

## ***A CALL FOR STORIES***

A significant number of European municipalities are linked to each other through a formal twinning agreement. In general, such partnership aims at encouraging cooperation between the towns and mutual understanding between their citizens. But what is important, it relies upon the voluntary commitment of citizens, in collaboration with their local authorities and local associations.

Town twinning encourages exchanges of experiences on a variety of issues of common interest. It may also provide opportunities to learn about the daily lives of citizens in other European countries, to talk to them and very often to make friendships. Thanks to the combination of those elements, town twinning has a real potential to enhance mutual understanding between citizens, fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union and finally developing a sense of European identity.

Our experience shows that joint activities may be helpful in enhancing collaboration above the borders, and in coordinating international projects. With the post war ideals, such as peace, friendship and mutual understanding, modern town twinning has gained more and more business-oriented face. Still, various social, cultural and environmental concerns are high on the agenda. Twinned towns choose to encourage tourism, help to experience new cultures and bring us closer to places all around the world.

There are about 200 twinned cities among the UBC members and altogether 532 twin cities in the Baltic Sea Region. The majority of the UBC cities have at least two twin towns, many have even several. This makes our organization even a larger network, with an enormous potential which, however, seems to be not fully exploited.

Is town twinning a reality in the Baltic cities or does it rather exist on paper? Is it still relevant in the times when short-term cooperation projects seem to be prevailing? What is the added-value of town twinning for the citizens and our municipalities? Does it bring any direct benefits to the citizens? What are the biggest challenges and barriers in this kind of collaboration? How has this special relationship evolved over the years in your cities? Do we need formalized ties with other cities at all? Aren't we a big European family yet?



Gdańsk, 3 March 2014

The next Baltic Cities Bulletin will be entitled:

## **“Town twinning in the Baltic Sea Region”.**

The Editorial Board would like to invite you to send stories on your cities' town-twinning experience and projects. Your stories on the key twinning projects and endeavours would be welcome.

As usual, apart from the main theme, we are looking forward to receiving stories on interesting events and daily life news from our member cities. Those articles are published in the chapter "News from Member Cities". The UBC Commissions are welcome to inform about their events, meetings and projects in the chapter "UBC Today".

Looking forward to your reply,

Paweł Żaboklicki  
UBC Secretary General

### ***Please follow these guidelines when submitting your story:***

- Deliver the story by e-mail to: **anna.dargiewicz@gdansk.gda.pl** in MS WORD format. Please remember to kill the viruses before sending it. Please expect confirmation of reception. Lack of confirmation means that the message is not delivered.
- Each member city may submit two articles - one related to the cover theme and one to the chapter "News from Member Cities". All stories shall be sent in English.
- Each article may have max 400 words, no more than 1 page A4, font TimesNewRoman 12pt. The editorial board sometimes needs to shorten the stories in order to include more stories into the Bulletin. It is also important to include the author's name and contact details for any follow-up questions related to the story.
- Please make all efforts to include a smashing photo or a digital picture to illustrate the article (JPG format, min. 300 ppi, one e-mail - one picture, the file should not exceed 3 MB). Remember to send us also the coat of arms of your city, if you have not sent it earlier.
- The deadline for stories to the Bulletin is **4 April 2014**. Please respect this timetable as we are unable to print out stories received after this deadline.

All the material should be sent directly to the UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk. If you have interesting issues to report, please do not hesitate to send them.

The bulletin is distributed in 5000 copies all around the Baltic Sea Region to over 200 Baltic cities and numerous key organizations and institutions, including the EU.