

Städtepartnerschaften Bergisch Gladbach

Bergisch Gladbachs twin towns:

Bourgoin-Jallieu

Luton

Velsen

Joinville-le-Pont

Runnymede

Marijampole

Limassol

Pszczyna

Beit Jala

Ganey Tikva

Butscha





Bourgoin-Jallieu

Bourgoin-Jallieu with its population of 26.000 is situated in the Département Isère in the middle of the Rhône-Alpes region, which is one of the most important economic regions in France. The geographical location of the city is characterised by the river Bourbe and the Plains between Lyon to the north-west (42 km away) and Grenoble to the south-east (64 km away).

The twinning Agreement was ratified on the French National Holiday – otherwise known as Bastille Day – in 1956 making Bergisch Gladbach one of the very first eighteen German cities to twin with cities in France.

Together with Luton and Velsen, Bourgoin-Jallieu is one of Bergisch Gladbach's oldest twin cities. The 'Arbeitskreis Deutsch-Französische Freundschaft' was founded in 2013 during the anniversary year of the Élysée Agreement and is responsible for both twin cities resp. towns in France, Bourgoin Jallieu and Joinville-le-Pont. It organizes various meetings and cultural events and has contributed much to successfully rekindling twinning with both cities.



Bourgoin-Jallieu

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Luton

Bergisch Gladbach's twinning with Luton enjoys a long history dating back to 1956. Luton is home to 240.000 inhabitants and is located approximately 50 km north of London in the east of England. As a Unitary Authority it has its own independent administration. The proximity to the capital and the good transport links have lent Luton an industrial character.

As early as 1951, even before the ratification of the twinning Agreement, there were lively exchanges between youth groups in both towns. This has continued over time and has since included school trips, exchanges and artists' meetings.

New impetus for the revitalisation of the city partnerships in England is taking place thanks to the 'Arbeitskreis Partnerschaft mit Runnymede und Luton' which was founded in December 2014. The contacts that have been established and are now stable. Anyone interested in being part of the working-group is most welcome.



Luton

Luton

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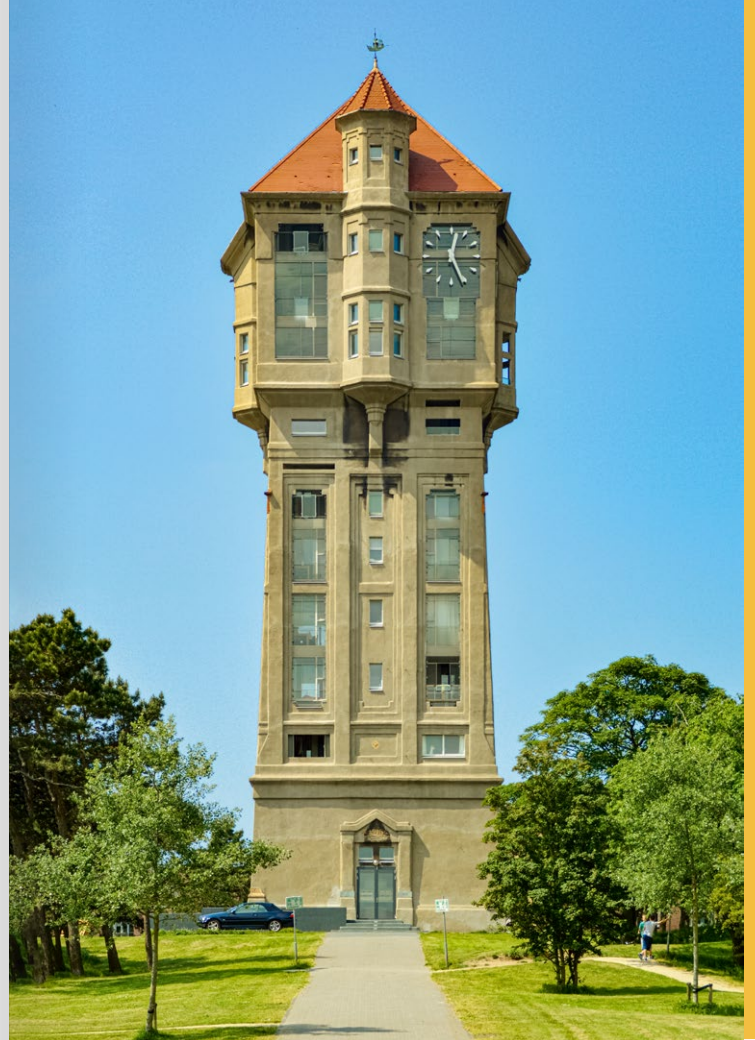


