



Union of the Baltic Cities Communications and Marketing

Report on UBC communications seminar “Communicating about Baltic Sea Region Cooperation”, 15–16 April 2015 in Turku, to UBC Executive Board, 12 June 2015 in Dolina Charlotty

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Contents of the communications seminar and this report are based on the *Plan of Action for UBC Communications and Marketing 2014–2015*, approved by the UBC Executive Board in Växjö 29 October 2015, and *UBC Communications and Marketing Strategy*.

1 Outline and feedback on the seminar

UBC Communications Seminar “Communicating about Baltic Sea Region Cooperation” was held in Turku 15–16 April 2015 (see attachment for full programme).

Altogether 33 participants from thirteen UBC cities attended the seminar. The cities represented were Elva, Gävle, Jelgava, Jyväskylä, Klaipeda, Kolding, Kotka, Liepaja, Pori, Trelleborg, Turku, Umeå and Växjö. Among the participants were representatives of four UBC commissions: Cultural Cities, Safe Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities.

The seminar’s aim was to provide concrete tools and ideas for member cities’ and commissions’ everyday work, a possibility to influence and to create new ways of thinking in UBC communications. Themes covered in the seminar included:

- UBC and its role in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation
- HELCOM – a case example on developing external communications
- Attracting the media
- Social media as a tool for getting our messages known
- Workshop on developing UBC’s external communications
- Workshop on developing UBC’s internal communications

The seminar was live-streamed and videoed in order to make it available to as many UBC actors as possible. All seminar materials and videos are available at:

<http://www.ubc.net/documentation,55,3407.html>

Prior to the seminar, a questionnaire was sent to all participants (see attachment). Feedback on the seminar was requested via online poll and was overall very positive:

- Useful, valuable and overall a very good seminar with participants from different commissions
- Useful not only in UBC context but in everyday life
- Good beginning for developing UBC communications which can formulate into a tool that every member city can benefit from

- Seminar clarified the new UBC commissions and their tasks
- Seminar gave general information about internet, social media and media environment which can be useful for everyone in the future
- Workshops helped to design new ideas about webpages and social media
- Meeting interesting people and having a great time in Turku
- Interesting to learn more about the UBC
- Interesting lectures and discussions, everyone had the possibility to interact
- “I had a lot of thought and knowledge to go home with and the seminar made me think more about my responsibility and the responsibility of each member city.”

Things the seminar participants saw could be developed in the future seminars:

- Workshops could have been divided for two days and arranged differently – the group was large to have discussions in.
- Could have been more participants and more time. Member cities should have sent more people to the seminar who are directly working with the field. Participants were mixed, which can be a good thing, but then a lot of knowledge from the member cities in the particular field of the seminar is missed.
- Instead of traditional workshops, online voting, live chats on the wall etc. could be explored, as well as using social media within the group.
- Lectures were a bit long.

2 www.ubc.net – public website

Principles and requirements for UBC website were widely discussed during the seminar. The results and suggestions below are based on these discussions, as well as on the answers the participants gave in the pre-seminar questionnaire.

Most important things to be developed in www.ubc.net are:

- Creating a more functional and clear design, layout and platform, better structure and userfriendliness – webpage is like a business card of the organisation
- Creating a more modern and attractive visual look
- Website should be mobile-friendly
- News, results of UBC work done in the commissions and cities as well as upcoming events should be more visible – less static information and more action on the pages
- Giving out clear messages what UBC is and how and why cities should join UBC
- Creating an intranet

Renewing of the website is preceded by renewal of UBC’s visual look, including UBC logo. Renewal of UBC’s visual look will also include the new commissions. Therefore, *it is crucial that the new commissions not invest too many resources in renewing their current websites etc. until the general look of the UBC has been renewed.* Instructions on how and in which timeframe to proceed will be provided to the commissions by the UBC Secretariat/Communications Manager.

The concrete work of building up the new UBC website can begin immediately in June 2015, if funds for the work are allocated. After initial tenders, preliminary negotiations have been carried out with the Turku-based advertising agency KMG.

