



# Baltic Cities Bulletin

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**BUILDING UP  
THE NEW UBC**



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COVER PICTURE  
*Photo: City of Kolding*

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# Baltic Cities Bulletin

Dear UBC Friends,

XIII UBC General Conference is approaching. On 27-30 October 2015 in Gdynia we will be evaluating our achievements and discussing the future. What have we gained thanks to the UBC membership? What are our expectations? What could be improved? What is the cities' and UBC's role in shaping the European policies? What are our priorities for coming years?

The UBC Strategy 2010-2015 is coming to its end this year. One of its goals has been to energize and to streamline the UBC work and to optimise the use of resources. Renewal of the UBC Commission structure – with aim of increasing their effectiveness – has been a part of this process. Instead of thirteen, we have now seven Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities. The decreased number of Commissions and revised scope of their activities are to ensure their work is more targeted and efficient, corresponding with the members' needs and, eventually, attracts more members. The UBC cities have welcomed this change by signing up for the new Commissions – each of them has some 30 or more members.

At the same time, UBC is developing its internal and external communications activities to inform better what we do and who we are.

UBC's key mission is to support the member cities in their development work, to bring added value to them and to promote regional development. Therefore listening to the opinions and wishes of our members is of central importance. This issue of the Bulletin is a mouthpiece of our members who decided to share their views on the UBC, its achievements and changes.

The stories deal with the questions on the reasons for UBC membership and its major benefits, the UBC's role in the regional and European policies, and the future priorities. Also, the cities list their expectations as well as bring some fresh criticism which is especially valuable when shaping the organization's policy and strategy.

Let's meet in Gdynia to confront our views and discuss the future work. Though much has been done, I think still the potential of our cooperation can be even more exploited.

Per Bødker Andersen  
President of UBC



Kolding, June 2015





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Photo: Guldborgsund Municipality

*There are still some bridges to build. The cities welcome the new Commissions' structure.*



Photo: Tadeusz Urbaniak

*Welcome to the XIII UBC General Conference in Gdynia!*

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# BUILDING UP THE NEW UBC

by Mikko Lohikoski, UBC Strategy Coordinator, Senior Adviser to the Mayor of Turku



During recent years, the Union of Baltic Cities has undergone a systematic renewal process. Its aim is to ensure that the UBC continues to successfully serve the interests of our Member Cities, and finally – the well-being of our inhabitants. The world around us is changing, so is the UBC.

The current UBC Strategy was adopted six years ago (Kristiansand, 2009) and comes to an end this year. Now it is

time to evaluate what has been achieved and what our key goals for the coming years are. The conclusions should be drawn at the forthcoming UBC General Conference (Gdynia, 27–30 October 2015).

The key parameters and trends on which the Kristiansand Strategy was based are still valid today. Globalization continues, bringing down barriers, although in many countries also countering trends have strengthened – mainly due to the uneven distribution of its fruits and increased inequality. Countries and cities, also in Northern Europe, are part and parcel of international developments and affected by it. We cannot close our eyes from the “bigger picture” – the prolonged economic crisis and uncontrolled migration waves are just two examples of this.

## **Baltic Sea Region – natural area for city cooperation**

Due to globalization and urbanization, the role of cities is becoming increasingly important in all spheres of life. They are the public authority closest to the citizens and their everyday problems. They are also key drivers for economic development and prosperity. Increasingly multi-cultural they become centres of innovation and investment, hubs of logistic networks. They produce huge amounts of waste and pollution, but also have a great potential to reduce emissions and promote sustainable development.

The well-being and vitality of cities is of highest importance to our societies. Successful urban policies are central dimensions of national and European policies.

The Baltic Sea Region continues to be a natural and relevant area of cooperation, having a long tradition. Now the Baltic Sea also serves as a unifying factor. The sea is surrounded by eight EU Member States and partially by the Russian Federation.

Environmentally, the Baltic Sea is a very sensitive marine basin, which needs particular care and attention. Its beauty is in many ways unique – but at the same time the Baltic Sea is one of the most polluted bodies of brackish water in the world. It is therefore very encouraging to register first signs of improvement in the water quality, for example in the Eastern Gulf of Finland, undoubtedly as a result of longstanding Russian-

*To save the sea for ourselves, and especially for future generations, would alone be a sufficient raison d'être for regional cooperation.*

EU cooperation in cleaning the waste waters in St. Petersburg. This proves that cooperation “across borders” is possible, beneficial and achieves practical results.

The necessity to save the sea was the starting point for what today is the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Initiated by far-sighted members of the European Parliament, this first EU macro-regional strategy has given impetus for other similar strategies across Europe.

## **Stronger UBC role in EU Strategy**

The UBC has been actively engaged in developing the EUSBSR from the very beginning. We stressed that *especially important for UBC is to ensure that the Action Plan recognizes the vital role of the urban dimension, so that the cities of the BSR will be able to make their full contribution to its implementation. None of the main objectives can be effectively and successfully addressed without full participation of the Region's cities.*

The UBC saw early that the EUSBSR is the key framework for our regional cooperation, as it offers common goals and joint framework for action. Now, when the Strategy has reached its fifth anniversary we can say that it has boosted regional cooperation, brought stakeholders together and generated new joint action. If pursued actively and involving all stakeholders, including local initiatives, its importance will continue to grow.

Many of the EUSBSR objectives can only be achieved in close cooperation with non-EU countries situated or active around the Baltic Sea. These include notably the Russian Federation, Belarus (with its rivers running to the Baltic Sea), Norway and Iceland.

Although recent political developments have strained political relations between the European Union and Russia, regional cooperation has continued between stakeholders. For the UBC, which includes members from both Russia and Norway, this cross-border dimension is natural and important.

UBC, its member cities and commissions have participated in practical implementation of the EUSBSR. However, it is fair to say that there is still some room for improvement.

The current EU member states process to confirm the UBC as a Horizontal Action Coordinator of the Strategy (HA Capacity) is a very positive new development and will undoubtedly deepen our participation – for the benefit of our members and the EUSBSR. UBC looks forward to a fruitful cooperation with the member states, other stakeholders and the European Commission, European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee in implementation of the Action Plan.

## **Renewal of UBC enables more active role**

However, to actively participate in the BSR cooperation, it is important for the UBC to strengthen its capacities – both organizationally and in content creation. With certain pride we can say that the UBC has, during last six years since the adoption of its Kristiansand strategy, done just that. The UBC's key mission is to support the mem-





ber cities in their development work, to bring added value to them through membership and participation and to promote regional development. Therefore, listening to the opinions and wishes of our members is of central importance.

The UBC Task Force on Development of the Organization (2011–2013) invited UBC stakeholders to put forward proposals, suggestions, and criticism where needed. It analyzed UBC's statutes, structures, working methods and made unanimous proposals on all these questions. These were consequently adopted and confirmed by the Executive Board and the General Assembly. The work of the Task Force proved to be very beneficial for UBC's internal development, enhancing its cohesion and direction (report of the Task Force, see [www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net)).

### **New Commissions – key to success**

Renewal of the UBC Commissions' structure – with aim of increasing their effectiveness – was a natural continuation of this work. Again, the work was done in a Task Force appointed by the UBC Executive Board. The starting point and mandate was clear and stated in the Strategy: to energize and streamline work of thematic UBC Commissions, ensuring that their work corresponds with the wishes of the member cities – and thus to secure increased city participation and result-orientation.

The internal consultation process on Commissions' structure was very extensive. There was a general agreement that the number of Commissions (13) was too big to sustain, whereas opinions differed about how to merge them into broader entities.

Based on work of the Task Force, which analyzed various proposals and their merits, the Executive Board decided on the new Commissions' structure in October 2014. In addition, the UBC has taken active measures to promote gender equality in all its work.

