

Mayor Markus Hollemann

Dear guests,

Dear fellow citizens.

Dear friends from our twin towns.

Dear representatives of the media.

I'd like to welcome everybody here to the ceremonial act of our twinning jubilees.

Apart from these numerous guests of honour, whose presence here is a pleasure for all of us, I am proud to welcome many guests from our twin towns.

We are very pleased that all of you from far and near have come to our Kultur & Bürgerhaus in Denzlingen.

Every five years we meet here. When I say „we“ I mean the citizens from our twin towns St.Cyr sur mer, North- Hykeham, Citta della Pieve and Konstancin-Jeziorna.

Besides the citizens there are also representatives of the townhalls and the elected committees staying with us. In particular I am very pleased about the presence of so many active and former members of the twinning committees.

I do certainly not exaggerate when I say that we are unanimous in living many friendly relations. And we have to look after our relationships, our friends and live them.

All of you who are here today are Europeans. For myself, I am a professed European. I love the many different cultures, people and regions. There is so much that unites us. And yet I am allowed to ask the following question here and today: “What is Europe”?

A geographical term like Africa or Asia?

A community of values based on common ideas and thoughts of our ancestors?

A place of small states, of fights against each other and the incompetence to collude with each other?

Or at its best an economic community, a zone of interests that is gradually drifting apart?

No matter what Europe means to you personally what it can be or will be: Europe is a diverse construction with unbelievably many facets.

That is what makes Europe so wonderful, so unique and also so difficult.

However we have to emphasize one point without any ifs and buts, without any small – mindedness:

The European Union, awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, has been able to keep peace in Europe for 60 years up to now.

The European Union was a guarantee for peace and freedom, for cooperation and solidarity in Europe. And even so contrasting, opposing politicians like Helmut Kohl and Joschka Fischer agreed with that.

In my opinion it is correct when there is cooperation and solidarity, when the stronger one helps the weaker one.

I notice that many have a critical opinion of the EU institutions. I am afraid that politics in Europe has become something that is called „Cherry Picking“ in the English speaking areas. Governments look jealously upon each other, and I say it deliberately: Governments! And they take care that from their point of view no one should get too many subsidies, that uncomfortable things should be passed over to their neighbours if possible, and that some arrangements do not even last long enough to let the ink on the document dry.

That is not my understanding of cooperation between partners on eyelevel.

But: 60 years of Peace!

This is what we have to thank you all for, you all who are here today: The French, the English, the Italians, the Polish and the German people.

The father of one of my friends, a combattant of World War II once said:“ The dreadful is, that I shot at people, I would have invited for a cup of coffee, if I had met them in other circumstances!“

And it is exactly that. He did not know them. There was no personal relationship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we, the community, we the citizens, meet each other regularly. And I must admit that I am still full of admiration and joy that some friendships have been existing for decades, having started in times when the confusions of the great wars still caused a lot of tensions.

How much courage but also confidence in others must men and women have had in those times, to lay the foundation stone for today's friendships!

Europe only grows through confidence and cooperation.

That means that Europe can only grow and become strong by such friendships, relationships, meetings and festivities as we are celebrating this weekend.

Dear guests and friends: actually we would have had to put this construct upside down, so to say: put it on its feet – because only we, in the best sense of the word, the people and the representatives of the people – have the courage and the will to get involved with each other.

Neither Bruxelles nor Straßburg.

We, the citizens, we demonstrate how „Europe is living together“ partly for many years already.

We are the basis, we are those, who really live peace, freedom and democracy, respecting each other.

Many of us have been campaigning with passion and courage for a long time, knowing that our friendship remains a stable link.

Knowing this we can manage without any jealousies and resentments, crises and problems like: migration, regional conflicts, economical problems and financial crises.

Like the words in a song of the British Band „Slade“:“ You’ve got troubles of your own? No need to face them all alone....and We can ride the stormy weather if we all get out and try“.

Especially twinning between communities and twin towns are supporting this with great effort and essential inputs.

All European citizens are asked for cooperation!

Europe is and will remain our future!

And we are Europe!

Therefore my friends let us join in building this Europe. If we citizens do not stand together, we will lose parts of the European people. And so we will lose our common future. This should not and must not happen.

Yes, there are many questions and there are many different views. But when we tackle the tasks together, the tasks that life confronts us with, that Europe confronts us with when we cooperate intensively and communicate, maybe having a cup of coffee together, then nobody will be alone.

I am convinced on the basis of our friendship we will find the right answers, because together we are strong. And we can and want to learn from each other. I have experienced that many times. We can take up impulses and concrete experiences and transfer them to our and other communities,

For example, I remember the idea of the „open bookshelf“. This or something similar we can now see in our twin towns. This exchange between partners and friends is exceedingly important. It creates confidence.

We twinned communities are the meeting places, we keep alive the spirit of a common house of Europe. And those who have been guests in one of the twin towns as children or as young people who have experienced the lively exchange between the communities, will as adults stand up for the European idea and defend it. I am sure about that.

Ladies and Gentlemen and dear friends let us continue building a strong and peaceful Europe, that is at the same time showing solidarity as well.

But as the saying is: Those who work should also celebrate. Therefore let us have a peaceful, lively and versatile Europafest, let's party together!

Meet friends, get to know new friends, socialize with new people, enjoy good conversations.

Thank you very much dear guests for your presence and your activities.

Thanks to the orchestra of the Akkordeonverein conducted by Ronny Fugmann.

A big thank you goes to the many helpers of clubs and committees, led by Franz-Karl Schmatzer, and the local administration.

Last but not least I thank the organizing team with Rainer Steigert and Jürgen Sillmann.

Let me finish this speech with a quotation by our late Chancellor Helmut Kohl, which expresses quite well what we twinned communities strive for.

He said:“ We want to create a peaceful Europe. Only a Europe that is strong enough to secure peace on our continent can make an active contribution to secure peace in the world.“

There remains nothing to be added.