

# MANNHEIM INTERNATIONAL

REPORT BY THE  
OFFICE FOR EU AFFAIRS AND  
GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY  
2023/2024/2025



Copyright: City of Mannheim

**STADT MANNHEIM**<sup>2</sup>

International and European  
Affairs and Protocol

# CONTENTS



## 4 THE OFFICE FOR EU AFFAIRS AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Brief overview of areas of responsibility

## 18/19 TWIN CITIES, FRIENDSHIP CITIES, AND COOPERATION PARTNERS

Exchange and cooperation

## 34/35 THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE IN NUMBERS

Legal notice / Contact

# 01

## 5 TWIN AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES

- 6 Toulon:
  - Joint youth participation project with Toulon #keepitclean
  - Mayor's trip in 2024: Commemorating the end of World War II
  - French culture in Mannheim: French Market and the Planken Anniversary
  - Soccer partnership with Toulon
- 8 BUGA Garden of Twin Cities / Chernivtsi Peace Celebration  
Conference of the Twin Cities
- 9 Beyoğlu: Signing of city partnership agreement and municipal expert exchange
- 10 Qingdao: Delegation trip
- 10 Klaipėda: Delegation trip
- 11 Bydgoszcz: Delegation visit in Mannheim
- 11 Windsor: Delegation visit in Mannheim

# 02

## 10 EUROPEAN & INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

- 13 EU-Funded Projects:
  - Rhizomatic Cities Network
  - IURC Windsor
- 14 Bechem (Ghana): Climate protection through reforestation and environmental education (2023)
- 15 Freetown (Sierra Leone): Work shadowing
- 16 Chernivtsi (Ukraine):
  - Goerdeler Prize Youth Project Chernivtsi
  - New rehabilitation center for victims of war
  - Aid transport
- 17 German-Ukrainian Municipal Partnership Conference and municipal vehicles
- 20 Windhoek (Namibia): Photo exhibition / museum exchange

# 03

## 21 INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND CITY DIPLOMACY

- 22 EFUS: Executive Committee reelection  
UN Forum of Mayors in Geneva
- 23 Brussels Urban Summit (Eurocities)  
Former Mayor Peter Kurz at the U7 Mayors Summit in Japan
- 24 Diplomatic Contacts:  
Visits of the French ambassador and Indian consul general

# 04

## 25 JOIN US!

- 26 Supporting exchange
- 28 Strengthening the city's EU expertise / Mannheim-Brussels study trip
- 29 Mannheim helps shape Europe:
  - European Competition
  - European Prize
  - Raising Awareness about the European elections
- 30 Internships abroad in Mannheim's twin cities
- 32 Building bridges in a networked world
- 33 Valued partners in Mannheim

# FORWARD

Dear readers,

Dear Mannheim residents,

The past few years have clearly shown us how closely local developments are linked to global events. Political tensions, wars around the world and in Europe, economic changes, and the consequences of climate change – these challenges do not stop at city limits. And they require concrete solutions. In times like these, international cooperation becomes even more important for our city.

The city of Mannheim's Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability is at the heart of this cooperation, which can be seen across Mannheim's wonderfully diverse urban society and with our international partners. Their work involves organizing professional exchanges with our twin cities, coordinating European and international projects in the fields of youth, business, and culture, participating in international networks, and supporting Mannheim residents in organizing their own exchanges. Through its work, the International Office builds important bridges between people, cultures, and institutions in and around Mannheim. In this way, the city of Mannheim shows its commitment to openness, dialogue, and diversity.

The following report provides an overview of the city of Mannheim's diverse international activities. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Christian Specht

Mayor



**CHRISTIAN SPECHT**

Mayor of Mannheim



**CATHÉRINE LISA SCHLEICHER**

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

Dear readers,

I am delighted to present another activity report from the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability. In this report, my team and I provide an overview of our work from 2023 to 2025.

For over 15 years, the office's dedicated staff have been committed to promoting international relations, international responsibility and the global networking of the city of Mannheim. This work is visible on many levels – in our urban society, school exchanges, international internships, the maintenance of city partnerships and the support of events like the "Table of Nations." With great dedication, we strengthen international ties and encourage the people of Mannheim to get involved.

At the same time, we promote (funded) international strategies that have been developed at the federal or European level and adapt them responsibly to the needs of our city. The past three years have been marked by global crises, financial challenges, as well as tragic events in Mannheim. In the face of these challenges, we have received encouragement, gratitude, and support – especially from dedicated volunteers who are committed to an open and peaceful Mannheim.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all of them. I hope you enjoy reading this publication and invite you to visit our newly designed website to learn more about our work.

Sincerely,

Cathérine Schleicher

# ABOUT THE OFFICE FOR EU AFFAIRS AND GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Mannheim wants to be a role model for international cooperation between cities. The city's Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability is the central coordination and competence center for all EU-related issues, municipal development policy, and international cooperation at the municipal level.

**THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OF THE CITY OF MANNHEIM IS STRUCTURED INTO THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY:**

## 01

### TWIN AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES

Mannheim maintains city partnerships and international relations around the world. The focus is on political solidarity, economic cooperation, and promoting inter-municipal exchange. Cities work together in a variety of areas, promote encounters between their citizens, exchange experiences, and jointly develop new solutions.

## 02

### EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

The city acquires funding for the implementation of local and international projects and strengthens the EU expertise of its administration through targeted training programs for its employees. In particular, the international development cooperation work of the city of Mannheim aims to shape global justice and sustainable development. The city does so by implementing projects to promote global responsibility and international cooperation with municipalities in the Global South.

## 03

### NETWORKS AND INTERNATIONAL CITY DIPLOMACY

The city participates in European and international networks, thereby strengthening its political interests and visibility with the federal government, the EU, and international organizations. In this way, the city actively influences political decision-making processes at the European and international levels and uses these to address local interests.

## 04

### JOIN US!

International relations thrive on encounters between citizens. Mannheim provides financial and advisory support for exchange programs for schools, associations, as well as cultural and economic initiatives. The city also offers international internships for its employees, and specifically involves local residents in the city's international activities. This makes an important contribution to promoting intercultural understanding and greater awareness of global issues.

# 01



## TWIN AND FRIENDSHIP CITIES



## MANNHEIM-TOULON



CITY TWINNING MANNHEIM  
AND TOULON

EXCHANGE, MEETINGS,  
AND JOINT PROJECTS

Political and civic encounters promote sustainable urban development, cultural exchange, and youth projects. Numerous cooperative relationships have been established since 1959. The topics range from economics and urban development to climate protection and European security policy. Schools and associations invigorate the partnership through a variety of educational projects and cultural events.



Soccer partnership between  
Mannheim and Toulon  
(Copyright: City of Toulon)

## SOCCER BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER – NEW CLUB PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MANNHEIM AND TOULON

Soccer brings people together – as demonstrated by the new partnership between Mannheim and Toulon. The over-35s team from DJK Käferthal-Waldhof traveled to southern France to meet their partner club Entente Pivotte Serinette in person for the first time. After preparatory online discussions and a language course at the Institut

Français Mannheim, the group set off well prepared for Toulon on April 30, 2025. A varied program awaited them on site, including a city tour, excursions, and a friendly match followed by a barbecue. An official reception at the city hall rounded off the visit. The exchange was supported by the city of Mannheim and state funds from Baden-Württemberg.

## FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT: MANNHEIM'S MAYOR VISITS TOULON

Mayor Christian Specht's first trip abroad since taking office took him to Toulon on May 8 and 9, 2024. The focus was on participating in a ceremony marking the end of World War II and professional exchanges between the two cities. Josée Massi, Mayor of Toulon since 2023, welcomed Specht to the city hall and presented him with a medal commemorating the 65th anniversary of the partnership with Mannheim.