The positive response of the member cities, and their readiness to participate in the Commissions, show that the structural renewal process is going into the right dimension. Now, key issues are to ensure that the Commissions will get a “flying start”. It is also important to ensure close cooperation between the Commissions and the Executive Board. The decision to appoint a liaison member for each Commission from among the Board members will hopefully promote this goal.

Thanks to the membership fees – each member city pays annually a fee based on the number of inhabitants – UBC has been able to support financially its Commissions. To motivate the Commissions to work in goal-oriented way, and to support excellence, the Executive Board has some time ago defined criteria for the evaluation of Commission work used when allocating funding.

### **Communication – key focus of UBC development**

Since 1991, the UBC has carried out very valuable work for the benefit of its member cities – and the region as a whole. However, it is largely unknown outside our organization – even in many member cities. Raising public profile and visibility of UBC and especially our achievements has to be a special focus of our development work.

The UBC Communications and Marketing Strategy, adopted a few years ago, and consequent decisions to implement it, have created a good basis for renewed and enhanced communication. The decision to appoint a UBC Communications Manager has ensured necessary human resources and added momentum to this work. Also in UBC, the trend to go digital is in the forefront, as we seek faster and more effective ways to reach our key constituencies, both internally and externally.

However, improved communication is not only about technical

solutions. It is crucial to define, produce and develop content and to mobilize our own resources – especially the Commissions, the member cities and their experts.

We must define what the key messages of our organization are, what the added value of our work is and why it matters. This can be done only in close cooperation with our members.

If we look at the UBC purely from a narrow organizational perspective, our communication resources – like other resources, too – are very limited. However, that would be a wrong conclusion. The strength of UBC, also in communication work, lies in our member cities and hundreds of thousands citizens, as well as in the Commissions. The first meeting of UBC Communications Network (Turku, April 2015), with representatives from a great number of member city experts, is the beginning of the most important process, which will undoubtedly prove to be critical for our future work.

### **Renewal is a continuous process**

During recent years, the UBC has carried out a remarkable renewal process. I am confident that it has created a sound basis for a stronger UBC and is beneficial to our member cities – and citizens.

However, it would be a mistake to think that this work is accomplished. Much remains to be done – and the world goes on. Many issues require our attention, both within the organization and in the region.

It is now essential to ensure that the new Commissions will actively start their work. We must find ways to support their day-to-day work by ensuring availability of necessary services to run the Commissions. Also, we need to ensure, that they get expert support e.g. in working out project applications. There are plenty of funding sources for good projects which UBC and its Commissions could tap from but we have been lacking the skills or capacity to do so. This must be changed.

One of the most promising new tracks for the UBC is the Baltic Sea Urban Forum for Smart Cities (BUF), which we initiated and developed together with the Baltic Development Forum and other partners. This initiative, which promotes smart innovations in various fields and brings together local public authorities, enterprises and innovators as well as citizens as end-users, has a huge potential and could be a source of inspiration for many UBC Commissions, too.

### **Change of know-how**

Mutual sharing of our experiences, expertise, know-how, best – and also worst – practices is one more area that could be improved.

The UBC member cities have a huge wealth of experience in all relevant fields. Our region is homogenous enough to allow adaptation from these experiences into our own practices. A better – maybe more systematic – exchange between member cities could be organized. For example, the UBC could set up a coordinated exchange course with common rules to promote expert exchange between cities – if possible, with outside funding. So we have the need, the structure, the network, the skills and the mutual trust – let us do it!

From the very start, the UBC has been a very “familiar”, easy-to-access platform for cities to meet. Even without deep knowledge in international diplomacy, command of European bureaucratic jargon or fluent articulation of English, it is easy to mix with city representatives as equals. For many cities, the UBC is a very comfortable forum for international cooperation, where one can learn from colleagues and jointly discover new areas of innovation and cooperation.

I am confident, that while much has been done and achieved, we have by far not yet exploited the full potential of our cooperation.

Mr Lohikoski served as the chair of the UBC Task Force on Development and of the Task Force on the renewal of the UBC Commission Structure.

From the beginning of 2015, UBC has the following seven commissions (in brackets the number of cities registered in their work):

- ▶ Cultural Cities (38 cities)
- ▶ Inclusive and Healthy Cities (31 cities)
- ▶ Planning Cities (41 cities)
- ▶ Safe Cities (30 cities)
- ▶ Smart and Prospering Cities (40 cities)
- ▶ Sustainable Cities (41 cities)
- ▶ Youthful Cities (35 cities).



# UBC – a Network for the Development of the Baltic Sea Region

With around 100 member cities in ten countries, the Union of the Baltic Cities is one of the largest network of cities in Europe. Umeå has been a UBC member since 1996.

The UBC is a way of linking the cities around the Baltic Sea that is free from bureaucracy, and focuses on the common issues that the cities, not the countries, want to work on. And it has been a very productive cooperation, says Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor of Umeå.

It is about what is good not only for our municipality, but also for our common interests in the region, not least having the cleaner Baltic Sea, she continues.

The UBC is a platform for cooperation and has strong foundations in free exchange of good ideas between the cities.

Each city decides for itself which areas it wants to cooperate in and also on its level of commitment. Umeå has chosen to cooperate in the areas of culture, urban planning and urban development, sustainability and equality.

*"There can be no growth if we are not open to new ways of thinking and new ideas and have no opportunities to test them with others".*

This aligns well with Umeå's profile, as we not only share our knowledge with others, we also benefit from new stimuli and develop our own skills, says Rönmark, the UBC Vice-President since 2005.

In her central role on the Board, she has been able to follow developments at the UBC at close quarters. The UBC has taken the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region a step further. The cities have

considerable mutual interest in maintaining the thriving Baltic Sea and the surrounding region. The Baltic Sea is heavily polluted and it is extremely important that the work to clean it up continues unabated.

We can help to make a difference. With 100 cities across ten countries behind us, our voice carries weight when we call on the European Union and the European Commission. We have access to the corridors of power and they listen to us and take on board what we are saying.

The UBC believes that it is the only functional regional network in this region. It has inspired the rest of Europe, with clusters also forming in the Alpine region, around the Mediterranean, and along Europe's Atlantic coast. Membership of the UBC costs can be considered a modest sum in these circumstances.

The UBC is a modern, simpler version of the old Hanseatic League, which brought together around 200 cities into the union between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. These cities provided the basis for stability in the area, but their cooperation focused primarily on trade. The UBC concentrates on other common issues of a cross-border nature. It is based on the free exchange of good ideas between the cities and a focus of energies on common issues, such as the cleaner Baltic Sea. Rönmark also considers the UBC to be a strong player in terms of security policy:



Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor in Umeå, Sweden, UBC 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President

With the tension seen in Europe in recent years, it is important that those of us who are members of the UBC demonstrate our trust and confidence in one another. When confusion reigns in the world around us, it is important that the local communities stick together in a show of strength and unity.

The city network also helps to boost growth. Rönmark explains:

There can be no growth if we are not open to new ways of thinking and new ideas and have no opportunity to test them with others. We are building bridges, while at the same time acquiring new knowledge that can benefit all the cities.

Looking forward, Rönmark thinks that the UBC should continue along its path, but with burning issues such as stability, climate, energy, environment and sustainability, in their various aspects, high on the agenda.

MORE

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## Smart and Open UBC

An interview with Per Schöldberg, Deputy Mayor of Växjö

What is of special interest to your city? What are the main reasons for your city being a UBC member? Which Commissions are you active in?

