

Press kit Dossier de presse Pressemappe

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Strasbourg city and urban community
Ville et Communauté urbaine de Strasbourg
Stadt und Stadtgemeinschaft Straßburg

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The complete version of the press kit can be found on the CD-Rom enclosed along with high resolution photographs free for press use. High resolution, royalty free video clips (stockshots) are available on the City's website: www.strasbourg.eu

Strasbourg is also an eminently cultural city, with a rich collection of museums and theatres. The programme of what's on at the different venues and numerous exhibition halls can be consulted on the Tourist Office website: www.otstrasbourg.fr

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STRASBOURG

Strasbourg, Strossburi in Alsatian, Straßburg in German, is over 2000 years old. Founded by the Romans in the year 12 BC, the city was first a military camp protecting the northern border of the Empire against "Barbarian" incursions. A monument, the Janus Aqueduct, designed in 1988 by the illustrator **Tomi Ungerer** as a tribute to his native city, symbolizes the bi-millennium whilst emphasizing the profoundly bi-cultural dimension, both Latin and Germanic, of Strasbourg.



Tomi Ungerer's Aqueduc de Janus symbolises the city's deep-rooted biculturalism

Strasbourg was associated from the outset with the colour silver, in reference to the water: the Romans named it *Argentoratum*, which no doubt came from the Gaulish word for "river fortress". Built five kilometres from the Rhine, on its left bank, the river Ill runs through its centre and numerous tributaries, streams and canals through its outskirts (the Bruche, the Aar, the Ehn, the Rhin Tortu, the Ziegelwasser, the Marne-Rhine Canal, the Rhine-Rhône Canal). The names of some of the city's neighbourhoods (Elsau, Krutenau, Meinau, Robertsau etc.) still bear witness to the presence of the flood plains (*Au*) which

surrounded the city in the past. The city is also situated on the one the largest reserves of drinking water in Europe, whilst the water table is barely below the surface.



Strasbourg, silver city of water

Where there is water, there will be islands, and the most well-known one in Strasbourg, the Grande-île, is home to the historic centre of the city: its architectural ensemble has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1988.

Destroyed in the 5th century, the city rose from its ashes under the name of *Strateburg*, of which Strasbourg is a Germanic variant meaning "the fortified town" (*die Burg*) on "the road" (*die Straße*).

At the crossroads of the north-south river route and an east-west overland route, Strasbourg constitutes the point where the two Europes meet, Northern Europe and Mediterranean Europe. The city lies, moreover, in the vast Rhineland area which stretches from Basle to Cologne, which situates it not only geographically, but also culturally and historically.

A few historical markers

9th century: The Oaths of Strasbourg: two grandsons of Charlemagne pledged mutual assistance before their armies, in two documents, one in the Tudesque langue, the other in Roman (old French). The latter is considered as the oldest text written in this language.

11th century: Beginning of the construction of the **Cathedral**. The work would be completed four centuries later (1439), making Notre-Dame the highest monument in Christendom at the time.

13th century: Strasbourg, attached to the crown of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, freed itself from the rule of the bishop and obtained from the Emperor greater political freedoms than those enjoyed by other cities.

14th century: Strasbourg was proclaimed a **Free Imperial City**. It then enjoyed a period of remarkable economic growth. The tradesmen's fair was created in 1336 and the Rhine bridge was built in 1388, the last bridge over the river before the sea. Several epidemics devastated the population, in particular the Black Death in 1349. The Jews were accused of poisoning the wells and were burned at the stake, men, women and children.

15th century: Strasbourg became one of the main European centres of printing, after **Gutenberg** spent ten years there. The city attracted numerous artists and intellectuals. The humanist movement prospered here, distinguished by eminent Strasbourg residents such as **Sebastian Brant**, author of *The Ship of Fools*. On the religious front, it was the (Germanic) Concordat of Vienna (1448) that applied: the bishop was not appointed by royal prerogative, but elected by the canons.

16th century: Strasbourg pronounced itself for the religious Reformation. The free city took in the persecuted dissidents, vulgarized their writings. **Jean Calvin** found refuge there and created the first Reformed parish, before leaving for Geneva. Public education developed, for both girls and boys. The Gymnase Sturm was founded in 1538, but its Protestant identity prevented it from claiming the status of a university.

17th century: The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) tore Europe apart. The whole of Alsace was laid to waste. In exchange for its neutrality, in 1621 Strasbourg obtained permission to found a university, which would thus be Lutheran. Under the Treaties of Westphalia, the king of France annexed Alsace. He reintroduced Catholicism, but guaranteed religious freedom.

18th century: Its close proximity to the Germanic empire made the city a highly strategic place. The German language and the Protestant religion continued to dominate, but the French influence was gaining ground. Numerous private residences bear the traces of this influence. Throughout this century, a family of princes, the **Rohans**, monopolized Episcopal power. They built a palace to their glory, near the Cathedral. The reputation of Strasbourg and its university began to radiate further afield: **Goethe and Metternich** studied there alongside thousands of other students from all over Europe. The city excelled in the teaching of law and medicine. During the Revolution, the city asserted its adhesion to the Republic. It was on this occasion that Rouget de Lisle composed the Marseillaise in Strasbourg.