Duration of the UBC web renewal is estimated to be four months, of which approximately two months includes the time required by the advertising agency to carry out the design as well as technical work. If work can start at the latest in the beginning of August 2015, a beta version of the website might be ready for testing at UBC General Conference in October.

3 Creating UBC intranet – internal website

Possibility of an UBC intranet was also explored at the seminar. The results and suggestions below are based on discussions during the seminar, as well as on the answers the participants gave in the pre-seminar questionnaire.

Overall, the intranet is seen as benefitting the work in both UBC commissions and member cities.

- In the future, internal communication within network should be carried out through intranet that is accessible through the main UBC website (www.ubc.net)
- Before intranet, main focus should be on designing and refining the contents of the main UBC website. Simultaneously we should keep in mind and record the requirements and needs for the intranet and explore the possibilities of building it, for instance, from the beginning of 2016.
- We should also continue developing, creating and re-organising UBC's information management and to find solutions on how to update information online and use more cloud services. These are explored in the Communications Experts' session during UBC Board meeting in Dolina Charlotty.

4 Baltic Cities Bulletin

Based on seminar discussions in Turku, as well as on the answers the participants gave in the pre-seminar questionnaire, the most important things to be developed in the Baltic Cities Bulletin are:

- Updating the layout and format into a more modern form
- Making the Bulletin more visual – better and larger photos and graphics
- Distribution through electronic means
- Bulletin should be better linked with www.ubc.net and social media channels
- More space for commissions to present their current work
- Considering distributing the Bulletin in the future mainly in digital format, not in print

Overall result of the seminar discussions and the questionnaires is that the Bulletin is needed, but not necessarily in print format but instead in online format/digital version. One option would be to develop a digital UBC newsletter with a wide distribution, to be sent 3–4 times per year, and in addition publish one printed version of the Bulletin ones a year.

These questions should be discussed at the next Bulletin Editorial Board meeting.

Regarding content, defining the target groups and their needs is essential: who should receive the Bulletin and what kind of content do they wish to receive. The contents of the Bulletin should then be developed accordingly.

As with www.ubc.net, the Bulletin should also act as a UBC “calling card”, informing about and marketing the organisation and, in particular, expressing the added value that the UBC brings to its member cities. Achievements and results of the commissions and member cities should be clearly showcased in the Bulletin.

5 Social media

Based on seminar discussions and on the answers the participants gave in the pre-seminar questionnaire, *the most used tools in the member cities and commissions are digital ones*. Digital communications tools are also considered to be the most important ones, especially website(s), social media, (targeted) emails and cloud services. Print mediums are used less and as an addition to the digital ones.

Most seminar participants state that they see social media as an important strategic communications medium that should be used more – even in case the municipality might not yet approve the use of

social media during working hours. Overall, *developing digital communications is seen as important*.

Most important things to be developed in UBC regarding social media are:

- Developing content-sharing practises and overall communications in the social media together with the commissions and the member cities – creating synergy
- Creating content according to UBC's goals and target groups/different stakeholders: commissions, member cities, decision makers, partners etc.
- Content should be visual and simple – more pictures, videos and graphics and less text
- More content about UBC's own activities should be distributed. At the moment, most of the updates are member cities' events.

Being visible and active in social media is part of UBC's branding process and requires the effort of the whole organisation. Therefore, all UBC actors (Board members, commissions' members, city representatives) who are in Facebook are strongly encouraged to:

- Like UBC in Facebook
- Invite other UBC actors as well as UBC stakeholders to like UBC in Facebook
- Like and share posts that are published on UBC Facebook pages
- Give tips and info to the Secretariat/Communications Manager on interesting topics and events that could be published both in Facebook and/or in www.ubc.net.

6 Internal strengthening of the UBC brand and cooperation

Based on seminar discussions and on the answers the participants gave in the pre-seminar questionnaire, UBC as an organisation and its achievements are well-known only to those who work directly with UBC issues, e.g. in the role of the city's contact person.