We have been the UBC member city for almost 20 years, since 1996 and believe the organization has an important role to play in the Baltic Sea Region, both politically and as an arena for development. Our main interests to take part in the UBC is to have access to an arena for cooperation and knowledge exchange with countries in our region. We believe that the work of various commissions gives us insight and new ideas for development of our city and lets understand the challenges of our neighbouring countries. This creates opportunities to cooperate on joint challenges through EU funding provided under the BSR Programme. We, in Växjö, are positive to the strive for re-vitalizing the UBC and give hope to the new commissions. We believe that the structure with fewer





# UBC – a Forerunner for the Baltic Sea Region



*An interview with Jarkko Virtanen, Vice President of UBC, Deputy Mayor of Turku*

*What is of special interest to your city? What are the main reasons for your city being a UBC member? Which Commissions are you active in?*

Baltic Sea regional cooperation is a long term interest and strategic priority of Turku. Therefore, the UBC as the most important Baltic Sea regional city network and representative organization of local governments is highly important for us. A united region is also strong in Europe. The UBC unites the whole region including cities outside of the EU. We have been and want to be active in all UBC Commissions.

*What do you see as UBC's major achievements?*

Historically, the UBC has been the most important city organization in the region in uniting the east and west sides of the Baltic Sea and promoting European integration. Over the years, we have contributed to exchanging experiences and building up the competencies of our cities through numerous practical co-operating activities.

*What should be the UBC's priorities in the forthcoming years and how should UBC be developed?*

The UBC must listen to its members and respond to their needs with all useful instruments that a city network possesses. In many issues, such as sustainable development and smart cities, our region is a global forerunner and has many leading cities. We should raise our profile and promote the region globally.



Jarkko Virtanen, Vice President of UBC, Deputy Mayor of Turku

*Which themes should UBC, and its new Commissions focus on?*

The themes of the Commissions are all well considered and relevant. All the Commissions should design their activities in cooperation with the UBC members and provide active cities with the possibilities to lead the development on different issues. We should also look into the future, identify the most interesting trends and develop forerunning work on emerging issue.

*How should UBC make itself and its achievements better known in the Baltic Sea Region, European Union, as well as overseas?*

The UBC could build stronger alliances not only with other BSR and European organizations, but also globally. We should move some of our focus on the global level and promote the solutions that have been and are developed by the Baltic cities. As many of our cities

are global level leaders, for example, in sustainable urban development, we have a lot of good examples to offer and the world is looking for these.

*What could be the role of the UBC, the Member Cities and Commissions in the implementation of the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region?*

The UBC is absolutely crucial for the implementation of this strategy. We will coordinate and root the actions at city level, carry out many resultful projects and provide dialogue with cities.

commissions have the potential to boost the cooperation and to improve its dynamism. For the time being Växjö has decided to join four commissions, namely: Planning Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities. We also have assigned a communication expert.

*What do you see as UBC's major achievements?*

I think that the UBC has had an important role in developing identity of the Baltic Sea Region and in giving the member cities the sense of belonging to this Region. Also, the UBC Commissions have done important work in mobilizing development initiatives and in facilitating information exchange in the BSR.

*What should be the UBC's priorities in the forthcoming years and how should UBC be developed?*

The municipalities have a role to play in an open, transparent and democratic development of the Baltic Sea Region. I think there is a room for a higher degree of political dialogue between cities. The idea of creating a political forum is well worth considering. Also, we hope that the UBC will be an important player to facilitate project cooperation between member cities. We would be keen on seeing some initiatives and mechanism developed to boost this process.

*Which themes should UBC and its new Commissions focus on?*

We think the theme of Smart Cities is well placed in time. We would also encourage to pay attention to the circular economy which is an emerging theme which will focus on important issues, such as resource efficiency and green jobs.

*How should UBC make itself and its achievements better known in the Baltic Sea Region, European Union, and overseas?*

We believe that the UBC and its member cities shall strive for presenting innovative ideas and best practices that can be spread to the rest of Europe and overseas. They will thereby be known for excellence. The UBC can have an important role to identify areas which could be developed and provide match-making to boost cooperation opportunities in the Region.

*What could be the role of the UBC, the Member Cities and Commissions in the implementation of the European Strategy for the BSR?*

We believe the UBC could take a more active role in identifying opportunities for cooperation and facilitating partnerships for highly innovative flagship programmes funded by the EU, BSR programmes, Horizon2020 and others.



Per Schöldberg, Deputy Mayor of Växjö



# Guldborgsund Welcomes the New Commissions



GULDBORGSDUND

by Frede Danborg

**G**uldborgsund is currently working on its new International Strategy 2015-2020. 11 administrative centres will formulate their goals and activities for the international work.

The main principle of our international cooperation is mainstreaming. This means using international cooperation as a common tool to reach the municipal political goals and strategies. All of 11 administrative centres should be involved in and should benefit from the international exposure and cooperation.

Such thinking fits very well into the broad scope of the UBC that covers most areas which a municipality may work with. UBC's current restructuring with fewer and stronger commissions will definitely make easier to use it as a tool for international cooperation. Also, UBC provides an international professional network for our staff and city council members. They may participate in conferences and training courses for developing their technical competences and providing inspiration and knowledge to face the challenges the municipality is facing. The UBC may also be a forum for developing joint cooperation projects co-financed either by the Nordic Council or the EU.

Being one of the founding members of UBC, Guldborgsund Municipality has shared a long history with the UBC. For some years municipal planning and technical issues were the main cooperation themes. In recent years particularly youth cultural work has come into focus. For some years, the Commission on Youth Issues has been a forum for preparing and implementing a range of youth camps and youth meetings held in Guldborgsund and other municipalities.

The structure and issues tackled by seven new commissions are of course different from the thematic administrative organisation of

the municipality. Each city has variations in the organisational set-up, which we should be aware of when we join the specific commissions. Four main responsibility sectors of Guldborgsund Municipality are, in terms of budget size: (1) labour market issues, (2) families, children and school issues, (3) social affairs and (4) health and elderly care. These four sectors take up 80 % of the annual municipal budget of approx. 500 million Euros.

Other areas, such as infrastructure, environment, culture, tourism and business development, together with municipal administration share the remaining 20 % of the municipal budget. The new UBC commissions are mainly active within the latter sectors, reflecting a long tradition for international cooperation among these areas.

However, we believe that the new structure will also provide room and opportunities for increased international cooperation for our four large welfare areas.

MORE

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Photo: Guldborgsund Municipality



## The Benefits Come From the Efforts

by Merili Aasma

**E**lva has been a UBC member since 1997. To a small town with no direct contact with the Baltic Sea being in the UBC sounds like a waste of resources. Lots of town council members do not seem to see or understand the effect of the organization. Without the proper background information it may look like justified opinion.

Elva was quite a passive member, noting no results from its membership. But in fact the profit comes from the effort put in! Now, being more active, Elva started seeing the real value of this organization. Developing international connections independently by such a small town like Elva requires definitely more resources than we have. So what is the benefit from being a UBC member?

UBC has given us the opportunity to be connected to a huge international network that would cost a lot more. Being a part of the functioning international network may bring much more than working on its own on that level. UBC gives Elva the opportunity to participate in international projects, to find solutions to the problems, to



UBC Estonian Cities meeting.

share knowledge and, last but not least, to introduce ourselves in the Region.

What would we like to see in the future UBC? Effectively working network that is well known in the region. All together we are able to have bigger impact and make a change. At the moment Elva has been listed in two Commissions – Youthful Cities and Smart and Prospering Cities. The Commissions cover very wide range of areas. If their members manage to keep them all active with

noticeable results, we will definitely achieve a lot. Working in the Commissions, Elva hopes for more connections, successful projects and knowledge. A widely known UBC would be much easier to explain to the council members and citizens.

We are hoping that effectively functioning UBC would be beneficial to its members giving the outcomes in which we are willing to invest.

