Those who celebrate a birthday receive presents from good friends. And those who celebrate a significant birthday receive a present of equal significance from their friends. This year, Latvia celebrates its centenary – a good reason for the German Embassy in Riga to bring the United Buddy Bears exhibition to a Baltic state for the first time, as a present of Germany to the Latvian people.

Together with Riga City, Ambassador Rolf Schütte and his team organised the exhibition of more than 140 United Buddy Bears on Cathedral Square, in the heart of Riga’s old town. From 12 July until 22 August, the bears stand there as beacons of tolerance, promoting the idea of different nations living together in peace. This is already the 32nd exhibition presenting the United Buddy Bears.
A powerful bear campaign for little patients

The opening event on 12 July 2018 was marked by the speeches of the three patrons of this exhibition – the Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany in Latvia, Rolf Schütte, the Mayor of Riga, Nils Ušakovs, and the Latvian Minister for Culture, Dace Melbārde. The minister expressed her gratitude for this unique exhibition: “This is a wonderful present to mark our country’s hundredth anniversary.” On behalf of all the countries represented by the bears Eva Herlitz, initiator of the United Buddy Bears, congratulated the Latvians on their country’s centenary.

Liene Dambina of the Children’s Hospital Foundation in Riga also expressed how grateful she was and thanked all the individuals, embassies and companies that had already donated money or whose donation will be collected in the context of the United Buddy Bears exhibition. The proceeds will go to the little patients of the Children’s Hospital in Riga who receive no state support for their treatment.

Buddy Bears unite different nations

Worldwide, the Buddy Bears are perceived as ambassadors representing Berlin and an open and cosmopolitan Germany. They are symbols of peace, friendship and close ties between different nations. Buddy Bears welcome guests, visitors and staff in front of an ever-growing number of German embassies and institutions like the Goethe-Institut. During the last six months alone, ten new Buddy Bears were unveiled on several continents. Very recently in July, Dr. Jürgen Morhard, Consul General in Mumbai, introduced the new “ambassador” with the following words: “True to the task of Buddy Bears worldwide, we wanted Mumbai’s Buddy Bear to give testimony to the comprehensive and close relationship between India and Germany, and that has been achieved.”

Charity

Since 20 June 2001, when the Buddy Bears appeared on the streets and squares of Berlin, Buddy Bear activities and help for children in need have been an inseparable unit. At charity events, bears are frequently put up for auction in aid of UNICEF and other children’s relief organisations.

The sum of donations generated so far amounts to

€2,287,000