Local administration (including communications specialists) and politicians would need to be made more aware of their cities role in the UBC and therefore take a more active role in benefitting from the UBC work as well as promoting UBC work in their own cities. To regular citizens, UBC work is unknown. These questions are explored in the Communications Experts' session during UBC Board meeting in Dolina Charlotty.

Internally, the commissions should be more informed about the work the other commissions are carrying out. There should be better and more frequent communication between the commissions.

For the future, possible steps could be:

- Boost campaigns in the member cities: spreading information about UBC work to colleagues and local politicians that normally don't participate in the network. Content and means of the campaigns could be planned together with the Secretariat and member cities' representatives.
- Member cities acting as UBC ambassadors: seminar participants agreed they should take a more active role in their member cities to promote the work their city does in the organisation – "we need to do our homework first"
- Member cities would like to cooperate in issues of international communications by sharing experiences and practices.
- The cooperation between different commissions should be strengthened – this would also have benefits on the local level in the UBC cities.
- Further training on internal and external communications could be organised in seminars and e.g. at UBC General Conference in Gdynia.
- UBC Presidium and Board could encourage a stronger involvement of the cities' politicians in the UBC activities, including exchange of experiences.
- Cooperation could also be carried out by together selecting messages that can be of interest at local level and by creating news stories of good example in the BSR to inspire excellence in the region.

Concrete changes in communications mediums that can help in developing internal cooperation:

- Internal communication within the network should be carried out through intranet that is accessible via the main ubc website.
- Before the intranet, more efficient managing of contact lists and events would be especially important in order to avoid overlapping in UBC meetings and contacts. *A meeting of commissions' representatives and UBC Secretariat could be organised e.g. every autumn to discuss the work and events (including dates) that will be carried out the next year.*
- Emails should be more targeted and personalized and sent without word attachments.
- Using more social media channels within the UBC.

7 UBC Communications Network

UBC Communications Network was established in January 2015, alongside with the renewal process of UBC commissions. The network consists at the moment of 37 cities' communications representatives.

The new UBC commissions have been invited to select a person to be part of the UBC Communications Network in the role of the commission's communications officer. Before UBC Executive Board meeting in June, only Safe Cities Commission has selected a communications officer to take part in the network.

It has also been suggested that UBC Executive Board will choose a Board member to monitor the implementing of UBC Communications Strategy and communicational issues.

All commissions are strongly encouraged to appoint their representative as soon as possible, in order for the communications and marketing within the UBC to function and also develop in the future.

Main tasks of the commissions' communications officers are to:

- Ensure that the commission follows UBC guidelines regarding communications and marketing and that the commission's contact details and other information are updated.
- Act as a liaison in matters regarding UBC communications and marketing. Main partners in this are members of UBC's Communications Network: UBC's communications manager, other commissions' communications officers and member cities' communications experts.
- Attend UBC's training events in communications (seminars, workshops).

8 Timeframe estimation for renewal processes in communications and marketing

2015

- Design of a logo and a visual "face lift" / August
- Design, production and testing of the web site www.ubc.net / June–November
 - Beta version of the website possibly available for testing at UBC's General Conference in Gdynia 27–30 October

2016

- Design, production and testing of UBC intranet / January–April
- Creating UBC's graphic guidelines and templates / January
- Design and layout for the Baltic Cities Bulletin based on the new visual image / January–February
- Design of UBC general brochure based on the new visual image / March–April



“Communicating about Baltic Sea Region Cooperation” UBC Communications Seminar 15–16 April 2015, Turku

Venue: [Forum Marinum maritime centre](#), Seminar Room, 2nd floor
Address: [Linnankatu 72](#), 20100 Turku. Tel. +358 2 267 9511