MORE

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# Can UBC Really Make a Difference?

by Satu Heikkinen

**E**sa Linna works for the City of Jyväskylä's Youth Services and describes his expectations as a new member of the UBC Youthful Cities Commission:

*I hope that through the UBC network we can really make a difference to youth issues on both national and international levels. The key to success is to take young people themselves on board and into the UBC network, giving them responsibility for its activities. At the same time as we can learn valuable things from others, we can also share with our own expertise abroad and make Jyväskylä better known in the Baltic cities.*

Mari Aholainen, Cultural Director of City of Jyväskylä describes her expectations:

*I'm really looking forward to the Cultural Cities Commission's common innovative cultural debate. It is important to be able to reflect national situation and other European countries. I look forward to being able to benchmark best practices and apply them to our work - the UBC network will help in taking ideas forward in our own city.*

Satu Heikkinen, International Relations Coordinator, the City of Jyväskylä, believes that most UBC cities have a good understanding of their own challenges, and their strengths. In the network,



Photo: Suomen Ilmakuva Oy

Jyväskylä is interested in hearing and sharing solutions to these challenges. It is easy to share success stories, but sometimes we could also describe the challenging situations that our cities face so as to find perspectives and solutions for them together. It is also important to share a clear picture of the future of Baltic cities and the global trends which affect success.

Just now, Jyväskylä is renewing its business policy in consultation with companies. In the future, decision-making in our city will include assessing the impact on business. How cooperation is carried out with companies is, in fact, one of the areas of interest for Jyväskylä in the UBC network.

A good way to influence activities and the environment together could be pilot schemes or campaigns that are realised at the same time in all the Baltic cities. The resource-smart experiments carried out by Jyväskylä are an example of this kind of pilot concept.

**MORE**

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## Sustainability at First

by Jūrmala City Council

**J**ūrmala has been a UBC member for fifteen years now. Over this period, we have changed both as the country and the city. Yet we have also worked purposefully to preserve our heritage in the field of culture, history and environment. At the same time, we are actively working on promoting the growth of the city and the competitiveness of our enterprises.

Among the main priorities of UBC the following should be mentioned: strengthening of cooperation between the member cities in order to jointly implement projects, including EU co-funded projects in different fields that are topical for the Baltic Sea region - sustainable development, promoting entrepreneurship and employment, preserving cultural and historical heritage, environment issues and innovations. Communicating and strengthening the UBC brand are important at both national and EU level - actively explaining topical issues to the Baltic Sea Region and also lobbying them in EU institutions and at a global level. The contribution of cities to this work may take the form of lobbying at a national level by involving own governments and diplomatic missions in the EU and international institutions. The UBC, in turn, as an organisation that unites cities, can have a common communication strategy to emphasize that issues shall be of concern for the entire region, rather than just for one or several cities or countries.

*Jūrmala is the largest seaside resort in the Baltic states. It is proud of its long-term SPA and treatment traditions based on the use of natural resources, Blue Flag beaches and unique dunes.*



We consider sea ecology and preservation of seashore to be a highly important aspect in the life of our city, its inhabitants and guests, as well as at the level of the entire region. At the same time, cities attribute importance to the development of entrepreneurship, which creates new workplaces and promotes social and economic stability. Therefore, the sustainable and thought-through use of natural resources of the Baltic Sea balanced with economic growth is the message we suggest to include in further UBC communication.

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# Šiauliai Looks into the Future of the UBC



by prof. Vincas Laurutis, Member of the UBC Executive Board



Šiauliai in the UBC started in 1994. The main idea of entering such a huge network organization was to be involved in the international community ensuring sustainable and successful development of the member cities and the Baltic Sea Region.

It is a strong representative and recognized regional organization of cities in the region with a goal-oriented platform for co-operation and exchange in various fields.

It provides a possibility for active networking, exchange of ideas, best practice and know-how and participation in projects and other activities that are of interest to the city. It provides numerous platforms for meetings between politicians, officials and specialists from different cities. A possibility to receive a concrete support and advice in the daily work from the UBC is of utmost importance for the member cities.

Šiauliai has been actively participating in the activities of former Commissions on Urban Planning and Environment, where a dialogue helps to find sustainable solutions, to take initiatives and to address challenges.

As the main achievements of the UBC in the last years I find the successful implementation of activities of the UBC Strategy for 2010-2015, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its Action Plan, developed Communication and Marketing Strategy, positioning of the UBC brand in the Baltic Sea Region and the EU and the consolidation of the Commissions for more targeted and efficient activities.

Sustainable and prosperous Baltic Sea Region, the UBC strong voice in the BSR, Europe and beyond, positioning and strengthening of the UBC brand with its distinguishing values should be the main priorities in the forthcoming years.

To enhance the efficiency of the UBC, better coordination between the Presidium, the Board and the Commissions should be established. Therefore, the members of the Board should be delegated to each Commission. I believe it would strengthen the responsibility of the Board members for the implementation of the UBC Strategy and Action Plan, as well it would reinforce the visibility of the Commissions work.

I sincerely believe in strength and efforts of the UBC to confront common challenges of the cities, to strive for the sustainable Baltic Sea Region making this place attractive to invest, work and live.

MORE

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LULEÅ KOMMUN

## Joint Actions are Important!

by Natalia Tochylenkova

Luleå Municipality is UBC's member since 2003. The membership opened for us the opportunity to communicate our news, events, projects, ideas to 10 countries surrounding the Baltic Sea. The UBC membership also gave the chance to make new partnerships and to be a part of the actions aimed at democratic, economic, social, cultural and environmentally sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region. Luleå is a member of the Planning Cities Commission and the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission.

We see the following UBC priorities in the forthcoming years:

- Systematic exchange of experiences between the member cities in their common fields of interest.
- Creating and supporting the contacts between the youth of the member cities through meetings, sport competitions, festivals, and other events.
- Supporting and developing the communication within the UBC network, also by means of social media.
- Servicing its member cities in terms of information flow and generating projects co-financed by European Union, and from other sources.

*I want Luleå to become an active member of the UBC network when it comes to urban development and planning of our city, - says Mrs Malin*

Lagervall, Head of the Planning Department. *To learn the experience of other municipalities, to create good life environment, to attract young and creative people, to create physical environments that make our city even more attractive to live in. I would like to find interesting projects together with other cities in the urban sphere where we can participate from Luleå.*

As the UBC member we want to bring more positive changes and development opportunities to our municipality, to create long-term cooperation within UBC network and to contribute with our knowledge, experience and expertise.



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# UBC on its New Way



by Pasi Pitkänen

The UBC is the largest international network in which the City of Pori participates. Pori is a member of three newly established commissions, namely: Cultural Cities, Safe Cities and Sustainable Cities. At the moment, Pori holds the chairmanship in the Cultural Cities Commission.

When the UBC was established, there was a need to strengthen direct co-operation between the cities around the Baltic Sea. On the grassroots level, mobility, visits and benchmarking, as well as seminars and forums have increased mutual understanding. Sectoral and professional projects have deepened common knowledge. Good practices have been discovered and translated into everyday use.

On the general level, the UBC has been able to establish its status as one of the most important institutional players in the Baltic Sea Region. On the European Union level, the UBC has been part of the process in which the importance of the BSR has been recognized. The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) helps to promote a more balanced development of the area. The BSR is currently considered one of the most dynamic and full of potential regions of the whole EU. The UBC will continue to play an important role in this process in the future.

From time to time all organizations need to look back and evaluate openly their functions, structure and strategy. Pori has supported the UBC renewal process and now welcomes the changes which have been made. However, while the necessary decisions have been made, the actual process is still underway. Although the renewal process has resulted in more comprehensive commissions,



even more emphasis should be put on multi-sectoral co-operation. More horizontal themes like gender equality should be introduced.