Velsen

Together with Bourgoin-Jallieu and Luton, the Dutch city of Velsen also belongs to the first cities with which Bergisch Gladbach signed a twinning Agreement. Located in the province of North Holland at the mouth of the North Sea Canal, it lies only 22 km from the capital city of Amsterdam. In the 19th century, the suburb of IJmuiden was a port of Amsterdam having a strong influence on its' industrial development. Today the community of Velsen numbers some 67.000 inhabitants.

Since the signing of the twinning Agreement in 1956 numerous activities have taken place between the citizens of the two cities. Today, Dietrich-Bonhoeffer-Gymnasium and Ichthus Lyceum in Velsen still regularly organize exchanges. In 2005, the relationship between the two cities attained a special significance when Bergisch Gladbach and Velsen both donated moneys to support Velsen's twin city Galle, Sri Lanka after it had been devastated by the catastrophic tsunami on Christmas Day 2004.

One is looking for people in Bergisch Gladbach who want to take care of the intensification of relations between the two cities. The city of Bergisch Gladbach would like to help in establishment of a Committee (Arbeitskreis).



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Joinville-le-Pont

Joinville-le-Pont is located to the south of Paris, just a twenty-minute tram journey from Notre Dame. Approximately 17,500 inhabitants call this small district in the Département Val de Marne home. As far back as 1960 the then autonomous town of Bensberg agreed to twin with Joinville-le-Pont; Joinville had previously twinned with Egham – nowadays Runnymede. Bergisch Gladbach and Egham became partners in 1965 forming a three-way connection between Joinville le-pont, Runnymede and Bergisch Gladbach.

The citizens were impressed by the 'beautiful town on the Marne', that extended a hearty welcome to its German guests at the twinning Agreement celebration. Since then there have been numerous activities between both towns, such as school exchanges and meetings with artists. A strong sign of friendship is symbolized by the 'Twin Town Concert' which has taken place every year since 1986 involving all three towns.

The 'Arbeitskreis Deutsch-Französische Freundschaft' was founded in 2013 during the anniversary year of the Élysée Agreement and is responsible for both twin towns in France, Bourgoin Jallieu and Joinville-le-Pont.

Anyone who is interested in further developing the friendly relationships is warmly welcomed to take part!



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Runnymede

Runnymede is one of the most beautiful 'suburbs' in London and is situated approximately 30 km south-west of this Metropolis. The community has 83.000 residents and belongs to the county of Surrey in the south-east of England. Runnymede has an illustrious history; it was here in 1215 that King John signed the famous Magna Carta which is deemed to be the precursor to British Constitutional Law. In 1965 the towns of Bensberg and Egham – today the borough of Runnymede- officially twinned with one another. The result of this was a truly 'triangular relationship' as at that time Egham had already twinned with Joinville-le-Pont, Bensberg's twin town in France.

A focal part of the exchange was the 'Twin Town Concert', which has taken place annually from 1986 to 2014, alternating locations between Bergisch Gladbach, Runnymede and Joinville-le-Pont.

Thanks to the newly founded committee 'Arbeitskreis Partnerschaft mit Runnymede und Luton' in December 2014 there has been a rekindling of contacts and activities with the twinned cities in England.

