



Niederanven, 18 October 2010

ALTEA (E)
BAD KÖTZTING (D)
BELLAGIO (I)
BUNDORAN (IRL)
CHOJNA (PL)
GRANVILLE (F)
HOLSTEBRO (DK)
HOUFFALIZE (B)
JUDENBURG (A)
KARKKILA (FIN)
KÖSZEG (H)
MARSASKALA (MT)
MEERSSEN (NL)
NIEDERANVEN (L)
OXELÖSUND (S)
PREVEZA (GR)
PRIENAI (LT)
SESIMBRA (P)
SHERBORNE (GB)
SIGULDA (LV)
SIRET (RO)
SUŠICE (CZ)
TÛRI (EST)
ZVOLEN (SK)

35th Douzelage Conference

SUŠICE

29th Apr – 2nd May 2010

Draft Minutes



PARTICIPANTS

1 = GENERAL MEETING, 2 = EDUCATION MEETING, 3 = YOUTH WORKSHOP, 4 = VISITOR, 5 = INTERPRETER,

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PREVEZA

NOT ATTENDING

PRIENAI

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PRESIDENCY

MR. ED WEBER¹

MR. CLAUDE BRAUN¹

GUESTS OF HONOUR

MR. JIŘÍ HAVEL, MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT

MRS JUDR. JIŘINA RIPPELOVÁ, MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT AND FORMER MAYOR OF SUŠICE





I. General Meeting

A. Speech of welcome by the President.

The president Ed Weber thanked Mr. Jiří Havel, Member of the European Parliament, for his very interesting lecture on Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. He especially welcomed Mrs JUDr. Jiřina Rippelová, Member of Parliament. Mrs Rippelová had been the Mayor during the accession of Sušice to the Douzelage in 2004.

The president expressed the thanks of all the member towns to the Mayor, Mr. Petr Mottl, to the town council and to the Douzelage Committee of Sušice for hosting this 35th Douzelage Conference. He especially thanked the Douzelage committee and exceptionally Mrs Vera SVOBODOVÁ who achieved in very difficult circumstances to manage the huge organization.

He welcomed the delegation of Siret (Romania) with their Mayor Mr. Adrian POPOJU, the Lord Mayor Counsellor Mr. Viorel Haiura and Mr. Tiberiu Rotaru who were all the three responsible for this excellent contact that could be built to the Town of Siret during the accession phase. This extraordinary co-operation had already been mentioned during the last Douzelage meeting in Altea.

During this meeting the Douzelage members will officially repeat the symbolic vote on Siret's accession taken already in Altea and welcome Siret as our 24th member town. It was generally accepted during the last meeting that this unanimous vote should be repeated by a symbolic act in presence of the delegation from Siret during the Sušice General meeting.

The president expressed his joy that finally all the delegations had managed to come to Sušice without major problems in spite of the two catastrophes that hit the world in a very short time and both created or still create severe problems to the daily life of its citizens. Europe was paralyzed, as most air travel was banned for several days. Airports were shut all over Europe and flights were grounded. This showed just how vulnerable we are, and how enormous the power of nature can be.

The second important problem Europe has actually is the financial crisis that hit the global economy since the summer of 2007 and has broadened to a crisis of historic proportions without precedent in post-war economic history. The financial crisis has hit the various Member States to a different degree. The president expressed his regrets that the delegations from Greece and Finland could not attend this meeting especially for these economic reasons.

Finally he mentioned the "Commission Work Programme 2010" presented by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission in the Plenary Session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 20 April 2010 emphasizing that the concerns and well-being of the European citizens will remain at the heart of the Commission but that all now need to work together in this period of exit from the crisis, to promote and defend the European values.

That's why the president thanked the member towns for their commitment in the Douzelage, the best example of what active citizenship means. He appealed for working together not only to keep the ideals at the base of this twinning alive but to make the Douzelage links firmer and the friendships stronger.

What has been done in the past is what will have to be done in the future – bring people together, build friendship and make every effort to give to the young generation the best education. He appealed for working in this sense of the European values. Solidarity, mutual respect of fundamental freedoms, human dignity and tolerance, liberty, democracy, and human rights all by promoting the diversity of our cultures should remain our absolute aim.



II. Business Matters

Before starting with the agenda, the president informed the delegates about the very sad news received from André Gendre from Granville on 6.10.2009, informing that Pierre Audrain, the former vice president of the Granville Douzelage committee, deceased. Pierre had been one of the pioneers of the Douzelage in Granville and he was always known as a very devoted man.

Before asking to observe a minute's silence in memory of Pierre the president passed the floor to Vice-president Günther Pecher who asked to observe a minute's silence also for the victims of the tragedy that hit Poland and the Polish population when on 10 April more than one hundred people, among them, the Polish president, his wife and great number of high ranking state officials died in a plane crash near Smolensk. As a gesture of friendship and compassion with Poland and its population, he asked all delegates to rise from their chairs and observe a minute of silence.

The president continued by noting with a certain satisfaction the very long list of activities and congratulated all those who were so involved and active during the last months. As major activities of the presidency up from the Chojna meeting, he specially mentioned the contact with Brussels and the many mails concerning the Douzelage enlargement.

The president was very pleased to welcome Mrs Benita Vikström, the Mayor from Oxelösund and he transferred apologizes from Mr. Adam Fedorowicz, the Mayor of Chojna who had been called in the last minute to assist to funerals in his town. He asked the delegates from Chojna to transmit his thanks to the Mayor for the hospitality with that he was received during his last visit a few weeks ago and for supporting the nomination of Mr. Cezary Salamonczyk. The president further welcomed Mr. Mario Calleja, the Mayor of Marsaskala who attended his first Douzelage meeting as well as Mr. Adrian Popoiu, the Mayor from the new member town Siret in Romania. He thanked all of them for the strong support they give to the Douzelage and to their local Douzelage committees. Finally he transmitted apologizes from Karkkila and Preveza who could not attend this meeting.

