



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

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The Young European Federalists (JEF Europe) has numerous local branches across many different countries. Each of these branches organises its own unique set of actions, projects and activities. Because of this, it is always interesting and useful for branches to share their best practices with one another.

One way to materialise a Twinning can be to organise a physical meeting between two or several sections. Over the course of a weekend, or several days, those taking part can show their respective activities but importantly come together to think about and discuss several, predefined topics.

Through workshops, talks and debates, participants leave the exchange with more knowledge of another culture, another language and of another local section but all leave thinking more about a **Federal Europe**.

Below is some advice to help you organise this type of event gathered from the experiences of **JEUNIP** who had an exchange with **JEB** in May/June 2014 and those of JEF Nice who are partway through organising their exchange with JEF Northern Italy.

- 1.) How to decide to organise a physical meeting?
- 2.) Who to contact? How do you contact them?
- 3.) How to finance this type of event?
- 4.) Hmm... But what exactly can we discuss?
- 5.) Hosting a section
- 6.) Visiting the other section
- 7.) What about after?

1. How to decide to do organise a twinning? And who will organise it?

The idea of organising a twinning had been proposed at the AGM of JEF France by Matthias Touillon, Head of European Relations.

The section **JEUNIP** was blessed with having German-speakers amongst its members (many students having learned German at school) and with Germany being one of France's neighbours, we decided at the AGM that **JEUNIP** should try to organise a twinning project with them in the form of a physical meeting. What's more, with 2014 being the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War we thought the timing was right to **celebrate the Franco-German friendship**.



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

As such, the theme had already been found: it helped us carry out an appropriate memorial of the past but importantly, we could also look forwards to the European Parliament elections. The time was right to cover both at the same time!

Two people speaking the language of our exchange partners were chosen to make contact with **JEB** and run the project: **this was clearly not enough!**

For the twinning between South-East France and Northern Italy, there are around 6-8 of us carrying out the preparation! Do not hesitate to **share the workload!**

- Application and monitoring of the grant
- Organisation of the logistics
- Communication
- Someone in charge of maintaining the link with the JEF partners
- Talks and workshops

Through splitting the work, it is both easier and quicker to get on with the project ! As a group, you can motivate one another and know how each of you are progressing, keeping things more efficient and productive! It also makes things a lot less stressful when everyone does the tasks assigned to them.

When it is not possible for you to meet in person, **skype and google drive are two ways to keep in touch efficiently.** You could also have a regular review to more easily see what there is still to do.

Top Tip: Divide the tasks and ensure there is somebody named responsible for each one (ideally two names as this is better than working all alone!), giving deadlines for each.

2. Who to contact? How do you contact them?

European seminars, whether organised by JEF France or by JEF Europe, are a great opportunity to see the world! Our contact within **JEB** was established because I had befriended a Berliner whilst at the Strasbourg-Stuttgart seminar 😊<3

After a brief chat on Facebook presenting our idea, I was introduced to the person responsible for wider European affairs in **JEB**.



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

Word of advice: Each location section usually has at least a page, a profile and/or a group on Facebook. **Definitely do not hesitate to write on and subscribe to their page and like their statuses to make yourself known to them.** Sometimes, they don't respond to this, at which point you can be a little more insistent and **send an e-mail to the person in charge of European relations at the national level who will have a database with all the contact details for the local branches.**

We spent many hours on Skype for the twinning with Berlin! Which could be a little chaotic. Don't hesitate to **set deadlines and fix regular skype meetings.** For the Franco-Italian seminar, we have **one skype a week** to monitor everyone's progress. **It is important that there is at least one person who keeps track of everything** (the president or the person in charge) so that internal communication remains efficient.

3. How to finance this type of event?

The twinning with Germany was really quite easy: l'OFAJ (Franco-German Organisation for Youth) contributes massively to financing Franco-German projects. We all simply went on their website, downloaded their grant application forms, which we filled in and sent, accompanied by our project (a file of just two pages presenting our planned activities).

As for the Franco-Italian seminar, we have good relations with the elected representatives in Nice who are always quick to help us and give us financial support.

Quite often, **consulates** can provide financial assistance! Usually you have to find an e-mail address on their website, send them the project (a pretty PowerPoint presenting the group, then the project with a provisional budget and a letter politely requesting a meeting), then hit them up again by phone. Don't hesitate to visit them to make yourself known, it proves that you are serious. Ask for logistical help and then for a realistic amount of financial assistance.