Specht also met with around 70 committed members of the town twinning association, including volunteers from German-French organizations, teachers involved in intercultural exchange, and representatives of local international associations. He emphasized the central role of Germany and France in a united Europe and highlighted the importance of vibrant city partnerships. Specht praised the outstanding volunteer work of the citizens as an essential anchor in the city partnership with Toulon, which makes a multitude of intercultural encounters possible.



## YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Youth exchanges in particular are an important foundation for town twinning and Franco-German friendship. They enable young people to gain experience abroad, break down prejudices, and thus contribute to carrying the European idea forward to the next generation.

Against this backdrop, the city of Mannheim has been organizing exchanges for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 from Mannheim and Toulon since 2022. In 2023, the young people founded the environmental initiative #keepitclean. Since then, both Mannheim and Toulon have had voting ashtrays that use questions about the twin city to create a playful incentive to dispose of cigarette butts in an environmentally friendly way. In addition to environmental issues, youth participation and intercultural understanding are also key topics of the exchange. Despite language barriers, friendships are formed that last beyond the official exchange. The next meeting will take place in 2026 as a trinational youth exchange. Young people from Toulon and the Lithuanian twin city of Klaipėda are expected to attend the meeting in Mannheim.



Mayor Christian Specht with participants in the 2023 youth exchange (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

The city of Mannheim also supported a beach clean-up campaign, exchanges with the youth council from La Seyne-sur-Mer, and numerous informal encounters that not only promoted environmental awareness but also intercultural understanding.

Despite language barriers, friendships were formed and a deep sense of shared responsibility developed. The young people are already looking forward to the trinational youth exchange in Mannheim in 2026.

“Exchanges between European cities serve as building blocks to further develop the EU and improve its geopolitical position and they should not be underestimated. Franco-German cooperation is particularly important, as it has repeatedly proven to be a driving force for European integration.”

Mayor Christian Specht

### INFO

Are you between the ages of 16 and 25 and interested in getting involved in German-French youth exchange?

Contact us to take part in the next meeting with young people from Toulon!

#### Contact:

[pia.schanne@mannheim](mailto:pia.schanne@mannheim) and  
[juergen.brecht@mannheim](mailto:juergen.brecht@mannheim)



## FRENCH CULTURE – ALSO IN MANNHEIM

Franco-German friendship is actively celebrated in Mannheim. One example of this was the French Market 2025 on the Kapuzinerplanken, which took place as part of the city experience weekend marking the 50th anniversary of the Planken. The tourism agency of the twin city of Toulon was also represented with a stand. In return, Mannheim presented itself at the “Bacchus” wine fair. A joint stand by VTM (Mannheim’s tourism agency) and Südlandhaus presented tourist attractions and specialties of the metropolitan region.

City leaders Josée Massi and Christian Specht at the Mannheim stand at the wine fair in Toulon (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



## INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTERS AT THE BUGA 2023

The city's international partnerships were given special visibility and vitality at the 2023 Federal Garden Show (BUGA) in Mannheim. Mannheim's twin cities took part in a wide range of activities. The BUGA provided an ideal platform for promoting international cooperation and cultural diversity in a variety of formats.

### CELEBRATORY OPENING OF THE GARDEN OF TWIN CITIES AT THE BUGA 2023

In May 2023, after two years of planning and preparation, the Garden of Twin Cities was opened on the BUGA grounds in the Luisenpark. Former Mayor Peter Kurz spoke about the importance of the garden as a visible symbol of Mannheim's international connections and as a place where Mannheim residents and visiting guests can experience the twin cities. Representatives from the partner cities of Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, Bydgoszcz, Chişinău, Haifa, Riesa, Swansea, Toulon, Windsor, and Zhenjiang attended the opening. Together, they planted a willow tree in the heart of the garden and unveiled the artwork One World from the Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e.V. (City Twinning Association).

From the outset, the garden was conceived as a joint international project. The city of Mannheim, Luisenpark, the BUGA23 Society, and the City Twinning Association actively involved all twelve partner cities. In 2021 a draft plan for the approximately 800-square-meter area was developed in a virtual expert colloquium. In the summer of 2022, young people from eight twin cities worked together with trainees from Mannheim to bring the garden to life.

### PEACE CELEBRATION WITH THE TWIN CITY CHERNIVTSI

Another highlight of the Federal Garden Show was the traditional Bergfest. On July 18, 2023, Mannheim welcomed a delegation from Chernivtsi to celebrate the halfway point of the Federal Garden Show together. Former Mayor Peter Kurz and Mayor Roman Klichuk opened the festival. The GERDAN theater studio delighted the audience with folk songs, while discussions focused on cooperation in the areas of education, sports, and humanitarian aid.

Theater studio GERDAN from Chernivtsi singing folk music (Copyright: Thomas Tröster)



### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE TWIN CITIES IN MANNHEIM

The International Conference of Twin Cities took place together with the opening of the Garden of Twin Cities. Local government representatives and Mannheim residents exchanged ideas on the four key themes of BUGA23: climate protection, environmental protection, resource-efficient energy production, and sustainable food security. Around 60 experts presented local solutions and specific projects.

Former Mayor Peter Kurz emphasized the importance of knowledge exchange for Mannheim's international engagement. Despite their differences, the cities discovered that they worked on similar challenges and common sustainability goals—from building renovation in Windsor to smart lighting systems in Bydgoszcz. The conference demonstrated the value of international networking

## MANNHEIM-BEYOĞLU



## NEW TWIN CITY: BEYOĞLU AND MANNHEIM

The elevation of the long-standing friendship between the city of Mannheim and the Istanbul district of Beyoğlu to a formal city partnership marks a significant milestone in the international cooperation between the two municipalities.

On October 11, 2024, the partnership agreement was signed by Mayor Christian Specht and Deputy Mayor of Beyoğlu Halis Yeşilbaş during a formal ceremony in Mannheim's Luisenpark. After the signing, a garden area designed in collaboration with Beyoğlu was inaugurated in the Garden of Twin Cities, and the artistic installation One World by the City Twinning Association was expanded with a plaque commemorating the new twin city.



Deputy Mayor Halis Yeşilbaş and Mayor Christian Specht open the garden area in the Garden of Twin Cities. (Copyright: Andreas Henn)



The official town twinning is the logical continuation of this long-standing friendship between our cities and opens up new opportunities for exchange and cooperation, which we are very much looking forward to.”

Mayor Specht  
at the signing ceremony

## STRENGTHENING THE PARTNERSHIP THROUGH PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

As part of the town twinning, an intensive exchange took place in 2024 between experts from Mannheim's Stadtraumservice (Municipal Urban Services Department) and their colleagues from Beyoğlu in the areas of road construction, waste management, and street cleaning. The project was funded by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL with funds from the Mercator Foundation. Experts from Mannheim's Stadtraumservice, accompanied by the International Department, had the opportunity to gain in-depth insights into the working techniques and organizational structure of the city of Beyoğlu during a week-long professional exchange and to share ideas with their colleagues. In the same year, Turkish colleagues made a reciprocal visit to continue the inter-municipal knowledge transfer in Mannheim. Numerous workshops were held to develop measures for coping with climate change.



The exchange focused on innovative systems for measures in the areas of urban cleaning, waste management, and road construction. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

Beyoğlu Mayor İnan Güney described the exchange as an important contribution to both inter-municipal knowledge transfer and securing trust-based cooperation between the two cities.



The exchange of experts between Beyoğlu and Mannheim facilitates the exchange of innovative concepts and the joint search for new solutions. It is also a living commitment to international cooperation and solidarity between our cities.”