Finally he reported on the presidency's activities since the last meeting:

Judenburg July 2009 – Plaque of Honour and Douzelage Monument

He reported on his participation in the festivities of the presentation of the Plaque of Honour from the Council of Europe to the town of Judenburg and the inauguration of the Douzelage monument on 11 July 2009. He pronounced to the town of Judenburg his praise and his gratitude for the wonderful monument which they have erected to honour the Douzelage. Pictures of the ceremony and the monument were shown.

Siret 4-7 January 2010 – Courtesy visit

Further the president reported on his very successful visit of Siret, the new Romanian town, from 4-7 January 2010. He mentioned that it was very, very cold when he had the pleasure to visit Romania for the first time. He met the Mayor and the Douzelage contact people in Siret. Siret is a very nice and ambitious town and travelling there was no problem at all. The president visited the marvellous monasteries of the region, the Auchan Mall in Suceava; he visited the city, its library, the museum, the Fire Brigade, the many churches, the Jewish cemetery etc. He was particularly impressed by the Epiphany procession of the faithful of the different religions that exist in Siret. He had very interesting discussions with the religious representatives of the various churches. The president expressed his gratefulness to the Mayor Mr. Adrian Popoiu for the warm welcome and the hospitality of the town of Siret. It was an exceptional event and an excellent opportunity to present the Douzelage to the population of Siret.

Chojna 6-9 April 2010.

The president had been invited by the town of Chojna and the Chojna Douzelage committee to have some preparation discussions with the local Douzelage committee and especially with Mr. Cezary Salamonczyk, the candidate for the presidency in order to clear all questions they or the town hall may have. Cezary Salamonczyk confirmed that they were very pleased that the president accepted to come to Chojna to discuss these technical issues about the presidency. He expressed his thanks that the president accepted to help the new presidency in the future.

13 and 14 Nov 08 - European Citizen's Forum in Brussels

In the end the president mentioned that Vice-president Alphonse Henrard and he followed the invitation of the European Commission to attend the European Citizens Forum and the Golden Stars Award Ceremony in Brussels. During this Forum they had the opportunity to meet Mr. Jan Figel', Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Mrs Odile Quintin, Director-General, Education and Culture DG, Mr. Pierre Mairesse, Director, DG



Education and Culture, Mr. Risto Raivio, the Head of Unit, well known by all Douzelage partner towns. He underlined that these visits are extremely important to stay in good contact with the officials working together with the Douzelage. This has become especially important due to the job rotation in the commission, which is the cause of the fact that most of the people with whom the Douzelage worked together in the last years, changed to other tasks and responsibilities. In his view, starting a new promotion tour in Brussels would be absolutely useful for the future of the Douzelage.

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Altea GM 14-17 May 2009

The following documents were unanimously approved:

Approval of the Minutes of the Altea GM 14-17 May 2009

Approval of the Education Committee Report

Approval of the IT-Workshop Report

Delegates were informed about the GM Summary Report and the Video produced in Niederaanven and sent in to Brussels for the Golden Stars Award contest. They were also informed about the negative decision for Altea and the projects awarded by the European Commission. A copy of the DVD on the Altea meeting was distributed to all delegations.

2. Approval of the accounts 2009 – 2010

Due the fact that Dr Carlo Sancassano from Bellagio, one the former Honorary Auditors, has left the Douzelage committee from BELLAGIO, a new Auditor had to be nominated. Mrs Donatella Gandola from Bellagio agreed to assume this charge.

After the accounts reflecting the actual financial situation of the Douzelage had been checked by the two Honorary Auditors, Donatella Gandola from BELLAGIO and André Gendre from GRANVILLE, they were unanimously agreed. Actually the Douzelage has 6957.83 € on its account. 3020.36 € are on the translation account and 3937.47 € on the presidency's account.

The president mentioned that the closing date (the date when the last statement from the bank had been received) was the 31st of March 2010. All transfers executed after this date will be booked on the new exercise 2010-2011. Towns were kindly asked to check their situation concerning the payments of the annual contribution and the translation equipment. He also mentioned that the bills for 2010 have not yet been sent out but will be sent as soon as the new presidency will be operational.

Holstebro explained their financial problems due to the refusal of their town hall to pay the annual fees for several years now. They decided to go back and ask the town hall for support after their elections. Just one day before coming to the Altea meeting, they had a new very promising contact which hopefully will be positive.

The president thanked Holstebro for the strong efforts they did to get the necessary money in order to allow their youngsters and members to participate in the Douzelage activities. With reference to the recent mail exchanges, the president suggested that if they have the money, they should pay for 2006-2008 and use the fee for 2009 to make a new start. This could be paid in 2010 if the situation has improved.

3. Annual Douzelage membership

It was proposed to remain at 300 € for the annual fee, according to the decision taken in SESIMBRA [SESIMBRA, para 2, 15/08/2003]

4. Simultaneous Translation accounts

It also was unanimously agreed to remain at the 50 € as the annual contribution for maintenance and transport of the translation equipment according to the decision taken in OXELÖSUND. [OXELÖSUND GM Minutes, para 2a and 2b., 16/05/2002] and [SHERBORNE minutes, October 2006, para 5]



5. Douzelage in the World Wide Web

a) Douzelage Website

Based on the recommendations of the Website workshop in Altea, the Douzelage website has been rebuilt and a software update has been put in service. The features mentioned in the IT-workshop have been set up by the Douzelage webmaster John Pettersson. Some adjustments will have to be made in the very next future in order to standardize the layout of the different towns. The president asked Mrs Benita Vikström, the Mayor from Oxelösund to express the thanks of the Douzelage to John Pettersson for the excellent work he does for the Douzelage.

The president explained the structure of the new site and underlined the many tutorials that can be found to make life easier, the webgroups that have been created, the Info-part with the latest news, the mailing lists, the monitoring facility, the lists of delegates, the applications, etc. etc. He invited the towns that applied to Brussels in the past, to send in a copy of their application to put on the web in order to give the member towns the possibility to learn one from the other. As the Douzelage will have more and more paperless office, all delegates were kindly asked to register in the member part in order to have access to all these additional facilities. It was especially mentioned that the Douzelage website is now available in all languages due to a Google translation function that has been added. This gives the possibility to people not speaking English language to have a view of the Douzelage in their own tongue. All towns are kindly invited to address to the Douzelage if they need help in any website question.

