was to spread a message based on the principle “*Yes to sport – No to drugs, violence and racism*”.
- During the meetings, the participants attended sports activities and visited ‘Ballance 2006’, a street-football tournament to promote tolerance amongst European and international youth communities.
- The participants also formed a joint football team to play against American schools, present in Zierenberg due to a school exchange programme.

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A new twinning bridging the north and the south of Europe



The Spanish and Swedish towns of Ontinyent and Mark have embarked on a promising, long-term town-twinning partnership, devoted to many levels and areas of co-operation as well as the exchange of good practice.

- Ontinyent first became interested in twinning with other European municipalities in 2001. The town representatives intended to establish co-operation at all levels: education, culture, sport and public administration. This led to the initiation of a relationship with its Swedish counterpart – the town of Mark. The two towns share a number of social and economic characteristics (size of population, presence of the textile industry and need for the conversion of traditional industries). It was therefore logical for them to establish a twinning partnership.
- To celebrate the signature of the twinning agreement between the two towns, a delegation from Mark made a 5-day visit to Ontinyent in early summer 2004. The delegation comprised a number of town officials and eight students from Mark's hotel school.
- The five-day town twinning meeting consisted of a number of interesting activities: Swedish representatives attended a public conference entitled "Associations in the territory - a European dimension". Other activities included visits to social care centres for people with disabilities, textile and wine enterprises and an exhibit on traditional textile artworks. They also participated in the popular local festival "Moors and Christians".
- Students from Mark's hotel school together with professional cooks from Ontinyent participated in a gastronomic workshop and presented the results of their work at an official dinner. This event was both a

▶ ONTINYENT (ES) • MARK (SE)



gastronomic exchange and a celebration of the Swedish delegation. Over a hundred Spanish citizens took part in the event, including representatives of different political parties, the town-twinning committee, local associations, entrepreneurs and young people.

- The main objective of the meeting was to provide the delegation from Mark with a better understanding of Ontinyent's business associations, its local gastronomy and its municipal projects. It was hoped that these would serve as a reference point of good practice to develop into common activities in the future.
- The town twinning meeting proved to be an important opportunity for both towns to plan future visits, school exchanges, tourism development and joint participation in other future projects.
- A local artist designed a logo for the town twinning partnership based on the local traditional textile

industry. There was good coverage of the event in the local and regional press.

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Fostering educational partnerships between old and new EU Member States



This town twinning project aimed to establish quality partnerships between schools in the two twinned cities. It also provided an opportunity for teachers from both cities to exchange good practice on teaching and learning methods.

- Leeds (United Kingdom) and Brno (Czech Republic) established a partnership in 1991, following the fall of the Berlin wall and at a time when central European countries were re-connecting with their counterparts in the European Union. A new impetus to the partnership of the two cities came in 2000 when exchanges of school teachers and students took place. In 2003, Leeds and Brno signed up to a long-term co-operation agreement in a number of fields including: education, life-long learning, community links and exchanges, business contacts and promotion, arts, culture, sport and sharing of good practice.
- In 2004 the two cities organised a four-day meeting in Leeds with the participation of 43 teachers and staff from education departments (half from Leeds and half from Brno). The event included a series of visits to schools and other educational establishments, meetings and a conference.
- The objectives of this project were to form new twinning partnerships between schools in Leeds and Brno, to encourage them to develop joint projects and to exchange good practice on teaching and learning methods, specifically in the field of “personalised learning” and the “Dalton method”, which encourages pupils to be responsible, active and to work together.
- The participants had a very busy programme during these four days: they visited schools and spent half a day observing classes and meeting head teachers and other teaching staff. They also visited learning

▶ LEEDS (UK) • BRNO (CZ)



centres and other educational establishments, where they were given presentations on creative learning and on working with vulnerable groups such as refugees and marginalized young people.