19th century: A trading city and major financial centre, Strasbourg developed all possible communication routes: new canals linked the Rhine to the Marne and the Rhône; a railway line brought the city closer to Paris. In 1870, following the war between France and Prussia, Alsace, Strasbourg included, as well as a part of Lorraine were annexed by Germany. The city emerged bruised and battered from the conflict. **In eighty years, it would change nationality four times.**

20th century: During the First World War, Strasbourg's men were incorporated into the German army: 3,000 of them would die serving the Kaiser. When the war ended, the city became French again, rejecting, sometimes violently, the symbols of its former membership of the German Empire. The 1930s saw an industrial boom, consolidated by the development of river navigation. Its position on the border made Strasbourg a sitting target in 1939: just before the outbreak of the Second World War, some 120,000 people were evacuated by the French government to the South-West of France, including the whole of the city's Jewish community. Of the 10,000 Jews living in Strasbourg before the war, 8,000 of them would return after the Liberation and a thousand would perish in concentration camps. After the Armistice, Alsace was once again annexed to Germany, but this time at the price of harsh germanization. Enrolment in the Wehrmacht, obligatory from 1942 on, sent many Alsatian "Malgré Nous" (unwilling recruits) to the Eastern front. In 1944, the city, in particular the Palais Rohan and the Cathedral, was bombed by the Allies, before being liberated by General Leclerc in November of the same year, and finding freedom once more.

Strasbourg today in brief

Capital of the Alsace Region and the
Departement of Bas-Rhin (67)

Since 1966 part of a grouping of 28 towns
and villages that form the Urban Community
of Strasbourg (CUS), covering certain
clearly defined areas of competence: urban
infrastructures, town planning, housing,
transport and economic development

The City is in charge of local policies in the
following spheres: culture, schools, welfare,
youth, sport, green spaces and forests, public
lighting, neighbourhood town halls, tourism,
security.

- > Surface area of the city: 78.27 km²
- > Surface area of the Urban Community of
Strasbourg: 316 km²
- > Surface area of the Eurodistrict
(Urban Community of Strasbourg-Ortenau
(in Germany)): 2156.70 km²

- > Population of Strasbourg: almost 280,000,
making it **France's seventh largest city**
- > Population of the Urban Community of
Strasbourg: almost 450,000
- > Population of the Eurodistrict: almost
860,000

A young population: 24% of the population
are under 20 years of age; 60 % under 40

A cosmopolitan population: 12.9 %
immigrants (national average: 5.6 %), mainly
from North Africa (25%), Turkey (13%),
Germany (10 %) and the rest of Europe (31%)

Economically active population: almost
213,000, including 5,500 people working
over the border in Germany

Unemployment: + 6.1 % (Bas-Rhin - France:
7.2% - 2nd half of 2008))

Main economic sectors: health, education
and social action, services to companies,
commerce, administration, transport, financial
activities

Strasbourg initial budget 2009:

Operations: €340m
Investment: €103m

**Urban Community of Strasbourg initial
budget 2009:** Operations: €696m
Investment: €179m

Mayor of Strasbourg:

Roland RIES (Socialist party, **Senator
of Bas-Rhin**), elected in March 2008 for a
6-year term with almost 60% of the vote

President of the CUS:

Jacques BIGOT (Socialist Party), mayor of the
town of Illkirch-Graffenstaden, elected by his
peers for a six-year term.

Much more information can be found on
the website of the City and the Urban
Community of Strasbourg:

www.strasbourg.eu

Roland Ries,

SENATOR-MAYOR OF STRASBOURG



A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Born on 11 January 1945 in Niederlauterbach, a small village in northern Alsace.

Entirely educated in Strasbourg. After a degree at the

University of Strasbourg, in 1968 he passed the "Agrégation" in French literature, and then taught for many years.

In 1974, he joined the Socialist Party.

In 1983, he was elected to Strasbourg city council.

Between 1989 and 1997, he held the position of First Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg and Vice-President of the Urban Community in charge of transport. It was in this capacity that he served as leader of the contracting authority for the construction of the Strasbourg's first two tram lines and chaired the CTS (Compagnie des Transports Strasbourgeois), the city's public transport body.

His competence in urban transport led to him being appointed President of the Club des Villes Cyclables (cyclable cities club) (1993-1994), then Vice-President of the GART, a grouping of authorities responsible for transport (1996-2001).

Between 1997 and 2000, he served as Mayor of Strasbourg and President of the Urban Community after the Mayor Catherine Trautmann took up the Culture portfolio in the Jospin government.

In 1998, in a bid to help reconcile Alsace with its past, he led a delegation to Oradour-sur-Glane, a village in the Limousin totally destroyed in 1944 by an SS unit which included a number of Alsatians. During this term of office, he also established relations with the Russian city of Tambov, where many Alsatian "Malgré Nous" (unwilling recruits into the German army) died after being captured by the Russians.

