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Europe/International

Delegation from Bocholt visits its twin town, Akmenė

Thematic dialogue with citizens, the business community, schools and the local authorities in the Lithuanian twin town

In-depth insights into industry, educational approaches and vibrant culture: a four-member delegation from the town of Bocholt visited its Lithuanian twin town, Akmenė, from 20 to 23 August 2026. The occasion was the traditional town festival, to which Akmenė invites its international partner municipalities every year.

Alongside the delegation from Bocholt - comprising Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers, City Councillor Martin Rudde, Sonja Wießmeier (Bocholt City Council) and Gerd Hagedorn from the Bocholt Art and Culture Association (KuKuG) - representatives from Latvia (Dobele), Poland (Konin), Estonia (Viru-Nigula) and Ukraine (Skhidnytsia and Verkhnodniprovsk) also took part in the multi-day working programme.

Immediately upon arrival, the guests explored concrete avenues for cooperation in initial technical discussions with the city's cultural officer, Akmenė. This was followed by meetings with key figures from the local cultural scene, including representatives of the local photography club and freelance artists. At the traditional 'White Evening' in front of the cultural centre in Naujoji Akmenė, the focus was on direct and informal exchanges with local residents.

A key focus was on the region's economic development: during a guided tour of the *Akmenės Cementas* cement works, the participants learnt about the sustainability measures implemented by the company, in which the German Schwenk Baustoffgruppe holds a 97 per cent stake. The group also visited the industrial estate in Venta, home to the *VMG Group* and the manufacturer *Bigso*, one of the longest-established suppliers to the furniture group IKEA.

Future-oriented education and international networking

The education sector also provided practical insights: the delegation visited a school in Naujoji Akmenė, which has specifically expanded its STEM programme using funding from the European "NextGenerationEU" programme - including courses in drone construction and laser cutting. Another item on the agenda was a visit to a local nursery to learn about early childhood education and care for under-threes.

The event concluded on a festive note with a joint delegation evening at the sports centre, attended by the Japanese Ambassador to Lithuania, Shinsuke Shimizu, whose home country is also twinned with Akmenė.

Positive assessment by the delegation

"The meetings in Akmenė highlighted the shared desire for closer cooperation in many areas, such as culture, business, administration and education," said Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers. She hopes that the on-site discussions will lead to the realisation of further joint projects between Bocholt and Akmenė.



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