

# **Bridges into the future: the evolution of town twinning**



## **Bridges into the future: the evolution of town twinning**

- A changing environment
- Town twinning classic, and beyond
- The changes summarized
- The partnership cycle
- ‘Europe’ and the acquis in all this
- The role of Local Government Associations (LGAs)

# Bridges into the future: the evolution of town twinning

## A changing environment:

- Globalising world:
  - *Economic, socio-cultural*
- European integration:
  - *Recovery from 2 World Wars; EEC, EC, EU; end of the East-West divide*
- Increasing importance of knowledge as resource
  - *The only resource that grows when sharing it*
- Growing relevance of cities/municipalities
  - *In terms of services to citizens; share in public expenditure; etc.*

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## Town twinning classic, and beyond (1)

- 1. Town twinning classic
  - *When: from approx. 1950*
  - *What: thousands of bilateral town twinnings, official declaration for infinity*
  - *Who: sportsclubs; cultural groups; individual citizens; etc.*
  - *Why: rebuild trust and understanding: 'never again a war'*
  - *How: travel by car or bus, so most often in neighbouring countries, sleep in families, etc.*
- 2. Exchange of professional knowledge and experience
- 3. Jumping to a higher level or scale

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## Town twinning classic, and beyond (2)

- 1. Town Twinning Classic
- 2. Exchange of professional knowledge and experience
  - *When: from approx. 1985/1990*
  - *What: thematic projects, for limited period of time, agreed in annual plans*
  - *Who: professionals through peer-to-peer exchanges*
  - *Why: learning from each other in order to improve*
  - *How: study visits, conferences, also further away*
- 3. Jumping to a higher level or scale

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## Town twinning classic, and beyond (3)

- 1. Town Twinning Classic
- 2. Exchange of professional knowledge and experience
- 3. Jumping to a higher level or scale
  - *When: from approx. 2000*
  - *What: thematic networks, for longer periods of time, open to additional participants*
  - *Who: larger groups of municipalities with common characteristics/interests, and with a wider geographic range*
  - *Why: common interests; joint advocacy/lobbying/promotion*
  - *How: online data sharing, webinars, collection of best practices, exchanges*

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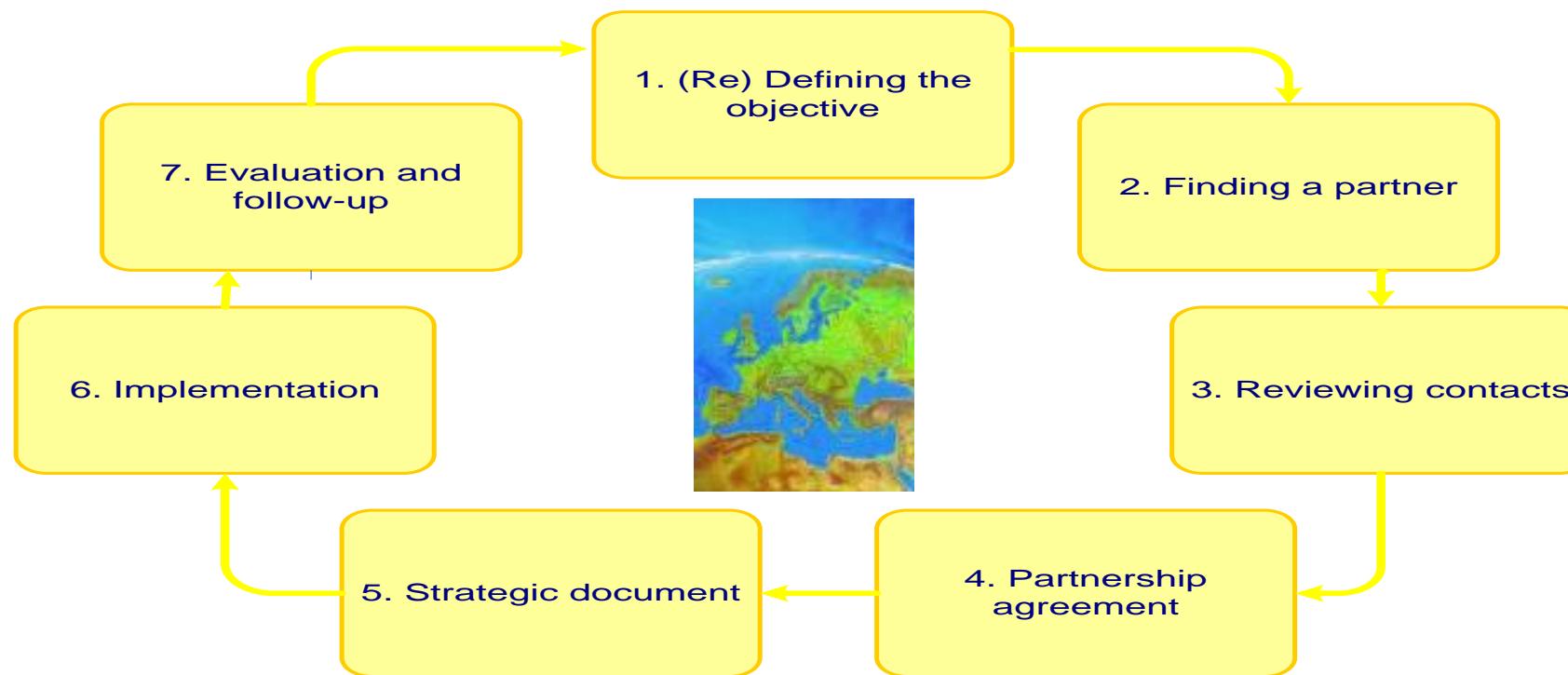
## The changes summarized

### More variety and shift in:

- What: type of partnership; organisational basis, from 'closed' towards 'open'
- Who: the people/parties involved; also geographical expansion
- Why: motivation/drive
- How: type of activities, ways of getting together

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## The partnership cycle



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## Europe and the **acquis** in all this

- Building mutual respect and understanding
- Learning from each other; integration; search for common interests
- Standards of governance
- Principle of subsidiarity
- Europe of citizens, not just of institutions
- Stronger together through cooperation

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## Role of Local Government Associations (such as VNG)

- Partner search, broker in supply and demand
- Advice, training workshops, guidelines, platforms etc. to promote a professional approach
- Harvesting the results of knowledge exchange
  - Best practices booklets
  - Integrate new insights from abroad in approaches at home
- Dissemination

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- Occasionally: (help) solve obstacles between partners



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**Thank you for your attention !**