Wednesday 15 April, 11.30–17

General topics and discussion, with focus on UBC

- ✓ 10.45–11.30 Registration. Forum Marinum, 1st floor
- ✓ 11.30–12.30 Lunch and opening of the seminar – Jarkko Virtanen, UBC Vice President, Vice Mayor of Turku. Forum Marinum, restaurant Daphne, 1st floor
- ✓ 12.30–12.35 Greetings from the Secretary General – Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General. Forum Marinum, Seminar Room, 2nd floor
- ✓ 12.35–13.00 City of Turku Communications and Marketing – Saara Malila, Communications Director
- ✓ 13.00–14.15 Theme 1: UBC and its role in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation
Introduction + panel discussion
 - Introduction: Mikko Lohikoski, UBC Strategy Coordinator
 - Representatives from UBC Member Cities, Commissions and partners
- ✓ 14.15–14.30 Coffee break
- ✓ 14.30–15.45 Theme 2: HELCOM – a case example on developing external communications
 - Invited speaker: Johanna Laurila/HELCOM
 - Discussion
- ✓ 15.45–16.45 Theme 3: Attracting the media
 - Subthemes:
 - Media in 2015 – currents and trends
 - How to get the media interested in your messages
 - Invited speaker: Ari Welling/Yle (Finnish broadcasting company)
 - Discussion
- ✓ 16.45–17.00 Summary and closing of the seminar day: Irene Pendolin, UBC Communications Manager

Get-together 19.30–22, restaurant & pub [Koulu](#). Wecksell room, 2nd floor
Address: [Eerikinkatu 18](#), 20100 Turku. Tel. +358 2 274 5757

Thursday 16 April, 9–16

Focus will be on concrete matters of UBC communications, developing communication between different UBC actors and a special case example on social media.

- ✓ 9.00–9.05 Welcome to Seminar Day 2: Irene Pendolin, UBC Communications Manager. Forum Marinum, Seminar Room, 2nd floor
- ✓ 9.05–11.30 Theme 4: Social media as a tool for getting our messages known
Introduction + discussion
 - Invited speaker: CEO Minna Valtari/Someco (www.someco.fi)
 - Developing communications in social media, with focus on UBC
 - Coffee will be served during this session at 10.15
- ✓ 11.30–12.45 Workshop 1: Developing UBC's external communications
Introduction + discussing and brainstorming together with Member Cities' and Commissions' representatives
 - Subthemes:
 - Tools, messages and channels in external communications
 - UBC website (www.ubc.net) and Commissions' websites
 - Baltic Cities Bulletin and other print and promotional materials
- ✓ 12.45–14 Lunch at restaurant Daphe/Forum Marinum maritime centre. Possibility to visit Forum Marinum maritime museum
- ✓ 14–15.45 Workshop 2: Developing UBC's internal communications
Introduction + discussing and brainstorming together with Member Cities' and Commissions' representatives.
 - Subthemes:
 - How can Member Cities get the most out of UBC
 - Tools, messages and channels in internal communications
 - Strengthening the communication between UBC actors: administration, Member Cities and Commissions
 - Coffee will be served during this session at 14.00
- ✓ 15.45–16 Closing of the seminar – See you again in UBC General Conference in Gdynia 27–30 October!



UBC Communications Seminar 15–16 April 2015, Turku Pre-seminar questionnaire to participants

In order to prepare for the seminar, we hope you would have time to fill in this questionnaire and send it before the seminar to irene.pendolin@ubc.net at your earliest convenience, preferably on **Monday 13 April** the latest.

These questions will be explored throughout the seminar: they will help to develop discussions and they will also be utilised afterwards in follow-up seminars. You can be as specific in your answers as you prefer. We very much appreciate your time and contribution!

1. Which tools do you/your City/your Commission use in especially international communications and in what way? E.g. website, newsletter, printed material, social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube etc.)?
2. What are or have been the biggest challenges as well as achievements in communications for you/your City/your Commission?
3. How well are UBC, its functions and services known to you/your City/your Commission and why?
4. Through which channels would you/your City/your Commission like to receive and exchange information within the UBC in the future? E.g. email, website, targeted messages versus mass messages, social media, cloud services etc.?
5. What kind of cooperation in communications or other issues would you/your City/your Commission like to have within the UBC in the future?
6. What are the three most important things you would change or develop in these UBC communications mediums:
 - a) www.ubc.net
 - b) [Baltic Cities Bulletin](#)
7. What is/are the most important questions or issues you wish to receive answers to in the UBC Communications Seminar?
8. This questionnaire was completed by (name, title, City and email):