

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CONFIDENTIAL

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## PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY



PACCOM053596

### COMMITTEE ON REGIONAL PLANNING AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

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

#### EUROPE PRIZE

Additional information concerning the application by  
the municipality of GERLINGEN, Baden-Württemberg,  
Federal Republic of Germany

- Replies to the questionnaire

[see also AS/Loc/Prix (20) 70]

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Replies to the questionnaire

Question 1: Membership in organisations of local authorities

Reply

Yes, of the International Union of Mayors and the Council of European Municipalities.

Question 2: Contribution to their activities

Reply

No events of this kind have as yet taken place in Gerlingen.

Question 3: "Twinning activities"

Reply

Since 1964, Gerlingen has been twinned with the French town of Vesoul/Haute Saône (the Deed of Association dates from 24 May 1964 and the text appears in the enclosed brochures). From the beginning, extensive annual programmes have been organised in close co-operation with the municipal authorities, town council, schools, churches, organisations and associations in Vesoul. Specialised twin town committees appointed by the town councils meet alternately in each town every year to co-ordinate plans and discuss any questions which arise.

As proof of the many activities which we organise, we enclose an account of the first ten years of our twin towns scheme, published in 1974, and an outline of the yearly programmes for 1975-78.

We have always, and increasingly in recent years, done our best to encourage family contacts and to facilitate the exchange of visits by individual young people.

Question 4: Other relations with municipalities abroad

Reply

Clubs and associations are uncommonly active in Gerlingen (there are nearly 60 associations and similar organisations).

Numerous associations maintain friendly contacts with their counterparts in a wide range of European countries. This is particularly true of the Culture and Sport Association, with its eight sub-sections, and the Music Association/Town Band, which organises international music festivals and concert tours every year on a reciprocal basis with such countries as Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Norway and Czechoslovakia.

## Question 5: Exchange of persons

Reply

See answer to question 3.

The persons responsible for the twin towns programme have made it their special task to satisfy all requests for contacts between individuals or families. Every year, contacts between families, as well as exchanges between children and young people are arranged by mutual agreement.

Vacation workers also come to Gerlingen (some also go to Vesoul), and nearly all of these are housed in families. The persons involved come from all sections of the community. Furthermore, numerous personal contacts result from exchanges between school groups and associations, not all of which come to the notice of the municipal authorities.

## Question 6: Organisation of European events

Reply

- a. International music festivals organised by the Music Association/Town Band;
- b. Sports meetings, with the local sports clubs competing against sportsmen from other countries;
- c. Annual sports competition for the twin towns challenge cup between schools in Gerlingen and Vesoul (held alternately in Vesoul and Gerlingen).

## Question 7: Europe Day

Reply

In view of the frequency of the meetings arranged as part of the twin towns scheme, no special celebrations are organised for Europe Day.

Every year, however, the local bulletin refers to Europe Day using the text issued by the Council of Europe.

## Question 8: Support to European movements

Reply

- a. The municipality supports all serious movements which set out to promote European unity and international understanding. No organisations of this kind are, however, based in Gerlingen.
- b. There are no facilities of this kind in Gerlingen.

## Question 9: Propagation of the European idea

Reply

The activities of the local adult education college do much to promote the European idea. Such activities include lectures on life in other countries, numerous language courses, co-operation with the Institut Français and study journeys, which attract participants from outside Gerlingen, to our twin town and many European countries. Other travel activities include sightseeing expeditions and visits to war cemeteries (eg in the Vosges), the latter in co-operation with the German War Graves Association.

Every year, on Commemoration Day, the Gerlingen branch of the German War Graves Association organises an impressive, well-attended ceremony, at which the emphasis is very much on the need to avert repetition of the cruel events of two world wars through international understanding.

With encouragement from the municipal authorities, Gerlingen schools - and particularly the "Gymnasium" - have already entered more than once for the European Schools Day competition and won several prizes. The municipality took part in the prize-giving ceremony and also made an award of its own.

