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## **Alsbach-Hähnlein in Dialogue with Europe**

### **Community Participates in Meeting of "Key to EU" in Several Countries**

**ALSBACH-HÄHNLEIN**, (tt), Corona liberalisation comes right on cue. For Mr. Hans Herrmann has lately been more on his way than usually. The chairman of partnership association of Alsbach-Hähnlein travels through half of Europe in order to make contacts, to bring people together and to live solidarity. Background is the initiative "Solidarity – key to solving social problems and supporting the evolution of Europe in future", the only German project of citizens, co-financed by the EU programme "Europe for Citizens". This definitely is a little accolade.

The three days' kick-off meeting took place at Alsbach last year, hosted by the community. Though with a year's delay, the pandemic had not changed anything in the ambitious goals. Nine European countries have been participating. The subject actually is solidarity as key to the future of Europe. A subject enjoying a totally new quality due to the pandemic and the war of aggression against Ukraine. Since the starting shot at Alsbach the discussion format has been travelling through the participating nations.

After Spain and Hungary – in February the meeting took place at the twin town of Diósd – the Czech Republic and Greece had been on the tour plan. In April a delegation from Alsbach-Hähnlein had been at the Italian city of Sulmona, which – according to the resolution of the community's representatives - shall become a further twin town. "Execution has come close to grip", said Mr. Hans Herrmann shortly before his departure to Poland. There, also a detour to the Ukrainian border had been part of the programme. The trips will end this year with visits to Bulgaria and Albania in the middle of August. Approximately, 20 citizens from Alsbach-Hähnlein have been participating in the international project as members to the delegation. "I have always been a friend of variety" Mr. Hermann who speaks of completely differing kinds of experience, points out.

Mainly the meetings with young people made lasting impressions. For to him, the next generation will be the leading architect of the European future. "We have to arouse their interest in Europe in order to open new perspectives", says Mr. Hermann at times where in several countries the back-slide into national and sometimes even into nationalistic reflexes can be recognised. Peace in Europe and the challenges within the context of the climate crisis are subjects by which young people can be tackled and motivated. During his stay at Prague in March he witnessed how Czech young people during a work shop simulated the work of the European Parliament and thus vividly reproduced political decision processes. To Mr. Hans Hermann one of the up to now highlights of the project which due to its organisation and inner dramaturgy had been excellently suited to unite people and to learn from each other.

A direct example of living solidarity also was the commitment abroad of members to the Alsbach Fire Brigade at Greece in late summer of last year when violent forest fires had been raging there. Beside experienced personnel also goods had been brought into the country. This help had been seen as a great act of solidarity, said the chairman of the partnership association who continues to look hopefully into the direction of the South: the desired and long decided solidarity with Sulmona (region of the Abruzzi) should be realized soon now. The dialogue between both communities has existed for more than 10 years and is very vital. Now the relationship shall be continued on an official basis.

”The formal act has still been pending“ said Mr. Hans Herrmann who calls this step overdue. Already in 2018 a written statement (letter of intent) had been signed by the Mayors in office at that time. His association is responsible qua statutes for care and design of such international contacts. Due to the change of Mayor at Sulmona last year, the process has slowed down again. Successor of Annamaria Casini became Gianfranco di Piero with whom the talks have been continued in this direction.

He is optimistic that the ink under the deeds of partnership will still dry in the current year. A date in spring targeted by the town hall has not materialized. The next possibility for sealing the friendship in a festive setting would be according to Mr. Hans Herrmann Alsbach Kerb (parish fair) in the beginning of September. A festival around the town hall with many citizens would be the ideal opportunity, thus the chairman, who knows from his own experience of the last months that travelling is again possible without any problems. tt