



// MANNHEIM INTERNATIONAL //

REPORT BY THE OFFICE FOR EU AFFAIRS AND
GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY 2019/20



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A WARM WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

Dear readers,
Dear citizens of Mannheim,

This activity report of the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability of the City of Mannheim is marked, in particular, by the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic. We have long been aware that global issues, trends and challenges influence our actions at a local level. However, the pandemic has made it clear that global challenges do not stop at national borders and can only be dealt with and resolved through coordinated international cooperation.

Given this conclusion, it is only logical that coping with the consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic has clearly shaped the international activities of the City of Mannheim. Our main aim was to compensate as best we could for the personal encounters that were no longer possible between the citizens of Mannheim and our partner cities. Therefore, the concept of a virtual school exchange was developed, with plenty of creativity, and was well received by both the pupils and the teachers involved. We were also able to help our partner cities by providing personal protective equipment and organising virtual professional exchanges as part of the response to the pandemic. Thus, despite all the negative effects, the pandemic also revealed just how strong the bond is that connects the City of Mannheim with its international partners.

Dr Peter Kurz

Mayor of the City of Mannheim



FOREWORD

Dear readers,

Every two years, we take the opportunity to present this activity report to you. It is important for us to inform you about the projects that the City of Mannheim is implementing in the disciplines of partnership work, Europe and municipal development policy. In this report, we have introduced the section "City Diplomacy" for the first time. Now, you may be asking yourselves: Isn't diplomacy something for diplomats? In fact, the Federal Foreign Office has had its own department for urban diplomacy for some time. However, the concept of urban diplomacy itself has a much longer history.

In 2008, the first World Conference on City Diplomacy took place in The Hague. In the years since, it has become increasingly clear that tackling global challenges requires not only international cooperation, but also the implementation of measures at a local level. Against this backdrop, today we understand urban diplomacy as the cultivation of external relations within the framework of a) bilateral cooperation with other cities, b) cooperation with international organisations and c) participation in international city networks.

The entire team of the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability hopes you enjoy reading this report. Feel free to contact us if you want to learn more about the international city of Mannheim.

David Linse

Head of the Department of International Affairs, Europe and Protocol
and of the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability



// FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD //



In 1957, Mannheim entered into a partnership with the Welsh port city of Swansea – thus commencing our first city partnership. Two years later, a second twin city, Toulon, was added. Former wartime enemies thus became not only allies, but also friends over the decades. To date, nine more twin cities, two friendship cities and four cooperation cities have been added to the list. Mannheim's network now spans the entire globe.

The challenging “Corona year” of 2020, in particular, proved how resilient and, at the same time, how immensely important such partnerships are in times of crisis. As an alternative to face-to-face meetings, which had to be reduced to a minimum with the outbreak of the pandemic, digital formats quickly emerged in the city networks that continued to facilitate exchange. And the willingness to help and provide mutual support within the networks and partnerships has also been impressive.

The Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability had the task of creating the framework conditions to facilitate exchanges between cities and encounters between citizens – thus fulfilling its core task of promoting civic encounters and supporting the goals and projects that bring city twinning to life, even in difficult times.

// GOOD FRIENDS FOR 60 YEARS /

In 2019, Mannheim and Toulon celebrated the 60th anniversary of their city twinning – a special year for Franco-German friendship. In this anniversary year, a large number of meetings and events took place in both cities, not only to celebrate the long-standing partnership, but also to further intensify the friendship.

On the occasion of the anniversary, Christian Specht, first deputy mayor of the City of Mannheim, travelled to Toulon with an official delegation of representatives from education, culture and start-up promotion. “After 60 years of city twinning, it is a special concern for Mannheim to further deepen the connection and friendship between our two cities with new ideas and projects,” Specht emphasised.

Intensive talks took place between NEXT Mannheim and the local start-up centre TVT Innovation, in order to expand the Franco-German exchange in the area of start-up promotion. Like Mannheim, the City of Toulon supports start-ups in the cultural and creative industries in particular – an ideal starting point for cooperation with the Mannheim start-up scene. These plans were put into practice just a few months later, when representatives from Toulon’s start-up centre travelled to Mannheim for a return visit.

Start-up scene benefits from city partnership

The aim of this form of cooperation is to facilitate access to the French and German markets for young companies. An exchange of experts and the joint acquisition of EU funding are also planned. The commitment was established by way of a joint declaration of intent. The initiative for exchange between the start-up scenes of Mannheim and Toulon thus makes an important contribution to the economic development of the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region, especially by creating international market access in the field of Industry 4.0, as well as the cultural and creative industries.

A concert at Palais Neptune

In the anniversary year, 77 young musicians from the Mannheim Music School’s Youth Symphony Orchestra (JSOM) travelled to Toulon for the first time to perform a concert and congratulate the twin city with a moving performance. The now-retired deputy mayor of Mannheim for education, youth and health, Dr. Ulrike Freundlieb, and the director of the Mannheim Music School, Bjoern Strangmann, accompanied the celebrations in Toulon in an official capacity.



The Youth Symphony Orchestra Mannheim enthused the French audience in Toulon

The concert took place in the Palais Neptune, the city’s Congress Centre. Around 450 guests accepted the invitation of the City of Toulon and celebrated the musical talents of the Mannheim orchestra under the direction of Jan-Paul Reinke with standing ovations. During their stay, the young musicians also had the opportunity to explore the twin city.

A guest at the French Market

Another highlight of the anniversary year was the annual French Market on the “Kapuzinerplanken” – a special pedestrian zone in the City of Mannheim – where Toulon was represented with its own stand for the first time. The tourist information office in Toulon presented the advantages of the city and the region as an attractive tourist destination. A group of vocational students from gastronomy and tourism from the Lycée Hôtelier Anne-Sophie PIC – a long-standing partner school of the Justus-von-Liebig School – were also guests. The students offered a culinary tasting of French specialities.

During the numerous meetings, the participants from both cities discussed many other concrete initiatives and projects. Even 60 years after its establishment, the city twinning thus offers a framework for injecting additional energy into the Franco-German friendship.

// mannheim.de/toulon



Presentation of the Medal of Honour of the City of Toulon to First Deputy Mayor Specht on the occasion of his visit to Toulon

// CHINA IN FOCUS //

As the only German city with two Chinese twin cities, Mannheim is a pioneer of the development of German-Chinese friendship. A wide range of projects and events were on the programme in 2019/20.

At the beginning of 2020, the City of Mannheim and the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Frankfurt hosted the third Baden-Württemberg-Chinese Spring Festival in the Baroque Palace. Under the patronage of Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut, the state's minister of economics, labour and housing, the celebration was dedicated to the exchange of representatives from politics, business, science, sports and culture. The Spring Festival, which is also known as "Chinese New Year", is the most important time in the Chinese calendar – a time for family and friendship. The Baden-Württemberg-Chinese Spring Festival is, therefore, a symbol of appreciation for those citizens of Chinese descent living here.

In his speech, Mayor Peter Kurz underlined the economic significance of China. Kurz noted that the country is still an important sales market for key German industries, and is also of great importance for companies in both Mannheim and Baden-Württemberg. The mayor also emphasised that there are common challenges: "International politics is characterised by growing mistrust and the questioning of a multilateral, rule-based order. China has repeatedly spoken out in favour of the principle of multilateralism. Against this background, events like this one contribute to fostering understanding and trust." The City of Mannheim has maintained close relations with Zhenjiang and Qingdao since the mid-1990s. "Baden-Württemberg and the City of Mannheim, in particular, play an important role in German-Chinese relations." Sun Congbin, Consul General of the People's Republic of China confirmed this point and noted, "The Spring Festival is the ideal platform to further deepen our friendship."

Expansion of the City of Mannheim's China activities

Back in May 2017, Mannheim was selected to participate in the EU's International Urban Cooperation (IUC) programme. The city was paired with Chongqing, one of the largest cities in the world. The IUC, which involves 140 cities worldwide – including metropolises such as New York, Yokohama and Sao Paulo – is the world's largest cooperation programme between European and non-European cities. IUC enables cities to find solutions related to issues including transport, air quality, energy and migration. As a result of the cooperation, Mannheim and Chongqing established a direct cargo train connection between the two cities in 2018.

As part of this cooperation effort, the City of Mannheim also organised the European-Chinese Business & Innovation Forum together with the European Commission and with the support of the Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW).



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In June 2019, experts from politics, science and business discussed the prospects for European-Chinese economic relations under the title "Trends and Perspectives between Cooperation and Competition". Mannheim is the only city in Germany to have held such a forum within the framework of EU cooperation.

"It is important that cities become internationally visible through the IUC project," Kurz explained. "This is because the question of how we organise our cities is crucial for sustainability." According to the mayor, the drivers of progress must be innovation and sustainability in equal measure. Precisely because these are different countries with different cultures and approaches, mutual exchange is essential for an enhanced understanding, Kurz concluded. The economic forum also marked the end of the first project phase between the cities of Mannheim and Chongqing within the framework of the IUC programme.

