

Comment by the Partnership Association of Alsbach-Hähnlein to the press release
“No Happy End with Sulmona”
by Sabine Eisenmann, published on August 5, 2023 in Darmstädter Echo

“No Happy End with Sulmona, because a Happy End with Sulmona was not desired by the Mayor

In this article facts are stated which cannot be confirmed because they are simply wrong. The facts are:

- 1) As part of a European project in 2012/2013, citizens from the communities of Sulmona and of Alsbach-Hähnlein had met for the first time. In the course of the years, numerous friendly contacts were made leading to regular meetings and joint activities of the citizens of the communities. Until today, the number of such meetings sums up to more than 30 which were all privately organized and without making demands on the funds of the community.
- 2) This development triggered the desire to give the relationship between the citizens of both communities an official frame. At our side, this led to the foundation of the partnership association of Alsbach-Hähnlein e.V., which contrary to the administration of the community has numerous voluntary persons at their disposal who have been willing and able to take care of this plan.
- 3) The civic engagement requested by Mayor Bubenzer during Sunday and election speeches had been practiced here. In the meantime, 45 citizens of our community have actively been cooperating in setting up a network for Alsbach-Hähnlein in Europe.
- 4) Consequently, the desire for an official partnership between both communities led in 2018 to drafting a Letter of Intent which led to a meeting of the former mayors Mrs. Casini (from Sulmona) and Mr. Rausch (from Alsbach) at Sulmona as well as of the cultural representative of the city of Sulmona at Alsbach-Hähnlein in November 2018. On this occasion, the text of the Letter of Intent was jointly agreed upon and written in both, the Italian and the German language. Some time later this Letter of Intent was signed by both sides and was meant to lead to a treaty of friendship/partnership.
- 5) On the way there, unfortunately, the pandemic got in the way and a new Mayor at Alsbach-Hähnlein entered the stage by which this process preliminarily stopped.
- 6) Due to the fact that the Mayor has not taken up the process again after the pandemic, the Municipal Council became active and in July 2021 decided unanimously that the Mayor together with the Parish Council should now finally conclude deeds of partnership with the city of Sulmona.
- 7) In the meantime, the Partnership Association of Alsbach-Hähnlein had been awarded again with the realization of a European project. The start-up meeting took place at the end of September/beginning of October 2021 at our community. A delegation of five persons from Sulmona under the leadership of Mayor Casini (she had announced her visit) participated at the meeting at Alsbach and brought a draft of treaty along, ready for signature, based on the Letter of Intent. This draft had been submitted on time to the Mayor of Alsbach-Hähnlein with the intention to have this treaty ceremonially signed within the frame of the start-up meeting. There could not have been a better setting for such act between two European communities than such event in which beside numerous citizens from Alsbach-Hähnlein also several people from totally 8 different European countries had been participating. The Mayor denied without presenting substantial reasons. Two further attempts within the frame of this project failed just the same, the last time in May of this year when again an Italian delegation led by the then Deputy Mayor stayed at Alsbach-Hähnlein. Based on the preceding conversations they had expected the treaty to be signed during the event, again the Mayor of Alsbach-Hähnlein refused to give his signature.

- 8) The flimsy invitation as well as an agreement written without having previously consulted with the communal bodies of Alsbach-Hähnlein nor with any Italian, had reportedly been handed over to the Italian guests on their way back to Sulmona on May 10. Actually, the agreement had only been sent by e-mail to Sulmona later. How naïve do you have to be to believe that there will be any reaction at all. After all, the Mayor had refused all proposals of the counterpart without any justification, thus massively compromising and upsetting them.

Conclusion:

It was not the community of Alsbach-Hähnlein who ended the partnership but the Mayor. What, however, weighs even more heavily is the fact that the Mayor boycotts a resolution of the Municipal Council thus disregarding the assignment. This must lead to parliamentary repercussions. The Mayor states in the newspaper Darmstädter Echo that the Municipal Council had agreed to his proposal. Evidently, he did not have any other information but what could be read in the newspaper. Factual and honest information looks differently, particularly, when three of nine members to the Parish Council were on vacation. This is just the reason why this subject had been published on that particular day. Concerning “practiced partnership with Diósd” the Mayor should have a look at how Bickenbach interacts with their French partner community. Then he will know what practiced partnership means. Astonishing is the superficial journalistic work at the newspaper Darmstädter Echo. In spite of the fact that the journalists of Darmstädter Echo had accompanied the activities of the partnership association of Alsbach-Hähnlein over many years, they have not asked the association for a comment.