ACTION ALL

b) Douzelage Contact addresses

In order to maintain a complete and up to date Town contact list and Education contact list, towns are kindly requested to check the linked lists and notify as soon as possible any amendments. If the addresses are correct, towns should confirm it by a short notice. It had been agreed that best would be to have one single contact address per town. It was mentioned that due to privacy regulations, all private addresses and contacts are accessible only on the member part of the website after logging in.

ACTION ALL

6. Programme for further meetings

The Schedule of the Douzelage Meetings had been published as Meetings [ANNEX F] prior to the meeting and a call for candidates had been launched to host the upcoming meetings. After a short analysis of the actual situation, the following schedule of meetings was proposed:

26-29 May	2011	Granville	20th Anniversary of the Douzelage and signing of the Codicil to the Douzelage Charta
Spring	2012	Zvolen	(date to be defined)
Spring	2013	Houffalize	with reservations (formal confirmation will follow by the end of 2010)
Sigulda	2014	Sigulda	will be Capital of European Culture 2014

New candidate towns willing to host the annual general meeting after Sigulda have to be identified - Volunteers are welcome. The "old towns" were invited to think about hosting a meeting after 2014, especially Bellagio who had to cancel their meeting in 2006.

The president reminded that in Altea 2009 it had been decided during the Granville meeting and the 20th Anniversary Ceremony a new Codicil to the Douzelage Charter will be signed by all member towns. It would therefore be important to have, as far as possible, all the mayors present at this meeting or at least a person mandated to sign and apply the official stamp on behalf of the municipality.

Action: ALL



7. Cooperation and call for project partners

The president shortly mentioned that, due to its good reputation, the Douzelage has been contacted by several organisations asking for cooperation in projects, i.e.:

After the Altea general meeting, where the Douzelage had Mrs Antonella Valmorbidia, the ALDA Director as guest speaker, a very fruitful cooperation could be established with the ALDA. As an example, a project description had been sent by ALDA and transferred to all Douzelage member towns called *Networking of twinned towns project*. This document shows how multiannual projects can be structured and organized.

Another contact was made by the **GSI - Gruppi di Solidarieta' Internazionale Italia** - Non-governmental actors and Local Authorities from Italy. This contact was based on the information the GSI found in the Italian Town Twinning Guide "Manuale L'Europa del Gemellaggio" published in 2007.

The Douzelage had further been invited to a conference called **South-North Mediterranean Dialogue** – that took place in Alicante 19/20/21 November 2009 and had as main team "Education and Migration". As the president could not attend this conference, he had forwarded the invitation to Altea situated just next to Alicante. Unfortunately Altea could not attend either.

Finally a project description called **CrossCulTour Milestones 2009 - Share our Experiences in Cross-Marketing Cultural Tourism from TRANSROMANICA - Major Cultural Route of the Council of Europe**, has been transferred to all member towns for information and to the people working in "The Romans in the Douzelage" project as an example. The president reminded that many of the Douzelage towns have very interesting touristic attractions to show. As an example he mentioned that the town of Niederanven has recently become a member of the St. Martin's Cultural Route, starting from Szombathely in Hungary at some 20 km from Kőszeg, then going to Slovenia, Italy, France, Luxembourg (Niederanven) and finally to Germany. Towns interested in promoting their tourism should study the network of cultural routes established by the European Institute of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe.

8. Promotion and support

After the formation of the Commission, there has been a quite substantial chair shuffle in Brussels. Therefore it is suggested to get again in contact with the new decision takers to make the Douzelage better known. Especially contact should be taken with those people who establish or who can influence the rules applicable in the Town Twinning or the Youth and Education Sectors. These potential officials that could be contacted for example could be:

- the European Commissioners (Education and Culture, actually Ms. Androulla Vassiliou)
- the National Members of Parliament MEP's
- the European Commission Citizenship - National Contact Points
- the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and its heads of units
- the Members of the Culture and Education committee of the European parliament
- the National Members of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions
- the National Representatives at the Committee of the Regions and its Commission for Education, Youth, Culture and Research

The links and the contact lists have all been forwarded to the member towns in order to give them the possibility to contact their national representatives in the different institutions or any other important people that could be useful in supporting the Douzelage. **ACTION ALL**

The president explained in detail the very useful contacts that could be build in the last years and he underlined that this excellent cooperation with the EU institutions could only be made due to these close contacts. Vice president Alphonse Henrard emphasized the relational character of the Douzelage. In his view these contacts the Douzelage has had over the last six years, both human and professional, have been extremely interesting and important. These contacts have helped to position the Douzelage, to promote its activities and of course at the end, to help every delegation trying to make their projects on youth, culture and many other areas successful.



9. Douzelage enlargement

Mr. Tiberiu Rotaru showed a very interesting presentation of the new member town Siret (Romania) agreed as the 24th Douzelage member town in Altea.

In a very vivid way, he gave information on Siret – the Small Europe, how it is very often called due to its many ethnical minorities, German, Polish, Ukrainian, Armenian and Jewish people living together with no conflict at all during many years already. He showed the historical benchmarks with the many medieval churches and mentioned the Jewish heritage, the geographical situation, the schools, the touristic attractions, accommodation and hotels, the travel facilities and the leisure infrastructures of Siret and its surroundings. As Mr. Rotaru underlined, one of the main aims from Siret in the Douzelage is to have their commitment enlarged by the experience of the Douzelage.

The president particularly pointed to the excellent preparation of his stay in Siret. The meeting he had with the Mayor and the town officials was an extraordinary opportunity to make the Douzelage and its activities better known. They managed to involve so many people and institutions in this visit that absolutely everybody in Siret knows now that Siret is a member of the Douzelage Town Twinning and that their town has won friends all over Europe. He congratulated the Mayor and the organizers for the excellent promotion of the Douzelage.

According to paragraph 6 of the Altea Minutes, the official vote on Siret's accession was repeated and all delegations unanimously agreed to accept Siret as new Romanian member town and the official accession document was signed.