Don't forget to look out for calls for proposed projects at the regional level either!

The grant application should be filled in by the two sections when it comes to l'OFAJ. Pay close attention to ensuring that the provisional budget is as equal as possible for both sides.



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

Any application grant should be handled jointly by the Treasurer and the person responsible for Europe-level activity. Ideally the President would also be kept up to date on progress.

Beware! The grant can sometimes arrive AFTER the event has taken place! Keep a close eye on the accounts and do all you can to ensure costs can be paid in advance! The treasurer especially ought to pay attention to ensure that participants give them **any papers required as evidence!** (It is generally good practice to keep travel receipts and signatures on an attendance register.)

Tips for keeping costs down:

Try to ensure that each participant can host one of their counterparts! This will really help make links 😊

Don't hesitate to organise a talk in collaboration with another organisation that could pay for a buffet at the end (meaning you are one less meal out of pocket!)

Watch and plan well the trips that you will be taking on public transport! Sometimes it is better value to buy weekly passes, sometimes not!

Negotiate for happy hour deals and other group discounts for anything and everything: one bar means one low-cost outing! (Often when you tell someone you're bringing a group of 20, they will make some form of gesture.)

4. Hmmm... But what exactly can we discuss?

Organising a twinning is your chance to meet cool JEFers for sure, but it is also a chance to exchange our best practices and share our visions of federalism and the future of Europe!

This is why it is important to factor in times for **formal AND informal exchanges!**

Formal exchanges include workshops reflecting on set issues, sharing of best practices, debates and talks!

Between two and four hours a day, you book a room that can hold all the participants together (or split them into several groups if you are too many, say more than 20) and any challenges. You could also have workshops reflecting on themes in line with your project.



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

E.g: We had a workshop comparative the results of the European elections in France and Germany.

For the **JE Mer**, the theme is “The Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the politics of migration.” We are therefore going to have a workshop on the politics of European migration and the positions that we have on this subject.

For more informal times, you can always have **games** before or after workshops, or before you all come together over a drink (yes that’s also part of organising a twinning!)

5. Hosting a section:

For those responsible for organising the exchange, the stress of thinking that nothing is perfect can wear you out before the twinning has even ‘*really*’ begun. This is why it is very important that there are several of you!

- People who are receiving the participants
- People manning the back office
- ➔ Feel free to switch between the roles.

Word of Advice: Make a formal infokit for the participants but also a very detailed road map for the organisational team (person ‘1’ goes to place ‘A’ to pay for the sandwiches which are to arrive at place ‘B’ at time ‘X’ whilst person ‘2’ goes with the participants from place ‘C’ to place ‘B’)

This will help you avoid many a car crash!

Organising a twinning is tiring with you using at least three languages: your own language, the language of your partners and also English for those who don’t know one of the two languages. Sometimes this can be a challenge!

Occasionally it is difficult for the organising team to maintain a brave face when something unexpected happens. But take care to remind yourselves that these hiccups are usually only noticed by you! Feel free to rest a little and let others on the team take over when you feel like everything is getting a bit too much.



Organising Twinning: Best Practices & Advice

Word of Advice: Prepare an infokit with all the important information that will allow for an enjoyable stay (numbers for the organising team, meeting times and locations, etc), you may also wish to give a small map of the town to the new arrivals 😊

It is always good for the participants to meet people who aren't necessarily part of the twinning committee! It can even be a good idea to include them in your activities for the week. For example, **JEB** came along on our European Villages campaign and met many members of Parisian JEFers as well as the National Board. Unfortunately we didn't get round to organising a '[Europe at School](#)' (French version [here](#)) visit to show them how it is done...

6. [Visiting the other section:](#)

One main point of order: **be on time!** It is very difficult to keep to the programme when everything is going well, so imagine what it's like when you have people trickling in late for the workshops!

Little bit of advice: A small gift to thank the organising team is always welcome. Try to think of something with a personal touch: a JEF T-shirt or goodies (and a nice bottle of French wine) are generally great gifts! **JEB** gave us a JEF Berlin T-shirt and cup in which I drink my morning coffee with pride everyday!

7. [What about after?](#)

Review! Keep a close eye on the necessary documents and make sure they reach the Treasurer! You can decide to keep the twinning again by restarting it the next year or you can decide to think bigger, doing a project with several sections, it's really up to you! ;)

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