In 2000, at the request of Prime Minister Jospin, he wrote a report on the reinforcement of Strasbourg's European vocation.

Between 2001 and 2008, he sat on the opposition benches of the City council.

Between 2001 and 2003, as Chairman of the Urban Transport Commission of the Commissariat Général du Plan (national economic planning agency), he submitted a report to Prime Minister Raffarin proposing a series of guidelines on the organization and financing of urban transport.

In 2003, as a consultant and expert in the public transport field, he worked for the city of Clermont-Ferrand on the introduction of its tram system and for the City of Paris

In 2004 he was elected to the Senate for a 9-year term. Several of his bills, dealing with urban public transport, car pooling, the future of EADS or the creation of a European globalization adjustment fund have been adopted by the Senate.

On 16 March 2008, he was elected Mayor of Strasbourg with almost 60% of the vote. With his 19 deputies, he signed a solemn oath (*Schwörbrief*), as was the custom in Strasbourg between the Middle Ages and the French Revolution, a formal written contract with the people, containing the commitments made during the election campaign.

One month later, as promised during the election campaign, he decided not to seek election as President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg leaving the way open for Jacques Bigot, mayor of Illkirch-Graffenstaden. He took over responsibility, as First Vice-President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg, for "Transport" and "European Affairs".

In October 2008, he was elected Vice-President of the newly formed Senate European Affairs Commission, where he energetically defends the European vocation of his city and the development of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict, a bi-national territorial concept with a special status, for which he is the French spokesman.

Jacques Bigot,

PRESIDENT OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY OF STRASBOURG



A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Born on 31 July 1952 in Strasbourg.

In 1970, he gained a higher degree in private law at the Faculty of Law in Strasbourg.

After being called to the Strasbourg Bar in 1975, he specialized in economic law and the rights of individuals.

In the same year, he joined the Socialist Party.

Between 1978 and 1983, he was a member of the Strasbourg Bar Council and chaired the local section of the French barrister's union.

In 1983, he stood for the first time in a municipal election on a socialist list in the town of Illkirch-Graffenstaden, near Strasbourg. He was elected and became a member of the municipal opposition.

From the 1980s on, consumer rights became one of his main causes:

- > from 1986 to 1993, he chaired the *Chambre de la Consommation* in Alsace, a body which grouped together the region's 13 consumer associations. He also sat on the national consumer council
- > from 1993 to 1996, he chaired *Euro-Info Consommateurs (EIC)*, a bi-national body based in Kehl in Germany, which coordinates the activities of the border regions of Alsace and Baden-Württemberg
- > at the same time, he was appointed Vice-President of the *European Interregional Institute for Consumer Affairs (EIICA)* based in Lille, where he initiated a cooperation project, backed by the

European Union, dealing with the right of access to the law and the settlement of cross-border disputes.

In 1995, he won the municipal elections and became Mayor of Illkirch-Graffenstaden. He was re-elected a first time in 2001, then for a third term in 2008, in the first round, with almost 70% of the vote.

Between 1995 and 2001, he was Vice-President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg in charge of economic development.

In 1998, he headed a "Socialists and Greens" list in the regional elections and was elected to the Alsace Regional Council, where he now chairs the Socialist group. The 2004 elections confirmed this position once more.

Following his victory in the 2008 municipal elections, he was elected President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg and at the same time became President of the Association of Urban Communities in France.

A new form of local government

The first priority of the City and Community team elected in Strasbourg in 2008 was to set an example of openness and representativeness. It began by forming a panel of candidates from very diverse origins, age groups, socio-professional categories and religions. Thus, some councillors come directly from civil society, others have worked in sectors as varied as health, the law, the economy, education, the services, business, research, culture or the public sector.

In one year, a new democratic organization has been set up within the City and Community councils. Thus,

- > for the first time, the President of the Urban Community is an elected representative of one of the peripheral towns and villages and not of Strasbourg itself
- > the deputy mayors have been given more room for manoeuvre
- > the opposition has seen its status improved, in particular its working conditions
- > the Socialist-Green partnership that governs the majority is based on critical and constructive dialogue
- > dialogue is encouraged between the towns and villages through regular exchanges between the Vice-Presidents of the Urban Community of Strasbourg and the mayors.

The City's inhabitants are now involved in the taking of major public decisions. The city council favours a participative form of democracy with the stated ambitions of initiating a constant dialogue at local level between the inhabitants of the city and their elected representatives, of thoroughly modifying the relationship between the ruled and the rulers. The latter act as the final arbiters after the project has first been submitted to the population.