As for the further enlargement process, the President said, that at the moment no further contacts to towns from Slovenia, Cyprus and Bulgaria have been taken. Celje from Slovenia has not given any answer to the mail exchanges until the closing date of 1st July 2009 so that they are no longer considered to be candidate. Škofja Loka from Slovenia, a town involved already in a Douzelage project could be a new town from Slovenia eventually. Information on the Douzelage and its accession procedure has been mailed to two teachers involved in the Comenius project meeting in Sherborne.

Mike Balfour from Sherborne underlined that Škofja Loka could indeed be a very suitable town in Slovenia. It's a town of about 20.000 inhabitants described on the official Slovenian Tourism website as the best preserved medieval town in Slovenia. It's a town full of history and culture with a lot of opportunity for walking around in the hills and mountains and is easily accessible because it's only 18 kilometres away from the main airport of the country. Mike Balfour will probably go to Škofja Loka in October and have some further information then.

10. European Programs 2007-2013 - comments

The President expressed his hope that the Douzelage is hopefully to be invited again as a consultant member to the talks on the new European Citizens Programme 2014-2020, starting probably in July 2010. He reminded the importance of the consultation meetings in the years 2004-2006 when the programme 2007-2013 was prepared and the Douzelage could give an important input on the concerns of larger twinning organisations.

Mr. Cezary Salamonczyk stressed that it is also very important to be visible on the national stage. He told about the several meeting in Warsaw he took part in the last year and the experience he won is that this is a perfect way to promote the Douzelage but also to be known personally by the decision taking people. The association these decision takers make with the projects and the person in charge is very important and helps in getting subsidies. He also underlined the very positive outcome from the national conferences to which he was invited and encouraged every delegation to take part to this kind of national events whenever possible.

The President reported on discussions that are underway in Brussels in the sense that it is planned in a next future to put the European Citizens Program under the control of the national responsibility as it is already done for Youth in Action projects. At that moment direct contact will be even more important and fruitful.

c) Outstanding payments and refunding

Mike Morrell from Sherborne talked about possible ways to simplify the reimbursement and the opportunity to find ways to speed up outstanding monies. He made concrete suggestions on the procedure when organizing meetings in the different programmes and as a conclusion of his very informative speech he stressed that lack of information from just one participating member town can delay payments for everybody. If all member towns



make a point of observing these proposals, then more and more people can enjoy the wonderful benefits of being member of the European wide Douzelage.

The motto Bad Kötzing wants the towns to stand for is: “*All you have to do, do it as early as possible and be reliable*”. Mr. Günther Pecher reported on their positive experience they made when organizing their youth project and the advance payment they received. They asked why there has been no reaction until now from Preveza concerning the reimbursement of the travel costs of their youth project. The president informed on the possible reasons of that delay and asked for patience. Towns will be advised very soon.

The president pointed out not to mix up the EU Citizens program and the Youth in Action program in the discussion about the reimbursement procedures. He noticed that in general, the Douzelage can be very satisfied about its achievement in this matter in the last 7 years. Even though around 85% of the Douzelage activities have been supported by EU programs the arguments and problems related to large twinning organisations are still valid and worth to be raised again in the discussions if hopefully the Douzelage opinion will be asked again. The president thanked all the actors who contributed to the success of the completed or ongoing projects. The enthusiasm and expertise of these people has brought the Douzelage to where it is today.

Mrs Maria Angeles Berenguer from Altea informed that the bank transfers of the travel costs of the Altea General Meeting have been executed on 14th of April. The economic department of the Altea Town Hall wanted to stress that for them it was necessary to have all the identification forms available. There were problems in getting the papers from 2 Douzelage towns. This caused the delay of the payment order.

The president again invited all the delegations to keep the Douzelage informed on eventual changes in their administrations in order to avoid that Town contact people leave their job without informing the Douzelage.

d) Best practise for youth projects

The question of child protection and security during youth activities becomes more and more important. Minimum standards must absolutely be respected. Best practise details, training kits and Child Protection issues are published on the Douzelage website. The president informed on these new regulations in the insurance and Child protection domain. He showed the links to the best practice advices on the website where all delegations can access to the new regulations. Finally he showed again how to contract insurance on the European benefits webpage for youngsters taking part in projects.

In order to help hosting towns in the future, Sušice pointed out as a general remark that deadlines should absolutely be respected and delegations must be more reliable. Cancelling participations at the very last moment decreases very considerably the money the organizers receive from the European Commission. If in the last moment a participant cannot attend, he should absolutely be replaced by another one.

Chojna, organizing projects in the different programs, added that

In Youth in action it is supposed that the cheapest way of travel is used. In some countries national agencies look at that very carefully. The second important point is the delay. The application target date and the information the organizers receive from the commission can be very short before the activity. This implies that ticket reservations can only be made very late. Getting money before leaving home is not possible because you must have invoices and boarding cards. As a general recommendation they said that putting the fare costs a little bit higher is a kind of guaranty to get the maximum amount back. In their point of view, sharing the knowledge and helping each will be very important for the future.

Another fact is that the national agencies of several countries severely verify all the bills before reimbursing money. This implies that all paper must absolutely be kept up to date during the whole project. Also cancellations in the last moment can have big incidences on the whole project. If a delegation of four people informs one day before the beginning of the activity that they will only be three, they are not considered to be a project partner any longer because the minimum to be accepted as project partner are four people. These rules must be followed and cheating is not allowed.

Mr. Salamonczyk further explained that there are possibilities to get money from different European sources in the future. By having multi-annual projects or by applying for several things at the same time: i.e. Youth in action meeting for the youngsters and Grundvik program for the meeting of adults. These programs are very often not very popular so it can be quite easy to get funds. One of the very important issues too, is to get funds very fast in order to reimburse the youngsters quite early in order to make participation possible also to young people from “countries that are not so rich”.



III. Survey of recent events

A. Projects not yet finished or in preparation

Before starting the tour of the table, vice-president Alphonse Henrard had asked to make a short statement. He had to leave on Saturday very early due to the VTT World Championship that is going to take place during the weekend in Houffalize.