- They also participated in a one-day conference entitled "Teaching and learning styles in the 21st century" on the theme of personalised learning. Both cities were given equal time to present their experiences in the field of teaching and personalised learning, thus providing a good opportunity for comparison and debate. They concluded the day with recommendations on what Leeds and Brno could learn from each other.
- To guarantee the success of the event, all written documentation was available in both English and Czech. Furthermore, interpretation was provided during the conference and during school and field visits. All participants were given a final report on the

project, serving as a record of all presentations and speeches summarising the main conclusions of the event.

- As a result of the meeting between the two towns seven new partnerships were established between schools in Leeds and Brno. Additionally, three twinned schools have considered the possibility of developing an application for a Comenius project.

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The Latvian-Danish week of friendship



The municipalities of Them, Denmark, and Gulbene, Latvia, took advantage of the occasion of the accession of Latvia to the European Union to celebrate their town twinning partnership. The event created strong bonds between the two municipalities and demonstrated their profound interest in further co-operation involving citizens at all levels.

- The two towns signed a twinning agreement in 1993. As a result of their partnership a not-for-profit association was established. The principal aim of the association is to further develop co-operation between the two municipalities. It was therefore logical for the association to use the occasion of Latvia's

accession to the European Union in 2004 to organise a friendship week involving citizens of the two towns. The event took place in Them in May 2004, to coincide with the accession date of May 1, 2004.

- More than 40 different activities were held during the week: athletic tournaments, musical performances, art exhibits and discussions. Most of the 4,400 citizens from Them took part in these activities. A delegation of 68 citizens from Gulbene (teachers, students, bands and the youth football team) were hosted in Danish families. Half of the Latvian participants were under 25 years of age.
- The objectives of the friendship week were to highlight the historical significance of the EU's enlargement to Latvia and other new Member States, promote knowledge about the enlarged European Union and provide a platform to exchange visits and cultures as well as to encourage mutual understanding.

► THEM (DK) • GULBENE (LV)



- Among the official guests of the friendship week was Latvia's ambassador, who inaugurated an exhibit of Latvian folklore, history and arts and participated in a church concert. During the week, visits of child care services, schools and social service centres were organised. Additionally, several political and educational discussions on EU topics, concerts, social events, sports tournaments and exhibits took place in Them. Tourist trips in the area were also organised. The grand finale was a party for all the participants of the friendship week.
- Local media showed a great interest in the event. The regional radio station took part in welcoming the guests and local newspapers wrote several articles about the event's preparations and activities.
- The friendship week has brought many valuable results. During the past two years, a number of new activities and meetings were organised around the

town twinning partnership. Many citizens from Them visited Gulbene and vice versa, both on a formal and informal basis.

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Women for a tolerant, multicultural and multi-religious Europe



Women from migrant and ethnic minorities play the lead role in their integration into society.

- Several organisations, led by the European Contact Group in the Czech Republic, co-ordinated an international meeting on the situation of women of minority, migrant and refugee backgrounds in Europe. It resulted in a five-day international seminar entitled “Women’s values and spirituality as a key to a tolerant, multicultural and multi-religious Europe. Everyday life of women from ethnic minority groups in Europe” which took place in April 2005 in the Czech Republic.
- The project brought together 60 women for presentations, plenary discussions, lectures, group work, workshops, visits to local organisations and multicultural evenings. The women’s countries of origin were Afghanistan, Angola, Byelorussia, Cape Verde, Congo, Chechnya, Chile, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, Philippines, Surinam, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the countries of the former Republic of Yugoslavia, while their countries of residence were throughout Europe.
- Their work resulted in the creation of a publication entitled “Memorandum on migrant and ethnic minority women” available in 3 languages – Czech, English and Dutch. The booklet contains recommendations to the EU for building a tolerant multicultural society, analysis and examples of discriminatory practices, women’s views of their role in the society and recommendations to grassroots activists across Europe.