Mayor Christian Specht

## MANNHEIM-QINGDAO

# DELEGATION VISIT

## ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE – TWIN CITIES MANNHEIM-QINGDAO



On April 24, 2024, a roundtable discussion was held in Mannheim to deepen the partnership with Qingdao in the Chinese province of Shandong. In attendance were around 100 participants from both cities. In 1995, Mannheim became Qingdao's first German twin city. Since then, both municipalities have maintained intensive exchanges in the fields of business, technology, culture, and tourism. Qingdao's former mayor, Zhao Haozhi, highlighted the openness and vitality of his city and emphasized the goal of promoting the development of climate-friendly and innovative technologies. He expressed his hope that concrete cooperation with Mannheim would be deepened and said he was convinced that the friendly relations would reach new heights through joint efforts. Huang Yiyang, Chinese Consul General in Frankfurt, also praised the efforts of the Mannheim city administration and described the roundtable as a new model for local cooperation between China and Germany and a platform for developing further opportunities for cooperation. Mannheim's Mayor Christian Specht spoke about the positive development of the partnership and underlined the importance of the exchange for both cities.



Chinese Consul General Huang Yiyang gives closing remarks. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

## MANNHEIM-KLAIPĖDA

# EXPERT EXCHANGE ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT 2025



On February 11, 2025, a virtual expert exchange on the topic of conversion projects took place between the twin cities of Mannheim and Klaipėda. The aim of the meeting was to exchange experiences on the conversion and cultural transformation of vacant buildings and to explore prospects for future cooperation.

Representatives from Mannheim's Department of Geoinformation and Urban Planning, the Cultural Innovation and Creative Economy Department (Next Mannheim), and the Office of International Affairs participated in the exchange. Klaipėda was represented by the Department of Culture, Tourism, and Sports and the Department of Urban Development.

The participants presented current conversion projects and challenges in Klaipėda, including the reconstruction of St. John's Church, the planned conversion of the central post office building, and the transformation of a former heating plant (Klaipėda Energy) into a cultural site. The Mannheim delegation then presented its own projects, including the conversion of existing buildings such as churches (e.g., the EinTanzHaus) and other conversion areas in the city.

In the discussion, commonalities and differences in the approaches of both cities were recognized and possible starting points for deeper cooperation were identified.

### Delegation trip in September 2025

A Mannheim delegation deepened the partnership in Klaipėda, particularly in the areas of STEM promotion, culture, and youth work.



The STEAM Center in Klaipėda is committed to promoting STEAM subjects among children and young people outside of school. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



Representatives from both city administrations meet to discuss healthcare and prevention. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



## MANNHEIM-BYDGOSZCZ DELEGATION VISIT 2025

On the occasion of the 14th German Senior Citizens' Day, the city of Mannheim welcomed a delegation from Bydgoszcz at the beginning of April 2025. City Councilor Maria Gałęska, Chair of the Senior Citizens' Committee of Bydgoszcz, gave insights into the municipal senior citizens' policy of our twin city during a panel discussion, focusing in particular on the topics of digitalization, mobility, and participation.



**For further information  
see QR code**



Mayor Christian Specht together with the German-Polish Society Mannheim-Ludwigshafen and the delegation from Bydgoszcz. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

## MANNHEIM-WINDSOR DELEGATION VISIT 2025



At the end of July 2025, a delegation from the Canadian twin city of Windsor visited Mannheim. The delegation was led by City Councilor Angelo Marignani, who is also chairman of the International Committee in Windsor.

In various rounds of talks, participants from the city administration and civil society discussed measures with the Canadian guests to strengthen the city partnership, which has existed for 45 years.

A key item on the agenda was the delegation's working meeting with Mayor Christian Specht and representatives of Mannheim's Department of Economic and Structural Development. The aim was to discuss future opportunities for expanding local business activities and promoting economic development in both cities.

Several key areas were identified during the meeting:

- Deepening economic cooperation in the areas of green tech, circular economy, and sustainable mobility.
- Strengthening the exchange of skilled workers and talent, for example through internship and mentoring programs between the two cities.
- Promoting joint projects in the field of energy and infrastructure, including cooperation on renewable energies and energy storage solutions.
- Expanding cultural and social exchange to make the town twinning visible at the social level as well.



Representatives of Mannheim schools and civil society organizations joined the Windsor delegation at the Garden of Twin Cities in the Luisenpark. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

Mayor Christian Specht welcomes guests from the Canadian twin city in the City Council Chamber. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

# 02

## EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS





INTERNATIONAL  
NETWORK EVENTS  
GREEN URBAN  
TRANSFORMATION

Network meeting during the EU-financed IURC Program (Copyright: IURC)

**A**round 20 international experts from 14 North American and European cities gathered in Mannheim from September 18 to 20, 2023, to participate in a professional exchange on the topic of sustainable urban transformation.

Mannheim was selected to host the meeting, which took place as part of the EU-funded International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) program, which the city of Mannheim and its Canadian twin city Windsor participated in since 2021.

The international networking event also marked the conclusion of the two-year funding program, in which, for the first time, all participating North American and European experts—including those from Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Rome—took part together. In the project, each North American city worked in tandem with a European twin city. The event was preceded by several virtual expert discussions as well as intensive professional exchanges between Mannheim and its twin city, Windsor. The collaboration focused on the key topics of mobility, sustainable energy production, and the green transformation of the city.

THE IURC FUNDING PROGRAM NETWORK MEETING SUCCESSFUL PROJECT COMPLETION – RHIZOMATIC CITIES NETWORK

**T**he European Union's IURC North America Program brings European cities together with Canadian and US cities to facilitate knowledge exchange through online formats, study visits, participation in thematic networking events, and capacity building. It is the world's largest cooperation program between European and non-European cities, offering local decision-makers the opportunity to network, gain new perspectives on pressing issues of sustainable urban development, and jointly develop innovative solutions.

The program is funded under the NDICI-Global Europe Partnership Instrument for cooperation with third countries and benefits from strategic support from the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

**T**he Rhizomatic Cities Network is an EU-funded project that aims to improve dialogue and build political networks between European and African cities in an 18-month process. This includes testing new models of integration and cooperation, expanding relationships between representatives of European and African municipalities, social movements, and civil society, and promoting exchange on the handling of cultural assets from colonial contexts. The city of Mannheim, together with the cities of Athens, Bergamo, Braga, Düsseldorf, Marseille, Montpellier, Palermo, and Reggio Calabria, participated in the project, which was financially supported by the European Commission, from May 2022 to October 2023.

Group photo of the project partners of the EU-funded project Rhizomatic Cities Network: Mannheim, Athens, Bergamo, Braga, Düsseldorf, Marseille, Montpellier, and Reggio Calabria (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



MANNHEIM-BECHEM



COOPERATION  
PROJECT ON  
FOREST  
PROTECTION  
SUCCESSFULLY  
CONCLUDED



Everyone pitches in: planting trees on school grounds in Bechem. (Copyright: Ebenezer Issifu)

Ghana is one of the countries with the most rapid deforestation worldwide. Since the 1990s, over 25% of its forests have been lost. The consequences are visible in the town of Bechem, whose population lives mainly from agriculture.

To counteract this development, the city of Mannheim, Bechem, and the Ghana Union Mannheim/Ludwigshafen e.V. launched a joint project in 2023 that combines reforestation, environmental education, and practical training. The aim was to get young people interested in protecting forests and to teach them practical knowledge to care sustainably for trees.

A total of 170 students from four schools in Bechem were trained and planted around 10,000 trees under the guidance of the forestry office. Additional workshops raised awareness of the importance of forests and turned the young people into important multipliers of this message in the community.

