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# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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# CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CONFIDENTIAL

Strasbourg 1 February 1960

AS/Loc/Prix (31) 27

## PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL PLANNING AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Sub-Committee on the Europe Prize and the propagation  
of the European idea

### EUROPE PRIZE

Application of the town of BACKNANG (Baden-Württemberg)  
Federal Republic of Germany

- Letter from the Mayor
- Replies to questionnaire

52.386  
01.52

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Application of the town of Backnang for the award of the  
Council of Europe Flag of Honour 31 July 1979

The town of Backnang (29,000 inhabitants) has had close "twinning" contacts since 1955 with the French town of Annonay (24,000 inhabitants) in the Ardèche département. As will be seen from the enclosed questionnaire and the anniversary brochure "Annonay-Backnang: 10 years as twin towns", large sections of the population have been concerned by the pairing scheme from the outset. This is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that, on the occasion of the twinning celebrations in 1966 and 1967, all the guests from the respective twin town were accommodated in private homes. ~~This is also the case today.~~ As a result, very many personal friendships have grown up. There have been four marriages between citizens from Backnang and Annonay. In order to establish friendly relations over and above the customary, relatively brief contacts, the Backnang municipal council decided last year to award scholarships to enable three schoolchildren from the twin town of Annonay to be invited for a period of one year each. A few days ago, three schoolgirls just completed their first year under this grant scheme. The next scholarship holders from Annonay are due to arrive in Backnang in September. This year, the Annonay municipal council has also financed a similar award, so that three schoolgirls from Backnang will be able for the first time to travel to Annonay to spend a year there. To our knowledge, this is the first activity of its kind in Baden-Württemberg. It is our hope that this experiment will lead to much deeper and stronger mutual bonds of understanding.

As a result of the many and varied reciprocal contacts, it was agreed in both towns that we should restrict ourselves to one twinning alliance, but that we should devote ourselves to a degree unquestionably beyond the average. The positive development of our twinning contacts have proved that we adopted the right attitude.

As described in greater detail in the replies to the questionnaire, the town of Backnang has also been active at European level in other ways. This is demonstrated by the existing sponsorship schemes and especially the intensive activities prior to the recently completed European elections.

The town of Backnang would have great pleasure in receiving the Council of Europe Flag of Honour, which it would regard as recognition of its past efforts in the European cause.

Yours etc

Dietrich  
Mayor

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Replies to questionnaire

Question 1: Membership in organisations of local authorities

Reply

Backnang has been a member of the International Union of Mayors since 1958.

Question 2: Contribution to their activities

Reply

owing to a lack of suitable premises, it has unfortunately not yet been possible to organise congresses or other European events in Backnang over and above the existing twin town arrangements

Once the citizens' centre has been completed (the architects' competition has been completed), it is intended to organise activities of this kind as well.

Question 3: "Twinning activities"

Reply

a. With the town of Annonay (Ardèche) France

The twinning agreement has existed officially since 1966. Preliminary contacts were already made in 1963

Main events organised:

- 1966: Twinning ceremonies in Annonay. One hundred and fifty Backnang citizens - mayor, town councillors, sports competitors (sports tournaments - the many other events are summarised at the end), town band, war disabled society, representatives of commerce, crafts and trades took part. A telegram of congratulations was sent by the then President of the German Bundestag and Member of Parliament for Backnang, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier.
- 1967: Twinning ceremonies in Backnang. Three hundred and seventy guests from Annonay travelled to Backnang - Mayor, town councillors, sports competitors (sports tournaments), town band, majorettes, minstrels' procession, folk costume group, representatives of commerce, crafts and trade (exhibition), private individuals. A gala day was organised.

- 1966: Major French-German conference of youth leaders in Annonay.
- 1969: Joint meeting of Annonay and Backnang twinning committees to co-ordinate the timetable of official visits to Annonay of numerous clubs and societies. Dedication of the "Place de Backnang" in Annonay.
- 1970: First pupils' exchange, numerous citizens attend festivities in Annonay and Backnang.
- 1971: First wedding in connection with the twinning partnership (to date four citizens of Backnang have married girls from Annonay).
- 1972: Introduction of the twin town pass card in Annonay and Backnang - free entrance to public institutions for the visitor.
- Conference of specialists on vocational education in Annonay.
- Two hundred guests from Annonay at Backnang open-air festival.
- 1973: Visit of the industrial and trade fair to Annonay.
- "Tunge Union" visits Annonay
- 1974: War veterans meet in Backnang.
- Glider enthusiasts visit Annonay with two gliders.
- Backnang choral society gives joint concert with St Etienne Chamber Orchestra in Annonay
- Farmers visit farming establishments in Backnang.
- Collegiate church choir gives church concert in Annonay.
- 1975: Official seminar in Annonay on the subject: "land-use plan and building plans of Annonay region".
- Local government seminar in Backnang on, inter alia, "the sponsoring of associations by the municipality".
- One hundred and fifty Backnang citizens attend the "Marc Seguin" festival in Annonay.
- Almost 100 Annonay citizens attend Backnang open-air festival.