“My dear friends, in 1991 I participated to the first Douzelage Meeting in Granville. This doesn’t actually make me younger. I had so many enriching and unforgettable human moments in the Douzelage meetings since then, in spite of the language problem. I think that there is no barrier if the will to communicate exists. In 2003 you named me vice-president of the Douzelage, the task to ensure the contact with Brussels. What a mission! All alone I could not have afforded this task. The precious advice of Günther and the experience of our president have helped me to do my best in this job. Our objectives were: let them know our association in Brussels, establish contacts with the administration and value our association in order to realize the strived projects. Still today I confirm my commitments and confidence and my disposal to the new presidency staff. Thank you for your friendship and your confidence in my capacities during all these years. Thank you to Ed; you have been a great president. Thank you to all of you.”

The president thanked Alphonse for these very kind words. He said that it is true that during all those years their cooperation was always based on friendship and warm human contact. They also became friends in their private life and together with Günther they always strived to bring the Douzelage to the first row in Brussels, where they also created friendships on the way. He expressed his thanks to Alphonse for all the work he has done for the Douzelage.

The president welcomed Bert van Doorn representing Meerssen. Mr van Doorn attended for the first time a Douzelage general meeting and he asked to be allowed to give some explanations concerning the actual situation of the Meerssen committee.

Bert van Doorn, an English teacher in the Grammar school in Meerssen first excused the Mayor of Meerssen who could not attend the meeting as today is the day of the celebration of the queen’s birthday and he has official duties to perform in her Majesty’s name in Meerssen. He apologized on behalf of the Meerssen committee for not submitting a list of activities list and for the outstanding payments. The reason of this is that in fact Meerssen had some serious trouble at the committee front. About 2 years ago a totally new committee had been installed. The chairman, Mrs Ijja Aussems, had to resign half a year ago, which left the whole Douzelage committee headless as there was no replacement to be found. 2 months after the secretary did also resign and then the treasurer lost his job and had to move away from Meerssen. But very fortunately the good news from Meerssen is that somebody convinced Karel Majoor to step in temporarily at least, as the chairman of the committee. So everybody can understand why many of the questions addressed to Meerssen had not been answered and so many things had not been done from the Meerssen side.

The president thanked for this information and asked Bert to give his best regards to all the people involved in the Douzelage in Meerssen and welcome Karel Majoor again as chairman in Meerssen again. Karel Majoor was the first Douzelage president. The president underlined the high commitment of Meerssen and especially the Benelux countries had fruitful exchanges and they hope they can continue this cooperation in the future.

Then started the tour of the table and towns were asked to give a short explanation on their past, running or planned activities.

ALTEA informed that after the General Meeting in Altea they had been preparing all the documents for the Golden Stars Awards. They worked hard in a very short time and appreciated very much the great help they got from the side of the Douzelage president. They thanked Niederanven for the fantastic video that had been produced and that is an excellent souvenir of this meeting. They took part at the Miniparliament activity in Bellagio with 2 young people of their secondary school. They thanked Bellagio for this great experience which they introduced in Radio Altea and in their local press department.

BAD-KÖTZTING noted that school exchanges and school trips to other Douzelage towns come more and more into fashion. They had quite a number of school contacts with Sušice, given the short distance and Köszeg. The pupils get keen to meet each other and participate to common sports events like skiing for example. Since the Altea meeting **BAD-KÖTZTING** had a concert of the Chamber choirs of Bad Kötzting and Sušice. They



performed together the Carmina Burana by Carl Orff. It turned out to be a very great success. The first performance was in Bad Kötzing with an audience of more than 600 people. The next day they performed in Sušice in the cultural centre, this was completely full of people. It was a great experience for the audience and for all performers.

For the youth Wilderness camp BAD-KÖTZTING organized in summer, 22 young people from 7 nationalities came to the camp in spite of the accommodation which had been very simple. For all of them it was an interesting experience. One of their activities for example, was that every one had to play another nationality, where they learned to put themselves into someone else's place. The photos of this event show that it has been a very positive experience for the young people. This formula could be interesting for other towns too, who would like to use the knowledge and the experience of an organisation working in the Bavarian Forest, an organisation which is in fact a youth hostel offering a large program at the same time.

BAD KÖTZTING sent 5 young people to Preveza in November and in April they sent 2 pupils and 2 teachers to the Bellagio Miniparliament. They thanked the organisers for the perfect organisation of these activities.

BELLAGIO worked hard on the organisation of the Miniparliament especially in order to get subsidised. They thanked all the participating towns for their commitment. The students from Altea, Bad-Kötzing, Chojna, Houffalize, Marsaskala, Meerssen, Sherborne, Sušice and Zvolen have met at the school in Bellagio and everybody worked hard in preparing this event and also during the stay. All the participants were very satisfied with the organisation. All students had been very serious and all the rules had been respected. So Bellagio was very happy with this event and wants to continue organising this activity.

As for the future activities of Bellagio there are some changes to be expected. In fact last year in June there had been municipal elections. Together with those political changes they have got a new Douzelage committee. Their next project is to prepare a DVD with all the Miniparliament activities. They are going to work out their future procedures (especially for the General Meeting) together with the Mayor and the town council, which in fact is very keen to support the Douzelage financially.

The president thanked both, Bad Kötzing and Bellagio for their excellent youth activities they have organised. The Bellagio Miniparliament has been working now for 11 years and has always been very successful until now. For Bad Kötzing too he only got excellent comments from the young participants. He encouraged all other towns to take over these youth activities or to organise similar projects. The environment activity that had been started in Niederanven, then Chojna, Oxelösund, Sherborne, Bad Kötzing and now is going to Judenburg is such a wonderful idea in the Youth in Action program that the project description can easily be adapted to the local conditions of other towns who can be sure that they will get the financial support from their national Youth Agency. It is really easy to organise such a youth activity and all the towns should think about hosting a Youth in Action project.

BUNDORAN had not many activities to present because since 2009 the council, because of the financial situation, has withdrawn from giving support for the Douzelage. However they tried to get some young people involved in the various projects but unfortunately they did not succeed.

Another event was, when Mike Balfour from Sherborne along with 5 golfing friends visited Bundoran in last April. It was a special occasion for Bundoran because it related to an old Golf Trophy that had been presented to Bundoran Golf Club in 1899 and had been cleared for an annual competition but some forty years ago it disappeared and nobody knew where it was. Mike discovered it in an auction house in Sherborne and brought it back and presented it to the Bundoran Golf Club. We appreciated very much this nice gesture from the Sherborne side.