► European Contact Group (CZ)



- A large public of EU citizens of foreign origin were given a unique opportunity to propose specific recommendations on anti-discrimination and equality policies for minorities and to discuss strategies for developing a multicultural Europe from a women's perspective.
 - The results of the seminar were compiled in a memorandum that was distributed not only among participants and civil society organisations but was also sent to the media and to relevant state bodies.
 - The event had a direct impact on the personal development of the participants and the empowering of women through the training on assertiveness and communication skills and through the discussions and workshops. It also had an impact on their community groups as well as their future involvement in international networks.
- This project helped to establish links between women from different backgrounds and inspired several new activities for the future, at both the local and international level. Follow-up meetings, another international seminar, and multicultural activities have all taken place since the first event.

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Disadvantaged young workers acting for a Europe without exclusion



Young workers' leaders from all over Europe were trained on methods to facilitate the participation and integration of young workers in society at the local, regional and national level.

- The project was developed by the International Co-ordination of Young Christian Workers and targeted the social inclusion of disadvantaged young workers. It lasted over a year and brought together participants from Italy, France, Great Britain, Spain, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Slovakia.
- The project was structured in three stages. First there was a preparatory two-month period in order to co-ordinate and organise the kick-off meeting. This was followed by a ten-day launch seminar in Rome in July 2004 during which 68 young regional and national leaders met to exchange best practices and ideas. They were

trained and given specific tools and advice to be able to initiate their own projects at home. Then, over the next ten months, they each launched actions at the local level: consultation programmes, local training seminars and national campaigns. Young workers' leaders were also active during the campaign for the ratification of the Constitutional Treaty when they organised debates, round tables and distributed publications. Overall, these actions reached approximately 180 000 people.

- During the first meeting in Rome, a Charter on the active participation of young people in society and the Church was elaborated. This Charter highlighted ten priorities that should be at the heart of the young workers' commitment. The Charter has been used by the national structures and disseminated as a basis for debate within the local teams of young workers.

► International Co-ordination of Young Christian Workers (CIJOC - ICYCW)



- The project of the Young Christian Workers provided means to encourage the integration of citizens from underprivileged groups. The young leaders were given the opportunity to identify best educational practices and to take responsibility in supervising other young people.
- The project demonstrated a real multiplier effect (as the training of 68 young workers' leaders benefited about 180 000 young workers), ensured a large transnational participation and promoted exchange of experience and mutual learning. The success of the project highlighted the relevance of the methodology that was used.
- The activities completed during the project were based on a collective reflection about the priorities of young workers and about the instruments available to raise their awareness on European issues.

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New European citizens! Televised debate and international workshop



Civil society organisations from the 10 new European Member States debate on culture and environmental issues in their own countries and the impact of European policies in these fields in the context of European integration.

- The NGO “Friends of the Earth Malta” conceived a project based on the topic “What does EU integration mean in terms of environment and culture for the new European citizens?” in order to provide wider dissemination of the meaning of European integration for culture and environment in the new Member States.
- The project, on the theme of EU integration issues in the different countries and in terms of culture and the environment, was organised through three types of activities: a debate involving members of various civil society organisations from the ten new accession countries, discussion workshops open to general public and a series of interviews with representatives of the European Commission and a range of civil society organisations.
- The 4-hour debate was broadcast on Television Malta on Sunday, 5 June 2005 (World Environment Day). Together with the rest of material obtained from the interviews and workshops, it was used to make a video that was disseminated on a large scale among civil society organisations in Europe, EU representatives, and key contributors. The debate may also be broadcast over other TV stations in the new European Member States.

► Friends of the Earth Malta (MT)



- This project provided civil society organisations from the new Member States with one of the first opportunities to foster debate and reflection related to common European issues and concerns.
- The choice of culture and the environment as topics for discussion as well as the decision to broadcast the debate ensured not only the interest of the audience but also provided an excellent way to reach the general public and to encourage public participation.
- The large transnational dimensions among new Member States encouraged the integration of civil society organisations and citizens from these countries and helped them build capacity to debate European matters and policies. The door is open to continued co-operation among these organisations in the future.
- An efficient dissemination strategy kept the

media interested in the project and assured the effective diffusion of the main conclusions, DVD and information pack, to civil society organisations active in the fields of culture and the environment and to policy makers at national and European level.