2018 saw renewed contact with 'The Egham Band', the first citizens' trip taking shape and more activities amongst young people in the pipeline.



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Marijampole

Marijampole is situated in the south-west of Lithuania, 139 km west of the capital city Vilnius and 38 km from the Polish border. The city Marijampole is part and the capital of the Marijampole Country. The Country has 58.608 inhabitants. The picturesque river Šešupė flows through the town.

Marijampole was the first town that Bergisch Gladbach twinned with following the political liberalisation of eastern-Europe. The official Agreement was signed in 1989 and since that time exchanges have flourished.

There is a long-standing connection to the shelter in Marijampole from which Bergisch Gladbach markets hand-made knitwear under the label 'Baltic Style'.

2016 saw the foundation of the non-profit association 'Hilfe Litauen Belarus e.V.' (a legit follow-on association from Hilfskomitee Litauen – Weißrussland) that organizes the delivery of relief supplies to Marijampole and maintains exchanges in the church area.

In the meantime, there are also activities in the fields of art and music.

In 2015, the 'Arbeitskreis Mariampole' was founded with a view to intensifying contacts.



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Limassol

Bergisch Gladbach entered into a 'City Friendship' with Limassol (Lemesos) in Cyprus, back in 1991. Bergisch Gladbach perceives this friendship to have the same standing as one with a twin town, it is in no way a second-class relationship.

The port-city lies on the south coast in Akrotiri Bay and belongs to the Greek part of this politically divided island. With over 235.000 inhabitants Limassol is the second largest city on the island.

Limassol's economy developed rapidly following the division of the island back in 1974. Today, it boasts a significant financial centre and is home to the Technical University of Cyprus. Tourism also plays a large role. Limassol is a busy seaside resort with numerous four-star hotels – mostly dotted along its promenade. The old town with its historic buildings is well worth a visit.

In the early years there were several meetings between the two befriended cities. Educational trips, school- and youth trips were organized. At present, work is being done to rekindle town twinning contacts on both sides. A 'Arbeitskreis Limassol' is in planning.



Limassol

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Pszczyna

Also known as the 'Pearl of Upper Silesia', Pszczyna – the county seat is one of the oldest and most beautiful cities of the Silesian Province to the south of Poland. It is located in the river Pszczyna valley, 37 km south of Kattowitz, 70 km east of Kraków and 28 km west of Auschwitz. As the city of residence for the Dukes and Princes of Pless the city boasts an impressive castle in which the famous composer Georg Philipp Telemann oversaw music. Nowadays Pszczyna is home to approximately 25,500 inhabitants.

Bergisch Gladbach and Pszczyna have been twinned since 1993. Due to its proximity to Auschwitz and Birkenau, Pszczyna is one of the destinations for day trips to 'The Journey Against Forgetting', which regularly takes people to the site of the Holocaust. Meetings between pupils are also cultivated in this vein, the Comprehensive School in Paffrath runs an exchange with the Zespół Szkół Ekonomicznych in Pszczyna.

With a view to strengthening ties, the 'Arbeitskreis Pszczyna' was founded in 2013. This gave rise to today's 'Verein zur Förderung der Städtepartnerschaft Pszczyna (Pless) – Bergisch Gladbach e.V.'. Of particular interest is the interaction between citizens of the two cities. Numerous contacts have already been established and should be nurtured and further developed in the coming years.

Anyone with an interest in supporting this work is very welcome.



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Beit Jala

Bergisch Gladbach's Palestinian twin town, Beit Jala is located in West Jordan approximately 2 km from Bethlehem and 10 km from Jerusalem. It belongs to the district of Bethlehem and has some 12.000 inhabitants. The twinning Agreement was signed in 2011, although there has been contact between the citizens of both towns since 2003. The 'Arbeitskreis Bürger für Beit Jala' emerged from these first encounters, it endeavored to encourage participatory interactions between people and institutions. Since 2010 the following association 'Städtepartnerschaft Bergisch Gladbach – Beit Jala e.V.' has set itself the task of building relationships.