CHOJNA had listed their many activities on the report distributed to all delegations. In addition to the activities mentioned, they took part in projects organized by Köszeg "Major minorities" and by Bad-Kötzing. Their students went to Bellagio too. They thanked the host towns for the excellent preparation of their activities. Chojna had two projects with Prienai and they found out a special Polish- Lithuanian program where it was possible to get 100% support for everything. Students didn't even have to pay the 30% of travelling costs. In the summer, after the Altea meeting, they had the project in Chojna and in the beginning of April and end of March this year they went to Prienai and had the project on "Easter habits" in both countries. Then their students took part in a Leonardo da Vinci program where students had work experience in five hotels in Sherborne and in three hotels in Germany in Berlin and Angermünde. That was the fourth year of the project and this holiday they would like also to send students to England for work experience.

Together with Sherborne they had a Comenius Regio project "Learning from the differences". It started in 2009 and will finish in 2011.

Mr. Salamonczyk again encouraged all towns to participate in this new program in the EU. It is for municipalities or schools and for associations and that's one of the programs that are just for adults. It's not for the students.



So it's a very good opportunity to exchange teachers or people employed by local governments or associations. Chojna also hosted Mr. Ed Weber who visited Chojna in April and Mr. Salamonczyk took part in several workshops about Youth in Action and Comenius programs in Warsaw.

As for the plans for the future, they will have in July the Youth in Action exchange project "Focus on future" with the participation of Köszeg, Sherborne and Sušice. The application was successful and they will receive more than 14.000€ for this activity. Further they will take part in a photograph project in Sherborne in July with seven students and in the project in Judenburg with four students.

Mr. Salamonczyk mentioned that he was really proud that 3 students from the School European Club Douzelage, three girls, wrote the project "Local window on Europe". This youth initiative is part of the Youth in Action program, so they will be subsidized. It is foreseen to organize meetings with people as well as a small cinema in their school. Chojna will also continue with the Comenius Regio program and two Leonardo da Vinci applications have been written. Results are still awaited. Further they would like to participate in a partnership program written by Mr István Matrái. Finally the catering project for adults is going to be prepared for 2011 in Chojna. This is going to be a Grundvik program.

The president thanked Chojna and especially Cezary Salamonczyk for their commitment and he reminded that the activities lists, as far as they have been forwarded to the secretary's office, can be seen on the web site.

Again he invited all delegations to send in their activity lists prior to the meetings.

ACTION ALL

GRANVILLE reported that last year in June they participated in the project "Adeps" in Houffalize at the occasion of their 10th anniversary. The Douzelage committee of Granville was invited to send a class. It had been very successful in spite of the lack of the support from Brussels. 2 weeks later in June at the Lycée de la Morandière they talked about the Douzelage and Europe by showing a special exhibition about Europe and a quiz. The students even talked about organising a Douzelage club. In July they participated in the Köszeg project Mami (2 to 9th of July) with 10 students and 2 adults from the same Lycée participated in discussions about minorities. They made some visits and they had been very interested and the organisation had been excellent. In July a cycling tour through the countries of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia had been done by a group of cyclists from Granville. In September they organised their first Douzelage walk crossing the Mont St. Michel Bay. As this was so perfect, this walk will be repeated next year. In December they had a partnership with Ecritures d'Europe together with the invited country Czech Republic. They had the exhibition "Hand" on the Berlin Wall. This year in 2010 at the beginning of May a group from Niederanven visited Granville and a class from the Lycée Michel Rodange and the president Ed Weber came there as well. From May 22 to May 24, the Granville wind band visited Luxembourg and gave a concert in Niederanven. In June there will be a 2-week exhibition with posters and it is important to meet teachers in order to help them and try to convince them to participate to the Douzelage project. In July 4 students will participate to the Judenburg project about the climate change. In September they will organise our second walk. Finally Granville will host the General Meeting from the 26 to 29th of May 2011. Unfortunately Altea will have their Municipal elections that weekend so that probably they will have problems to send the delegate Mayor. But Granville strongly hopes that Altea will find somebody else to be there.

HOLSTEBRO reported that they were concentrating their activities in solving their disastrous economical situation and admitted that, due to a substantial financial donation from their local Bingo Club, they were able to pay their dues and now they are out of the fire. Further more Holstebro had local elections in last November and fortunately they got a new Mayor in Holstebro (a social democrat). When Holstebro joined the Douzelage it was also under a social democratic mayor. At the moment when Holstebro council decided to withdraw the funding, it was a right wing mayor. So now again they have a social democratic mayor and they intent to tie him to a chair and listen to what they have to say. So hopefully in future Holstebro will be back for activities.

The president thanked the Holstebro delegation, Mrs Mette Grith Sorensen Mrs Jette Hingebjerg for the very strong support they have given to the Douzelage idea during all this difficult times. Both worked so hard to keep the Douzelage alive in Holstebro.

HOUFFALIZE had the Adeps week in their sports centre. They also had a couple of students who went to Preveza in November and they participated in the Miniparliament in Bellagio and at the Youth Camp in Bad Kötztzing. The president thanked Houffalize and sent his best regards to Mrs Manuela di Pinto wishing her a good recovery.

JUDENBURG had different international school and choir exchanges. Their choir visited Sušice just a couple of weeks ago. Because of all their activities they were awarded the Plaque of honour from the Council of Europe on 11 July 2009. They will have a work shop from the 10th to the 7th of July 2010 for young people called "Absolutely up to date - Climate change in front of our house". In this frame they are going to do a trip to the



Dachstein (3000m) to see the reduction of the glaciers in the Alps. People won't have to walk up as they will be driven by cable cars. Explanations will be given by glaciers and climate experts. There will also be interesting lectures. Judenburg is the only alpine town within the family of the Douzelage. Their town lays in a mountain chain going up to 2500m. Youngsters will get a lecture on renewable energy, wood, water and wind and a lecture of the environmental aspects of the forests in the context of global warming. And then they will discuss about the consequence of the green house effect on the ecological system of mountain streams of the area around Judenburg. They will also visit an institution dealing with energy and a wood innovation centre. There will be an excursion through Europe's highest wind and solar park at a height of 1900m. Finally they will also have the opportunity to stay for 3 nights at the International Alpine Military Training Centre, where European soldiers had been trained before going to Afghanistan.

