

Chers amis de Radlett, dear friends from Radlett,

Last time I had the opportunity to stand in front of you and to make a speech, it was back in 2008 for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the twinning of our two cities: Radlett and Louveciennes.

Our friendly relationship is now 33 year old.

33 years, that's one third of a century. It may seem a blink of an eye, but it is an eternity. The world in which we live today has very little in common with the world of 1984 when the twinning was initiated.

Twinning in Europe have been founded with the noble idea to build strong relationships between countries that have been each other's best enemies for centuries. The French and the Brits have been sitting like cats and dogs for centuries. Germany and France have been fighting since the middle of the 19th century. The construction of Europe has achieved a great result: reconciling the former enemies and teaching them how to live together. Twinning cities and villages throughout Europe was an efficient way to implement these brilliant principles among the population and to encourage personal encounters and individual initiatives. Without mentioning language learning...

In 1984, France and Britain still looked exotic to each other.

33 years later, a blink of an eye later or an eternity later, we live in another world. The digital revolution has changed our habits and our environment, shrunk our big planet to the dimensions of a global village and turned our European ambitions into globalization.

Great Britain is not an island anymore; easyJet takes us anywhere for a few quids; Shakespeare's language has become universal thanks to the internet; Skype or Whatsapp allow us to chat with our friends and relatives no matter if they live next door or down under.

Having said that, it comes as no surprise that the concept of the twinning has been ageing and isn't attractive anymore to the new generations. And it had to come to an end.

But we can be proud of what we have achieved during these 33 years. So many stories to tell, so many good memories to share. And the satisfaction to have actively supported this movement of pan-European friendship.

I would like to thank all of those who have participated and contributed to this adventure, those who have hosted and welcomed people from Louveciennes in their homes, who have dedicated their time and their efforts to make it happen.

It is over now, and curiously enough (or should I say sadly enough?) this "TWEXIT" happens just a few months after the Brexit. The British people have voted, and their choice must be respected. Let's hope that this will not harm the friendly relationships between our respective countries.

To finish on a more positive note, I am more than happy to see that our twinings with our German twin city (Meersburg am Bodensee) and with our Romanian twin city (Vama) keep going. It is so important for France and Germany to be close and to keep Europe moving forward. And from a more personal point of view, I'm very glad to see that the end of the twinning will not terminate the sincere friendship between members from our respective twinning associations: RAIFA and CJL.

Thanks again to all. The twinning is dead, long live the twinning! Le jumelage est mort! Vive le jumelage!