Opening of the Mannheim-Rhein-Neckar-Chongqing-Center

In 2020, the successful cooperation between Mannheim and Chongqing entered its next project phase. An important milestone for this was the establishment of the Mannheim-Rhein-Neckar-Chongqing-Center with locations in Mannheim and Chongqing, founded by Mannheim-based MEI WEN TI GmbH and Chongqing Share Zhihe Enterprise Management Co. Ltd. The centre was inaugurated at the Smart Cities Summit in Chongqing in September 2020. As a privately funded platform supported by the public authorities of both cities, the centre aims to promote cooperation in the fields of trade, technology, innovation, culture, education and tourism between Chongqing and Mannheim and the Rhine-Neckar region, and to strengthen international cooperation with China.



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WITH QINGDAO AND ZHENJIANG MANNHEIM HAS TWO CHINESE PARTNER CITIES SIMULTANEOUSLY. THE CITY ALSO COOPERATES WITH CHONGQING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EU IUC PROGRAMME.



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BRIDGES TO CHINA

The Society for German-Chinese Friendship in the Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region (Gesellschaft für deutsch-chinesische Freundschaft Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar e. V.) (GDCF MRN) is a non-profit association that sees itself as a bridge builder between Germany and China and promotes relations between the German and Chinese people in all areas – in the spirit of international understanding and friendship between peoples. The thematic focuses of the association include the areas of business, culture, education, health, sports and youth exchange.

// For more information: www.gdcf-mrn.com



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»We're opening the door to China«

Jia Song heads the China Desk of the City of Mannheim. She answered some questions about opportunities, hurdles and exchange with China.

» Ms Song, you have headed the China Desk of the City of Mannheim since August 2020. What are the most important tasks of the desk?

« As the China Desk, we are responsible for strategy and business-related contacts with China. Our task is to maintain and expand contacts with China, in general, and with our partner cities, in particular. At the same time, we are the first point of contact for local companies interested in China as a market and location. We help smaller companies and start-ups, in particular, to open the door to China and facilitate their market entry there.

» In your experience, what are the hurdles for smaller companies when it comes to China?

« The biggest hurdles are misunderstandings, prejudices and reservations – on both sides. The western media are very critical of China, which naturally has a negative effect on the image of China in this country. This means that reservations often exist even before a company can experience China in the first place.

» How can such reservations be countered?

« We want to counteract this by promoting personal contacts and encounters. For example, we are planning an exchange between entrepreneurs from Mannheim and our partner city Qingdao. In addition, we want to offer more information events at which German companies (that have already successfully established themselves in China) can report on their experiences. Before the Coronavirus pandemic, we also had the opportunity to represent our great city at Chinese trade fairs and events, and to present innovations and services of local companies. All of this should help to break down prejudices and also assist smaller companies to overcome their trepidation for entering China.

- 1 Artistic performance at the Baden-Württemberg Chinese Spring Festival
- 2 Mayor Kurz and Sun Congbin, consul general of the People's Republic of China in Frankfurt, at the Spring Festival
- 3 Panel discussion in the framework of the European-Chinese Business and Innovation Forum
- 4 Inauguration of the Mannheim-Rhein-Neckar-Chongqing-Center in Chongqing
- 5 Jia Song is the central point of contact of the City of Mannheim for exchange with China

// A CELEBRATION OF PARTNERSHIP /

Toulon, Chişinău and Haifa – Mannheim celebrated the anniversary of three twinned cities in 2019. To mark the occasion, the city invited visitors to the “Day of the Twin Cities” to Mannheim, where they enjoyed an exciting programme with many stories, activities, and conversations. One thing became clear: City twinning thrives on exchange, relationships and the commitment of the citizens.

Mannheim has been twinned with the French city of Toulon for 60 years, with the Moldovan capital Chişinău for 30 years and with the Israeli city of Haifa since 2009. The three twinning anniversaries and 30 years of friendship with El Viejo in Nicaragua were celebrated at the Day of the Twin Cities with an event for the citizens together with the city twinning association Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e.V.

At this event, which took place in November 2019 in Mannheim, visitors were treated to a diverse programme on the topic of “City Twinning”. Those who were interested were able to find out about the history of the partnerships in an exhibition, where schools and associations highlighted their twinning activities. The exhibition was complemented by presentations and discussions. At the end of the twinning day, there was a panel discussion that focused not only on the special stories of the three twin cities, but also on the importance of twinning at this time.

First Deputy Mayor Christian Specht began his speech by highlighting the political and historical context in which the first city twinning arrangements were established, emphasising the important role of the Council of European Municipalities (CEM) and the later Council of European Municipalities and Regions, today an association of more than 100,000 local authorities from 39 European countries.

Specht then went into detail about the individual twinning arrangements. Mannheim’s partnership with Toulon was one of the pioneers of Franco-German cooperation. This partnership remains very dynamic to this day, said Specht. Within the framework of the partnership with Chişinău, the foundation stone was laid for an innovation in city twinning: the establishment of the first German-Moldovan-Ukrainian municipal cooperation project.

The partnership with Haifa, Specht continued, was largely the result of the commitment of volunteers and citizens. Today, cooperation in economic and scientific disciplines is also at the top of the agenda. Dr Einat Kalisch-Rotem, Mayor of the City of Haifa, emphasised in her speech that the cities’ international alliances offer opportunities and possibilities to work on their progress and development. The City of Haifa’s official relations with Germany



The official representatives of the city of Haifa, Chişinău and Toulon, as well as First Deputy Mayor Specht, on the occasion of the twinning day

date back to 1968. However, the connection existed far before the official partnership. In the 1930s, many Jews fled to Haifa. There is now an extensive network of German-Israeli projects in the fields of education, culture, research and business.

Victor Chironda, deputy mayor of Chişinău, explained that the partnership with Mannheim is important not only because of its longevity, but also because Chişinău is currently in a process of change. Here, there are opportunities to learn from Mannheim and plan further projects together.

Jacqueline Martin-Lombard, city councillor and delegate for international relations of the city of Toulon, emphasised the importance of friendship between cities in a global world. Despite linguistic and cultural differences, the friendship between Mannheim and Toulon has developed in an exemplary manner. Both cities are comparable in size and characterised by dynamic economic development: “The more we stand together, the stronger we are,” Martin-Lombard explained.

Sara Höflich de Duque took part in the panel discussion as a representative of United Cities and Local Governments, a network of local and regional governments and their associations. She praised the diversity of connections in Mannheim. At the same time, she emphasised the role of cities in a global world: Whether from the perspective of inclusion, culture, solidarity, digitalisation or climate change – all policy fields, said Höflich de Duque, always play out at a municipal level. She also emphasised that city twinning depends, above all, on the commitment of the citizens. Therefore, it is important to make the contributions of the cities, the municipalities and the commitment of their citizens visible. “It is precisely for this reason that events such as this City Twinning Day in Mannheim are so important,” Höflich de Duque concluded.

// mannheim.de/tag-partnerstaedte



The Mannheim delegation as guests in Riesa

// 900 YEARS OF RIESA //

As early as 1988, one year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Mannheim and the City of Riesa, in Saxony, established official relations and have since initiated numerous projects and an intensive exchange. Given these close ties, a Mannheim delegation, led by City Councillor Helen Heberer, was invited to the 900th anniversary of Riesa. The highlight of the meeting with guests from China, France, United Kingdom, Italy, Poland and the USA, was a ceremony with Riesa's philharmonic orchestra. Musicians from all twin cities were invited under the motto "music connects". Mannheim was represented musically by a trio from the Oriental Music Academy Mannheim. "Close cooperation and the cultivation of friendships strengthen cohesion in Germany and at an international level," emphasised Councillor Heberer. The delegation also used the stay in Riesa to explore further opportunities for cooperation and to establish contacts with representatives of culture, politics and business.

// mannheim.de/riesa

// VIRTUAL EXHIBITION //



Selected drawings by Mannheim children



"Staying healthy together" – under this motto, Mannheim's Canadian twin city of Windsor presented a children's art exhibition in 2020, which was held online in light of corona-related restrictions. Children from Windsor and its twelve twin cities were invited to submit pictures of their experience with the pandemic. In addition to Mannheim, children from Changchun (China), Fujisawa (Japan), Gunsan (South Korea) and Saltillo (Mexico) took part in the campaign. A total of 18 pictures by Mannheim children were selected. In a video message, Mayor Kurz thanked the children, as well as the Canadian organisers, for the idea of making the perspectives of children around the globe on the pandemic tangible and, despite Corona, successfully creating a stimulating exchange across borders. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent restrictions, the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the twinning between Mannheim and Windsor, which was planned in connection with the art exhibition, had to be cancelled.