Mrs Kober further informed that the Mayor of Judenburg, Mrs Grete Gruber, has a new project and plans to plant flowers from the Douzelage towns in Judenburg. Mrs Kober already now thanks Bellagio, Bad Kötzing and Köszeg who already have brought their plants. All delegations will be asked to bring to Granville next spring, a few plants from each town.

ACTION ALL

The president thanked Willy Schnedl and the Judenburg Douzelage organisation team and special thanks to Mrs Andrea Kober for organizing these excellent activities. He also thanked Judenburg for the excellent idea to build this Douzelage monument in their park.

KÖSZEG: The delegate from Köszeg noted that they had so many activities that it is hardly time to enumerate them all. He mentioned the "Mami" project on Major Minorities from 2-9th July, but also the project with Chojna in the frame of Youth in Action "Focus on future" etc. etc. He invited everybody to consult the summary that had been distributed, where all the activities are listed. It does not only contain the Douzelage activities but it also gives an overview on other international relationships of Köszeg.

MARSASKALA: Because Marsaskala is in the Douzelage only since last year, they had a lot of activities in their town but not in connection with the Douzelage yet. Based on the experience the delegation could have in this meeting, Marsaskala will go to initiate activities in the frame of the Douzelage next. They thanked Bellagio and Judenburg because they participated in the activities of both towns.

MEERSSEN had reported already on the reorganisation of their committee so that they didn't take the floor now to repeat again the same. The president however underlined that he got a mail from the former president Mr Karel Majoor confirming what has been said. He welcomed the new committee and expressed his hope on a good and fruitful cooperation.

NIEDERANVEN had been to the Altea General Meeting and later they produced the video of this meeting. The town of Niederanven supported this video, produced by the cameraman who was agreed to be a member of the Niederanven delegation. A copy of the video had been sent to Brussels in the frame of the Golden Stars award, in order to complete the dossier of Altea. A copy of that video had been distributed to very Douzelage town. This report had also been shown on a Luxembourg TV channel. As for the other activities a group from Niederanven (tourist office and Douzelage committee) visited Bad Kötzing for the Open air Theatre Festival to see the "Beggar Opera", which had been a wonderful performance. The association Natur- a Reesfrënn (nature and travel friends) visited Judenburg. Andrea Kober had arranged a guided tour by Willy Schnedl. The group of about 50 people were received at the Town Hall, where a glass of friendship had been offered. Niederanven thanked Judenburg for this nice gesture. In November 2009 the Municipality of Niederanven, in accordance with the Town officials and the local Douzelage committee, proud of the delivered work of the last years, took the unanimous decision not to be a candidate for the next presidency but Niederanven is ready to continue its active participation in the Douzelage as it did before. A delegate teacher from the Niederanven School attended the preparatory visit in Sherborne for the Comenius language project. In May 2010 the elderly people association Club50+ travelled to Granville where they were André Gendre made a guided tour of his town. The Harmony music band of Granville came to Niederanven to offer a concert on White Sunday, together with the local brass band "Fanfare la Réunion de Hostert". Finally the man's choir from Meerssen will visit Niederanven and give a concert in the Cultural Centre.

OXELÖSUND brought the news that last evening a "Douzelage choir" was established led by Inga from Sigulda and Sandro from Malta. They gave their first performance in the middle of the main square last night and they were very successful. ☺

The Mayor of Oxelösund, Mrs Benita Vikström, said that they were ashamed that they had not that lot of activities as other towns have, which is due to the recession they had in their town last year. The big steel plant in Oxelösund was hit and 400 people lost their jobs. This had an impact on the municipality and the taxing income so they were forced to cut expenses. Now it's a little bit brighter and economy is going upwards again. Oxelösund had a delegation in Altea and they will go to Judenburg in summer too.



There will possibly be a new problem because elections will come in autumn and Mrs Benita Vikström is not going to run again for the Mayor's office because she decided to stop and to do something else. She sees another problem when the Douzelage work is only done inside the municipality. They had had a hard time engaging people in Oxelösund. Therefore she hopes that the next mayor will take care of the Douzelage and maybe they will organize it in another way and possibly she can find a place outside the municipality and continue without being a mayor.

The president thanked Mrs Benita Vikström for the strong support she gave the Douzelage over all these years. She always was an example of an excellent and committed Mayor.

PRIENAI participated in the students exchange project with Chojna by sending 10 students and 2 teachers to this Youth in Action project. In March they had a visit of students from Chojna in the frame of the project on "Easter habits". They also took part in the preparatory meeting in Sherborne involving Zvolen (Slovakia), Prienai (Lithuania), Niederanven (Luxembourg) and Skofja Loka (Slovenia) in the Comenius project on language learning and environment. From 26-28 June 2009 a delegation of four people from Türi visited the events of the commemoration of the Millennium since the first records of the name of Lithuania in Prienai. There was a discussion about future co-operation. For 2011 a visit of Sherborne for young people is planned and the Brass Band from Türi will visit Prienai from 1-4 July 2010 and perform at Prienai Town Festival.

SHERBORNE: In addition to the very detailed activity report distributed to all delegations, Sherborne underlined that they had a series of presentations of different partner towns made their members of the committee. They had wine and food from the countries and had many people interested in this activity. They presented so far Köszeg, Preveza with Greek dancing, Oxelösund, Prienai and Bellagio. In September they will start again with Türi, Bad Kötzting and Sušice. They recommended to the other towns to take over the idea of these presentations because these really were great evenings.

Mr. Jeremy Barker had two additional remarks. First he explained that the Roman Project will rise Phoenix-like from its ashes. In response to the question of several towns, he promised that it will happen.

The second is the "Music in the Douzelage". In Sherborne they had a crushing disappointment. It was quite unexpectedly that the heads of music and the head teachers turned the proposal down but as Inga has announced, Sigulda might well take this under its wing. He expressed his hope that in the future this particular project, which is a wonderful idea, will prosper.