In order to place the citizens at the heart of the decision-making process and get a better grasp of their expectations, but also to get people involved in public debate who would ordinarily remain outside it, the City and the Urban Community of Strasbourg have developed a whole series of concrete, innovative initiatives that place discussion and contact at the forefront of their action:

- > Satisfaction surveys conducted with public service users, in the form of questionnaires and direct interviews. In December 2008, some 800 parents and about a hundred children were consulted on the modernization of the school meals system
- > Public consultations conducted by councillors on the major projects involving the future of the inhabitants such as the urban renovation of certain neighbourhoods or the extension of certain tram lines

« Today we can no longer run politics or decide on major projects as we did 15 or 20 years ago, when elected representatives were on a pedestal, distant and inaccessible. The public no longer wants that. » (ROLAND RIES)



> **Neighbourhood councils:** these independent bodies, set up for a period of two years, have their own operating budget and are not attached to any political body. Meeting approximately once a month, the citizens organize the debates themselves, covering projects that have been submitted to them (opening of a cultural centre, renovation of a school, construction of a new gymnasium, route of a new cycle track) or any other neighbourhood-related topic with a collective interest. Their opinions are then integrated into the deliberations of the city council so that the councillors are aware of them before they make their decision or take the vote. But these councils also have the possibility of alerting the city councillors on specific issues.

Since December 2008, Strasbourg has had about ten of these councils, covering all the areas of the city. They consist of 1/3 representatives of associations and socio-professional bodies, and 2/3 of inhabitants whose names are drawn from a hat or who have put themselves forward. Their participation is always voluntary and unpaid. Their first opinions will be included in the deliberations of the city council in April 2009. This initiative is still in the experimental stage. It is therefore being constantly monitored and assessed and remains liable to change. The councillors, for their part, must familiarize themselves with their new mission. To do so, they have been offered a course of training by the City over this first year.

The introduction of these councils involved a great deal of preparatory work for the municipal team, involving public information meetings, meetings with associations and experts, an awareness-raising campaign, the introduction of a freephone number and a forum on the Internet and finally the installation of mobile stands in the different neighbourhoods. Following this communication effort, some 1,500 of Strasbourg's citizens came forward as

candidates for a total of 400 places available. Strasbourg now hopes to share this enterprise in participative democracy with other French and European cities in a network of pilot cities which may constitute a true "laboratory of innovation" in this field. Click on this link www.vousalso.org to find out more.



Local inhabitants participating in public decision-making

> **Urban workshops** led by technicians and specialists on specific subjects, such as green neighbourhoods, is another project also in the process of being implemented in Strasbourg: the objective is to stimulate and educate people by offering clear, intelligible information.



> **A consultative council of foreign residents** which will soon allow us to revive the notion of the citizenship of residents. In the absence of legislation in France giving foreign residents voting rights in local elections, Strasbourg is currently setting up a body where people from countries outside the European Union can also have a voice and a channel for putting forward suggestions. People's access to their rights, the fight against all forms of discrimination, how to change the way "foreigners" are depicted, valuing memory and promoting cultural diversity will be just some of the themes this body will examine.

> **A youth council**, made up of about 130 young people aged from 11 to 15 years, wishing to perfect their civic education. Their election in February 2009 on the Internet inaugurated an unprecedented experiment in cyber-democracy in Strasbourg. For 18 months, these young people will discover how the city is run, learn to debate and get involved in political choices in a wholly autonomous way. They will reflect on subjects as essential as the future of Europe, coping with disability or the protection of the environment. To find out more, simply browse the website www.cdj-strasbourg.org. In the near future, a Young People's Assembly, for teenagers aged 15 to 18, will also be set up, with similar aims.

> **The States General on Sport**, conducted as a vast consultation exercise, involving both people who practice sport and those who do not, those involved in clubs and those who practise outside any formal structure. This consultation took the form of a survey with individual questionnaires as well as public conferences, at which genuine debates took place on the following themes: *"Sport and health: what does sport contribute to wellness and health?"*, *"Sport*

and city neighbourhoods: what sports can be practiced in the city?", *"Amateur sport: an indispensable, but changing social link?"*, *"Top level sport, professional and events-based: an unavoidable dimension for large cities?"*. Inaugurated in March 2008, these States General are intended to decide a policy on sport for the next five years, which will meet as far as possible the expectations of the inhabitants and the real needs of the city.

> **The Conference on Culture**, held in the form of a series of workshops, which throughout 2009 will involve professionals, political decision-makers and inhabitants in what will be both a local approach and a reflection on Strasbourg's cultural impact at regional, national, European and international level.

 **A living democracy supposes that the opinions of the population be taken into account in a dialogue that involves everyone, on a permanent and lasting basis and not only during pre-election periods. The city council has made the participation of as many people as possible in the city's affairs a priority.** 

(EXTRACT FROM THE DELIBERATIONS OF STRASBOURG CITY COUNCIL OF 2 FEBRUARY 2009, APPROVING THE CREATION OF A CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL OF FOREIGN RESIDENTS)

A confirmed environmental culture



An attractive, practical, environmentally-friendly tram running on the longest network in France

500 km of cycle tracks make Strasbourg France's most "cyclable" city

With the return of the tramway to its urban landscape in 1994, with an attractive, modern, practical, environmentally-friendly tram, Strasbourg established for itself a reputation as a pioneer. And today, the city continues to hold all the records: with its 53 km of commercial lines, its 5 existing lines (a sixth is planned for 2010) and its 66 stations, its network is the longest in France and the only one to be meshed. Its low floors facilitate access for people with reduced mobility or boarding with pushchairs, whilst its windows keep the passengers on a level with the street. Almost 300,000 people use it every day. Over the last fifteen years, the tram has become the cornerstone of a vast public transport policy that encourages alternatives to the car and invites road users to multiple travel combinations: tram-bike, tram-walking, tram-bus, tram-train, tram-car pool. The symbol of ecomobility, the tram is also a fantastic social vector and a guarantee of improved access to some parts of the city, in particular those situated along the Rhine. In a few years' time, it will also put Kehl, in Germany, within easy reach.