A greater focus should be placed on concrete and pragmatic actions, which in turn will result in more tangible and better results for the member cities, as well as for the whole UBC. The commissions should make

concrete action plans and link them directly to EU programmes and other sources of funding. Actions and objectives should be prioritized. 'Less is more' also applies here. Actions should be conducted through projects with sufficient resources (funding and coordination) and the outcomes should be disseminated throughout the whole UBC network.

New themes should also be addressed and strengthened in a common forum. This can be done within the reorganised structure of the commissions. For example, the UBC network could be utilized better in promoting business and enterprises. Internal civil safety and security issues will increase their importance in more vulnerable modern societies.

The UBC should continue its efforts in ensuring that the BSR will remain at the core of European Union strategic policies in the future.

MORE

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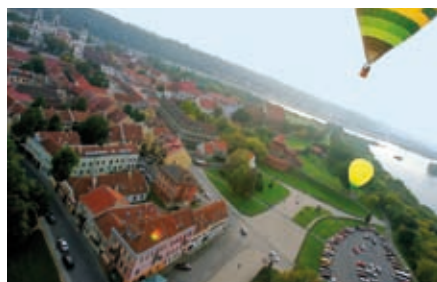


# Heading for the Smart Development

by Lina Duobaite

Kaunas is proud of its long-term and rich membership in the UBC. There have been, of course, ups and downs in our activity in the Union, mostly depending upon the priorities of the city's development. However, the increase of the city's attractiveness for investments and tourism, as well as the well-being of the citizens: housing, transport and mobility renovation, infrastructure development, environmental protection, cultural events, educational issues, etc., have always been the biggest concerns for cooperation with other members. Primarily, the membership in the UBC meant for Kaunas its stronger ties with the Western and Northern parts of Europe, with which it is linked by its values, the historical and cultural identity.

When considering the future of the UBC, it is important to be aware of several issues. First of all, having achieved higher standards of the sustainable urban development, now it is important to understand that security and safety in all spheres of life are vital for further development. Here we can speak of any type of security – national, physical/individual safety, economic or cyber security, etc. – In any case, it is the basis for an individual or a city on which they build up their future. In the turbulent times, the security of the soci-



ety should be supervised both on the international, national and local levels. The network of local government can serve as a means of spreading and sharing actual information on the political situation of the country, the attitudes of the society, as the state's policy is also formed from the initiatives of democratic cities.

Secondly, the network can be a perfect "pool of contacts": a city or organization

looking for partners and experts, sharing the experience or information, data, monitoring, etc. would contact the UBC network and find an abundant number of contact they need. This can be like a data base for all the member cities and for other European cities, too.

Last but not least, the new approach for further sustainable urban development is closely related to and must go step-by-step with the new technologies. The building of "smart city" is the primary aim of each government thinking of the future and people who will be living in the city in future years. Facilitating the every day life with the help of "smart technologies" – it is the new concept towards which the UBC, as well as all the cities are heading now.

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# Looking Back at All These Years...



by Slava Kononov

To answer the question on the achievements and problematic areas of the UBC from Narva perspective, I simply asked colleagues from the local administration and other specialists, who have been involved in the activities of the Union, to give a brief SWAT analysis of the things they did, saw, and participated in.

Most of the positive responses concerned the actual existence of UBC as a platform for specialists in different areas of city structure and maintenance to meet their peers. This is viewed as an extremely valuable opportunity for everyone to share their experiences, learn from each other, exchange best practices, find contacts, build professional networks and establish personal ties. Since most of the meetings in the Commissions were devoted to a specific topic, it was possible to decide on the necessity for participation in a given event, and if the topic was relevant to the needs of the city, come up with a presentation and share the current burning issues with colleagues from the other cities, hoping to find solutions. The contacts with colleagues from the Baltic Sea Region were also handy when we contemplated applying for an European funds project. In addition, it brought some new contacts and partnerships, e.g. with the cities of Kristiansand and Gävle. Finally, some of the colleagues appreciated the opportunity to write an article and share their practices with others in the Bulletin. They also felt that it was a



Everyone involved in UBC activities in Narva is enthusiastic about the changes the Union is currently undergoing.

good channel for popularisation of the city outside its borders; yet, the latter statement was not shared by everyone.

A major downside was echoed by several people I polled - namely, the lack of follow-up activities after the meetings in the Commissions. Unfortunately, even when the meeting on a topic was extremely productive, and sound decisions,

which had a potential for useful implementations in all the UBC member cities, were made, no further steps to disseminate the results of the meeting were attempted. Thus, the effects of the entire event were limited. Several colleagues believed that sharing the approaches to the issues and making presentations was all fine, but giving a bit of a practical edge to the organization of the meetings, i.e. making more on-site visits, demonstrating how things are done in practice would have been desirable.

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## Transparent BSR – a Goal for the Whole

by Eglė Deltuvaitė

Right on the brink of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union of the Baltic Cities all may proudly say: prosperous and fulfilling projects, invaluable co-operation and experience are only some of the gains that each member city received during the years. The Baltic Sea Region became closer than ever, large-minded and liberal, it is the foundation for sustainable community.

The political dialogue is one of the key aspects ensuring exchange of vital information, contributing to good governance practice and ensuring professional development of urban officials in each member city. Given the conduct of municipal elections in Lithuania early year 2015, Klaipėda has applied a new approach to the selection of representatives for Commissions. To ensure professional performance within Commissions' framework a proficient civil servant together with one politician are appointed. The past practice has revealed that both political and professional background has to be filled to ensure acceptability and effective implementation of UBC Commission decisions, projects, etc.

Another important aspect is successful execution of the UBC messages: change can be inflicted, but to do so one needs experience, practice and support. Klaipėda offers a message that UBC as flag-bearer is more than qualified to spread: "BSR - Sharing Transparency". With respect to the Corruption Perceptions Index 2014 results given by Transparency International UBC unites top four front-runners – Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway (accordingly). Nevertheless, corruption is an excruciating splinter for all countries, no matter the rating.



Considering the possibility for new commissions initiating constructive dialogue towards widespread transparency in the BSR, debating tools and measures adopted by governments, businesses, researchers and civil society groups, the UBC could prove its regional leadership role by inviting member cities from the countries at the top of the index to act as mentors; the rest becoming students. A poor score, according to the Transparency International, is likely a sign of bribery, lack of punishment for corruption and also the public institutions do not respond to citizens' needs.

While working together - change is inevitable: resulting in faster, more efficient public management, more transparent procedures and better governance in whole BSR.

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# Platform for Experts



by Riga Municipality

**R**iga's sustainable development strategy states that Riga aims to be an internationally recognisable Northern European metropolis in 2030. The quality of life, innovative economy, wise and cost effective management, and modern supervision with public involvement prove Riga's identity as a rightful member of the family of Northern metropolises.

As for Riga's participation in the UBC network, its aims are concentrating on development of mutual relationship and cooperation on city development issues. Riga is among 32 cities that has founded UBC in 1991. As it is one of the largest cities, capable of sharing experiences in implementing innovations, we are fully aware of the responsibility of being one of the key cities evolving regional development goals.

The value of UBC network lies in exchange of experiences on the level of experts, and we would like to propose to develop this practice in the future. Until now the UBC work has been based on the activities in commissions. We would like to suggest promoting of cross-commission cooperation, as well as the development of an internal UBC communications platform. We highly appreciate the established contacts within the network that have been evolved into new ways of cooperation. Riga is especially interested to participate in the new UBC commissions: Cultural Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities.