He further informed that he got news about the Douzelage Community Play. He reminded that the first edition of this play in Karkkila, called "Bridges", was a phenomenal event. Around 180 young actors from several towns and thousands of visitors came to the six performances. Still today people are talking about this event.

Jon Oram, who was the director of this play, which was performed in a big space with no stage where the actors and the spectators are all mixed up, has been asked to do a Community Play on a European scale.

Remembering what happened in Karkkila, his request now to the Douzelage is, to provide the young actors for the next Douzelage Community Play. It probably means that four or five are supposed from each town.

It is assumed that in principle the Douzelage will support this project which is supposed to be in 2012 or 2013 and will wide about the cost. It is founded by the Arts Council of Great Britain and will cost NOTHING.

To conclude, Mr Barker expressed his hope that as many towns as possible will send people for this event. As soon as more details will be known, they will be circulated.

He invited any towns that like to play "Boule" to come to Sherborne and play "pétangue" on their new piste.

SIGULDA: The delegate of Sigulda expressed her proudness that Sigulda is back with the Douzelage again. Last year they had elections and they have a new mayor now who is very close to the people. The financial crisis in the last few years, made it impossible for them to be more active. Luckily they have the problem under control now. In the last two years many applications for EU funds were prepared, most for infrastructural projects. Now Sigulda is coming more to culture and to tourism again. They had not too many activities in the Douzelage but what can be mentioned, is that they had a student exchange with Oxelösund with the brass band and with Preveza.

Mrs. Inga Barisa expressed her hope to see all delegates again in 2014 in Sigulda.

SUŠICE explained that all their activities have already been mentioned in the reports of all the towns speaking before; however they added that they were very glad that although they had been working very hard for preparing the general meeting and making presentations of their activities to the local public, they were able to participate in 9 Douzelage activities, i.e. the Adeps in Houffalize, "Mami" in Köszeg, Miniparliament in Bellagio, the quire exchange with Judenburg and the five Bad Kötzting.

TÜRI gave some general information on their elections in last October where they have got a new mayor too. As activities they had distributed their very complete activity list but wanted to mention that they had 10 musicians and singers of the Oisu Folk Band from Türi took part to the Festival of Estonian Music in Sherborne. They took



part in the Wilderness Camp in Bad Kötzing and had a cycling trip in the Järva County. A delegation of four people visited the commemoration of the Millennium since the first records of the name of Lithuania in Prienai. Türi had asked all Douzelage towns to participate in the youth project "Rock for Peace" in Türi but unfortunately, no town was interested in participation. They will have a group of Wessex Morris Men from Sherborne coming to visit the Türi Flower Festival and the brass band from Türi will visit Prienai to perform at the Prienai Town Festival. In exchange, the Folk dance group from Prienai will take part in the Kabala Song and dance Festival in Türi. Finally they invited the towns to participate at the yearly running race from Paide to Türi in October.

ZVOLEN mentioned that they had a teachers meeting with exhibition of posters with facts and photographs on the Douzelage towns and the association in June. In October they had a student's conference called Douzelage Day where pupils could take part in quizzes presenting Douzelage towns. In April 2 teachers and 3 children took part in the Miniparliament in Bellagio and they are looking forward to participate to the youth project in Judenburg.

IV. Election of a new President and two Vice-Presidents

Cezary Salamonczyk (Chojna) was elected President, Mike Balfour (Sherborne) and Mario Calleja were elected Vice-Presidents.

After the elections, words of thanks were expressed by
 Past president Ed Weber,
 Honorary president Jeremy Barker
 Past Vice-president Günther Pecher
 Vice-president Mario Calleja
 and Vice-president Mike Balfour.

V. Provisional Agenda for the General Meeting in Granville in Spring 2011

The Vice-mayor Gerard Leroy in his speech said that for him it's a great honour and pleasure to be a guest and a representative of the town of Granville here in Sušice. As a member of the town council he assured the delegates of the friendship and deep interest that the council and the town feel for the Douzelage.

Granville is a land of sailors, where half of the horizon is defined by the sea. It is a harbour, a land of welcome, a land of exchanges too, where men are always open-minded. That's why the European project is so familiar to the people of Granville. He called to carry off the enterprise of the Douzelage idea, a common adventure, which is in the image of Europe, tangible and accessible to all. Europe means proximity and a better understanding between people.

In the 55 years since the beginning of Europe and the 20 years of the Douzelage, we could find the determination, generosity and enterprising spirit. Carry on this enterprise and support it, is a message that the Mayor of Granville Daniel Caruhel, has asked me to pass to you. During this conference with our 24 members of the Douzelage I'm persuaded that we will share a high division of solidarity as well deep respect for our diversity. I am also convinced that we will meet in the same spirit when we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Douzelage in Granville. He thanked for joining the Granville general meeting in May 2011 by the sea to exchange European ideas that will be translated into generous actions.

André Gendre informed that they have been already working on their general meeting for a year now and that they have chosen as theme of the meeting "Voluntary activities promoting active citizenship", a European theme to raise awareness and to promote volunteering in the European Union and to increase the visibility of voluntary abilities in the EU, the men's concern being employment, social affairs, education, training, youth and citizenship.

Concerning the education theme, the theme "Security in the school and how to manage good behaviour". Granville intends to organize a European dinner but they haven't decided yet because people from Granville are used of the organisation of the European which is on Saturday and they love to come and visit the different country stoles and buy things and try to talk to the people. This could be a possibility for their people to organise the same thing because in 21004 it was very much appreciated. They also intend to have a youth workshop because it could be interesting for the financial aspect.



Concerning the visits, they will do the same visit as usual; there will be a visit of the Mont St. Michel and maybe the “Maison Dior” because there is a lot of sightseeing around Granville.

Before closing the session, a short film about the town of GRANVILLE had been shown.

VI. Education Committee Report

Report of Mr. Stuart Atkinson, the chairman of the education committee of the Douzelage.

VII. Youth-Workshop Report

Report of Mr Kevin Waterfall, chairman of the Youth-Workshop and presentation made by Jan Patek from Sušice and Hannah Phillipson from Sherborne.