The project is the first to emerge from the City of Mannheim's Roundtable on Development Policy and was funded by the Baden-Württemberg Development Cooperation Foundation's state program bewirkt!Ausland.



Workshop with students from Bechem on the topics of tree care, climate, and the environment (Copyright: Ebenezer Issifu)

## MANNHEIM-FREETOWN



MANNHEIM AND  
FREETOWN SHAPE  
THE FUTURE

TOGETHER FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT

(Copyright: Jonathan Weekes)

The cooperation between Mannheim and Freetown, Sierra Leone, shows how municipal exchange can promote sustainable development in concrete terms. One example of this is the visit by Jonathan Weekes, an urban planner in Freetown, as part of a work shadowing program with the city of Mannheim in August 2025.

The aim of the shadowing was for him to gain the experience and expertise that he needs to set up the first municipal urban planning office in Freetown. His colleagues in the Geoinformation and Urban Planning Department of the city of Mannheim gave him in-depth insights into the entire spectrum of municipal planning – from strategic principles to modern mobility planning and climate impact adaptation to concrete implementation on site.

For Freetown, which is suffering from rapid growth and a lack of infrastructure, these ideas are crucial. The cooperation shows how knowledge transfer based on partnership enables cities to actively and sustainably shape their future. The project was funded by the Experts for Municipal Partnerships Worldwide program of the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).



Hands-on sustainable urban development: Experts from the Department of Geoinformation and Urban Planning of the City of Mannheim with their guest from Freetown on an informative tour of the Glückstein district (Copyright: Jonathan Weekes)

## MANNHEIM – CHERNIVTSI



### MANNHEIM RECEIVES GOERDELER PRIZE

The Goerdeler Foundation Prize for Local Politics and International Understanding was awarded to the city of Mannheim in 2025. The award ceremony took place on February 11, 2025, in the council chamber of the New Town Hall in Leipzig. The award was presented under the motto “How can peaceful coexistence in cities be strengthened through international cooperation?” and honors Mannheim’s exemplary cooperation with its Ukrainian twin city Chernivtsi. Mannheim’s commitment to its longstanding twin city Chişinău (Moldova), which has also faced major challenges since the outbreak of the war, was also taken into account. Both Chernivtsi and Chişinău receive refugees from the frontline of Russia’s war in Ukraine. Chernivtsi provides for up to 60,000 internally displaced persons, while Chişinău provides for approximately 40,000 refugees from Ukraine.



Presentation of the Goerdeler Prize by mayor of Leipzig Burkhard Jung (Copyright: City of Leipzig)



The gait trainer in use in Chernivtsi (Copyright: City of Chernivtsi)

### NEW REHAB CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF WAR

In 2024 and 2025, Mannheim’s cooperation with Chernivtsi was centered around support for the establishment of a rehabilitation center with Polyclinic No. 2, which serves the people of Chernivtsi, veterans, and those injured in the war. The city of Mannheim supplied high-quality medical equipment to modernize the rehabilitation center, including a gait trainer to help patients regain their ability to walk, a finger-hand device, and other medical equipment. An important component was the transfer of knowledge in the field of physical and mental health. This enabled experts to further their training and network with institutions in Mannheim and Heidelberg.

Exchanges took place with the Schmieder Clinics in Heidelberg, the ZAR Rehabilitation Center in Mannheim, the Central Institute for Mental Health (ZI), and the Center for Psychosocial Medicine at Heidelberg University Hospital, among others. Mannheim University Hospital also supported the project in the field of medical technology. The project was coordinated by the Department for International and European Affairs and Protocol.

### HUMANITARIAN AID

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Mannheim has taken numerous measures to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Chernivtsi and Chişinău, while also establishing sustainable structures. Among other things, in 2022 Mannheim’s City Council allocated a special budget of one million euros for humanitarian aid. Together with donations from the people of Mannheim and grants from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, relief supplies valued at around 1.7 million euros were delivered to Mannheim’s Ukrainian twin city, as well as to Chişinău and Mannheim’s Polish twin city Bydgoszcz.

Mannheim’s aid included food, school equipment, solar panels, pipe systems to secure the water supply, and generators.



Stadtraumservice employee loads relief supplies (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



## GERMAN- UKRAINIAN PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE

Mayor Specht speaks at panel discussion at the Ukraine Recovery Conference  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)



Mannheim's mayor Christian Specht and Chernivtsi's mayor Klichuk in a joint interview  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)



It is definitely a step in the right direction that the importance of municipal city twinning for current support and reconstruction is being recognized”

Mayor Christian Specht

The conference provided an opportunity for the mayors of Mannheim and its western Ukrainian twin city Chernivtsi to meet. The first official meeting between Mayor Roman Klichuk and Mayor Christian Specht was marked by intensive discussions on the key topics of the partnership and further future cooperation. The conference took place in the run-up to the important European Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) in Rome.

Davide La Cecilia, the Italian government's special representative for the reconstruction of Ukraine, joined the URC preparatory panel in Münster via live video link. Mayor Christian Specht represented the voice of German municipalities on the panel: “It is definitely a step in the right direction that the importance of municipal city twinning for current support and reconstruction is being recognized. City-to-city cooperation is one of the most important tools for local reconstruction in Ukrainian municipalities and shows that urban diplomacy is recognized as an important part of international cooperation at the national and European level.”

## MUNICIPAL VEHICLES

Since 2023, numerous municipal vehicles have been sent to Chernivtsi. The donations are an important source of support for maintaining the municipal infrastructure in the twin city.

The support for the Ukrainian twin city's vehicle fleet ranged from decommissioned vehicles from the municipal urban services department (Stadtraumservice) to a turntable ladder vehicle from the Mannheim fire department and commercial vehicles from the procurement package of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) project for improving civil protection in municipal partnerships with Ukraine, which was financed through federal funds.

Municipal utility vehicles on their way to Chernivtsi  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)





**THE CITY OF MANNHEIM CURRENTLY MAINTAINS A TOTAL OF 13 CITY PARTNERSHIPS, ONE FRIENDSHIP CITY, AND TWO ADDITIONAL COOPERATION PARTNERSHIPS ON FOUR CONTINENTS.**

Mannheim's city partnerships reflect a long tradition of internationalism in practice. Among the oldest connections are Swansea and Toulon, with which the city has had close ties since the 1950s. With its latest partnership with Beyoğlu, which was added in 2024, Mannheim is also sending a signal of openness and the continuous expansion of its global relations.

# TWIN CITIES, FRIENDSHIP CITIES, AND COOPERATION PARTNERS



## TWIN CITIES

**BERLIN – CHARLOTTENBURG-  
WILMERSDORF, GERMANY**  
Twin city since 1962

**BEYOĖLU, TÜRKIYE**  
Twin city since 2024

**BYDGOSZCZ, POLAND**  
Twin city since 1991

**CHISINĂU, MOLDOVA**  
Twin city since 1989

**CHERNIVTSI, UKRAINE**  
Twin city since 2022

**HAIFA, ISRAEL**  
Twin city since 2009

**KLAPĖIDA, LITHUANIA**  
Twin city since 2002

**QINGDAO, CHINA**  
Twin city since 2016

**RIESA, GERMANY**  
Twin city since 1988

**SWANSEA, UNITED KINGDOM**  
Twin city since 1957

**TOULON, FRANCE**  
Twin city since 1959

**WINDSOR, CANADA**  
Twin city since 1980

**ZHENJIANG, CHINA**  
Twin city since 2004

## FRIENDSHIP CITY

**EL VIEJO, NICARAGUA**  
Friendship city since 1989

## COOPERATION PARTNERS

**FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE**  
Project partner since 2021

**WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**  
Project partner since 2022

## MANNHEIM-WINDHOEK



The partnership between Mannheim and the Namibian capital Windhoek has developed into a lively and forward-looking exchange in recent years. The connection between the two cities has been in place since 2020 and was officially reaffirmed with the signing of a joint declaration of intent in April 2022. Since then, the two cities have worked together on the subject of coming to terms with the colonial era and in various cultural projects.

## GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Two delegation visits from Windhoek in September and November 2025 clearly illustrate how diverse and intensive this cooperation has become. The delegation visit from Windhoek in September 2025 focused on global responsibility and sustainable urban development. A four-member delegation visited Mannheim directly following the 6th Partnership Conference Between Municipalities from Germany and Sub-Saharan Africa in Giessen, organized by the Service Agency Communities in One World. At the Franklin conversion site, they gained an impression of how Mannheim is shaping urban transformation – a topic that is also of central importance to the city of Windhoek. In the U-Halle on Spinelli, the delegation took part in the opening of Fairtrade Weeks and encountered numerous local initiatives committed to sustainable economic structures and fair supply chains.

The highlight was a panel discussion on fair trade, during which Deputy Mayor Clemencia Hanases presented Windhoek's perspective. Her exchange with the audience showed how valuable dialogue between municipalities from different regions of the world is for a common understanding of global justice. The visit made it clear that the partnership between Mannheim and Windhoek is built on a strong sense of responsibility and is focused on supporting sustainable urban development and fair economic relations.

### EQUAL PARTNERS

## MANNHEIM AND WINDHOEK IN EXCHANGE



Mayor Christian Specht and Mayor Ndesihafela Larandja from Windhoek with the two artists at the opening of the photo exhibition Margaret Courtney-Clarke: Geographies of Drought. (Copyright: Michelle Striegel, rem)



The deputy mayor of Windhoek, Clemencia Hanases, on stage at the opening event of Fairtrade Weeks in Mannheim (Copyright: Mr. Schwerdt)

### When art brings people together

...it can lead to exciting connections between creativity, city history, and plans for the future. This was exactly what happened during the second delegation visit from Windhoek in November 2025, which focused on the topics of art and photography. An eight-member delegation led by Mayor Ndesihafela Larandja traveled to Mannheim to open the exhibition Margaret Courtney-Clarke: Geographies of Drought together with Mayor Christian Specht.

The project is part of an intense cooperation between the Reiss-Engelhorn Museum and the City Museum of Windhoek, supported by the International Office of the City of Mannheim. Since 2022, the project participants have been working together on a photographic exhibition that combines colonial history, social realities in Namibia, and artistic reflection.

# 03

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND CITY DIPLOMACY



From October 6-7, 2025, Mayor Christian Specht was one of two German representatives to participate in the Forum of Mayors at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

## UN FORUM OF MAYORS IN GENEVA



At this high-level international event, he spoke about a variety of pressing urban issues, including affordable housing. The Forum is one of the few opportunities for local governments to make their voices heard within the UN system. Given the central role that the United Nations plays in addressing global challenges, this exchange is particularly important.

On the sidelines of the forum, Mayor Specht met for a private conversation with UNECE Executive Secretary Tatiana Molcean. They discussed a number of issues relevant to Mannheim, including measures to adapt to climate change.

The forum was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, one of the five regional commissions of the United Nations that works to promote economic integration.

Mayor Christian Specht participates in the UN Forum of Mayors (Copyright: City of Mannheim)



## REELECTION TO THE EFUS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In July 2024, the General Assembly of the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) took place in Liège, Belgium. During the event, the city of Mannheim was re-elected as a member of the Executive Committee. Mannheim also continues to hold the position of vice president within EFUS.

In July 2024, the General Assembly of the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) took place in Liège, Belgium. During the event, the city of Mannheim was re-elected as a member of the Executive Committee. Mannheim also continues to hold the position of vice president within EFUS.

EFUS is a network recognized by national and European institutions that promotes the exchange of experiences and mutual support between authorities across political affiliations, based on the principle of cities helping cities. Deputy mayor responsible for security, Dr. Volker Proffen, reported from the event: "Through this international platform, we can contribute our experiences from Mannheim, exchange ideas with other major European cities, learn from their insights, and all benefit from one another."

The European Forum for Urban Security is a European city network dedicated to crime prevention and urban security. It was founded in Barcelona in 1987 under the auspices of the Council of Europe and brings together around 250 cities and regions from 17 countries.

The city of Mannheim has been actively involved in the network since it joined in 2010 and, as a reelected member of the Executive Committee, will continue to play a key role in shaping the strategic direction and thematic focus on security-related issues. This involves projects dealing with issues such as safety in nightlife, prevention of radicalization, and violence against women.



Former mayor Peter Kurz takes part in a panel discussion at the Brussels Urban Summit (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

## MANNHEIM STRENGTHENS THE VOICE OF CITIES AT THE BRUSSELS URBAN

From June 12 to 15, 2023, the Brussels Urban Summit took place in Brussels, attended by around 2,000 participants from over 400 cities worldwide – including former mayor Peter Kurz and employees of the city of Mannheim. The summit's theme was Urban Solutions for Global Challenges and it was organized by the international city networks EUROCITIES, Metropolis, and the OECD Champion Mayors.

The international city summit addressed global challenges such as climate change, sustainable urban development, migration, social cohesion, and democracy. Workshops were held to take stock of progress and develop perspectives for a fair, sustainable urban future. Speeches emphasized the central role of European cities, including Mannheim, in energy transition, digitalization, and climate neutrality. Mayor Kurz highlighted the importance of international city networks like Eurocities for exchange, joint learning, and political influence. He also noted that cities must be more closely involved in national and international political processes in order to achieve global goals, as key transformations take place at the local level.

## U7 MAYORS SUMMIT IN JAPAN

Former mayor Peter Kurz took part in the third U7 Mayors Summit in Tokyo in March 2023, together with other city leaders from the G7 countries. The aim of the meeting was to strengthen the role of cities in the G7 process and to formulate concrete expectations for the Japanese G7 presidency.

At the heart of the Urban7 is the conviction that policy is more effective when cities are actively involved in national and international decision-making processes. Under the German G7 presidency, urban issues were given greater weight. Their messages on climate change, the reconstruction of Ukrainian cities, and the housing shortage were included in official G7 declarations. The mayors adopted a joint message highlighting cities as defenders of peace and democracy and emphasizing sustainable urban development as a driver of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The U7 declaration also calls for more multi-level governance. At the summit in Japan, Mayor Kurz and his colleagues presented the declaration to representatives of the Japanese G7 presidency.



Former mayor Peter Kurz meets with Japanese ministers to discuss the Urban7 initiative.

(Copyright: City of Mannheim)



## BENEFITTING TOGETHER FROM GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS



Mayor Christian Specht presents French Ambassador François Delattre with a gift. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

The City of Mannheim’s cooperation with the diplomatic corps is an essential part of its international work and has played a central role in its political, economic, and social development for many years. The city regularly welcomes diplomats from all over the world to discuss key issues for the future with the mayor—from integration and education to security and Mannheim’s economic attractiveness for international companies.

These diplomatic contacts not only strengthen the work of the city administration, but also have a direct positive impact on the lives of Mannheim’s residents. In recent years, Mannheim has welcomed ambassadors and consuls general from countries such as Chile, France, Namibia, New Zealand, Poland, China, India, Japan, Romania, Türkiye, and the USA. The encounters range from professional working visits to ceremonial receptions, supported by the Salon Diplomatique, which promotes international exchange in Mannheim.

## FRANCO-GERMAN FRIENDSHIP IN FOCUS

A highlight of these international encounters was the visit of French Ambassador François Delattre, who signed the city’s Golden Book during an event organized with Salon Diplomatique in November 2023.