The number of well-established contacts expanded rapidly; promoting a flourishing exchange between schools, as well as inter-cultural theatre projects which bring German, Israeli and Palestinian children together. As a result of several citizens' trips to Palestine personal friendships have formed and social projects such as the building of a sports field or the extension of a center for the handicapped were supported by donations from Bergisch Gladbach. Various activities are conducted every year by the association and Bergisch Gladbach's administration.

Anyone who would like to participate in the activities or become a member of the non-profit association is very welcome.



Beit Jala

Beit Jala

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Ganey Tikva

Bergisch Gladbach also maintains a relationship to Israel. The town of Ganey Tikva is located in the Tel Aviv region and is home to approximately 16.000 inhabitants. It is renowned for its high standard of living and good educational system.

Ganey Tikva was agreed in 2013 and completed Bergisch Gladbach's activities in the Middle East which aim at creating sustainable friendships.

Since then there have been reciprocal visits between the citizens of both cities. Moreover, a grammar school exchange program has become well-established. Culture is of major focus: 2016 saw one of Helmut Brands' sculptures presented at Ganey Tikva's inauguration of Bergisch Gladbach Square in Ganey Tikva - it is called 'Jáchad', Hebrew for 'together'. Equally, in 2016, Ganey Tikva Square was inaugurated at the 'Kirche zum Heilsbrunnen' in Bergisch Gladbach. As a sign of friendship connecting both cities the sculpture 'A key to friendship' by the Israeli artist Orna Ben-Ami was presented to Bergisch Gladbach.

In order to develop the relationship further and lend continuity, an association was founded, then, in 2018 the 'Freundeskreis Ganey Tikva an der Kirche zum Heilsbrunnen' and after that, in 2021 the association 'Städtepartnerschaft Ganey Tikva - Bergisch Gladbach e.V.'. There are also cooperations with the association 'Städtepartnerschaft Bergisch Gladbach - Beit Jala e.V.'. Anyone interested in building relationships with our twinned city in Israel is welcome to actively participate.



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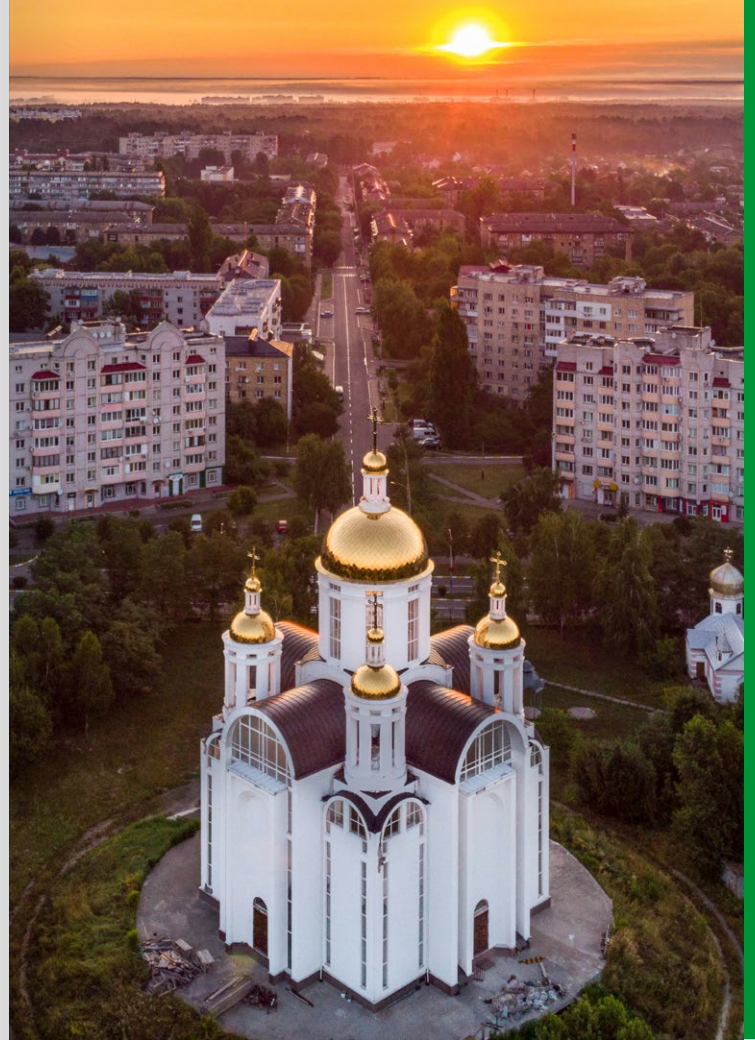