## Question 10: Actions of European solidarity

Reply

Yes, on several occasions; most recently in 1976.

## Question 11: Presentation

Reply

Yes, the municipality would organise a ceremony, underlining the significance of the event.

## Question 12: Other initiatives

Reply

In addition to the twinning scheme with Vesoul, Gerlingen maintains the following contacts:

a. With Ghana: From 1850 to 1876, the Gerlingen missionary, Johannes Zimmermann, worked in the territory of the Krobo tribe in present-day Ghana and made such an impression, in actively helping the natives to rationalise their farming methods, that his memory is still venerated. Mayor Eberhard was thus invited to Odumase/Ghana in 1972 for the ceremony to mark the inauguration of the "Johannes Zimmermann Church". In return, Chief Konor Nene Mate Kole visited Gerlingen in 1976.

The municipality, the local church community and the public at large followed these events with lively interest (and contributed to social projects in Ghana). An exhibition on the history and economy of Ghana organised in the town hall by the Ghanaian Embassy, also proved extremely popular;

b. With Japan: Business links established by an optical firm based in Gerlingen have brought the town into contact with the Japanese town of Sabae. Local government and municipal officials were included in an industrial delegation from the area which toured Europe and visited Gerlingen; this led to the establishment of friendly contacts. The Gerlingen "Realschule" has already exchanged drawings with a school in Sabae.

c. At the request of the Baden-Württemberg Assembly, a visiting group of Arab local government representatives was invited to Gerlingen in June 1976 and was (as the participants said) given a deep and practical insight into the workings of local government in a German town.

d. An impromptu reception was organised in the town hall for a Czech band which happened to stop for the night in Gerlingen on its way through to France.

e. At the request of GUT-Travel, a group of trade union representatives from Poland was received in the town hall, during a study tour through Germany, and inspected a number of local government projects.

You will see from all this that the Gerlingen authorities are constantly and successfully concerned to strengthen links between the peoples by taking full advantage of every opportunity for human contact.

Furthermore, by agreeing, in 1969, to sponsor the Germano-Hungarian Association, the municipality accepted another important responsibility. After the war, more than 1,000 Germano-Hungarian refugees came to Gerlingen, settling in the town and taking an active part in its official and community life. For this reason, the town was asked to act as sponsor. The deed of sponsorship, concluded on 19 October 1969, reads as follows:

"On 2 July 1969, the town council of the municipality of Gerlingen will accept sponsorship of the Germano-Hungarian Association in Baden-Württemberg. In so doing, our town will become, in a spirit of friendly co-operation, the focal point of the association's cultural activities.

In consultation with the association, it is intended that all available documents relating to the centuries of German life in Hungary shall be collected and stored in Gerlingen.

The archives and cultural assets of the association will be taken under the municipality's protection and administered jointly.

The municipality will do everything in its power to facilitate and support the association's annual meetings in Gerlingen."

We can now look back on nearly ten years of successful work - work which has also helped to strengthen international understanding. An impressive Germano-Hungarian museum has been built up, preserving for posterity the traditional culture of the German communities in Hungary and helping many visitors - including those from other countries - to understand how Hungary was settled after the Turkish wars, some 2 1/2 centuries ago, and how its subsequent history developed. Of the many important events organised in connection with the sponsorship scheme, we will only mention the seminars on Hungarian history and culture which attract the attention of scholars from far outside Gerlingen, who concern themselves with now-vanished communities in South-East Europe.

We are agreed with the Germano-Hungarian Association that the aim of the sponsorship scheme must not be to nurture resentments, but to keep the cultural achievements of an energetic community alive in posterity's memory, to study their historical significance objectively and, in the final analysis, to facilitate complete integration.

Our belief that this approach is the right one is strengthened, not only by our good relations with the German-Hungarian Society in Cologne, the World Federation of Hungarians in Budapest and the Hungarian Embassy in the Federal Republic, whose cultural attaché has officially visited Gerlingen, but by reactions both among the former refugees and the local population.