Mayor Christian Specht welcomes Indian Consul General Shatrughna Sinha to City Hall. (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

In his speech, Delattre emphasized the special significance of Franco-German friendship and praised the commitment of cities and their citizens as the driving force behind this partnership. Mayor Christian Specht also stressed that city partnerships in particular have made a decisive contribution to healing the deep wounds of European history. The partnership between Mannheim and Toulon, established in 1959, was an early symbol of peace and understanding. The relationship continues to connect generations to this day. Clubs, choirs, civil society groups, and start-ups maintain close contacts. The city profits from joint projects between city administrations. Student exchanges provide young people with valuable international experience.

This engagement is also reflected in many ongoing citizen-led projects. In their speeches, Delattre and Specht noted that democracy, peace, and European cooperation cannot be taken for granted. In the face of global challenges, such as climate change, social polarization, and growing anti-Semitism, cities bear a special responsibility. Mannheim is therefore consciously focusing on exchange across national borders in order to develop joint solutions and strengthen European values.

# 04

JOIN US!



## SUPPORTING EXCHANGE



Reception hosted by İnan Güney, Mayor of Beyoğlu. (Copyright: Michael Kahmann, Martin Keller)

City partnerships are brought to life by encounters between residents. That is why the city of Mannheim supports schools, associations, and other institutions with financial subsidies for travel expenses for exchange with our twin and friendship cities. This support strengthens intercultural dialogue and helps Mannheim, as a cosmopolitan city, to actively shape its international relations.

The city of Mannheim is committed to making residents aware of these partnerships. We would like to thank all engaged residents for their commitment and interest in international work.

- Town twinning thrives on encounters: Mannheim maintains close contacts with its partner and friendship cities around the world.
- Financial support: Schools, associations, and organizations can receive financial subsidies for travel expenses to enable encounters with people from the twin cities.
- Transparency and exchange: The city publishes a final report on the funded projects on its website so that citizens can gain insight into the results and experiences.

### HOW DOES THE CITY OF MANNHEIM PROVIDE SUPPORT?

- Subsidies (based on distance) for meetings outside Mannheim
- Subsidies for events in Mannheim
- Subsidies for virtual meetings

In addition, eligible program costs for guests, e.g., for a city tour, workshops at the Technoseum, or a guided tour of the Kunsthalle, can be covered.

[Further information on the application process can be found here:](#)



# SUPPORTED ACTIVITIES 2023-2025



Copyright: Kristina Hummelsberger



Copyright: Piotr Pilkowski

## SCHOOL EXCHANGES

### Haifa (Israel):

- Lessing Gymnasium (suspended in 2024 due to the Middle East conflict, 2025 meeting in Mannheim)

### Toulon (France):

- Lessing Gymnasium
- Werner-von-Siemens-Schule
- Ludwig-Frank-Gymnasium (every two years, no meetings in 2024)
- Johann-Sebastian-Bach-Gymnasium (every two years, no meetings in 2024)
- Integrierte Gesamtschule Mannheim-Herzogenried (2023)
- Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium

### Bydgoszcz (Poland):

- Lessing Gymnasium
- Geschwister-Scholl-Gymnasium

### Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf:

- Ludwig-Frank-Gymnasium (2023)

### Beyoğlu (Türkiye):

- Carl-Benz-Schule (2025)

Reports on the projects can be found here:



## OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY MEETINGS WITH TWIN CITIES

### Toulon:

- St. Lioba Parish (annual meeting in Toulon or Mannheim)
- Seckenheim Choir (every two years in Toulon or Mannheim)
- DJK Käfertal-Waldhof (first meeting in Toulon in 2025)

### Bydgoszcz:

- Anniversary of the German-Polish Society MA-LU (2023)
- Bydgoszcz theme days at the Mannheim Abendakademie (German-Polish Society MA-LU) (2024)
- German-Polish Society trip (2024)

### Berlin Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf:

- Konkordien-Kantorei Mannheim (first time in 2024)

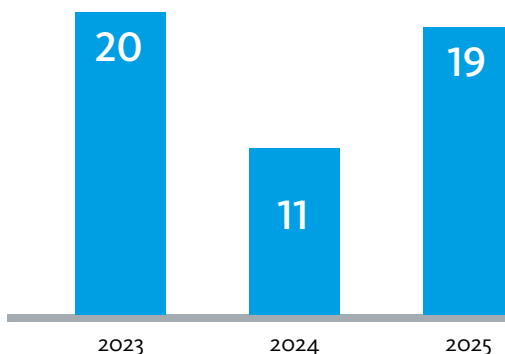
### Chişinău (Moldova):

- Mannheim Abendakademie (2023)

### Swansea (Wales):

- GV TeuTonia 1862 e.V. (2023)

## NUMBER OF SUPPORTED ENCOUNTERS



European policy has been an increasingly important issue for local authorities for some time now. Around 85% of legislation enacted in Germany is now based on European regulations, and around 70% of decisions made at the EU level have an impact on local government affairs.

TOGETHER FOR MANNHEIM  
 PROFESSIONAL  
 DEVELOPMENT  
 PROGRAM TO  
 STRENGTHEN  
 EUROPEAN UNION  
 EXPERTISE

Parlamentarium in Brussels during the 3-day trip to Brussels in November 2025 (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

The trip also provided valuable impetus for the implementation of European initiatives at the municipal level. The discussions showed how closely programs such as ESF+ are linked to urban practice and how European networks strengthen professional exchange and cooperation in the long term. Visits to the Baden-Württemberg State Representation, the Association of German Cities, and the European Office of Local Authorities of Baden-Württemberg highlighted the central role of cities, where so much European legislation is implemented. Other highlights included discussions in the European Parliament, expert presentations at the European Commission, and an exchange with the Directorate-General for Employment. The group also gained insights into the workings of the Council of the European Union.

BRUSSELS UP CLOSE – STUDY TRIP  
 STRENGTHENS EU EXPERTISE

From November 12 to 14, 2025, 14 municipal employees traveled to Brussels as part of a professional development program on strengthening EU expertise. After three seminars in Mannheim, participants spent three intensive days in Brussels – where EU policy is shaped. The participants gained direct insights into decision-making processes and experienced the EU institutions up close.

Many were particularly impressed by the openness with which the delegation was received. It became clear how many committed people in Brussels work every day to raise awareness of the perspectives and concerns of cities – for example, as part of the EU Mission 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities. The visit to the European Parliament, on the day the Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence was passed, left a lasting impression on the participants.



We try to impart future skills through training so that city employees can actively shape Europe and recognize and seize opportunities.”

Ellen Röck



Direct contact with the European institutions has shown that Europe is lived locally – and Mannheim is right in the middle of it.”

Maria Wagenblaß



Group photo of participants in the three-day study trip as part of the professional development program on strengthening EU expertise in November 2025 (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

The professional development program on strengthening EU expertise consists of three seminars in Mannheim and the hands-on highlight: three days in the heart of Europe. Brussels is where politics are shaped and the future of Europe is decided. Our program will continue in 2026. The new call for applications for Mannheim employees is already in preparation and will be published shortly on Desknet.

# MANNHEIM HELPS SHAPE EUROPE

## EUROPEAN COMPETITION

The European Competition is Germany's oldest school competition on European topics and takes place with a different theme annually. It is aimed at students of all school types and invites them to engage creatively with current issues relating to European integration. The city of Mannheim has participated actively in this competition for many years.

### The theme for 2023: Europe is colorful

Seven schools in Mannheim took part, and 60 students received awards, including three national prize winners. The award ceremony took place on May 26, 2023, in the City Council Chamber.

