

Distinguished Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

As a First Deputy Chairman of City Board, on behalf of Kouvola delegation, I have an honor to bring our greetings to you. I want to thank for the invitation. It is just great to be here. I want to thank Mulheim for everything what we have achieved together during past four decades. Mulheim has always been active twin town partner for us. The cooperation has been successful. Twin town relation has accomplished real actions in practical level. The meaning of Mulheim twin town relation was highlighted in 2009, when new Kouvola started. Six municipalities merged and naturally former cities had altogether tenths of twin towns. So at the beginning in 2009 we had to prioritize and to choose only three twin towns to new Kouvola. Mulheim, indeed, was one of those three.

Ladies and Gentlemen

During the last decades the emphasis of cooperation between Kuusankoski and Mulheim has linked especially to youth affairs. The choice has been the right one. In Finland youth affairs are under serious discussion in both state and local level. The main task for society is to offer enough educate and job opportunities to young people. At begin of next year in state level starts young people society guarantee program. It means that all young people must have a place for job, educate or training. The aim is to have a zero tolerance for social exclusion. I am convinced that in youth policy also the meaning of internationality increase because of globalization. Young people need international contacts. It is crucial to learn to speak foreign languages in early age and to get familiar of different kind of cultures. I see the potential to deepen the twin town cooperation especially in youth affairs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The European Union has launched the growth strategy. Growth is the key to success in local level as well. I have said many times, that the three biggest challenges for us are growth, growth and growth. We have lost about 4000 jobs from traditional forest industry since 2006. So we really have to diversify our industrial structure. We have to operate valiant trade and business policy. We have decided to succeed. We have chosen two core strategic emphases. Forest, energy and environment sector includes for example advancing wood construction and renewable energy production. Green Spirit are strongly exist. The objective is to diminish 30 % our greenhouse emissions, to increase the use of renewable energy sources and to increase energy saving. We believe that is possible to combine ecology and economy. I have said, in fact, that Kouvola will renew with renewable. Later on it would be interesting to hear and to share the best practices what comes to the fight against climate change. Tourism is the other strategic sector in our trade and industrial policy. Our location between two metropolises, Helsinki and St. Petersburg, offers plenty of interesting opportunities.

Distinguished Mayor, Ladies and gentlemen

In Finland we are the forerunner in local level. All in all, the merge of municipalities was definitely the right decision. New Kouvola is in a right way. We are doing the right things. We just have to be patient. Big things don't happen rapidly. It is relevant to look to the future instead of looking back.

With these words I warmly welcome you all to visit developing, fascinating and homely Kouvola!

Antti Koivisto