To promote knowledge transfer and exchange of professional experience for the evolvement of an integrated urban development in EU and worldwide, the goal of urban planners within the network is to develop cross-border cooperation in the field of spatial planning, environment, economy and public involvement. The

*The City of Riga is an active member of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and Nordic countries cooperation networks, e.g.*

*Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC), Eurocities, the new Hansaetic League (Städtebund DIE HANSE), Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), UNESCO, METREX, Union of Capitals of the European Union and other.*

seminars organised by the UBC Commission on Urban Planning have always been significant events for our urban planners. Riga also hosted such seminars, gaining valuable insights for the city development planning. We would like to suggest the Planning Cities Commission attracting foreign experts to find solutions to local issues and also enabling practice for

experts from the member cities.

It is important to involve young people in decision making processes on all levels. Experience sharing among experts on youth issues is the key point of the Youthful Cities Commission. In its framework a specific discussion theme (social inclusion, leisure time, informal education, and gender equality, employment of young people or other) is proposed.

To improve efficiency of the UBC activities we would like to suggest drawing more attention to the cooperation between the UBC commissions and to the involvement of young people in the activities.

Development of sustainable and safe urban planning has always been a key subject for municipalities. Institutions responsible for the development and maintenance of transport infrastructure are interested to share their experience with other cities in this field. We do hope that Safe Cities and Sustainable Cities Commissions will become an active platform for sharing experiences among transport specialists and experts both in the form of direct contacts and study tours, etc.

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## UBC on the Move and so is Gävle

by Annika Lundqvist

**T**he success of any organisation or activity is based on its capacity to develop and adapt to changes over time. The UBC has shown during the last couple of years its willingness to make a transition towards the future, where the renewal of the organisation/commissions is a first step and more is expected.

The Baltic Sea is our common resource and as historical barriers have been taken away we have possibilities to renew, develop and further strengthen our Region.

Getting to know each other, sharing knowledge, experiences and work in finding solutions to common challenges, will promote growth and prosperity for all.

It is important for the UBC to closely link its work to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, as well as the Europe 2020 Strategy. Dialogue, influence and commitment in order to integrate local level support are to be implemented for a prosperous region.

Gävle shares a lot with other members of the UBC. The network

*Important investments in Gävle: infrastructure, electrification of access railway to the Port of Gävle, new soccer stadium and multi-sport arena, city centre renewal, accessibility and attractiveness, senior housing and Strategic Environmental Programme.*



is an important platform for our development work. Whether it is environmental issues, youth, education, social inclusion or business development - areas of priority in Gävle - we are looking for opportunities of cooperation.

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# Networking Pays Off



by City of Vaasa

The City of Vaasa is happy to receive and comply with all the reforms that have been made in the UBC. The UBC's strategy, targets and mission have been clearly encapsulated. Now we are eager to begin interacting actively within the network.

Within our own organisation, we have pondered the wishes and needs of Vaasa in this network and here, in short, are the results of our reflections:

We would see as the UBC's main tasks:

- ▶ To promote the European welfare state system and the well-being of its citizens,
- ▶ To support and develop urban development and multiculturalism and to supervise the interests relating to its projects,
- ▶ To highlight issues concerning the Baltic Sea and its surrounding area in the EU.

In the forthcoming years, the UBC should prioritise the following issues:

- ▶ The quality of the environment, achieving climate targets and residents' well-being,
- ▶ Logistics and getting from one place to another,
- ▶ The protection, strengthening and promotion of European urban culture (urban development and multiculturalism),
- ▶ Urban and environmental security (incl. marine traffic),
- ▶ Developing the activities of the commissions so that they become efficient and concrete cooperation networks.

Vaasa has been most active in the Planning Cities, Cultural Cities and Healthy Cities Commissions. Especially, the Planning Cities Commission



sion has been an interesting and active panel and we would like to recommend its effective methods also to other Commissions.

The City of Vaasa is especially interested in energy efficiency and preparation for and/or adjustment to climate change, residents' well-being, logistics, security (living environment, traffic, sea). Also, increasing international competitiveness and promoting multicultural urban development are in focus.

Vaasa wants to promote supporting a specialist work: networking, exchanging information and experiences, understanding global and international development. What is more, the city would like to gain more visibility as an energy capital which help highlight Vaasa's strengths, such as education and research.

MORE

[http://www.ubc.net/member\\_cities,9,48.html](http://www.ubc.net/member_cities,9,48.html)



# Go Further and Overstep the Present

by Jarek Józefczyk

Individual and community resilience, co-production, participation, locality and globalization, social identity - what do these notions and the hidden behind values bring to our reality? Is there any potential we could use? Are there any specific, practical examples



Jarek Józefczyk hopes for lively dialogue to overstep bounds and limits.

of the above-mentioned headwords in our cities? Discussion driven by deep content undoubtedly enriches participants. Creating opportunities for such will be the major task for the Inclusive and Healthy Cities

Commission as well as for the entire UBC. We will try one more time to open the field for exchange, for research, for dialogue, for creation ... perhaps also for innovation.

## Three levels of activity

To ensure profits coming from the UBC members activity, we should remember to build on the following three levels: strategy, coordination and operation. That means we should offer something useful on the ground of decision makers (policy building area), we should try to work out some offer – or even mechanisms – strengthening

all those who are responsible for networking and harmonisation of local resources. Moreover, we should not forget to bring some specific, handy tools for those who are engaged in implementation of all those policies and plans on the basic level. In fact, this should be the paramount for the UBC. What does it mean that something is useful, handy, effective? This question should be present at every stage of UBC members activity. Nowadays, this question very often requires innovative approach for local communities and makes us think how to define assets, make them visible and inspire leaders to use them. Some braveness in making the opportunity for participation (in a wide sense) is inevitable.

## UBC quality mark

The UBC has already achieved a strong recognizable position at the cross-border activity arena. Now, it is time to highlight stronger success stories which always have the potential of bringing more splendour for the UBC members and the organization itself. We could use some well-known methods for good practices, which would have built-in transparent and professional research mechanism of the presented case.

Values, complete and complementary activity, concentration on high quality, professional networking – these elements, as we believe, have potential for UBC development, stability and innovation among member cities.

MORE

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# Welcome to the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission



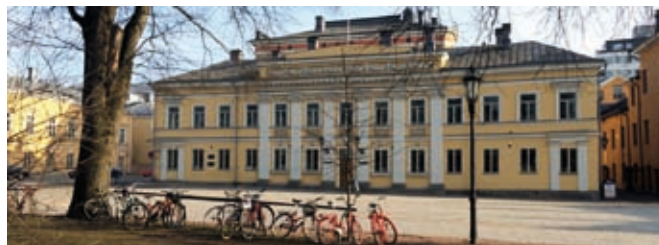
by Esther Kreutz & Björn Grönholm

Working towards a sustainable Baltic Sea Region is the core task for the UBC. A new Commission reflects the complex and interlinked topic of sustainable development: the former Commissions on Environment, Energy and Transport were joined in the new UBC Sustainable Cities Commission.

The co-chairs of the Commission are Ms Dace Liepnice from the City of Liepāja, Mr Per-Arne Nilsson from the City of Malmö and Mr Risto Veivo from the City of Turku.

The UBC Sustainable Cities Commission is coordinating and actively implementing the work with the cross-sector UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 approved in the General Conference in Kristiansand 2009. During the past 5 years we received a high number of external project funding for development work in the UBC member cities. Altogether 38 UBC cities have directly been involved in around 20 projects. We have also tested new technologies for web-meetings and conferences to enable all UBC member cities to participate. Furthermore, the Commission has been successful in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region through several flagship projects.