### 2024: Europe (un)limited

A total of 62 students received prizes, including 16 state and three national prizes. The award ceremony was held on June 14, 2024, in conjunction with the Europa-Union Mannheim.

### 2025: Europe? But of course! – Special successes for Mannheim

Five Mannheim schools took part, and 67 students received awards – including a remarkable 38 state prizes and eight federal prizes. The award ceremony took place on June 27, 2025, in Mannheim's City Council Chamber. First Deputy Mayor Diana Pretzell highlighted the great creativity of the entries and emphasized the importance of European values for young people.

## THE EUROPEAN COMPETITION...

offers students of all ages the opportunity to develop creative ideas for the future of Europe. Every year there is a new theme and a variety of ways to submit your work. Schools in Mannheim regularly participate successfully – join in and help shape Europe!

The competition is held under the patronage of the Federal President and is supported by the federal government, the states, and local partners.

For more information, visit [www.europaescher-wettbewerb.de](http://www.europaescher-wettbewerb.de).

## EUROPE PRIZE

The city of Mannheim was awarded the first-ever Europe Prize in the urban districts category in a nationwide competition promoting good municipal European work. The award recognizes Mannheim's strong commitment to European cooperation and was presented on Europe Day 2025 at Villa Reitzenstein by Evelyne Gebhardt, state chairperson of the Europa-Union Baden-Württemberg. In a press release, Mayor Christian Specht highlighted the special importance of municipal European work in the face of global challenges. First Deputy Mayor Diana Pretzell accepted the award on behalf of the city. She emphasized that Europe is part of everyday life in Mannheim and that the city benefits from professional European networking and project work. She particularly highlighted the Local Green Deal, which implements European sustainability goals at the local level in an innovative way.



First Deputy Mayor Diana Pretzell accepts the Europe Prize on behalf of the city of Mannheim. (Copyright: EUBW Julian Rettig)

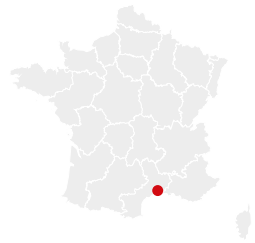


Fountains at the water tower (Copyright: City of Mannheim)

## FLAGS AND FOUNTAINS RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

To raise awareness about the European elections on June 9, 2024, the city of Mannheim organized a special public event at Friedrichsplatz. At nightfall, the fountains at the water tower were illuminated in the colors of the European flag. In addition, European flags, as well as flags from the Association of German Cities, were installed around the square. With the motto "Your vote, your city, your Europe," residents were called upon to exercise their right to vote. The measure was implemented in cooperation with the MVV, which operates the fountains on behalf of the city.

# INTERNSHIPS ABROAD IN MANNHEIM'S PARTNER CITIES



## TOULON INSIGHTS INTO WORKING METHODS AND THE FRENCH WAY OF LIFE

Noelia Weyherter, a dual student at Mannheim's City Hall, spent four weeks in Toulon, Mannheim's French twin city, in September 2023. She gained valuable professional and personal experience while abroad. She worked at the Palais des Congrès Neptune, the city's convention center, where she assisted with several events. She especially enjoyed the Forum des Associations. She learned about event management and gained insights into the differences between protocol and working methods in the two countries.

In addition to organizing conferences, she took part in an official memorial service and improved her French language skills. She also enjoyed getting to know Toulon in her time off, especially with her hosts, Alycia and Pierre. She explored beaches, markets, and destinations such as Porquerolles and Le Castellet. French habits quickly became part of her life, and her hosts became close friends.

Her conclusion: the internship was a great linguistic and cultural enrichment and encouraged her to take a chance and move abroad. Her thanks go to the Department of International Affairs, Europe and Protocol, the Palais Neptune, and Alycia and Pierre.

Noelia Weyherter, intern in Mannheim's twin city Toulon  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)

## KLAIPĖDA MY INTERNSHIP ABROAD IN KLAIPĖDA, LITHUANIA



### "Klaipėda – where is that and what is there?"

I heard this question often before I left for my internship abroad. The Lithuanian port city is the third largest and oldest city in the country after Vilnius and Kaunas. Still known to many as Memel, much of its German past remains evident today: Art Nouveau buildings, German inscriptions, and associations such as the Simon Dach House.

As part of my dual studies in trade fair, congress, and event management at the city of Mannheim, I was given the opportunity to complete a four-week internship in a twin city. After intensive research, I decided on Klaipėda. I obtained an internship through Honorary Consul Arunas Baublys. Together, we developed a plan that would allow me to gain as much insight as possible into the activities of the culture and events department and the mayor's office in a short period of time.

In my free time, I explored the old town, the many sculptures, and the beach. Highlights included the Curonian Spit and the Sea Festival, where I even got to take part in the big parade. This internship was a valuable personal and professional experience that I can highly recommend to all students.

Leonie Jaus, dual student at the City of Mannheim  
July 2024



Parade at the Sea Festival in Klaipėda. Intern in Mannheim's twin city Klaipėda  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)



Fishing village of Nida, Curonian Spit  
(Copyright: City of Mannheim)



Nico Sälzler – Intern with the City of Mannheim, Department for International Affairs, Europe, and Protocol (Copyright: Nico Sälzler)

## CITY OF MANNHEIM

### INTERNSHIP REPORT – DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, EUROPE, AND PROTOCOL

My internship in the International Affairs, Europe, and Protocol Department of the City of Mannheim offered me fascinating insights into international work at the municipal level. In the Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability, I worked on European and global issues and experienced how Mannheim maintains its foreign relations with twin cities and networks such as EUROCI-TIES and Connective Cities.

I was involved in preparing delegation visits, researching political actors, and compiling briefings. Attending conferences, UN meetings, and city events showed me how cities are actively shaping global challenges.

#### INTERNSHIPS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, EUROPE, AND PROTOCOL

We offer bachelor’s and master’s students studying public administration, politics, European studies, and international economics and social sciences internships (for course credit only) lasting at least eight weeks, providing practical insights into the international work of the city of Mannheim.

You will learn about the city’s relationships with twin and friendship cities and gain insights into international networks and EU-related topics. The content will be tailored to the requirements of your degree program.

What you can expect: a dedicated team, varied tasks, and valuable experience in an international, political environment that will strengthen your personal and professional development.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.mannheim.de/de/stadt-gestalten/europaund-internationales/mach-mit/praktikum>

Send applications to:

[Catherine-Lisa.Schleicher@mannheim.de](mailto:Catherine-Lisa.Schleicher@mannheim.de)

At the same time, it became clear how important strategic communication, creativity, and cooperation with civil society are. The internship provided me with valuable professional and practical skills in organization, teamwork, and intercultural communication.

Nico Sälzler, M.Sc. International Administration and Global Governance, University of Gothenburg, May - July 2025

## WINDSOR

### INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE – IN CANADA

From September 2 to October 30, I completed an internship at Invest WindsorEssex (IWE) in Windsor, Ontario. The regional economic development organization is responsible not only for the city, but for the entire surrounding county. Within the organization, I was assigned to the Business Expansion and Retention team.

At the beginning, I mainly took on organizational tasks related to the Emerging Technologies Conference, including registering participants via Eventbrite. I also worked on a list of companies in the greenhouse/agri-business sector, which I systematically reviewed and filtered. I then contacted relevant companies to encourage them to participate in a regional business database.

As the conference drew nearer, I provided more intensive support to the team, particularly with regis-

tration, sending emails via HubSpot, and general communication management. The coordination tasks gave me valuable insights into the planning of large events.

Another important part of my internship was attending numerous events and company visits, including an AI Summit and a visit to BASF Windsor. In addition, I was in contact with the city of Windsor to further strengthen the partnership with Mannheim. Overall, the internship was extremely enriching, both professionally and personally, and showed me how international cooperation is put into practice.

