

Honorary Plaque of the Council of Europe

Toruń was honoured with the Honorary Plaque of the Council of Europe. This is the second high distinction, (after the honorary flag), given to us for actions we made for the sake of European unity. The message about granting of this prize came on the first of May 2005, on the first anniversary of Poland's joining the European Union.

- Already today I can say that we at once begin to put every effort to gain the most prestigious laurel of the Council of Europe - *Prix de l'Europe* - said president Michał Zaleski during the special press conference.

The Honorary Plaque is in recognition for active participation in national and international organizations, such as the New Hanseatic League. Toruń is Polish coordinator of this association, and Organization of World Heritage Cities. Not without importance was the fact that in December 2003, after the tragic earthquake in Bam in Iran, Toruń called on Polish cities from the UNESCO list to jointly help inhabitants of Bam. Toruń takes active participation in the project of Healthy Cities of International Health Organization.

Toruń was highly appraised for its cooperation with the twin cities. Since the time our city was granted the Honorary Flag we established cooperation with Swindon, signed declaration of future cooperation with Guilin and established contact with Lutsk (the Ukraine), which will possibly bear fruit in the form of future cooperation. What is important is the fact that it is not only the self- government that cooperates with foreign countries, but also other institutions, such as: Nicolaus Copernicus University, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, European Centre for Youth Cooperation and Mobility, Regional Centre of European Information, schools, cultural institutions and sports clubs. Thus the Honorary Plaque is also a distinction for them.

Important international events take place in Toruń, such as the Kontakt International Theatre Festival, the "Probaltica" Festival of Music and Arts of the Baltic Countries, the International Ecumenical Christian Music Festival "Song of Songs", festival "Toruń - Music and Architecture", Toruń International Puppet Theatres' Festival, International Meeting of Folk Groups, as well as occasional events, such as, the

International Polish Star Track Rally.

The Council of Europe highly appraised events that took place in our city during the referendum campaign and on the occasion of Poland's entry to the European Union - for example: unveiling of the copy of the fresco "March of Nations of Europe to the Cross" on 31st of May 2003.

The Plaque is a sign of high esteem for actions of inhabitants of Toruń for the sake of idea of unity. It is impossible to enumerate all the conferences, meetings, and competitions connected with the European Union that have been organized lately by numerous institutions and youth. One can enumerate the European Forum, International Conference Poland - the European Union - World, the International Conference of Students' Scientific Circles "Student in the European Union", the debate "Let's talk about the European Parliament", the literary competition "How do you imagine the place and role of Toruń and its citizens in uniting Europe" and "European Day without a Car".

The Honorary Plaque is made of bronze, and apart from European symbols there is the name of the city and year of granting. Handing over of the previous prize took place on the 6th of December 2001.

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