



**Town
Twinning
Checklist**

A checklist for town twinning

The concept of twinning was originally intended to promote peace, but it has developed into a European movement which is still going strong. There are now about 30,000 twinning initiatives spread all over Europe. The Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG) is part of a European network of associations which promote and monitor twinning.

Most twinning involves cultural exchanges, young people, and sport, but there are also towns or twinning committees which use it as a platform for other exchanges, such as between schools, in the health care sector, with local companies, and in environmental affairs. This gives twinning an added dimension for both the towns and their residents.

Scores of voluntary workers and their associations are dedicated to twinning. Towns very often provide a budget, but funds are also available at European level such as in the programme 'Europe for its citizens' (2007-2013).

The VVSG project '**Learning network of municipalities for town twinning**' has been supported by that programme in order to examine closely and reinforce their twinning operation together with ten pilot towns. This checklist is part of this project. It lists the most important steps which towns can take to set up, develop, and maintain a dynamic twinning association.

For who?

Anyone from the town who is involved in twinning will certainly find the checklist useful. This may apply to the mayor, executive councillors, the officer for cultural affairs, European affairs, or other services, or the volunteers on the twinning committee.

What & how?

The checklist acts primarily as a source of inspiration and lists the various steps which you can take to set up a twinning association, give it a firm foundation, and keep it alive. At all events this checklist is designed to contribute to the further professionalisation of twinning amongst towns, cities, municipalities, and their volunteer workers.

Twinning associations or European city links in all **shapes, sizes, and colours**

- **Socio-cultural twinning** largely involves local residents, but it does not contribute much towards specific policy areas or themes.
- **Symbolic twinning** is often limited to ceremonial gatherings, does not attract local involvement, and lacks content.
- Twinning which opts for **exchange of knowledge and technical assistance** is often very useful to the local town councillors as a result of the specific content of the collaboration, but tends to bypass local involvement.
- Twinning which opts for active **European citizenship** manages to relate major local involvement to clear, intrinsic, policy choices from the local town councillors.

The VVSG argues for a re-assessment or deepening of twinning so that it does clearly provide added value as an instrument for towns and their residents and contribute to the development of Europe from the bottom upwards.

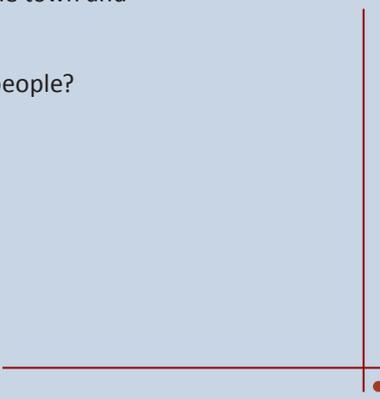
Motivation and objectives

- **Why** do towns opt for a European friendship relationship?
- **What** sort of twinning does the town want?

The commitment of the town

- **How far** does the town want to commit itself to twinning?
- Who will take the **political responsibility**?
- To which **department** or **official** will the twinning be entrusted?
- What **financial scope** does the twinning initiative have for policy making?

Who takes part?

- Who will sit on the **twinning committee**?
 - **How** will the twinning committee be defined?
 - What **agreements** will be made between the town and twinning committee?
 - How will news be **communicated** to local people?
 - Which **associations** will be approached?
- 

Policy areas

- In which **policy areas** does the town want to work together with a twinning partner?

Will the twinning initiative be geared towards:

culture - sport - young people - tourism - education

Or other policy areas:

environment - sustainability - mobility,...?



Special target groups

- Twinning is aimed at all local people, but will the town be **targeting** anyone in particular?

Will the emphasis be on:

young people - people with a disability - elderly
local SMEs - environmental associations,...?

The form of partnership

- **Who** will your **partners** be?
- Who will accept **responsibility** for **European and international contacts** and exchanges?
- What contribution will be made by:
schools - youth organisations - art colleges
music colleges - sports clubs - chamber of trade
libraries - environmental associations - advisory councils,...?

Types of activities (not exhaustive):

- What activities will you use to raise the specific profile of the twinning initiative?
- Whom in particular are you going to reach or not reach?
- Are the initiatives varied enough?
- Is there enough scope for others to carry out their own activities within the framework of the twinning association?
- Are the activities sufficiently accessible and do they raise awareness?
 - Annually recurring theme day linked to the European theme of the year
 - Youth camps
 - Sharing experience of developing municipal youth work
 - Annually recurring cultural historical study day
 - Debate about a topical European subject
 - Sessions for tasting regional products
 - Sports activities and bicycle rides
- Jointly organised cultural quizzes: *drama, film, music (double festivals), humour festivals, (art) expositions, and cartoon quizzes*
- Exhibition exchanges
- Organisation of a study day together with other Flemish towns with a twinning partner in the same country
- Exchanges between library staff for other municipal services
- Exchange between various advisory councils (*e.g. senior citizens, youth, environmental etc.*).

Practical considerations

- What **overnight accommodation** can the town provide?
- What are the **tourist attractions**?
- What about the **distance**?
- What is the **best way to travel** to the twin town or city? (*car, bus, train or plane*)
- Does the participating group have sufficient **linguistic competence**?

Which is the twin town?

Search

	yes	no
Are you going to use the town's informal contacts as the starting point?		
Will the town take advantage of requests from towns and cities abroad?		
Will the town take advantage of requests from local people?		
Where will the town get its information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VVSG • Council of European Municipalities and Regions • Internet • Twinning website (www.twinning.org) 		

Profile

- How do you intend to introduce your own town?