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Euro-discussions, euro-awareness, euro-activity



In the context of the recent European enlargement and the process to ratify the European Constitution, the rural regions of Podkarpackie in Poland and Bardejov in Slovakia benefited from a comprehensive information campaign focusing on the impact of European Union policies in their respective regions.

- Following the results of a research which showed that only 10 % of the inhabitants of the Podkarpackie area in Poland had reasonable knowledge of the issues concerning the European Constitution, the Polish NGO "Centre for Social and Economic Development", in collaboration with the Slovak partner "Development Agency of Upper Sarn", carried out a comprehensive information campaign and debates on the integration of Poland and Slovakia into the European Union and its impact on rural areas.

- Local social leaders such as representatives of governmental institutions and civil society organisations, local media, schools and universities participated in more than a hundred seminars on strategic planning, European integration and organisation of public debates about the European Union.
- These skilled local leaders organised and conducted more than hundred debates in the rural regions of Podkarpackie in Poland and Bardejov in Slovakia, with almost three thousand inhabitants participating. A final conference "European education as a source of new opportunities" summarized the project and assessed the need to create opportunities to express opinions on EU integration for inhabitants from rural and small-town areas.
- The most controversial themes, such as access to national labour markets or the European Constitutional Treaty, identified in the course of the project implementation provided material for five different publications which were distributed to neighbouring districts.

► Centre for Social and Economic Development (PL)



- This project provided Polish people from rural areas with detailed information on the European Union and European Constitution and established a platform for debate in a dozen of small localities in which meetings promoting the European Union have rarely happened in the past.
- Seminars and discussions on topics of particular interest for the target group were conducted by experts and by skilled social leaders familiar with specific local problems. The participation of the Slovak association in certain debates and seminars enabled the exchange of experiences and highlighted to the audience similarity of the Polish and Slovak concerns.
- Local press, television and radio assured good media coverage of the debates. The five publications which resulted from the debates were distributed with the aim to further popularise the subjects brought up during the project implementation.

- The participants in the seminars and debates declared themselves less sceptical towards European issues after the project. They also believed that the project has increased their acceptance of the European Constitutional Treaty and improved their awareness of participation in the construction of an enlarged Europe.

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Youth and the enlarged European Union



The aim of this project was to inform the general public and especially young people, about their role and opportunities in employment, participation in decision-making and mobility in the enlarged European Union.

- This educational project was organised through the collaboration of trade unions from three European countries: the Cyprus Workers' Confederation (SEK), the General Workers' Union of Malta and the Greek General Confederation of Labour. They brought young trade-unionists, aged between 15 and 35, to Cyprus to work on the issues of employment, participation in decision-making and mobility within the European Union.
- The two-day workshop held in November 2004 was prepared on the basis of a survey as well as focus groups. Approximately 70 participants took part and discussed the three issues mentioned above. They then presented their conclusions at a seminar open to the general public (more than 100 participants attended). The whole process highlighted young people's feelings of insecurity with regard to the rising unemployment rate and their concerns about vocational training qualifications, gender issues, discrimination towards youth and xenophobia.
- Two thousand copies of a booklet on the conclusion of the workshop and general information about the EU were distributed to youth groups and governmental departments. The SEK website was rearranged in order to make the results available in both Greek and English versions. Dissemination seminars were organised at local level in each of the three participating countries.

► Cyprus Workers' Confederation, SEK (CY)



- The target group was actively involved in the preparation, organisation and follow-up of the activities. The project helped to raise the profile of youth concerns in the agenda of the trade unions involved and to increase the awareness of young people on issues of employment, mobility and decision making in the enlarged European Union.
- The dissemination process was very actively organised and provided a further opportunity for debates. In addition trade unions visited a number of workplaces and organised local seminars attended by youth members. These seminars provided a forum for productive discussions and the exchange of experiences and ideas.
- As one result of the project, the Cyprus trade union and the National Council of Youth worked together on a joint contribution towards formulation of the national youth policy. Further co-oper-

ation between the Greek, Cypriot and Maltese organisations, especially in the area of non-formal education for youth, is planned.

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