// mannheim.de/windsor

// VISIT BY THE LORD MAYOR //



Lord Mayor Black signs the Golden Book of the City of Mannheim

The visit of the Lord Mayor of Mannheim's Welsh twin city Swansea, who is newly elected every year, is a fixed programme item in the calendar of the City of Mannheim. In December 2019, Lord Mayor Councillor Peter Black was a guest of Mannheim. The focus of the visit was an exchange on comprehensive urban developments in both cities. Black was impressed by the development of the Glückstein Quarter and, during an official reception hosted by Deputy Mayor Michael Grötsch, discovered more about the Federal Garden Show 2023 and the conversion zones that became available in 2015 with the withdrawal of the US Army. Swansea is also pursuing holistic urban development. The city centre is currently being upgraded, with a focus on cultural urban development. Another important project is the beach promenade, which is to be made more accessible and usable in a variety of ways. The regular visits of the Lord Mayor are made possible by the company ABB. The company maintains close contacts with Swansea through a trainee programme. ABB apprentices have been undertaking internships in Swansea lasting several weeks since 1998. Around 600 apprentices have now become ambassadors of the Welsh coastal city in Germany.

// mannheim.de/swansea



For the first time, the Bach-Gymnasium is organising a virtual school exchange

// VIRTUAL STUDENT EXCHANGE /

School exchanges are an important component of Mannheim's international commitment. Given that meetings that were planned for 2020 could not take place due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the idea of a virtual exchange was born.

>>The students were thrilled<<

Petra Jenny Farian teaches French, Spanish and Latin at the Johann Sebastian Bach-Gymnasium (a Grammar School). In November 2020, she accompanied her school's virtual student exchange with its partner school in Salon-de-Provence in the south of France.

>> Ms Farian, how did the virtual exchange come about?

<< The Institut Français approached us with this idea. I found it interesting and contacted the German teacher at our partner school in Salon-de-Provence – and she also liked the idea. And then we both looked for volunteers among our pupils. During the exchange, there were two groups of 18 students each, which was barely any smaller than the numbers that make up a regular exchange.

>> What did the virtual exchange look like in concrete terms?

<< The concept was developed by two speakers from the Franco-German Youth Office (DFJW) on behalf of the Institut Français and on the initiative of the City of Mannheim. The plan was for the pupils to meet daily for one and a half hours in a virtual room for a week. At the beginning, there were games to get to know each other and small tasks, such as introducing a favourite object. Afterwards, the students worked together in smaller groups on various topics in a playful way and with the relevant online tools.

>> And what was the students' response?

<< The students were all enthusiastic about the virtual exchange and all said that they would participate in such a format again, even if it could not replace a real exchange.

>> Can you imagine such a format complementing a regular exchange in the future?

<< I am sure of it. For example, I could imagine an accessible virtual exchange room as a form of free learning time where students get to know each other before an exchange in person, and can then keep in touch afterwards.

"It is a fascinating and extremely important experience to meet peers from other countries. This must also now be possible for the pupils in another form," Christian Specht, first deputy mayor of the City of Mannheim and chairman of the Institut Français, commented on the situation. Specht went on to say that the cultivation of city twinning should not be neglected, despite the Coronavirus pandemic. It is part of our common peace project.

Against this backdrop, the idea of continuing the Franco-German school exchanges in a virtual format was born at an early stage. It was important to enable intercultural encounters, despite the disruptions of the pandemic. With this project idea, the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability of the City of Mannheim approached the Institut Français Mannheim and brought it on board as a project partner at an early stage. The Ministry of Justice and of Europe Baden-Württemberg, as well as the Franco-German Youth Office provided project funds, so that a pilot project with two Mannheim schools could be implemented at the end of 2020. Several groups of pupils from the Bach-Gymnasium and the Lise-lotte-Gymnasium in Mannheim met virtually with their partner classes from Salon-de-Provence and Remiremont.

Given the Coronavirus situation at the beginning of 2021, the virtual Franco-German school exchange was continued – with the participation of other schools from the region. "The exchange format is also an opportunity to try out new forms of intercultural communication," Deputy Mayor Specht emphasised. "Of course, virtual exchanges will never replace face-to-face encounters. But as an educational tool, it is also conceivable for the time after the pandemic."

Further information on applying for grants for virtual exchanges and civic encounters can be found at:

// mannheim.de/zuschuesse-international



Online exchange in place of an in-person encounter with the French partner school

// PREMIERE IN BYDGOSZCZ //

In May 2019, a school exchange took place for the first time between Mannheim's Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium and the M. Kopernik-Liceum II in the Polish twin city of Bydgoszcz. This exchange was made possible in part by the support of the Chairman of the German-Polish Society Mannheim-Ludwigshafen, Piotr Pilkowski. Five pupils and two teachers from the Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium Grammar School, who had prepared intensively for the exchange, spent a week with Polish host families. It was a special honour that the German group was received in City Hall by the vice president of the City of Bydgoszcz, Ivona Waszkiwicz. After this official welcome, an exciting programme awaited the exchange group: The German pupils were able to take part in lessons at the Liceum. The group also visited the City of Bydgoszcz, with its numerous sights and attractions, went on an excursion to Gdansk and visited the Stutthof concentration camp. The exchange week, according to concluding remarks by all participants on the German and Polish sides, was a meaningful and unique opportunity to talk about the culture, customs and traditions of both countries. The pupils and teachers exchanged experiences, established contacts and gained new friends, so that all participants are already looking forward to the return visit of the Polish delegation.

// ANNIVERSARY VISIT //

Since 1989, the Werner-von-Siemens School in Mannheim has maintained a school partnership with the French Lycée Professionnel G. Cisson Toulon. To mark this anniversary, the headmaster and eight teaching colleagues from the French partner school travelled to Mannheim in April 2019. During an official welcome at Mannheim's City Hall, City Councillor Bernd Kupfer conveyed the congratulations of the City of Mannheim in his speech and thanked both sides for their fantastic commitment. Afterwards, the French delegation was received with equal ceremony at the Werner-von-Siemens School. During the visit, German and French colleagues had the opportunity to develop new ideas for the annual school exchanges. The focus of the stay was also on facilitating an exchange concerning the differences between the German and the French education system. In this way, the French guests had the opportunity to get to know the German pedagogical approach. In order to gain insight into the practice of vocational training, the French teachers also visited selected training companies. The stay was rounded off by a series of visits that allowed the French delegation to discover the City of Mannheim and the Rhine-Neckar region. In addition to a walk in Luisenpark and a guided tour of the city, the programme also included a hike along the city's famous "Bergstrasse" rural district.

SPONSORED ENCOUNTERS WITH MANNHEIM'S PARTNER AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES 2019/2020

Bydgoszcz

Poland

// The German-Polish Society Mannheim-Ludwigshafen: Meeting with artists from Bydgoszcz in Mannheim (May 2019)
// Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium: Student exchange with II Liceum M. Kopernika in Bydgoszcz (May/June 2019) and in Mannheim (December 2019)

Chişinău

Republic of Moldova

// Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium: Student exchange with the Lyceum Mihaol Kogalniceanu in Chişinău (May 2019)

Haifa

Israel

// Lessing-Gymnasium: Student exchange with the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa (March 2019 and February/March 2020) and in Mannheim (December 2019)
// Friedrich-List-Schule Mannheim: Student exchange with Kiryat Haim High School in Mannheim (July 2019) and in Haifa (October/November 2019)

Toulon

France

// Ludwig-Frank-Gymnasium Mannheim: Student exchange with the Collège Maurice Ravel in Mannheim (March 2019)
// Lessing-Gymnasium: Student exchange with the Lycée Dumont d'Urville in Mannheim (March 2019) and in Toulon (March/April 2019 and January 2020)
// Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium: Student exchange with Collège Bon Accueil in Toulon (March 2019) and in Mannheim (December 2019)
// Justus-von-Liebig-Schule: Student exchange with the Lycée des Métiers de l'Hôtellerie et du Tourisme de Toulon in Toulon (March 2019)
// Werner-von-Siemens-Schule: Student exchange with the Lycée P. Georges Cisson in Toulon (April 2019) and in Mannheim (April/May 2019)
// Johann-Sebastian-Bach Gymnasium: Student exchange with the Lycée Bonaparte and the Lycée Rouvière in Mannheim (May 2019)
// Parish of St. Lioba: Exchange with the Parish Ste. Thérèse in Toulon (May/June 2019)
// Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e. V.: Citizens' Meeting in Toulon (September 2019)
// Singkreis Seckenheim e.V.: Meeting with the choir "A Cœur Joie" in Toulon (October 2019).

Commitment for Europe

// IGMH: Celebration of the certification as "Ambassador School for the European Parliament" (January 2020)

// MANNHEIM: EUROPEAN CITY //



Mannheim is committed to Europe and benefits from the European Union in a variety of ways. The Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability promotes involvement in European networks, facilitates EU project work by acquiring funding and makes municipal concerns visible in Brussels.