The city has long been trying to lower its level of pollution, reduce road traffic congestion and save energy by encouraging soft modes of transport. This effort, a necessity in view of our close proximity with Germany, began to take root in the 1970s with the appearance of cycle tracks, of which the city now has almost 500 km. In this field, Strasbourg is once again a champion: it is France's most cyclable city. No less than 130,000 cyclists regularly use the cycle tracks. They have at their disposal about

fifty bike parks and some 6,000 bike stands to park their wheels.

Many other innovative projects are currently being planned or developed in this pilot city:

- > car pooling, which already exists, with a scheme organized by the association "Auto'trement" with the encouragement of Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg at the time. This service consists of sharing the costs and optimizing the time a vehicle is used by making it available to other people
- > a "street code", intended to increase the protection of pedestrians
- > pedestrian priority zones, open to all road users, but where the pedestrian has priority
- > the tram-train: thanks to a new type of vehicle able to run on both rail tracks and the tram lines, it will be possible to connect Strasbourg centre and station with the foothills of the Vosges, a mountainous area situated to the west of the city
- > the "Module Cristal", a new generation electric car, invented by an Alsatian company, Lohr Industrie, which it will be possible to rent for city centre trips.

Since June 2007 the city has also been connected to Paris in 2 hrs 20 mins by the TGV-Est, which in the years to come should be extended into Germany and later as far as Budapest. A connection with the TGV Rhine-Rhône is also planned, making Strasbourg a major European rail hub.

For the city council, however, the environmental issue is not limited to just the promotion of public transport or clean modes of transport: it is currently involved in the introduction of a "Climate plan", which embraces globally the management of sustainable development for the whole of the urban area, including for example the energy aspects of housing. What is at stake is to join the club of cities leading the way in this field.

To put this plan into practice and encourage new practices, numerous initiatives have been decided that will help protect the environment:

> **The local authority itself has a duty to set an example: it intends to divide its greenhouse gas emissions by two by 2025.** In this perspective, for the last year all public building projects have aimed to achieve a «LCB» (Low Consumption Building) performance objective, in anticipation of the new thermal regulations that come into force in 2010 throughout France. The main sources of greenhouse gas emissions have now been identified in the city and the urban community's stock of buildings and installations; an experiment in energy monitoring is now underway in certain schools, along with an awareness-raising campaign among the pupils; the local authority's departments have expanded their fleet of natural gas-fuelled vehicles

> **Green neighbourhoods will replace brownfield development sites.** Environmentally-friendly, they will be economical in their use of space and resources, will use sustainable materials, be accessible to public transport and guarantee a socially mixed population. Four projects of this type are today in the pre-operational phase. Strasbourg's ambition is to become a reference in this field: at the beginning of 2010, it will organize a European conference on the theme of "mobility in green neighbourhoods and in the sustainable city"

> **Several thousand new housing units will be built according to high-energy performance criteria.** More generally, a wide-ranging urban renovation policy is currently being implemented in the Strasbourg urban area. Grants are available to improve private

housing in particular, on the condition that energy consumption is reduced

> **The "zerophyto" initiative sets milestones on the path to the total and permanent elimination of phytosanitary products.** The aim is to protect the natural resource that is the largest aquifer in Europe. In one year the use of phytosanitary products has been cut six-fold by the city departments responsible for maintaining public spaces, parks and gardens, roads, cemeteries, school yards and sports grounds. Areas which until now were paved or gravelled have now been grassed, an appreciable contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gases by fixing carbon. A comprehensive project to renovate school yards, supported by local authorities, provides for the creation of natural areas, the planting of fruit trees, the introduction of educational gardens and drinking fountains, as well as the generalization of environmental education

> **Food distribution channels will be shortened.** Relying on a long tradition of market gardening in Strasbourg, the local authority is preparing to launch a policy on peri-urban agriculture resolutely focused on organic farming. Initially, this will involve renewing the school meals offer in the city's 38 establishments to offer a more balanced, more diverse diet, more in line with sustainable development policies. The carbon footprint of the meals served will be calculated, for example. Later on, a wider distribution to the rest of the population may be proposed based on a system of decentralized cooperatives

> **The 6,500 allotments in the Strasbourg urban area will be retained.** Covering a surface area of 170 hectares, these allotments first appeared in 1914, during the First World War, at a time when the city was cruelly lacking in food supplies. These allotments not only enhance the urban landscape, but also encourage the city's inhabitants to enhance it themselves. Strasbourg is the French city which features the most of this type of space.