Simon Völkel, dual student at the city of Mannheim September/October 2025



Company visit at BASF in Windsor, Canada (Copyright: Simon Völkel)



## BUILDING BRIDGES IN A CONNECTED WORLD



On February 26, 2025, the City Partnership Network Meeting took place in Mannheim – an event organized by the city of Mannheim and the Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e.V. (City Twinning Association).

Around 60 guests attended the networking event, including representatives from schools and associations, the Institut Français, the German-Polish Society, the German-Turkish Institute, and Klaus Schlappner, initiator of the German-Chinese youth soccer tournament. Many interested residents with no previous connection to town twinning also took the opportunity to find out how to get involved. Mayor Christian Specht spoke about the importance of international cooperation and described Mannheim's 13 twin cities as important bridges between cultures. These connections act as strategic networks in science, education, sports, and culture and are reflected in concrete exchanges with Toulon, Beyoğlu, Klaipėda Windsor, and others. Many of these connections can be felt in everyday life – in environmental protection, economic cooperation, or humanitarian projects such as aid for Chernivtsi (Ukraine).

## EXCHANGING ABOUT NEW PROJECTS AND IDEAS

The meeting provided an opportunity to exchange about new projects and ideas. Mayor Specht noted that town twinning plays a special role, especially in difficult times, as it connects people and cultures. He called for new initiatives to be developed and for the power of these relationships to be used to create a more peaceful and just world. Mannheim will continue to strengthen its partnerships and expand cooperation. This is important because, in the face of global challenges, cities are often the first to be affected and must work together to develop new solutions.

## TABLE OF NATIONS – CELEBRATION OF DIVERSITY AND TOGETHERNESS ON TOULONPLATZ

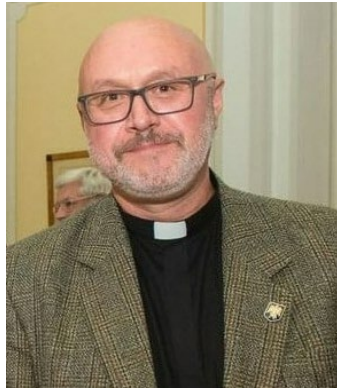
On Saturday, May 10, 2025, the Reiss-Engelhorn Museum and the city of Mannheim invited guests to the Table of Nations at Toulonplatz. Mayor Christian Specht opened the festivities, sending a signal of Mannheim's cosmopolitanism and the peaceful coexistence of cultures. The event offered a colorful program of music, dance, hands-on activities for children, and culinary specialties from around the world. Around 30 intercultural associations and institutions presented traditional dishes from countries they had roots in, which guests could sample and learn about. A large table with photographs of the dishes and QR codes for the recipes invited guests to try their hand at cooking themselves. "Food and drink bring people together and build bridges between cultures," Specht noted in his opening speech.



Table of Nations at Toulonplatz  
(Copyright: rem)

As a partner of the Reiss-Engelhorn Museum, the city of Mannheim provided financial and organizational support for intercultural exchange. The event served as a powerful example of how cultural events strengthen the local community.

Mannheim is strengthened by people and initiatives that take responsibility and are committed to open, supportive cooperation. Below, we share the stories of some of those people and organizations making an impact in Mannheim.



**PETRO BOKANOV**

**P**etro Bokanov has been fostering connections with Ukraine and helping people in need for many years. As a priest of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, he supported wounded soldiers and civilians and served as a military chaplain in eastern Ukraine. Since the attack on Ukraine in 2022, he has been coordinating pastoral care and volunteer workers to help the wounded and support refugees throughout Germany. As a medical chaplain and representative of the social services of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in Germany, he combines humanitarian engagement with organizational

responsibility. Based in Mannheim for almost two decades, he is also involved in community work and supports the Ukrainian communities in Frankfurt and Mannheim.

Priest Petro Bokanov  
(Copyright Petro Bokanov)

**STRONG CIVIL SOCIETY, STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**

Mannheim is a cosmopolitan city—shaped by people who are passionate about international engagement. Numerous associations and institutions contribute to strengthening and further expanding Mannheim’s global connections through their volunteer work. They promote intercultural exchange, support the internationalization of the city, and create spaces in which friendly relationships between residents of Mannheim and our twin cities can grow.

We would like to present two of these partner organizations as examples and express our sincere gratitude to them— as well as to all those we cannot mention by name – for their tremendous commitment.

**MANNHEIM HILFT OHNE GRENZEN E.V.**

**T**he non-profit association Mannheim hilft ohne Grenzen (Mannheim Helps Without Borders) was founded in 2020. The association connects Mannheim residents who have roots in countries around the world. These residents share the goal of working together on development cooperation policy, initiating international aid projects, and taking on global responsibility. Their aim is to establish networks and create structures that have a lasting impact. The idea is that aid can be provided more effectively when people who are familiar with the region and culture and, ideally, have local networks, take action.

The initiative for the association goes back to the joint commitment of the city of Mannheim and Mannheim residents with Turkish roots to implement a development policy education project for the Turkish city of Kilis. The long-term goal of the association is to extend its commitment to other regions in the Global South and thus make a sustainable contribution to development policy.

[www.mannheimohnegrenzen.de](http://www.mannheimohnegrenzen.de)



**FÖRDERVEREIN STÄDTEPARTNERSCHAFTEN MANNHEIM E.V.**

**F**ounded in 2002, Förderverein Städtepartnerschaften Mannheim e.V. (City Twinning Association) supports the international relations of the city of Mannheim with its twin cities through conceptual, organizational, and financial contributions. The association organizes its own events and supports the activities of other associations that serve to establish and maintain partnership contacts with the twin cities.

The association helps welcome visitors from the twin and friendship cities invited by the city of Mannheim. In cooperation with partner friendship associations, the association offers citizen trips to the twin and friendship cities.

[www.partnerstadt-mannheim.de](http://www.partnerstadt-mannheim.de)



APPROXIMATELY

6.6 MILLION  
EUROS

Total amount of EU funding raised by the  
City of Mannheim

160

Consultations on EU funding programs  
for other departments and municipal  
enterprises

342

Speeches, position papers, and other  
documents drafted regarding European  
and international topics

THE INTERNATIONAL  
OFFICE IN NUMBERS

18

Departments and municipal enterprises that regularly  
represent the interests of the city of Mannheim in  
international networks and institutions

43

International delegations welcomed  
by the City of Mannheim

672

Young Mannheim residents who participated in a  
city-supported exchange program with a twin city

## LEGAL NOTICE

Publisher: City of Mannheim Office for EU Affairs and Global Sustainability

Layout/Design: Matthias Coenen

Editorial Team: Stefanie Miller, Maria Wagenblaß

### Image Credits:

City of Toulon (5, 6) / City of Mannheim (cover photo, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32) / Thomas Tröster (8) / Andreas Henn (9) / Jonathan Weekes (12, 15) / IURC (13, 35) / Ebenzer Issifu (14) / City of Leipzig (16) / City of Chernivtsi (12, 16) / Reiss-Engelhorn Museum (20, 32) / Mr. Schwerdt (20) / Michael Kahmann, Martin Keller (26) / Kristina Hummelsberger (27) / Piotr Pilkowski (27) / EUBW Julian Rettig (29) / Nico Sälzer (31) / Simon Völkel (31) / Petro Bokanov (33)

January 2026

## KONTAKT

Department of International and European Affairs and Protocol

Department Head:

Cathérine Lisa Schleicher

Rathaus E 5

68159 Mannheim

+49 621 293 9503



STADT **MANNHEIM**<sup>2</sup>

International and European  
Affairs and Protocol