Size	Language	Historic affinities	Cultural affinities	Economic affinities	Extra activities

- What is the profile outline of the required twin town or city?

Size	Distance	Language	Historic affinities	Cultural affinities	Similar activities



Meeting each other

- Who will accept **responsibility** for the **first visit**?
 - How will news be **communicated** to the people?
 - What are the **arrangements** during the first visit?
-
- Will there be time to get to **know each other's** political cultures and municipal structures?
 - Will there be an **exchange** of views on the objectives of the partnership?
 - Is there attention paid to a **partnership of equal value**?
 - What is the **social support** like in the twin town or city?
 - What **financial support** is available?
 - Are there any links with an **ambassador** or a **representative**?
 - When will there be an invitation for a **return visit**?

Officialising the twinning

- Who will accept responsibility for drawing up an **agreement** regarding intentions and joint objectives?
- Are **both towns** fully committed to the scheme?
- How are you going to organise the **official signing**?
- What are the agreements for the **first working year**?
- How do you communicate news to the **people**?

The twinning structure

- Who is the **contact person** in the town council?
- Who is **invited** to be on the twinning committee?
- What is the **composition** of the twinning committee?
- What are the **committee's responsibilities**?
- Is the relationship between the **committee** and **town** clearly defined?

Bilateral or multilateral twinning associations

- How do **friendship** links **develop** into **working partnerships**?
- How does a **bilateral** twin association **develop** into a **multilateral** twinning association?
- How should the town work on a **long-term programme**?
- When are the **assessment** and **feedback** on objectives planned for?
- **Who** will **carry** out the assessment?
- What will be done with the **conclusions** after the assessment?
- How will the twinning association be made and kept **visible** in the town and amongst the people?

Working on a sustainable partnership

- What **agreements** have been made in advance of **political changes** of power (*e.g. after town council elections*)?
- Does the twinning association have **enough breathing space** to be able to grow in the long term?
- What new **themes** can we broach?
- Do we need to **renew the forms** of the partnership?
- Do we need to **renew the composition** of the twinning committee?
- How can we make better use of **networks**?

The costs

- What are the **costs**?
- What are the **costs of travel, accommodation, and translation**?

The income

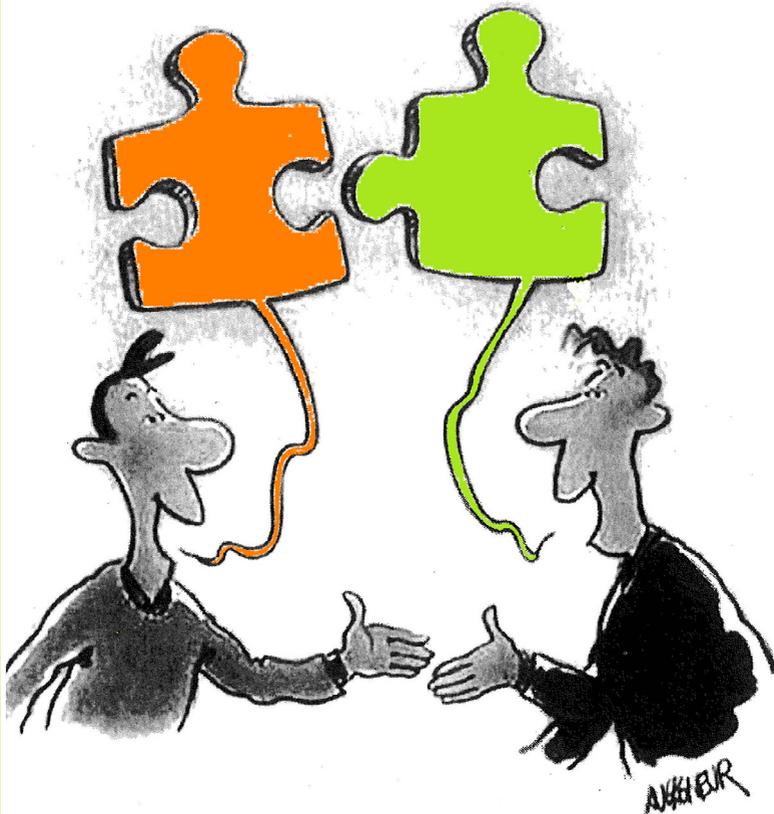
- How much **income** is there?
- What help is provided for in **town budget**?
- How are **funds** raised?
- Should there be a **membership fee**?
- Should you approach **companies** and **service clubs**?
- Should you look for **sponsorship**?
- Is it worth submitting a project to **European programmes** (citizenship, youth exchanges, school exchanges etc.)?
- How do you search for **additional resources**?
- Which **partnerships** can offer support?
- What **initiatives** are provincial, regional, and federal governments taking with regard to young people, education, and women?



'The future of twinning associations lies in a change of emphasis from help and support to the creation of sustainable partnerships to tackle joint projects and problems'.

Jan Olbrycht

European member of parliament for Poland



Colofon

Publisher: Mark Suykens (VVSG)

Editor: Betty De Wachter (VVSG)

Accompaniment and final edition: Adina Balog (VVSG),
Tine Van Laer (VVSG), Leen Van Lindt (freelance project
leader)

Layout: Tine Van Laer (VVSG)

Impression: Schaubroeck

With the Financial support of the European Commission,
programme 'Europe for Citizens'