At the centre of Franco-German friendship

After 1945, the city became the symbol par excellence of the reconciliation between the two countries. This is why the City was chosen by the Europeans as the seat of three institutions: the Council of Europe (since 1949), the European Court of Human Rights (since 1959) and the European Parliament (since 1979). This Franco-German friendship is also reflected in:

> the importance of the economic, human and cultural cross-border exchanges: Germany is the Bas-Rhin's leading trading partner (exports: almost 5 billion €; imports: over 6 billion - figures for 2008); over 25,000 people from the Bas-Rhin, including Strasbourg, work in Germany. Finally, the presence of the Franco-German cultural television **arte** in Strasbourg should be emphasized

> the vast urban development operation in progress on the approach to the banks of the Rhine and the city of Kehl in Germany: turning its back on the border, for a long time Strasbourg directed its expansion towards the north, south and west. Today, the city is developing along the Route Nationale 4, the road linking France to Germany over the Rhine and is urbanizing an area of 250 hectares, a former industrial site close to the river port

> the Pont de l'Europe bridge, built in 1960, which enables vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians to cross the Rhine between Strasbourg and Kehl, over a length of about 300 m. A daily count carried out in December 2008

indicated that over 41,000 vehicles can cross this bridge in one day. A second bridge was opened to traffic in 2002

> the Passerelle des Deux Rives footbridge, with its elegant suspended architecture, has straddled a vast 60-hectare park situated on both banks of the Rhine since 2004. It is the work of French architect Marc Mimram (born in Paris in 1955), whilst the green spaces were designed by the German landscape gardener Rüdiger Brosk, from Essen. 177 metres long, the bridge connects one bank to the other in a continuity that is both tangible and symbolic and which stands for the abolition of all borders, geographical and human



The Passerelle des Deux Rives footbridge, where the heads of State and government of the NATO countries will be welcomed

> the progress of the Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau towards the establishment of a new form of cross-border governance, modelled on the example of Washington DC. Created in 2005, this European territory with a special status is

seen as the future laboratory of an advanced form of Franco-German cooperation, which in time would allow for joint decision-making, the pooling of services and public investments. This territory, which unites the 28 municipal authorities in the Urban Community of Strasbourg and the Ortenaukreis (which includes the cities of Kehl, Offenburg, Oberkirch, Lahr and Achern) covers a surface area of over 2,000 km² with a population of almost a million. It was granted the legal status of a "European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation" (EGTC) last March, the first step on the way to the realization of a multitude of projects. Strasbourg's European dimension should be reinforced by this initiative and people's daily lives facilitated considerably. Already, a joint teaching programme has been introduced and closer cooperation is being organized between Strasbourg's university hospitals and the Kork Epilepsy centre concerning epilepsy care. German emergency vehicles have the same priority rights in the Strasbourg urban area as local ambulances. Since 1 January 2009, the French residents of the Ortenaukreis have been able to obtain their identity papers from the Town Hall in Strasbourg and no longer from the French Consulate in Munich. There are also plans to extend the Strasbourg tram system to Kehl in the next few years. Finally, on 4 May next, the city council meetings of Strasbourg and Kehl will be held together. A few days later, on 15 May, the councillors of the Eurodistrict will gather in the Jardin des Deux Rives to take an oath.

« If we wish Europe to become a concrete entity for its citizens, the latter have to have the feeling that Europe brings them some added value. It is with this in mind that we are working with the elected representatives of the other side of the Rhine to build this new Eurodistrict, a pioneering European territory »

(ROLAND RIES, MAYOR OF STRASBOURG)



« The Eurodistrict must be run in this spirit and with a double ambition: to make this area of almost a million people into an urban entity that will have some weight in the Upper Rhine Valley and in Europe; as the Rhine is no longer a border, to do what is necessary to abolish the administrative, legal and tax borders »

(JACQUES BIGOT, PRESIDENT OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY OF STRASBOURG)



Capital of the Europe of democracy and human rights

When the Council of Europe, now consisting of 47 Member States, was created in 1949, the question arose as to which city would be best placed to accommodate this organization responsible for promoting European unity, democracy, human rights and political pluralism. Strasbourg was chosen for the reasons explained by Ernest Bevin, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs: "We were looking for a centre that could both be convenient for all European nations and come to symbolize European unity. Strasbourg was a natural choice. This great city had been witness to such breed of human stupidity that attempted to settle its affairs through war, cruelty, and sheer destruction".

In total, Strasbourg is home to some twenty European institutions or international cooperation organizations, all situated together in the Wacken, an area in the north-east of the city, where the NATO summit is taking place. Like Geneva and New York, Strasbourg, without being a State capital, is no less an international capital with a strong diplomatic presence (46 embassies, about thirty consulates).

