

Greeting/letter to the English partner municipality regarding the continuation of the town twinning partnership following the conclusion of the Brexit transition phase

Dear friends, for decades now our cities (*Name of the municipality*) and (*Name of the municipality*) have enjoyed a very special relationship. Many ties have developed over the past (Number) years; not only between official institutions, but also between the inhabitants of both cities. Now, as in the song sung by Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman it is “time to say goodbye“.

Is it really? Absolutely. As the result of a democratic process, all of you, as citizens of the United Kingdom, must leave the EU—Europe as a political entity.

But this change in political structure does not mean that our friendship has to fade.. So it actually isn't time to say goodbye.

I am very confident that (*Name of the municipality*) and (*Name of the municipality*) will continue in their community partnership with one another no matter what the post-Brexit conditions may look like. The steering committees on both sides have already agreed to proceed with existing plans and projects.

I now recall the spirit of the partnership document: the desire for friendship and the fostering of human ties and cultural connections between citizens for mutual enrichment. I am convinced that the people of today can only solve the problems of tomorrow together. This spirit remains alive in our partnership to this day.

I think it is crucial to distinguish between mutual commitment at the municipal level and the level of “big politics”. The trusting and unique co-existence between the citizens of both nations as well as the friendships that have emerged must not be affected by the latest political events. Our goal is to expand the scope of exchange between twinned towns, for example by integrating associations, and thus to embody the spirit of international understanding as put forward the founding charter of our community partnership.

Above all, I see the future of our town twinning partnership as dependent on involving our youth and having them drive the necessary changes in our respective towns. After all, it has been shown time and again in recent years that you in (*Name of the municipality*) and we in (*Name of the municipality*) both have very similar tasks and problems. Be it city marketing or public participation, transport policy or housing construction, the integration of new citizens or environmental protection—we are united in our search for new solutions. Every local community is usually happy to receive suggestions; and we who maintain partnerships with communities in other countries know how valuable it can be to think outside the box.

As Europe and the world as a whole grows closer together, open-mindedness and tolerance are more important than ever. The development generally referred to as globalization often takes place over people's heads. Big business operates globally, and computers are networked worldwide—but where is the individual in all this?

City partnerships are an ideal forum to experience and even help shape citizens' approach to coexistence with other cultures. City partnerships offer the opportunity to get involved and to contribute to global understanding. And they offer the chance to learn many new things and to make new friends.

Even Brexit can be seen as an occasion to further intensify the partnerships between cities across Europe. Not just between (Name of the municipality) and (Name of the municipality), but between as many cities and municipalities as possible, all across the continent. In light of the UK's departure from the EU, our new motto is: "Now more than ever!"

Promoting town twinning work means promoting the creation of a European consciousness. Town twinning partnerships are the literal embodiment of the European community spirit and international understanding. Nowhere else in Europe do so many people come together, and nowhere else in Europe are so many bonds created created. The British are and will remain Europeans and important partners for us in future. In Germany alone over 550 municipalities have city partnerships with counterparts in Great Britain. Brexit only makes clearer the urgency with which these should be revitalized and expanded.

Brexit is a new experience for the EU. And it needs to stay that way! Stand up for Europe, make your voice heard and get involved. For far too long Europe's unstopability was the subject of soapbox oratory. Reality –has other ideas, however—Europe is not a sure-fire success in and of itself. This is not only demonstrated by Brexit, but also by the development of anti-European sentiment in a number of EU member states. A united Europe is not only a guarantee for growth, prosperity and stability for all of us, but also ensures the continuation of peace on our continent. This requires all of the relevant political forces, society and the economy to work together sustainably.

These beliefs will continue to determine the shape of our town twinning partnership into the future. I thank you for your commitment and wish our two cities and their inhabitants many more years of a harmonious and lively relationship. I'm already looking forward to our next meeting.