

Tornio-Haparanda: a Unique Result of City Twinning

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HAPARANDA

Founded in 1842 by Karl XIV Johan

Area: 918 km²

Inhabitants: 10 200

Population density: 11,6 per km²

Unemployment rate: 14,7 % (2004)

Number of companies: ca. 800

TORNIO

Founded in 1621 by Gustaf II Adolf

Area: 1227 km²

Inhabitants: 22 300

Population density: 19,2 per km²

Unemployment rate: 14,8 % (2004)

Number of companies: ca. 1050

The border cities of Tornio in Finland and Haparanda in Sweden make up a significant and exceptional area. This area is an essential part of the northern part of the Gulf of Botnia extending from Raahé to Piteå, in its centre. Close cross-border cooperation of this kind between two cities located in different countries is unique in Europe. Although Tornio and Haparanda administratively belong to different states, diverse cooperation is carried on in almost all administrative sectors.

Forerunner in Cross-Border Cooperation

Tornio and Haparanda have a long common history. The border line between Russia and Sweden, drawn at the Peace in Hamina (Fredrikshamn) in 1809, divided this area into two parts. In spite of the national frontier, peaceful relations and dealings between people continued as before.

In 1986, the city governments decided to study possibilities for cooperation between municipalities. As a result of this study, Provincia Bothniensis, a cooperation organisation between Tornio and Haparanda was established in 1987 with the aim to promote cooperation between these border cities. The decision-makers of the cities were far-sighted, and long before the debate on Finland and Sweden joining the EU was started they understood what benefits would be brought by cooperation.

The development and deepening of cooperation is the administration's responsibility. In this the Administration of the City Councils appoint five members each for the municipal electoral period. This organisation also has its own office.

Work groups form an important part of cooperation. At present there are work groups dealing with the following issues:

- Business and Tourism
- Training and education
- Community structure, city planning, environmental issues, technical services
- Physical education and leisure time
- Social services and health care
- Culture and youth activities
- Planning and constructing a new city centre 'On the Border'

In addition, there have been many projects in progress that belong to the EU Interreg programme.

For a period of more than ten years, we can list several concrete results which also have brought economic benefits to the cities. The objectives, which were set at the

founding stage of the organisation and in the course of cooperation, have been achieved and in most areas even exceeded. These achievements include cooperation in cultural and leisure time activities, borderless education; free school attendance across the border on all levels including vocational training, the common comprehensive school 'Language school' and the upper secondary Euro school, cooperation and joint investments in fire and rescue services, common sewage treatment plant, combining the district heating networks, combining the tourist agencies, carrying out the redevelopment plan of the city bay, located at the national frontier.

'On the Border'

The most concrete result of the cooperation is the construction of a new common city centre on the border area. It has been a process of 10 years that started in 1995 when Finland and Sweden joined the EU. The process has proceeded in phases starting with an international architecture competition in 1996. The second phase was the development plan for the area, the third the realisation plan including both a master plan and a town plan. The construction started in 2005, and in 2008 there will be approximately 100.000 m² of new commercial space in the area. The world famous IKEA is going to open their northernmost unit in the world in November 2006.

IKEA is followed by the most famous chains of stores in Sweden and Finland. It also means around 1500 new jobs in the service sector by 2010.

The cities have also expanded their cooperation network to the regional level. The road administrations of Finland and Sweden participate in the cooperation project, and the land survey offices of the two countries participate in its general planning. We are now creating a new kind of working pattern in which the frontier, which used to be regarded as a barrier, has been turned into a resource, a resource which will offer new opportunities for the development of the region.

Focus on Education

Bilingualism is a unique richness of HaparandaTornio. The cities have a common language school in Haparanda in which instruction has been given in Finnish and Swedish since 1989. The curriculum of the school is a combination of the curricula of the Finnish and Swedish school systems. Thus, children grow up to be bilingual and international at the same time as they develop roots in the community.

In autumn 1998, Eurolukio, the Euro upper secondary school, started its activity, also unique among schools. In its

curriculum, internationalism is a concrete thing. The aim is for pupils to gain active skills in more than two languages and good possibilities for postgraduate studies both at Finnish, Swedish and European institutions of higher education and universities.

Vision 2010

The Administration of Haparanda-Tornio has adopted a new vision up to 2010, according to which '*Haparanda-Tornio is an international centre in The Bothnian Arc and Barents Region; a meeting place for cultures, knowledge, logistics, innovation and people*'. The aim of decision-makers and officials in Tornio and in Haparanda is to continue to be forerunners of frontier cooperation in the future. This means that we must have new ideas and the courage to realize them.

International Attention

Cooperation between Tornio and Haparanda has received wide attention both in Finland and Sweden as well as internationally. Haparanda and Tornio have participated in many international projects with the aim of developing cooperative efforts similar to the Haparanda-Tornio pattern between other city twins on European borders. At the moment Haparanda-Tornio are partners in 'City Twins Cooperation Network' project along with eight other cities on European and Russian borders. More information about the project is available in www.citytwins.net.

More information can be found on the following homepages: www.tornio.fi; www.haparanda.se; www.pagransen.com

Publications

The case of Haparanda-Tornio has been studied and discussed in numerous articles:

Heininen, Lassi (2004). "'Hapatornio' – Twin Town". In: *Baltic Region - Conflicts and Co-operation. Road from the Past to the Future*, an Estonian-Finnish-Latvian-Lithuanian-Swedish reference book. The English Edition. EuroUniversity, Estonian Euroinfo Society, Kirjastus ilo. Estonia, p. 210-211. (the book is also published in Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Russian and Swedish languages).

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Zalamans, Dennis (2004). "The Next Generation. A study of youths in five border towns": In: *Narva and the Baltic Sea Region*, edited by Karsten Brüggemann, Narva.

Zalamans, Dennis (2005). *The light of two border towns from a different angle. The situation of youths in Narva and Valga on the Estonian border*. Forthcoming.

Zalamans, Dennis and Kujala, Jukka (2004). "European Impact on the Finnish-Swedish Border – The case of Haparanda and Tornio" In: *Regional Policies in Europe. Soft Feature for Innovative Cross-Border Cooperation*, edited by F.M. Zimmerman and S.Janschitz, Leykam, Graz.