

German and Russian foreign ministers honor Kassel's city partnership

- **Partnership between the cities of Kassel and Novy Urengoy is personally honored by Maas and Lavrov**
- **Jury: The innovative use of new media and the involvement of young people is exemplary**

Kassel / Berlin. The partnership between the cities of Kassel and Novy Urengoy will be honored today at the closing event of the German-Russian Year of Local and Regional Partnerships. It is one of 30 bilateral partnerships that will be particularly honored by Germany's and Russia's respective foreign ministers, Heiko Maas and Sergey Lavrov. From around 250 submissions, a German-Russian jury selected the city partnership for the following reasons: "The excellent partnership between Kassel and Novy Urengoy at diverse levels is exemplary for its innovative use of new media that enables the project to operate cost-effectively and flexibly." In particular, the jury highlights the involvement of young people as a reason for conferring the award.

More than 500 representatives from German and Russian cities, local communities and civil society initiatives are expected to attend the thematic year's festive closing event, which is being held at the German Federal Foreign Office. In addition to Wintershall's CEO Mario Mehren, the Mayor of Kassel, Christian Geselle, will also attend the ceremony. Geselle sees the partnership as a reliable bridge between the cities and their people. "Throughout the years, numerous friendships have been forged which have a lasting impact on the

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mutual understanding of both countries' culture, history and present day life that goes far beyond professional interests. The partnership is an example of how – beyond global politics – something big can emerge 'on a small scale' at the level of individual cities," says Geselle.

A city partnership extending far beyond professional interests

The city partnership between the North Hessian city of Kassel (204,000 inhabitants) and the Western Siberian city of Novy Urengoy (120,000 inhabitants) was founded in 2005 by the City of Kassel, Kassel University and Wintershall. For twelve years now, the intensive and multilayered exchange of experience between experts from the city administrations as well as representatives from business, education and culture, moderated by the University of Kassel, has made a considerable contribution to the development of both cities. However, the city partnership extends far beyond the scope of a mutual exchange: "The spectrum ranges here from traditional student exchanges and research collaborations to monthly online conferences as well as the annually alternating summer and winter schools with administrative employees in Siberia and North Hesse," explains Dr. Marina Adams from Kassel University. "The experiences garnered from this collaboration are valuable because, above all, they strengthen the mutual understanding of life in Russia and Germany," adds Adams.

Part of Wintershall's social responsibility

For the Chairman of the German-Russian Forum, Matthias Platzeck, promoting German-Russian communal dialogue is more important than ever: "The civil dialogue is and remains a success story – particularly in times with political differences of opinion between our countries. However, we also believe that city partnerships only have a lasting effect if they receive concrete financial support in addition to political acknowledgment." This is exactly what Wintershall does. The company promotes not only the city partnership but also an annual student exchange between the two cities, which started in 2005. For Wintershall's CEO Mario Mehren, the cooperation between the two cities makes an important contribution to the future of German-

Russian relations and peaceful coexistence: "As a globally active company, we always pair our economic success with social responsibility. And that is so with Novy Urengoy in Western Siberia. Wintershall is actively engaged in intensifying the dialogue with Russia and is also promoting this at civil society levels. For us dialogue and exchanging views provide the basis of all coexistence."

The German-Russian Year of Local and Regional Partnership, which has been held under the auspices of both countries' foreign ministers, was launched in June 2017 at the XIV German-Russian City Partnership Conference in Krasnodar. It was coordinated on the German side by the German-Russian Forum.

You can find further information about the city partnership between Kassel and Novy Urengoy [here](#).

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