The focus of the City of Mannheim's European policy commitment in 2019 and 2020 was on urban transformation, mobility and climate change, as well as on current issues surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic. For example, the City of Mannheim organised a European sustainability conference as part of the German Council Presidency and, together with other European cities and regions, sent a clear signal on climate protection with the "Mannheim Message". Together with 15 other German EUROCITIES members, the city also coordinated the representation of interests vis-à-vis the German government in order to obtain unbureaucratic access to European reconstruction funds after the Coronavirus crisis.

In order for a municipality to be able to react to European legislative initiatives at an early stage and to help shape the political agendas of the EU, a high level of competence in EU matters must be available within the city administration. The city of Mannheim has recognised this, subsequently developing and successfully implementing a training programme entitled "Strengthening European Capability" for employees.

// THINKING EUROPEAN //

The EU is also becoming increasingly important for the work of local authorities: Around 70 per cent of decisions taken at EU level have an impact on municipal issues. The City of Mannheim has reacted to this and offers its employees a training programme to get them ready for all matters and issues concerning the EU and Europe.

The numbers are impressive: An estimated 85 per cent of legal acts in Germany are based on European regulations. The importance of Europe, or more precisely the EU, has also increased continuously for the Mannheim city administration in recent years. The city administration implements European law within its administrative work, it participates in numerous EU funding programmes and is involved in European networks, such as EUROCITIES.

Against this background, the Department of International Affairs, Europe and Protocol has developed a training programme together with the city's Department of Organisation and Personnel. Under the title of "Strengthening European Capability", municipal employees can build on and deepen their knowledge of Europe and the EU in all areas. The training series comprises a total of three theoretical modules, which culminate in a practical module in the form of a study trip to Brussels. The first round of training, which took place from 12 October to 13 November 2020, was attended by 18 staff members from different municipal departments. Within the framework of the theory modules, course participants acquired sound knowledge regarding the functioning of European institutions and gained in-depth insight into the EU funding programmes relevant for Mannheim. The theoretical knowledge was imparted by employees of the Department of International Affairs, Europe and Protocol, as well as external EU experts

The first seminar took place as a face-to-face event in the council chamber of the City of Mannheim and was continued virtually thereafter due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The study trip to Brussels, which has been postponed to 2021, will focus on visiting the European institutions located there. In addition, the course participants will have the opportunity to get to know their "professional counterpart" in the EU Commission and the EUROCITIES network in person.

// mannheim.de/europa



Part of the Europe training also involves a study trip to Brussels

THE CITY OF MANNHEIM HAS DEVELOPED A TRAINING PROGRAMME ENTITLED "STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN CAPABILITY", IN WHICH MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES CAN DEEPEN THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE EU AND EUROPE.



Intensive exchange between the municipal participants within the framework of the training course

// FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE //

“Mannheim 2020”, the 9th European Conference of Sustainable Cities and Towns, focused on the social, economic and cultural challenges of sustainability and climate neutrality. The City of Mannheim co-hosted the conference, which was organised by the city network ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.



The participating cities and municipalities jointly called for ambitious targets to be set for the European and global framework, in order to further strengthen sustainability and climate protection. The focus was on the European Green Deal and the New Leipzig Charter.

The three-day conference, which took place online from 30 September to 2 October 2020, provided a platform for local decision-makers to share knowledge and insights, and to interact with a wide range of stakeholders working towards a better future for Europe's cities and towns. Participants had the opportunity to learn about the progress made in Europe in the fight against climate change, and to familiarise themselves with concrete concepts of those municipalities that are leading the way in the field of sustainability. At the same time, they discussed alternative economic models and the central role of digitalisation in all change processes.

In addition to panel discussions with representatives from European cities and the European Commission, as well as presentations by researchers and non-governmental organisations, participants had the opportunity to learn about new tools and specific solutions to meet the challenges on the ground in praxis-oriented workshops. The topics ranged from urban mobility and the energy transition, to socially sustainable public procurement and the circular economy for plastic, construction and organic waste.

Mannheim Message

As a concrete result of the conference, participating cities and municipalities agreed on the joint adoption of the “Mannheim Message”. It is the cities’ response to the European Green Deal. The signatory cities, regions, organisations and individuals confirm their willingness to support the European climate goals with Local Green Deals. “Not only Mannheim, but many European cities are committed to the goals of the European Green Deal. This is done in the knowledge that many of the necessary measures have to be implemented in the cities,” Mannheim’s Mayor Peter Kurz noted

during the adoption of the Mannheim Message. “At the core of the Mannheim Message is, therefore, the statement that cities will adopt and implement their own Local Green Deals. In doing so, cities are once again taking on a pioneering role.” Against this background, the City of Mannheim has already set up its own office to develop and implement a Local Green Deal for Mannheim in the future.

// mannheim.de/green-deal

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

The European Green Deal is the growth strategy presented by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for a sustainable and equitable transition to a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The Green Deal aims to implement the environmental and climate goals of the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 on the European continent, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent by 2030 and to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.



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- 1 Mayor Peter Kurz speaks at the ICLEI conference in Mannheim
- 2 Second European Summit of EUROCITIES Mayors in Brussels 2019
- 3 First Deputy Mayor Specht at the EUROCITIES Mobility Forum
- 4 EUROCITIES Meeting of the Mobility Forum in Karlsruhe
- 5 Mayor Peter Kurz at the AdR Meeting in Brussels



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// EUROCITIES /

In 2019 and 2020, the City of Mannheim once again expanded its involvement in the European city network EUROCITIES. Mayor Peter Kurz participated in the second Mayors' Summit 2019 in Brussels. At the annual meeting in November 2020, during a panel session with Maroš Šefčovič, European Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Foresight, he called for cities to be given greater consideration in the distribution of European funds in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic and for their central role in combating the pandemic to be recognised. Mannheim's First Deputy Mayor Christian Specht also represented this position at an exchange between the Forum Chairs of EUROCITIES and several EU Commissioners: "Large cities like Mannheim fought at the forefront of the Coronavirus crisis and showed how solidarity within Europe works. But they were also particularly affected by the pandemic – which is why they should not be considered last in the economic reconstruction process, but rather need direct access to European reconstruction funds."

// mannheim.de/eurocities

// MOBILITY FORUM /

Road safety, electric scooters and infrastructure for alternative mobility – the topics that characterised First Deputy Mayor Christian Specht's chairmanship of the EUROCITIES Mobility Forum from September 2018 to November 2020 were diverse. At the 2019 Forum meeting, Specht emphasised Europe's pioneering role in the fight against climate change: "Mannheim is also facing significant challenges here, and we are already implementing comprehensive support measures for a change in mobility behaviour with the Model City Mannheim." However, the city administration is dependent on European directives and regulations, which can only be aligned with local needs together with the European cities. Specht also represented EUROCITIES at the Decision Makers Summit of the European Urban Mobility Days in a panel session with Adina Vălean, EU Commissioner for Transport, on the topic "How do we imagine urban mobility in 2050?"

// COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS /

According to estimates, around 70 per cent of all European laws have an impact on cities and municipalities. This is why the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has an important role to play: It is the institutional representation of cities and regions in the European legislative process. Dr Peter Kurz was the only German mayor to sit on the CoR from May 2018 to January 2020, representing around 200 cities and nearly 53 million inhabitants. The CoR is made up of elected representatives of local and regional authorities from all 27 member states. As the influence of European legislation on cities is growing every day, Dr Kurz has been particularly active in his role in promoting the interests of cities.

// WORLDWIDE NETWORK //

The City of Mannheim currently maintains relations with a total of eleven twin cities, two friendship cities and four cooperation partners.

In addition to the traditional partnerships with cities in France and the United Kingdom, Mannheim has expanded its network in recent years, with development partnerships taking hold in the Global South.