Currently, the next UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2015-2020 is under development to be adopted at the UBC General Conference in Gdynia in October 2015. In the upcoming years we will focus on further strengthening the cooperation and good reputation of UBC cities in the Baltic Sea Region and in Europe. Active discussions with UBC member cities are taking place to draft the new



*The Commission is hosted by the City of Turku and has a secretariat with currently 9 full time international experts developing projects on climate change, urban mobility, waste water management and maritime issues. Photo: UBC Sustainable Cities Commission*

Action Programme, as well as to develop new projects focusing on the climate change, smart city for Baltic Cities, energy efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> neutral cities, multimodal mobility solutions, integrated urban wastewater management, circular economy, industrial symbiosis and blue growth.

## How to get involved

You will find all information about our work on our recently renewed website [www.ubc-sustainable.net](http://www.ubc-sustainable.net), as well as on our Facebook page. Soon you will also receive the first UBC Sustainability eBulletin with recent news and upcoming events.

MORE

[www.ubc-sustainable.net](http://www.ubc-sustainable.net)



## Facing Together the Challenges

by Niels-Peter Mohr

Throughout the years the Commission on Urban Planning, now named the Planning Cities Commission, organized more than 30 seminars. It has been working together with the host cities and, recently, also with the other UBC commissions. At each seminar local challenges have been discussed. The practical solutions worked out at the workshops have always been presented to the local experts and politicians, as well as the to public.

It has been a great success:

- Because we managed to bridge the Baltic Sea. Architects, planners and politicians – in the beginning with a limited common language - managed to communicate with a pen and paper, to exchange ideas, to develop new ideas together and to make friends with one another;
- Because we managed to provide the host cities with ideas from the outside, which have influenced the local debate, the local planning and development;
- Because debate and planning are a good way to save money and to prevent bad projects to be realized.



*Elbląg, Poland 2012 – The Commission at work in the streets discussing the rebuilding of the historical city centre.*

The Planning Cities Commission is ready to continue this template and the next two seminars are already in the pipeline. The first one will be in Gdańsk, Poland in October 2015 and the next one in Söderhamn, Sweden in the Spring 2016. At the UBC General Conference in the end of October 2015 our Steering Group will invite more cities to participate in the seminars.

Also, we invite other Commissions to co-operate with us. Developing cities is a multiple task. To develop an attractive, worldwide competitive city calls for a holistic approach including environmental, cultural, health and other issues.

The Planning Cities is looking forward to the new UBC structure. Seven modernised and refreshed commissions were born and now we have a second chance to prove that our region is innovative, engaged and hard working to solve the huge challenges of our time.

The next seminar of the Commission, entitled "Developing Sea Coast - Local and City-Wide Perspective", will be held on 18-21 October 2015 in Gdańsk, Poland.

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# Involving the Youth in the Society



by Hasan Habib

Everyone wants best for children and young people, so does the UBC Youthful Cities Commission (YCC). YCC is committed to helping children thrive, achieve and develop confidence to meet the transitions into adulthood. Youth work has a good track record in engaging young people in positive activities that empower, encourage and support them to work through these transitions and help them develop the necessary personal and social skills to face the challenges they may face along the way.

A holistic approach to support the youth is to build a bridge between education, training, youth work and the labour market, and for increasing the dialogue among stakeholders. This approach implies collaboration involving formal, non-formal and informal education and trainings.

Europe is changing and the demography is getting gray. At this time the youth is a very important resource to develop both the cities and the region. The participation of the youth brings in new dimensions, perspectives and expertise in the municipal work. This is the core of the YCC work. YCC will work actively to promote youth co-operation in the BSR and works towards youth influence and participation in the UBC member cities.

*The future priorities of the Commission will be:*

- ▶ Influencing the youth policies in the UBC cities and strengthening of partnership with stakeholders
- ▶ Promoting the youth participation and combating youth exclusion and other barriers
- ▶ To strengthen the co-operation with the UBC cities and other Commissions to tackle the burning issues related to the youth.
- ▶ To contribute to raising standards for all and bridging the gap between the highest and lowest achievements of the young people by providing access to enjoyable, non-formal learning opportunities that could help them develop enhanced social and cognitive skills and overcome learning barriers.
- ▶ To improve the non-formal learning environment by creating inclusive, participative settings in which the voice and influence of young people are championed, supported and evident in the design, delivery and evaluation of programmes.

To implement our aims the Commission will design the activities:

- By helping young people to overcome learning barriers;
- By providing personal and social development opportunities for young people, but targeted for those who need it most;
- By helping young people to gain confidence, develop their self-esteem, have high expectations and aspirations;
- By helping young people develop the understanding of human rights;
- By providing opportunities for young people to gain additional skills, accreditation and training;
- By developing young leaders through supported volunteering;
- By helping young people in transition into adulthood;
- By providing access to different opportunities to learn, and to improve life chances, using a youth work methodology;
- By supporting young people to participate positively and effectively in society.

MORE

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## New Wind under the Wings of Culture

by Jaana Simula

The new Commissions are starting their work this spring. The outlines of the Cultural Cities Commission were drawn already in November 2014 in Tallinn, when the last meeting of the UBC Commission on Culture was held. Excitement was truly in the air! Cultural Cities - the new name of the Commission opens up the role of culture in the society in a proper way - Culture as tool and culture as a way of living.

City of Pori is the lead city and over 30 cities have said yes to culture. These different cities around the Baltic Sea can now strengthen their co-operation on many levels. The new way of working together is on its way as the action plan for the coming years is shaping up. Children's culture, culture as tool for social inclusion, and co-operation between festivals are on the agenda.

Cultural Cities Commission held its first meeting of this year in Riga during the Cultural and Creative Crossovers conference on 11-12 March 2015. The conference was organised by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia and was co-financed by the European Commission. The conference was held during the annual creativity week "radi!" and one of the aims was to raise a debate over contribution and impact of culture and creative industries to growth, innovation, sustainable development and well-being of society.

The two day conference with over 30 speakers gave a wide picture of the possibilities culture and creativity had to offer to our cities. The workshop on culture and sustainability held by Culturability

BSR was one of the last points of the conference. Culturability BSR is one of the flagship projects in 2013 Action Plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Strategy. This workshop was of special importance for the UBC Cultural Cities Commission as it has been working closely. The conference can be relived in You Tube, you will find it by typing Conference on "Cultural and Creative Crossovers". Development of cultural and creative crossovers in anthropological perspective was a headline of the conference.



*The conference can be relived in You Tube, by typing Conference on "Cultural and Creative Crossovers". Development of cultural and creative crossovers in anthropological perspective was a headline of the conference.*

MORE

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# Connecting the Top of Europe

by Wolfgang Schmidt



Photo: Landeshauptstadt Kiel - Bodo Quante

The City of Kiel, Germany is a long term member of the Union of the Baltic Cities. Wolfgang Schmidt has been a chairman of the former UBC Business & Tourism Commission since 2009 and now continues as a chairman of the new UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission.

The Baltic Sea Region is one of the leading growth and trading centres in the world with more than 100 million inhabitants. It boasts stable democracies, institutional structures favourable to business, proximity of markets, good infrastructure, high levels of education, strong industrial traditions and a shared history of cooperation and trade.

Smart development of the UBC member cities is more and more affected by increasing globalization. It has brought the world new opportunities, along with new challenges. Power balances are shifting, the competition is growing and threats have become more diversified and less predictable. For that reason smart development can be shared and must be based on cooperation among cities and regions.

The mission of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission is *Connecting the Top of Europe*. We link professionals from city administration, business and academia and provide a platform for contacts, strategy development and projects in relation to smart and prospering cities' development.