- 1976: The former Mayor of Annonay, Daniel Aimé, is made an honorary citizen of the town of Backnang
- Celebrations on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the twinning agreement in Backnang (see special programme), eg French Week, marquee erected for the occasion, special jubilee ducat struck etc, etc. Approximately 400 guests from Annonay take part.
- 1977: Tenth anniversary celebrations in Annonay (see special programme). Marquee, gramophone record produced jointly by associations of both towns, attended by approximately 400 Backnang citizens.
- 1978: Various meetings between societies and organisations. Seminar in Annonay (municipal council)
- 1979: Numerous meetings.
- One hundred and fifty guests at Backnang open-air festival.
- Concert by the combined brass bands of Annonay and Backnang

From 1956 to present day:

Yearly official meetings of municipal councils of both towns; at present, several times a year there are meetings of the twinning committees of both towns to discuss the programme of events (eg three times in 1979).

Very frequent meetings and joint events organised by the clubs and societies of both towns (see enclosed chronicle of ten years of twinning activities)

Question 4: Other relations with municipalities abroad

Reply

a. Friendship with the town of Bácsalmás, Hungary

Backnang is the "foster town" for all Hungarian Germans in the Federal Republic and, in addition, for the former Bácsalmás/Batschka area. As a result, friendly relations have also been developed with the Bácsalmás community. There are yearly meetings between our two towns and visits by young people and study trips by members of the evening institute have been arranged.

b. Fostership by the Backnang Sudeten-German Association of St Peter/Ahrntal, South Tirol, Italy

Support of the mountain farming community there, especially with a view to developing tourism.

c. Fostership by Backnang Europe Union of Diekirch in Luxembourg

Pupil exchanges etc.

Question 5: Exchange of persons

Reply

1. Scholarships

Backnang was the first town, at least in Baden-Württemberg, to institute scholarships to enable three schoolgirls from Annonay to attend a local school for the entire academic year 1978/79. Accommodation of the pupils in families. The entire costs are borne by the municipality. These amount annually to approximately 20,000 DM. By comparison, the Land of Baden-Württemberg as a whole makes available 120,000 DM for school exchanges with foreign countries; excluding France.

The television service of South German Radio in Stuttgart made a TV film of this particular form of school exchange. The programme was broadcast on 7 June 1979

The exchange will be repeated in 1979/80. Annonay has also financed three similar scholarships for 1979/80.

2. Exchanges of pupils

Since 1970, at least 50 schoolchildren a year have taken part in a school exchange in accordance with the principles of French-German Youth Agency. Pupils are accommodated in host families and attend classes in the corresponding local school (official twinning arrangements between schools exist).

3. Exchange organised by bakers and pastry cooks.

4. Exchange organised by police.

5. Exchange organised by farmers.

6. Exchange organised by primary school teachers (about to take place).

## Question 6: Organisation of European events

Reply

1. Petition in favour of setting up a European Union
  - Backnang Municipality and Europa-Union - over 3,300 signatures sent to the Federal Chancellor and the President of the French Republic (1976).
2. Similar petition in Annonay
3. French Week in Backnang: evening of French chansons, French wine-tasting, French chamber music concert, photo exhibition, French dance band etc (1976).
4. International Youth Rally organised by the Europe Youth Club, Backnang.

In 1979, this Club was awarded the Europe Prize of the Rems-Murr rural district in recognition of its activities.

5. International folklore shows

Part of the yearly Backnang open-air festival, attended by groups from various European countries.

6. Annual European Cup football competition in which numerous European teams take part.
7. International music events with brass bands from France, Holland and Switzerland etc.

## Question 7: Europe Day

Reply

Public proclamations, flags flown from public buildings, poster displays, Europe Ball, European football tournament on Europe Day, activities in conjunction with the Europa-Union, for example, meeting in Backnang with the President, Jean Rey (1978). The population is invited to all these activities.

## Question 8: Support for European movements

Reply

Intensive collaboration with the Europa-Union. Backnang has the strongest membership of any Europa-Union local section in Baden-Württemberg.

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Active collaboration in the election committee of the Rems-Murr district to prepare for the direct European elections in 1979.

Question 9: Propagation of the European idea

Reply

Lectures in the evening institute.

Numerous events organised prior to the European elections.

Support for European schools competitions - school winning entry by the third year primary school class of Backnang-Sachsenweiler for the 25th European competition in 1978.

Question 10: Actions of European solidarity

Reply

For example, towards Frejus flood disaster fund.

Question 11: Presentation

Reply

If the town of Backnang were to receive the Flag of Honour for 1980, it would organise the presentation ceremony as part of the official opening of the 10th Backnang open-air festival on 27 June 1980. This would be attended by thousands of citizens, including young people.

The President of the Land of Baden-Württemberg, Lothar Späth, has been invited as guest of honour.

In addition, the ceremony will be attended by delegations from the twin town of Annonay and participants from France, Great Britain, Italy and Switzerland.

Question 12: Other initiatives

Reply

Nil

Enclosures

Brochure to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the twinning of Annonay and Backnang,

French Week programme,

Tenth anniversary gramophone record,

Prospectus on Backnang,

Backnang - an economic area with a future (blue sheet).