/ TWIN CITIES

**BERLIN
CHARLOTTENBURG-
WILMERSDORF**
Germany
343,592 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1962

BYDGOSZCZ
Poland
345,754 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1991

CHISINAU
Republic of Moldova
532,513 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1989

HAIFA
Israel
285,316 Inhabitants
Twin city since 2009

KLAIPEDA
Lithuania
157,350 Inhabitants
Twin city since 2002

QINGDAO
China
9,204,000 Inhabitants
Twin city since 2016

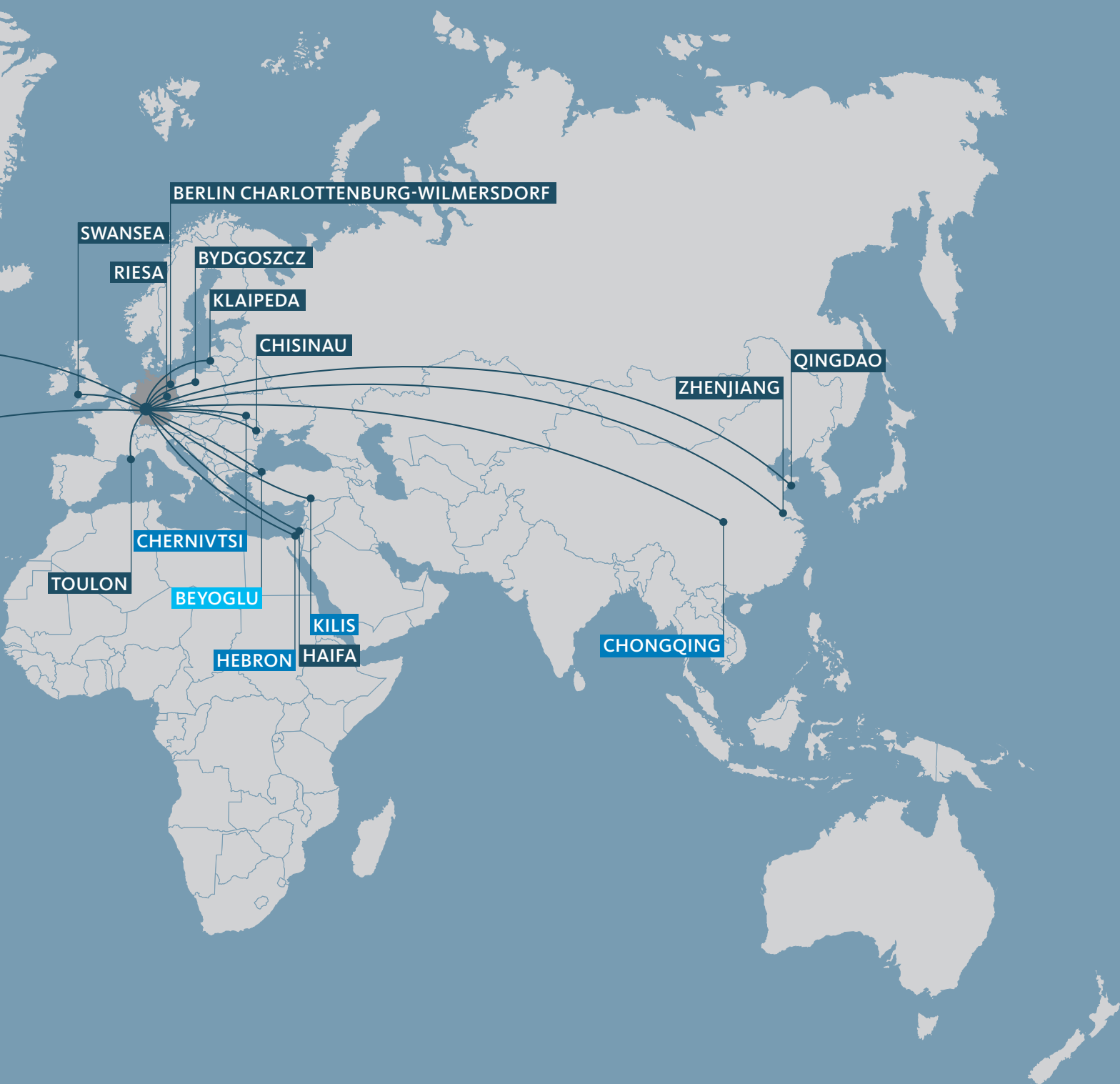
RIESA
Germany
30,364 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1988

SWANSEA
United Kingdom
247,000 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1957

TOULON
France
171,643 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1959

WINDSOR
Canada
217,188 Inhabitants
Twin city since 1980

ZHENJIANG
China
3,113,384 Inhabitants
Twin city since 2004



/ FRIENDSHIP CITIES

BEYOGLU
Turkey
246,000 Inhabitants
Friendship city since 2011

EL VIEJO
Nicaragua
89,957 Inhabitants
Friendship city since 1989

/ COOPERATION PARTNERS

CHONGQING
China
34,036,400 Inhabitants
Cooperation partner since 2017

CHERNIVTSI
Ukraine
267,060 Inhabitants
Cooperation partner since 2016

HEBRON
Palestinian Territories
215,450 Inhabitants
Cooperation partner since 2013

KILIS
Turkey
116,034 Inhabitants
Cooperation partner since 2017

// ACT LOCALLY, IMPACT GLOBALLY //



Cities are playing an increasingly important role in tackling global issues, such as climate protection, migration, education and peace. The City of Mannheim assumes this responsibility, both locally and internationally. Its development policy work is firmly anchored as a strategic goal in the Mannheim 2030 mission statement adopted by the City Council in 2019.

With this in mind, the Department of International Affairs, Europe and Protocol of the City of Mannheim maintains partnerships with municipalities in countries in the Global South, supports information and education work pertaining to development policy and advocates for civic commitment with regard to development policy issues.

The City of Mannheim's development policy project work to date has been very effective: Projects in Turkey, Moldova, Ukraine, Nicaragua and the Palestinian Territories have been (and are being) successfully implemented. The focus is on projects that support municipal services of general interest, local democracy and gender equality.

The City of Mannheim maintains a particular focus by specifically supporting immigrants who are socially engaged in their country of origin. In this way, development policy projects not only have an impact abroad, but also promote integration in Mannheim.

// SUPPORT FOR EL VIEJO /

Extreme weather, hurricanes and floods – in Nicaragua, the consequences of climate change are already being clearly felt today. The City of Mannheim has initiated a joint seepage basin project in the friendship city of El Viejo to prevent the regular flooding of the city centre.

The Central American country of Nicaragua is often hit by extreme weather and hurricanes. Mannheim's friendship city El Viejo is frequently affected by this: The city regularly suffers from the consequences of severe flooding. In order to jointly design a project to help El Viejo cope with these challenges, employees of the City of Mannheim and a member of the Association for the Promotion of a City Twinning between Mannheim and El Viejo (Verein zur Förderung der Städtepartnerschaft Mannheim – El Viejo / Nicaragua e. V.) travelled to the friendship city on the Pacific coast for the first time at the beginning of 2020. The project trip was organised by Stephanie Oechsner, the coordinator for municipal development policy of the City of Mannheim, whose tasks include establishing international project cooperation.

Seepage basin in the fight against annual flooding

The key problem facing the city of El Viejo is that in the rainy season, the dry soil cannot absorb large amounts of water and thus the lower-lying city centre is regularly flooded. As a result, schools and hospitals can sometimes not be accessed for months. After several working meetings and a site visit with experts on urban drainage systems from both municipalities, the project team developed a concept to solve the problem as cost-effectively as possible. The construction of a seepage basin was chosen, in order to ensure that a large part of the rainwater is intercepted before it can enter the city. The remaining, relatively small amounts of water that the seepage basin cannot absorb can be handled by the existing municipal sewer system. The solution is both ecological and benefits local farmers, as the basin raises the water table.

For the implementation of the planned project, the City of Mannheim will receive federal funding in the amount of EUR 150,000. The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the Partnership Projects for Sustainable Local Development (Nakopa) programme of Engagement Global with the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW). Construction on the seepage basin is expected to begin in 2021. As part of the project, municipal employees in El Viejo will also be trained by employees of the City of Mannheim's Urban Drainage Department.

"In our Mannheim 2030 mission statement, we have stipulated that Mannheim wants to be a role model for international cooperation between cities and is committed to municipal development cooper-



The Mannheim expert delegation in an exchange with the experts from El Viejo

ation," explains Mayor Peter Kurz. This project, Kurz continues, is a prime example of the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and also shows how relevant international cooperation between cities is in solving global challenges at the local level. "I am, therefore, delighted that this project is being financed by the federal government, and I would like to thank the donors, as well as the City of Mannheim's own wastewater management company, for contributing their technical expertise.

// mannheim.de/el-viejo



MANNHEIM – EL VIEJO

The cities' relationship is based on a proposal from the citizens. Since 1986, the Association for the Promotion of a City Twinning between Mannheim and El Viejo has provided information about the situation at local level. On the basis of this civic initiative, Mannheim's City Council decided in 1989 to establish a friendship arrangement with the city of 89,900 inhabitants, which has since been supported in particular by the Nicaragua Association.

// NEW SPACES FOR CHISINAU AND CHERNIVTSI /

Accessibility and citizen participation – these were the central goals of a joint project of the cities of Mannheim, Chişinău and Chernivtsi, in which public squares were redesigned in the Moldovan and Ukrainian cities.

“Rethinking public space. Citizens shaping their future” – this is the title of the project partnership between Mannheim, Chişinău (Republic of Moldova) and Chernivtsi (Ukraine), which also describes the goal of the joint project. Municipal experts from the three cities worked together on a pilot project in which public spaces in the Moldovan and Ukrainian cities were redesigned according to modern standards. Aspects of integrated urban development and the involvement of local citizens played an important role in the redesign process. Two years of intensive cooperation have now been completed by the experts from Mannheim’s urban planning department and their colleagues from Chişinău and Chernivtsi, who successfully completed the project at the end of 2019.