Butscha

Our most recent town twinning is with the Ukrainian town of Butscha (English „Bucha“). This was decided on 21 June 2022 during the Russian war on the Ukraine, which began in February 2022. The connection to Butscha came about through Bergisch Gladbach's twin town Pszczyna, which has maintained friendly relations with Butscha for a long time. Butscha is located about 25 kilometres northwest of the capital Kiev between the rivers Butscha and Rokach. The town takes its name from the river „Butscha“, which crossed the former railway line. The city was founded in 1898 as a settlement around a railway station and remained one of the largest settlements in the Ukraine until 2007. The founding year is considered to be 1901, and the municipality celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2001. In 2006, Butscha was granted city status.

The coat of arms is in the form of a dark green shield with the „family tree of the village“ in the centre. The tree symbol shows 4 branches representing the four villages of Yablanka, Melniki, Lesnaya Butscha and Yastremshchina. They form the basis of modern day Butscha. In addition, a fragment of the railway line can be detected at the base of the tree.

In order to intensify contacts and be able to actively support Butscha, planning has begun to set up a working group or association. The city of Bergisch Gladbach would like to stand by Butscha in solidarity during these extremely difficult times and in future by providing all available support.



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Butscha

Bergisch Gladbach fosters friendships in nine countries



Bergisch Gladbach maintains twinning relationships with eleven cities in nine countries. The first twinning agreements with France, Great Britain and the Netherlands were signed as early as 1956. After the end of the Second World War, people in Europe came to the realisation that friendly and peaceful coexistence between countries was only possible if personal contacts were established between citizens across borders. After the end of the Cold War, cities in Eastern Europe joined. Since 2011, two more twinning agreements have been concluded – both located in the Middle East. In 2022, the twinning relationship with the Ukrainian city of Butsha followed - in the time of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine.

The twinning agreements are publicly documented by large-format signs on all the city's main access roads. This sends a message to those entering the city that Bergisch Gladbach values and cultivates international connections. In 2016, there was the addition of a „Twin Towns Square“ in Bergisch Gladbach Stadtmitte – centrally located next to the bus and S-Bahn station where you can also find further information on the twin towns. Bergisch Gladbach would like to dedicate streets or squares to all partner cities. The first streets to be named were Bourgoistraße, Velsenstraße and Lutonstraße in 1966; they are located in a suburb that reflects twinning's importance in and with Europe. Plesser (Polish Pszczyna) Street and Marijampole Street, both named in 1993, are in the suburb reflecting Eastern European cities.

Beit Jala Square was inaugurated in 2015 and Ganey Tikva Square in 2016. In 2020, Joinville-le-Pont and Runnymede received their own squares. Missing is a street for Limassol – the city with which Bergisch Gladbach is not twinned but shares a friendship. In addition, there is still no dedication for Butscha, the town twinning established in 2022.



Contact

Interested?

There are many opportunities for citizens to become involved in Bergisch Gladbach's town twinning.

Please contact the appropriate persons within the working groups, as shown in this brochure.

Town twinning and friendships

The City of Bergisch Gladbach actively seeks and highly values partners abroad.

Based on its interest in particularly connecting young people across national borders, the city maintains friendships with ten towns in eight countries.



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