

## Mulhouse

A small French city of no more than 100,000 inhabitants, Mulhouse lies on the triangle of the German-Swiss-French border. A few years ago, I met with a delegation of native French and French-Arabs from that city in order to discuss financing the construction of a large Islamic center there. They were talking about funding of € 15 million. Back then, I didn't give that project any attention due to our commitment to the charitable projects stipulated in my father's will, so I declined. About a month ago our French-Arab friend visited us again, along with his Spanish wife, a French-Arab lady, and two French natives. As usual, we welcomed them, but the context of the two meetings was quite different as France had recently been hit with a series of terrorist attacks. That was what drove me to go on talking with them about this project, which had still been pending over all those years due to the lack of funding. The delay was understandable as the current situation is no picnic for any project with an Islamic character in Europe. In this context, I shared some questions and ideas which I thought might help them find an answer to their dilemma. First, I asked them why is such a huge Islamic project being planned for a city with a population of no more than 100,000? Second, what is your vision for this project, and what does the center have to offer the French community? The delegation found that the answers didn't come so easily because, as we also say in Kuwaiti, we "bit off more than we could swallow." Out of courtesy, they told me that it would be a center for all religions. So I asked them, are there separate swimming pools for men and women? Are the Jews and Christians