The starting point for this form of cooperation was the long-standing connections between the twin cities of Mannheim and Chişinău. By including the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi in the project partnership, the City of Mannheim implemented a development policy project on a trilateral basis for the first time, which meant that the project benefited from special synergy effects.

Accessibility and citizen participation

In the cities of Chişinău and Chernivtsi, a public square was redesigned with the support of experts from Mannheim in a comprehensive process of citizen participation. The citizens and the municipality jointly developed a design concept for a public space in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. An important starting point was the fundamental perception that public spaces are often less accessible for certain groups of people, for example, because they are not barrier-free. Therefore, these spaces cannot be used equally, especially by people with disabilities, older people and children. The redesign process was not only about innovative urban planning aspects, but also about the ecological, social and cultural dimensions – and thus about adopting a holistic planning approach. It was, therefore, particularly important to involve the citizens in the planning processes from the very beginning. This comprehensive design approach not only enhanced the public space and made it more accessible, but also strengthened the democratic culture at the local level and the trust in local government.



The redesigning of the public squares was preceded by a comprehensive exchange between the experts of the three cities. The City of Mannheim contributed its experience and expertise by accompanying the project from the planning stage, through public participation, to the actual construction. The project offered an optimal framework for learning from each other, exchanging experiences and working together as equals across national borders.

The square in Chernivtsi was officially inaugurated in July 2019, and the pilot project in Chişinău was successfully completed in November 2019. Through the renovation of green spaces and pavements, taking into account accessibility and a modern lighting concept, the squares in both cities have subsequently witnessed a significant improvement in the quality of urban life. At the same time, the citizens of Chişinău and Chernivtsi had the opportunity to actively participate in an urban planning process for the first time. The project thus made a vital contribution to promoting democratic structures at the municipal level.

// mannheim.de/chisinau

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

The twinning between the Moldovan capital of Chişinău and the City of Mannheim was established in 1989. Since then, the partnership has been characterised by a lively exchange at the municipal and civic level. The Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi has also maintained an active city partnership with Chişinău since 2014, from which the idea of a cooperation in the form of a trilateral project was born.



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ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL

The development policy projects of the City of Mannheim in Kilis, Hebron, Chişinău/Chernivtsi and El Viejo are funded by the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) of Engagement Global with funds from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

SKEW is the centre of excellence for municipal development policy in Germany and implements development policy funding programmes that also provide financial support to municipalities in the implementation of their development policy measures.

- 1 Exchange with experts from the cities of Mannheim, Chişinău and Chernivtsi on the topic of integrated urban development
- 2/3 The public square in Chernivtsi before and after the reconstruction works
- 4/5 The public square "George Coşbuc" in the historic centre of Chişinău before and after renovation efforts.

ENGAGEMENT
GLOBAL
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen

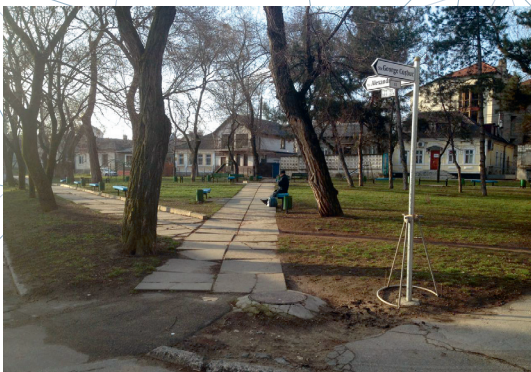


mit ihrer
SERVICESTELLE
KOMMUNEN IN DER EINEN WELT

Mit Mitteln des



Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
und Entwicklung



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Planning illustration of the vocational training centre for Syrian refugees and Turkish women in Kilis

// AN EDUCATION CENTRE FOR KILIS /

The development project with the Turkish city of Kilis is entering the next phase. A new vocational training centre for Syrian and Turkish women is currently being built.

The City of Mannheim has been involved in a development policy project partnership with Kilis since the beginning of 2017. Due to its proximity to Syria, the Turkish city is strongly affected by the immigration of Syrian refugees. Until the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, Kilis had around 90,000 inhabitants. Today the city is home to an additional 129,000 refugees, which poses major social and economic challenges for the city. "Cities are crucial stakeholders for global issues. This is felt most directly in dealing with refugees," emphasises Mayor Peter Kurz. "Something must be done in the areas from which people are fleeing and in which refugees first find shelter. We are setting a good example in Mannheim with our cooperation with Kilis."

The impetus for this form of cooperation came from the Working Group of Islamic Communities in Mannheim (AKIG) and Duha e.V., as one of its members comes from Kilis and has personal contacts with the city administration there. Through this connection, Mannheim became aware of the refugee situation in Kilis and laid the foundation for the municipal partnership. The aim of the partnership is to promote the vocational training of Syrian women refugees in Kilis and to improve training opportunities in the long term.

Expertise and third-party funding for the project

In the project's first phase, which was successfully completed in 2018, the focus was on analysing the needs in terms of vocational training and on qualifying Turkish female trainers. In 2019, the project partnership entered the next phase. Given that there is a lack of teaching space in Kilis for the education and training of Syrian refugees, Kilis and Mannheim agreed to build a modern vocational training centre for Syrian refugees. The City of Mannheim was able to raise around EUR 385,000 in funding for the implementation of the project. The funds will be used to finance both the construction and further training measures for the instructors. The project is thus the largest development policy project of the City of Mannheim to date.

After the project was officially launched in December 2019 with the signing of the project agreement by the mayors of both cities, construction of the education centre was able to begin in the summer of 2020. After completion of the building in the summer of 2021, around 700 Syrian and Turkish women will have the opportunity to learn a profession and continue their education in the centre. The centre is to become a model school for vocational training and lifelong learning in Kilis. The City of Mannheim is contributing its expertise in the disciplines of didactics, integration and economic policy and, above all, is imparting the necessary administrative knowledge so that the City of Kilis can continue the project with trained staff without any issues following a "start-up phase".

// mannheim.de/ez-projekte



I am honoured to be part of the bridge between my birthplace and my home. With the initiation of this project partnership, both cities – with the support of civil society – are now driven by the shared sense of solidarity at both a local and global level. <<

Mustafa Dedekeloglu, chairman of the association Mannheim Helps without Borders (Mannheim hilft ohne Grenzen e. V.), has supported the project partnership with the city of Kilis since the beginning. He himself comes from the southern Anatolian city.

// JUMPSTART IN HEBRON //

At the beginning of 2019, the Co-Working Lab started operations in the Palestinian city of Hebron. The start-up centre, which was developed and implemented in close cooperation with NEXT MANNHEIM, opens up new perspectives for young Palestinians.

Hebron is the largest Palestinian city in the West Bank. The city is characterised by its very young population. Despite a very well-developed university landscape and a well-educated population, the city suffers from a high unemployment rate, especially among young graduates. The difficult economic situation, triggered by the ongoing tensions in the region, is having a negative impact on the job market, which leads to a significant lack of prospects for younger generations.

Start-up aid for young Palestinians

To remedy this situation, Mannheim and Hebron have been working together since 2017 in the development policy project "Hebron-Mannheim-Co-Working-Lab (HEMA)". The City of Mannheim supports the Palestinian municipality of Hebron in promoting start-ups and building a local start-up scene. The aim is to harness the economic potential of the region and create sustainable prospects for the population. With funding from the German government, a modern "Co-Working Lab" was set up in Hebron. Young Palestinians can use the collaborative space to work together on projects and set up businesses.

The municipal start-up centre NEXT MANNHEIM is contributing its many years of experience and expertise to the project. It also advises and trains the employees there. The City of Mannheim received a total of EUR 175,000 in federal funding for the project's implementation. This makes the project the largest municipal development project in the Palestinian territories funded by the BMZ and currently the only German municipal project in Palestine that focuses on promoting innovative business start-ups.

The first start-up companies moved into the Co-Working Lab in Hebron at the beginning of 2019. After five students from Hebron completed an internship in Mannheim start-up companies in the spring of 2019, seven young entrepreneurs had the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive mentoring programme in Mannheim in autumn 2019. The highlight and conclusion of the project was the first German-Palestinian Digital Summit in November 2020, which focused on the exchange of ideas on digitalisation and start-ups. The conference, which had to take place digitally because of the pandemic, also offered space to present the concrete project outcomes.

// mannheim.de/ez-projekte



View of the newly established Co-Working Lab in Hebron

HELP FOR HEBRON

The cities of Hebron and Mannheim have maintained an active project partnership since 2013. With funding from the BMZ, Mannheim and Hebron were able to improve the sewage infrastructure in Hebron in 2016, which means that more people now have access to clean drinking water. Since 2017, the focus of the cooperation has been on promoting business start-ups. Thanks to the successful acquisition of federal funding, the City of Mannheim is able to initiate specific infrastructure investments in Hebron without burdening the city's budget.