STRASBOURG IS THEREFORE HOME TO:

> **the Council of Europe** and its Parliamentary Assembly, not forgetting the various bodies attached to it:

- the European Court of Human Rights, guardian of humanist values and created almost exactly fifty years ago
- the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, established in 1994 to promote local autonomy
- the European Youth Centre, established in 1972 to educate and inform young people on
- the Council's pan-European approach

- the European Pharmacopoeia, set up in 1964 to guarantee the quality of medicines and draw up the standards applicable to its member countries
- the European Audiovisual Observatory, which has been gathering and circulating information on the European audiovisual industry since 1992



The European Court of Human Rights, guardian of humanist values

> **the European Parliament**, whose members have been elected by direct universal suffrage since 1979. Its codecision powers have extended out by the different treaties and its areas of competence have been widened (the environment, transport, regional development, budget, approval of the appointment of European Commissioners, etc.)

TWO OTHER BODIES ALSO DEPEND ON THE EUROPEAN UNION:

- > **the European Ombudsman**, arbitrating disputes between citizens and the Community institutions since 1995
- > **the Schengen Information System (SIS) for police cooperation**, adopted by 27 countries including Norway, Iceland and Switzerland, which are not members of the European Union: since 2001 the SIS has consisted of a database providing the authorities of each Member State with alerts on people or objects
- > **The Eurocorps**, created in 1992 on a Franco-German initiative. Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain later joined its joint command in Strasbourg. Poland recently followed their lead. On 26 February last, the Treaty of Strasbourg, signed five years earlier, came into force, giving the European army corps a legal status and therefore operational autonomy
- > **The European Science Foundation**, has brought together since 1977 some 77 European organizations from 30 European countries, with the main mission of promoting scientific research, improving European cooperation in this field in conjunction with the Brussels Commission and contributing to the pooling of resources. It coordinates projects, organizes conferences and workshops, networks skills and puts forward prospective investigations
- > **The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine**: set up by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it is the oldest of all the cross-border organizations. It guarantees the freedom of navigation on this river, which represents the busiest waterway in Europe with a total traffic of 300 million tonnes (a volume three times higher than that of the Danube). Bearing in mind that the Rhine flows through or along 6 different countries, its mission is also to guarantee safe navigation and work towards the unification of the Rhine river regulations



The Palais du Rhin houses the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine, the oldest of the cross-border bodies

- > **The Assembly of European Regions**: founded in 1985, it constitutes the largest independent network of European regions. No less than 270 of them are represented, from 33 different countries. Its mission consists essentially of promoting the principle of subsidiarity and regional democracy, reinforcing the political influence of the regions with the European institutions and encouraging inter-regional cooperation in Europe and beyond
- > **The Strasbourg Club**: in 2003 the City created a federation of 38 metropolitan districts from the Enlargement countries, such as Warsaw, Lodz, Bratislava, Nicosia and Split. The Club endeavours to facilitate the implementation of European technical cooperation programmes and exchanges of competence in a variety of areas (town planning, transport, the environment, social affairs, information technologies). The mayors of the 38 cities meet at least once a year. In October 2008, at one of the meetings, Strasbourg recommended that the objectives of the Club be re-oriented towards good governance and local democracy.

Strasbourg is also a member of several European networks such as Eurocities, which passes on to the Community institutions some of the major preoccupations of the large European cities. It was within this framework that Strasbourg signed a recent Declaration on climate change. It also recently joined "Cities for children" dedicated to the theme of childhood in the city.

All these examples show, should it be necessary to do so, that the impact and actions of Strasbourg far exceed the limits of just the European Union: the city, animated by a pan-European spirit born of its humanist tradition, sees itself as a link with the whole of the continent.

But Strasbourg has also long been resolutely turned towards the wider world. It has been twinned with Boston (United States) and Leicester (United Kingdom) since 1960, Stuttgart (Germany) since 1962, Dresden (Germany) since 1990 and finally with Ramat Gan (Israel) since 1991.

At the same time, the City pursues a policy of decentralized technical cooperation, intended to foster transfers of experiences and know-how towards other cities in the world. Including:

- > **Jacmel** in Haiti, where a project to improve municipal capacities (cleansing management, markets, local taxation) is underway

- > **Douala** in Cameroon, where in a few months' time a social centre will be inaugurated in an underprivileged neighbourhood

- > **Fès** in Morocco, where a new cooperation project on water sanitation and the training of emergency medical staff was approved in June 2008

- > **Novgorod** in Russia, where a programme of aid for heritage protection and administrative organization has been running since 1997

- > **Bamako** in Mali, where the construction of a tram system is being studied, taking into account Strasbourg's experience.

Finally, a support fund of €15,000 for Strasbourg associations involved in international solidarity projects is granted each year by the City.

Projects supported in this way include the participation in the construction of a school in Peru and the setting up of awareness-raising campaigns on deforestation in Senegal.

A solid and flourishing economy

Its close proximity to Germany, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Belgium, but also to the Rhine, Europe's most important commercial river, is a huge advantage for Strasbourg and economy has brilliantly taken advantage of this privileged geographical location. The presence of major European institutions as well as the setting up of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict have also contributed to this economic dynamism.

