

Speech of the Mayoress of Weilerswist, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Ladies and gentlemen,

I bid you all a hearty welcome to the festive activities on the event of this 40th anniversary of the twinning of Weilerswist and Carqueiranne,

dear members of the twinning associations of Carqueiranne and Weilerswist,

dear Councillors of Weilerswist, and

dear Josie and Gino Cancilla, who today represent the Council and the Twinning Association of Whitnash / UK.

Thank you all for coming to celebrate this anniversary.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The twinning of Carqueiranne and Weilerswist has lasted for 40 years now.

Twinning – many people nowadays will regard this as irrelevant.

My view on this is:

Twinnings, in a quite uncomplicated way and suitable for all age groups, allow personal contacts between people who may have different backgrounds in culture and language, but are connected by a feeling of Europe as their homeland.

Let us look back: Out of debris and ashes of the World Wars our founding fathers and mothers have created a grand oeuvre – our Europe.

A strong common market, borderless trade, travelling, researching and working opportunities: 500 million Europeans are living in prosperity and freedom – and above all in peace.

The generations of our children and grandchildren cannot imagine a life without this European home feeling. And we all thought that this was going to continue forever.

Today even the last one has realized that we have to fight and to stand up again for our Europe.

And here is where twinnings have the important task to strengthen European unity on a level of individuals and communities.

People from Weilerswist in Germany, Carqueiranne in France and Whitnash in the United Kingdom – coming together and visiting each other – contribute on a low level to bring people in Europe together in personal contacts.

Personal communication makes us understand each other's language as an enrichment and not as a barrier. It makes us curious on traditions and culture of our European friends. The unknown is no longer frightening us.

Thus the community of Weilerswist found its twinning partner in Carqueiranne.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1978, e.g. 41 years ago, Mayor Friedrich Schmitt from Weilerswist and Mayor Armand Conan from Carqueiranne founded the twinning of both towns by signing the twinning document.

Since then mutual meetings and visits took place. Personal meeting led to longtime friendships which in some cases last until today.

Through our twinngs- carried by you, the citizens of Weilerswist, Carqueiranne and Whitnash – we not only live the European spirit with its variety in languages and cultures, we commonly contribute to creating and shaping our Europe.

I cannot speak about twinnings without dwelling on the specific situation of our friends in the Whitnash Twinning Association, represented today by Josie and Gino Cancilla. 2016 for the first time a member of the European Community has decided to leave. This is a decision of tremendous consequence. We regret it, but respect it as well. We all hope that this decision will not negatively affect our long lasting friendship.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I ask you, indeed I urge you to actively support the diversity of languages and cultures, the potentials of our Europe in order to create a European homeland, a Europe in peace for our forthcoming generations.

On this opportunity I wish to express heartily thanks for the long-lasting support by Brigitte Bonin and Christa Kayser as well as their predecessors together with their teams in Carqueiranne and Weilerswist. They virtually live municipal partnership.

Thank you for your attention. I wish that our twinning will last at least for another 40 most interesting years.