Workshops and coaching sessions on the topic of start-ups are intended to encourage young people in their plans to set up their own company

// WORKING TOGETHER THROUGH THE CRISIS //



The Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed life in cities. Worldwide, municipalities are facing immense challenges, while at the same time, many national governments are closing themselves off.

The latter is also having a huge impact on international cooperation between municipalities. Due to the pandemic, numerous activities within the framework of city twinning and cooperation projects had to be cancelled or postponed. But there were also positive aspects: It was above all the city twinning relationships that made an important contribution to international solidarity and cooperation throughout the pandemic.

The City of Mannheim was, therefore, always in close contact with its partner cities despite the extensive restrictions on contact and continuously exchanged information about the situation and measures in the individual cities. To this end, the city developed many new online formats for international and intercity cooperation, which brought the twin cities even closer together during the crisis.

In addition, concrete aid projects made an important contribution to halting the global spread of Covid-19 while promoting international cohesion in times of crisis.

// VIRTUAL SUMMIT OF THE TWIN CITIES //

The pandemic brought about a change in city life from one day to the next and poses immense challenges for municipalities worldwide. How are cities dealing with the effects of the crisis and how do we want to live in our cities in the future? These were the central questions of the first virtual mayors' summit with Mannheim's partner cities.

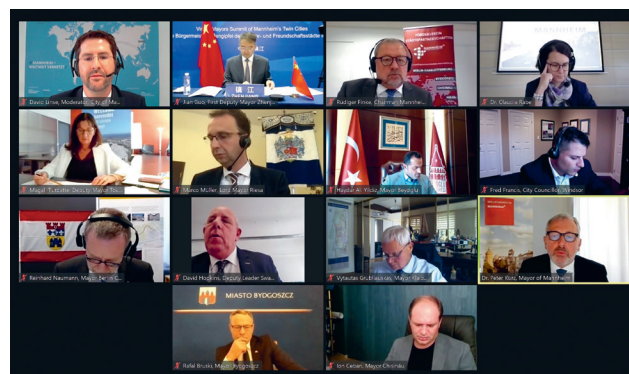
Together with the Mannheim Association for the Promotion of City Twinning (Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e.V.), the City of Mannheim invited its twin cities to a virtual meeting for the first time in September 2020. Mayors of the partner and friendship cities from Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Beyoğlu, Bydgoszcz, Chişinău, Haifa, Klaipeda, Qingdao, Riesa, Swansea, Toulon, Windsor and Zhenjiang took part in this discussion format, to which the citizens of the participating cities were also invited. The international experts Cathryn Cluever Ashbrook, political scientist at the Harvard Kennedy School, and Natalie Samarasinghe, Deputy Special Representative for the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, supported the conference with their specialized knowledge.

"The global challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic show how important the international exchange of experience and knowledge between cities truly is," emphasised Mayor Kurz in his opening speech. "At the same time, we want to reaffirm the role of cities as the political level that is closest to the citizens in shaping international relations, and position ourselves as important partners in international political decision-making processes".

The partner cities adopted a joint political declaration to strengthen urban diplomacy and thus participated in the UN initiative for a worldwide exchange of ideas on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. In the declaration, the political representatives of the partner cities advocate for the resolution of armed conflicts and the fight against the causes of flight and displacement. They also called for a redefinition of the role of cities in the sense of a formalised participation of cities in the decision-making processes of the United Nations.

The political declaration was then handed over to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, so that the demands of the City of Mannheim and its partner cities could be included in the dialogue on the future of the international community at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, which was held in September 2020.

// mannheim.de/virtueller-gipfel



For the first time, the mayors of Mannheim's twin cities exchange ideas in a virtual format

>>We're marching ahead!<<

Rüdiger Finke, Chairman of the Mannheim Association for the Promotion of City Twinning (Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften e.V.), discussed the virtual summit of the twin cities.

>> Mr Finke, how were you involved in the virtual summit as an association?

<< In the early summer of 2020, the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability of the City of Mannheim approached us with the idea of organising a virtual meeting of cities and asked us whether we, as an association, wanted to be involved in the content. The focus was to be on the importance of global cooperation between cities, in general, and in view of the Coronavirus, in particular. We also wanted to tie in with the 75th anniversary of the UN. Together with the city representatives, we worked out the content, including the declaration addressed to the UN to strengthen the role of cities within the UN. The idea was to set an example during the times of the Coronavirus, true to the motto "We won't give up!"

>> What was the response from the twin cities?

<< The response was impressive: a total of twelve partner and friendship cities took part in the online meeting. Reports on the current situation from the cities were followed by a lively discussion, at the end of which the declaration to the UN was also adopted by all participants. The content of the declaration was actually included in the Chancellor's speech on the occasion of the UN anniversary.

>> And what was your conclusion?

<< Very positive. The virtual format allowed us to bring twelve cities from three continents to one table, which would certainly not have been feasible as a physical meeting. Nevertheless, a virtual summit can, of course, not replace a face-to-face exchange. However, it is an interesting format that will certainly be used after the pandemic has passed, and that could complement the face-to-face visits and exchanges that will hopefully be possible again soon.

// ASSISTANCE IN THE PANDEMIC /

The fight against the worldwide pandemic urgently requires global solutions. It has become clear that solidarity and international cooperation are invaluable, especially in times of crisis. The City of Mannheim, therefore, supports its international partners who have been particularly affected by the crisis – both through donations in kind and through the exchange of experience on communal crisis management. At the same time, the city of Mannheim has also received concrete support from its twin cities.



The Coronavirus crisis is a global challenge that can only be overcome through international cooperation and solidarity. We want to take on global responsibility even in times of crisis and show solidarity with our international partners. <<

Dr Peter Kurz
Mayor of the City of Mannheim



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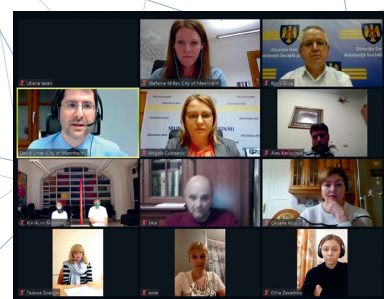


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- 1 Handover of the mask donation from Zhenjiang
- 2 Donation of medical masks to the Women's Centre in El Viejo
- 3 Information campaign for Hebron
- 4 Supporting the city of Chernivtsi with the procurement of medical Coronavirus testing equipment
- 5 Virtual professional exchange between the senior medical staff of the University Hospital Mannheim and the clinics from Chişinău and Chernivtsi
- 6 Loading the masks for Bydgoszcz



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MANNHEIM'S CHINESE PARTNER CITY ZHENJIANG DONATES 100,000 MASKS

Mannheim's twin city not only covered the costs for the masks, but also paid for the transport. "I would like to thank our twin city for this generous donation, which we want to pass on to medical and nursing staff, in particular," noted Mayor Peter Kurz. "This support is anything but a matter of course and shows that we too can count on international solidarity from our twin cities." The mayor accepted the masks with representatives of the Mannheim-based construction company China Zhenjiang International Economic-Technical Cooperation Limited (CZICC), which was responsible for the construction of the Chinese Garden and actively supported the handling of the donation by the city of Zhenjiang. The project was initiated by the International Department of the City of Mannheim in close cooperation with Dr Norbert Egger, former first deputy mayor of the City of Mannheim and honorary citizen of the two Chinese twin cities Qingdao and Zhenjiang.

SUPPORT FOR EL VIEJO IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE CORONAVIRUS

For cities in the Global South, the Coronavirus pandemic poses a particular challenge. Against this backdrop, the City of Mannheim and the Mannheim Association for the Promotion of City Twinning initiated a Coronavirus prevention project in Mannheim's Nicaraguan friendship city El Viejo. Thanks to a financial donation, the Women's Centre in El Viejo was able to distribute a total of 500 protective masks, as well as disinfectant or liquid soap to 200 people. In addition, the people were informed about hygiene measures and infection paths as part of a Corona Prevention Action Day. "Especially in times of crisis, it is important to think of our friendship and twin cities, and to help where it is possible and necessary," emphasised Rüdiger Finke, Chairman of the Association for the Promotion of City Twinning.