STRASBOURG THUS HAS:

- > **the second busiest river port in France**, with 9 million tonnes of freight (2008 figures)
- > **a long tradition of organising international conferences (more than a hundred per year) and trade fairs** (nearly fifty annually), that put the city on the second rank after Paris
- > **a host of foreign or internationally active companies**, spread throughout its inner fringes, including Steelcase, Kraft Foods, Sanofi-Aventis, Johnson & Johnson, Lohr Industrie, Kronenbourg, Würth, Eli Lilly, Hager, Heineken

- > **highly successful business parks**, some of which are dedicated to high technology businesses (such as the 170-hectare Pôle d'Innovation in Illkirch) or the tertiary sector (for example, the Espace Européen de l'Entreprise)

- > **a very wide-range of service industries**, which, in particular, make the city one of France's main banking centres (13 banks have their head offices in Strasbourg), acknowledged for its high level of international expertise

- > **a great variety of industries**, including a number of key branches such as chemicals, automotive parts or agri-food (400 companies, 15,000 employees)

- > **innovation clusters** renowned worldwide, particularly in the field of life sciences and living organisms, which occupy 40 % of the scientists.

A rich university offer

Its history is run through by the thread of a double culture, French and German. The University of Strasbourg (UdS) became a single entity last February, embracing in a vast conglomerate three institutions: Louis Pasteur University, dedicated to the sciences, medicine and technology - it boasts a Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1987 and a Fields mathematics medal in 2006 - Marc Bloch, the Social Sciences University, and Robert Schuman, the University of Law, Political Science and Economics. The 42,000 students (including 21% foreign students) plus the 6,000 lecturers and other staff make it France's largest multi-disciplinary university.



In February 2009 the University de Strasbourg became the largest multi-disciplinary university in France

Driven, with its 2,500 researchers, by the ambition to constitute one of the major centres of university research in Europe, UdS is involved in numerous partnerships, such as EUCOR (Confederation of the Universities of the Upper Rhine), a tri-national network of universities including Basle in Switzerland, Karlsruhe and Freiburg in Germany, and Mulhouse in France. It is also a founder member of the LERU, the League of European Research Universities. Its outstanding performances in particular fields such as molecular biology, biotechnology, chemistry, materials physics and space sciences have contributed for many years to its international reputation.

Recognized as a centre of excellence and innovation, Strasbourg has attracted many other entities, universities or institutes with a national, international and European scope. Here are just a few examples:

> **the International Space University (ISU):**

founded in 1987, it was initially located in Massachusetts, in the United States, until an international competition chose Strasbourg in 1994. The ISU trains students, future professionals, astronauts and experts in a multi-disciplinary culture adapted to space projects. All the knowledge of the existing space bodies is concentrated there. This scientific experience, unique, attracts specialists from all over the world

> **the Human Frontier Science**

Program (HFSP): created by G8 on a Japanese initiative, it has been based in Strasbourg since 1989. This international programme cultivates fundamental research in the field of the mechanisms of living organisms and complex biological systems

> **the IRCAD (Research Institute against Cancer of the Digestive Tract):**

its basic and applied research programmes as well as its teaching of new surgical technologies have made its worldwide reputation. This exceptional structure covering 8000 m², established in 1994, receives 3,000 surgeons every year, covering all the different specialities

> **the ENA (National School of**

Administration): created in 1945, it was decentralized to Strasbourg in 1992, thus increasing the city's top level European and academic standing. The ENA trains the future top civil servants for the French administration, but is also attended by students of over a hundred nationalities.

At the confluence of all religions

Strasbourg has the historic particularity of having been German in 1905, when Church and State were separated in France. Today it is still, like the rest of Alsace and a part of Lorraine, subject to a regime of local laws known as the *Concordat*. This is combined with the principle of secularism, which is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic French.

This original status has led to an extremely varied religious landscape, which can be seen in the presence of many places of worship. Strasbourg thus has about thirty Catholic churches, 23 Protestant "temples", 9 synagogues, 23 Muslim places of worship, numerous Evangelical churches, 6 Orthodox places of worship, some ten Buddhist places of worship...

Pluralism also reigns within many of the different groups: the premises of the Great Synagogue house an Ashkenazi synagogue and a Sephardic synagogue, Protestant churches are Lutheran or Reformed, the Hanefite or Malekite rites are both practiced in the mosques, Zen Buddhism cohabits with Tibetan Buddhism...

The richness of this religious landscape, encouraged by the city council in particular in the form of subsidies, has a direct effect on city life. Dialogue between the different religious traditions is permanent here and often leads to gestures of solidarity such as the Strasbourg Appeal initiated by Mayor Roland Ries at the beginning of this year, following an increase in the tensions in the Middle East and signs of a rift between the Jewish and Muslim communities in Strasbourg.

« Strasbourg is not a city like other cities. It has a past, a history that can be seen in its urban landscape, a culture in the widest sense of the term, it has a message to put across, that of Rhenish humanism, of the acceptance of the other with all his differences » (ROLAND RIES) »