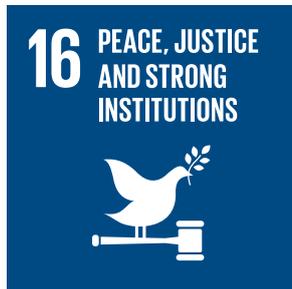


**SDG 16: PROMOTE PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDE ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR ALL AND BUILD EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND INCLUSIVE INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVELS**



SDG 16 aims to create peaceful and just societies, provide universal access to justice, and build effective and accountable institutions. The aim here is to significantly reduce all violence and violence-related mortality, and especially child abuse and exploitation. This will involve strengthening the rule of law, drastically reducing illegal financial and weapons flows, and fighting organised crime.

**BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PEACE**

**➔ WHAT ARE THE ACTIVITIES ALL ABOUT?**

The German city of Jena in Thuringia is twinned with the Palestinian town of Beit Jala. It is also part of a three-way relationship that includes the French municipality of Aubervilliers. The three municipalities have now also established cooperation agreements with Gilboa in Israel.

**➔ WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?**

Links with Beit Jala emerged from 1997 onwards, initially at the level of citizen, following a visit by today's Mayor of Jena, Dr Albrecht Schröter. This was followed by reciprocal visits by associations, cultural groups and municipal delegations. The twinning agreement was signed in 2011 at an official ceremony in Beit Jala.

**➔ HOW WAS THIS IMPLEMENTED?**

One key starting point is the annual festival of peace and culture in Beit Jala. Municipal policy-makers and administrators, interested citizens, sports teams and cultural ensembles travel to Palestine to attend this festival. In 2015, together with the Service Agency Communities in One World, Jena hosted the Second Conference of German-Palestinian Municipal Partnerships. In September 2017 the series was continued with the Third Partnership Conference in Jericho.

**➔ WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?**

Intensive work is under way to further develop meetings between Jena and Beit Jala. There is also an active network of eight other German-Palestinian (project) partnerships. This network, which is supported by the Service Agency, creates space for meeting, networking and sharing municipal expertise.



**Jena** ➔ Thuringia

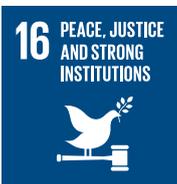


Population:  
**110,000**



Mayor:  
**Dr Albrecht Schröter**





## TURNING COOPERATION INTO FRIENDSHIP

Creating peaceful societies is a key goal of the 2030 Agenda. The path to peace and friendship is often a long one, but it pays off. This is demonstrated by the twinning arrangement between Jena in Thuringia and Beit Jala on the West Bank. It began with two trips to Palestine made by Albrecht Schröter, who at the time was a pastor. In 1995 he also visited Beit Jala, which is home to one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. This link between the Protestant pastor and Beit Jala developed into what he likes to call a 'lasting and productive relationship'. He reports that he 'took his passion for that country with him' when he went into politics, and became mayor in 2006. When Dr Schröter discovered that Jena's twin city in France, Aubervilliers, was already cooperating with Beit Jala, he decided to establish a partnership in Palestine.

From his years of experience, Dr Schröter concludes that a municipal partnership – like a romantic relationship – must pass through three stages of development: 'First of all the two sides meet, then they do something together, and finally they make a firm pledge to enter into a relationship.' This was followed initially by links at the level of citizens, in some cases also involving teamwork with Aubervilliers. In late 2008 the two sides 'got engaged'. In 2010 they then met at a first festival of culture and peace in Beit Jala, and in September 2011 they signed the agreement at a ceremony in Palestine.

Prior to that Jena had already noticed that Palestinian municipalities were very interested in partnerships with German municipalities. People in Palestine wanted people to come and see exactly what was going on for themselves rather than having their opinions shaped by propaganda, explains Dr Schröter. They were not interested in money, but rather in expert advice, for instance regarding municipal services, tourism, culture and social cohesion. 'They simply wish to leave isolation behind', says Dr Schröter.

The fact that they have succeeded in doing so is demonstrated by the many visits in both directions and the joint projects between Jena and Beit Jala. Ties emerged for instance with a rehabilitation network and with a women's cooperative in Beit Jala, whose works have since enriched the Christmas market in Jena. Meetings take place between theatre groups and circus projects in Jena and Beit Jala, and there are church



Footballers in Jena's fan project with their partners in Beit Jala (Photo: Fanprojekt Jena)

communities that cooperate with each other. The fan project in Jena is supporting football in Palestine, and schools have developed exchange programmes. In Thuringia workshops have also been developed for young Palestinians on dealing with violence, and on treating women and men equally.

According to the mayor, who visits Beit Jala himself once every three years, the aim is for as many citizens as possible to meet and for as many associations as possible to correspond with each other. The city council has also earmarked an amount of 50,000 euros for development cooperation in the municipal budget, which is open to all Jena's twinning schemes, including the partnership with San Marcos in Nicaragua. In Beit Jala this item is being used to build a library and a football field, and to develop a classroom in a former monastery.

Together with the municipalities of Bergisch Gladbach, Xanten and Cologne plus the relevant municipal partners from Palestine, in 2016 and 2017 the City of Jena is implementing a further project – using funds from the Service Agency's NAKOPA programme. One aim is to create an office for the joint coordination and marketing of tourism in the environs of Bethlehem, which remain largely undeveloped for this purpose. Local capacities will be organised and a viable marketing strategy will be developed so that a large proportion of the value created will remain in the region. In this setting tourism will function not only as a driver of peace and mutual encounter, but also as a way to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

### INTERNET ADDRESSES

[www.jena.de/de/startseite/210413](http://www.jena.de/de/startseite/210413)

<http://skew.engagement-global.de/funding-from-the-nakopa-programme.html>