HELP FOR HEBRON

The Palestinian city of Hebron, with which the City of Mannheim has a long-standing project partnership, was also deeply affected by the Covid-19 crisis. For many months, Hebron recorded the highest infection figures in the West Bank. To support the city in this particularly difficult situation, the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability was able to acquire funding at an early stage. The office raised a total of EUR 10,000 in funding through the Foundation for Development Cooperation (Stiftung Entwicklungszusammenarbeit) of the State of Baden-Württemberg, to support the city of Hebron. These funds were used to purchase medical masks, disinfectant and protective suits for the clinics in Hebron and to launch an information campaign to raise awareness among the local population about hygiene and protective measures.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR AID PROJECT IN CHISINAU AND CHERNIVTSI

In order to support other international partners of the City of Mannheim during the crisis, the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability of the City of Mannheim solicited funding from the federal government. Mannheim's Moldovan partner city Chişinău and the Ukrainian city of Chernivtsi, which has been a cooperation partner of Mannheim for several years, also benefited from this funding. Both cities have been suffering the dramatic consequences of the pandemic since the beginning of the crisis. The aim of the cooperation is to exchange an array of experiences between the municipalities in dealing with the pandemic, and to improve the medical equipment in the partner cities. In addition to the procurement of medical materials, such as protective masks and testing equipment, several virtual meetings took place in which experts from the three cities exchanged strategies and measures for dealing with the pandemic. The exchange was supported by the medical staff of the University Hospital Mannheim. For this project, the City of Mannheim was able to acquire funding of EUR 49,000 from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) as part of the Municipal Corona Solidarity Package programme. "I would like to thank the supporters, whose grants make the projects possible without any financial contribution from the City of Mannheim, as well as the doctors of the University Hospital Mannheim for their professional support for the project," emphasised Mayor Dr Kurz.

MASK DONATION FOR BYDGOSZCZ

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Mannheim has been in close contact with its partner cities regarding the current Coronavirus situation. In mid-November, a dramatic call for help from Mannheim's Polish twin city Bydgoszcz reached the City Hall: In view of the extremely high number of cases in the city, there was a shortage of protective equipment at the municipal hospital in Bydgoszcz, as well as at the oncology centre. "After careful consideration, we decided to support our Polish twin city by donating 50,000 medical masks, as we are sufficiently equipped here," explained Mayor Peter Kurz. The German-Polish Society (Die Deutsch-Polnische Gesellschaft Mannheim- Ludwigshafen e. V.) supported the relief action and, under the leadership of its Chairman Piotr Pilkowski, organised a quick and inexpensive transport of the protective masks to Bydgoszcz. Rafał Bruski, mayor of Bydgoszcz, expressed his thanks to the City of Mannheim: "In the near 30 years of our partnership, a true friendship has grown between our citizens, cultural institutions, associations and local governments. The quality of the partnership can be seen most impressively in difficult times. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the City of Mannheim for this extremely valuable and necessary initiative. I thank you very much for this gesture of solidarity and friendship".

// GIVING CITIES A VOICE //



International cooperation at state level is crucial for overcoming global challenges. The international community and the European Union have already adopted several agreements to address these challenges. These include the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal.

In the implementation of these agreements, however, it has become clear that cities and municipalities around the world have outsized responsibility when it comes to taking measures for climate protection, integration, education and – especially recently – healthcare. Recent studies show that the majority of the measures have to be implemented at local level if the goals are to be achieved. Local and regional authorities are implementing 65 per cent of the measures for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 70 per cent of the climate protection measures and even 90 per cent of those measures aimed at combating climate change.

Against this background, urban diplomacy is also becoming increasingly important. Cities work together in international city networks and seek direct cooperation with international organisations in order to make their concerns heard and directly shape international political agendas.

// COOPERATION WITH UN-HABITAT /

With the UN-Habitat programme, the United Nations is working to achieve a better future for cities worldwide. The programme plays a central role in the implementation of the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, an action plan aimed at promoting sustainable urban development at a local level.

In March 2019, Mannheim became the first German city to sign a cooperation agreement with UN-Habitat. The purpose of this contract is to create a framework for cooperation between UN-Habitat and Mannheim, in order to strengthen the local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to facilitate the promotion of international urban diplomacy. “The fact that UN-Habitat is establishing this cooperation with Mannheim shows the appreciation that the international organisation has for the work done in Mannheim,” emphasised Mayor Peter Kurz. “This affords Mannheim far-reaching opportunities to distinguish itself as an innovative and international city.”

The agreement was signed by Mayor Kurz and UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif at the Global Strategic Dialogue held in Mannheim in March 2019. The event was jointly organised with UN-Habitat and aimed at discussing and strengthening the role of the private sector in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in cities. After the agreement was signed, representatives of the City of Mannheim took part in other high-level events organised by UN-Habitat.

UN-Habitat – General Assembly

The first session of the newly created UN Habitat Assembly took place in Nairobi, Kenya, at the end of May 2019. As a representative of the City of Mannheim, and on behalf of all European cities and municipalities that are members of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Deputy Mayor Felicitas Kubala took part in the assembly. In her speech at the forum of local and regional authorities, she outlined the Mannheim process for implementing the global sustainability goals, including the intensive involvement of citizens.

UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF)

In July 2019, Mayor Kurz attended the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York as a member of the German government’s delegation. The HLPF is the UN’s most important platform for sustainable development. At the meeting, Kurz presented the City of Mannheim’s mission statement and explained how Mannheim is



Mayor Dr Kurz presents Mannheim's Voluntary Local Review at the UN in New York

implementing the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals. “The important role of cities in implementing local goals, as well as in tackling global problems, is increasingly recognised not only by the EU but also by the UN. With its approach, Mannheim is an example that meets with tremendous resonance,” Kurz positively summed up his participation.

United Nations Climate Summit

Dr Kurz was one of two German mayors to attend the UN Climate and SDG Summit in New York in October 2019. A total of 150 heads of state and government from all over the world discussed progress toward implementing the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda. Mannheim’s mayor was part of the German delegation, which was led by Chancellor Angela Merkel and included several federal ministers. The highlight of Kurz’s participation was the presentation of Mannheim’s Voluntary Local Review, a report on the local implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. “We are the first German city to present in detail the progress we have made on the sustainability goals and the work we have left to do,” Kurz reported. The City of Mannheim will update this report regularly in the future.

World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi

The 10th World Urban Forum took place in Abu Dhabi in February 2020 under the headline “Cities of opportunity – Connecting culture and innovation”. Around 12,000 representatives from 168 countries attended the event, including a delegation from Mannheim led by Mayor Kurz. The forum, organised by UN-Habitat, is the leading international conference on sustainable urban development. Mannheim participates in the World Urban Forum in order to make the city better known on an international level, to present trend-setting projects, to take up suggestions for its own urban development and to help shape international policy in the interests of cities. “With our participation in the 10th World Urban Forum, we want to underscore, on the one hand, that Mannheim is one of those ambitious cities in the field of sustainable development,” emphasised the mayor. “On the other hand, we are campaigning for the voice of cities to be heard more strongly in international policy and international agreements in the future.”

// A STRONG VOICE FOR THE CITIES /

Mannheim has been an active member of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) since its founding. At the GPM's Annual General Meeting, which took place in Durban, South Africa, in November 2019, Mayor Peter Kurz was elected Chairman.

The GPM is an institution by (and for) mayors from all countries and explicitly does not see itself as another network of cities, but as a political body. Through its deliberate parliamentary and primarily virtual mode of operation, it promotes an inclusive political culture that facilitates the political participation of mayors, especially from developing countries. "In just a few years, we have succeeded in establishing a transnational political body," emphasised Mayor Kurz. "The fact that this happened without financial support from governments is impressive proof of the ability of cities and their mayors to act." At the same time, the GPM's goals are very ambitious: The aim is to further develop the international political system in such a way that cities are given real rights of participation.

Under the leadership of Mayor Kurz as Chair of the Executive Committee, the organisation has successfully brought together mayors and worked towards achieving its ambitious goals. During the Coronavirus crisis, the GPM created opportunities for mayors to exchange ideas and work together. At the same time, the GPM has also drawn global attention to the situation facing many cities: An open letter from GPM mayors calling for the greater representation of cities at the UN was included in the UN's 75th anniversary report.

// mannheim.de/gpm



The aim is to further develop the international political system in such a way that cities are given real rights of participation. <<

Dr Peter Kurz
Mayor of the City of Mannheim



The Executive Committee of the Global Parliament of Mayors elected in 2019

GLOBAL PARLIAMENT OF MAYORS

The Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) was founded in The Hague in 2016 and sees itself as an association and exchange platform for mayors worldwide. Its aim is to pool the experience and expertise of municipalities and to shed light on the pioneering role that municipalities play in solving global challenges, such as climate protection, nutrition and mobility. Since November 2019, Mannheim's mayor, Dr Peter Kurz, has been chairman of the GPM.



Do you still have any questions about these and other projects?
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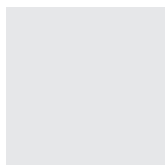
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Editors David Linse, Stefanie Miller, Raum Mannheim **Photo credits** UN-Habitat (1) / MVV Energie AG (2) / Andreas Henn (3,31) / City of Mannheim (5,6,7,8,9,13, 19-21,23-26,-28-29,32) Petra Jenny Farian (10) / European Union, Patrick Mascart (10) / EU Parliament: Hieu VO/Shutterstock.com (editorial) (13) / ICLEI Europe (14) / EUROCITIES (15) / European Union, Fred Guerdin (15), City of El Viejo (18,19), City of Kilis (22), Mustafa Dedekeloglu (22), Global Parliament of Mayors (30)

Version as of May 2021



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