Our work is based on the UBC Strategy 2010 - 2015 and draws on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

Presently, we are discussing our new priorities and actions. They could look like this:

## Priorities & Actions

### Smart Cities

- Fostering business development, employment and entrepreneurship
- Procurement policies
- Improving the connections between education and labour market
- Market potential in societal challenges (climate, energy, demography)

### Knowledge Society

- Improving the connections between education and labour market
- Co-creation with business and researchers/universities
- Market potential in societal challenges (climate, energy, demography)

### Talent, Tourism, Marketing

- Attractiveness for workforce (talent attraction and retention)
- Attractiveness for business/investment
- Attractiveness for visitors (tourism, destination marketing)

The Commission discussed its areas of action at the first meeting in Malmö on 26-27 May.

MORE

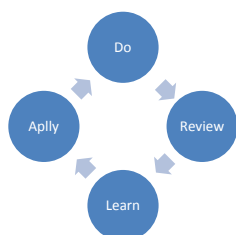
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# A Holistic Approach to Safety

by Leszek Walczak

Contemporary Baltic cities face many similar threats and risks. To deal with them they choose sometimes different approaches, methods and tools. The sources they use and the methods they apply are more or less efficient but sometimes are simply a waste. Not always the most expensive solutions are best. The best is to choose the smartest way of action, proper to the needs and possibilities. To find it you need your and other expert's knowledge and experience. There is no better way to gain it than through active network cooperation, engagement and learning.



As a good example of such an initiative can be newly established Safe Cities Commission. It offers active learning through joint local safety projects.

With its new approach it tries to find smarter ways to build local safety system with a new and more practical dimension. It considers citizens' sense of safety through holistic framework, taking into account many meaningful factors. It embraces a wide range of topics, from extreme weather events, natural and technological disasters, health threats, man-made disasters to everyday accidents, etc. It also focuses on four basic pillars of civil protection including pre-

vention, preparedness, response and restoration.

Gdańsk's recent activities also concentrate on cooperation within the Commission and the existing city partners' network. The city's new philosophy assumes that the most durable effects can be achieved by real engagement. It catches its chance to build an effective local safety management system through the project cooperation. It aims to create a chance for active learning through common EU funded projects.

The idea can be supported by many initiatives. The project coordinated by Sweden and Council of the Baltic Sea States and implemented within the EUSBSR Priority Area Secure on Protection from land-based emergencies, accidents and cross-border crime is among the most valuable. It covers prevention, preparedness, response and restoration to all kind of threats, no matter whether their origin is a natural disaster, man-made disasters or intentionally organized action. It also promotes holistic approach covering many challenges. It enhances comprehensive and coherent approach to reduce vulnerabilities and societal security.

The first Safe Cities Commission meeting took place in Gdańsk on 21-22 May 2015. Liepāja has taken over the chairmanship.

MORE

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## Kemi hosted the 72<sup>nd</sup> UBC Board meeting

by Irene Pendolin

The 72<sup>nd</sup> meeting of UBC Executive Board was held on 25-27 February 2015 in wintry Kemi. Among the main topics were the new structure of the UBC Commissions, financial matters, and plans for the UBC General Conference in Gdynia 27-30 October 2015. UBC also attracted a new member: Bergen auf Rügen.



Mikko Lohikoski, Strategy Coordinator of the UBC, reported on the results of UBC Strategy 2010–2015 and plans for the new Strategy to be adopted by the General Conference in Gdynia.

To prepare a successful strategy, UBC needs to analyse the achievements and failures in implementing the current strategy. In addition, developments and changes in the operational environment should be analysed, especially in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

Jaana Simula, the Vice-Chair of the former Commission on Culture, informed on the progress and plans of the new Cultural Cities Commission. Miłosz Jurgielewicz, the Safe Cities Commission, presented the latest developments on the Citizens for Safety project. Matti Mäkelä, the Task Force chair, introduced the latest developments on the work of UBC Task Force on youth employment and well-being.

The Board also discussed the proposal of the City of Umeå on promoting gender equality issues within the UBC, presented by Linda Gustafsson. The Board agreed to establish a Working Group on Gender Issues. The next Board meeting will confirm the Working Group

provided that at least 5–7 cities from three or more countries have confirmed their participation.

New structure of the UBC Commissions was discussed widely. The topics included: information on member cities' participation, lead cities nomination, Board contact persons to the Commissions, allocation of funds for 2015, and

future steps for the consolidation of the Commissions.

Irene Pendolin, UBC Communications Manager, presented the report on implementation of the Plan of Action for UBC Communications and Marketing 2014–2015. During 2015, developing UBC's communications and marketing will continue, especially regarding digital communications, and several communications events are organised: a communications seminar in April in Turku, a follow-up seminar in connection with UBC Executive Board meeting in June, as well as a communications workshop during UBC GC in October.

Monika Pawlińska, City of Gdynia, presented the venue and other practical plans for the UBC General Conference in Gdynia 27–30 October 2015. The Board stressed that the role of the new Commissions should be emphasized in preparing the General Conference.

Also, UBC financial report 2014 and the proposal of the UBC budget 2015 were presented to the Board by the Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki. The Board took note of the report and approved the budget for 2015.

*The XIII UBC General Conference, 27–30 October 2015, Gdynia, Poland*

## Building smart cities in the Baltic Sea Region



At the General Conference in Gdynia 27–30 October 2015, the invited representatives of UBC member cities, Baltic and European governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations will discuss the smart city development. The economic, environment, energy, safety, cultural, equality and other challenges the smart development faces nowadays – all these will be the theme of the discussion panels and workshops.

At the General Conference we will also adopt the new Strategy, evaluate our achievements and discuss the future. What have we gained thanks to the UBC membership? What are our expectations? What could be improved? What is the cities' and UBC's role in shaping

the European policies? What are our priorities for coming years?

The General Assembly will elect the President, three Vice-Presidents, Executive Board, Board of Audit, Secretariat, and Auditor for the next period. Also, activity reports, Board of Audit report, auditor's report, membership fees 2016–2017 and other internal issues will be on the agenda.

All member cities are warmly welcome to the General Conference in Gdynia!





## Towards a New Project

by Matti Mäkelä

The UBC Board decided at the General Conference in Mariehamn (1 - 4 October 2013) to set up a Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being. The Task Force shall work until the next General Conference in 2015, during which it is expected to submit its final report.

The work of the Task Force is based on the Action Programme created by the experts of ten Finnish cities and fully backed up by the UBC leadership. Meetings, workshops and day-to-day activities of the Task Force have clearly indicated that the UBC member cities and partner organisations possess vast experiences in these issues. It is also evident that they are interested in working together to seek practical, effective solutions to tackle youth unemployment and marginalization.

The interim report of the Task Force shows that in most UBC countries youth unemployment rates have gone up during the last two years due to the well-known economic problems in Europe and globally. However, the report also shows that there are many reasons for optimism. For instance, multivocational and multidisciplinary co-operation, guidance and support and many other services are extremely functional in many UBC cities. The report also stressed the importance of cooperation between different actors (both locally and across borders), as well as flexible educational paths and other services that promote and advance the employment opportunities of special groups. All these practices are vital in supporting the well-being of young-

sters and ensuring the availability of future work force when the economy finally makes an upward turn.

UBC Task Force decided in Riga (January 2015) that there is a real need for a joint project in the Baltic Sea Region concentrating on advancing youth employment. Idea was presented to UBC Board in Kemi (February 2015), where it was decided that the Task Force should start preparations for a new project that will gather and disseminate existing best practices, as well as it will support the development of new practices and models to promote Youth Guarantee and support Youth employment in the Region.



The Task Force meeting has just been held in Naestved, Denmark, in June 2015.

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UBC Charlotta Rock Festival, 12 -13 June 2015

## The Youth Rock Bands on Stage



The UBC Charlotta Rock Festival, offering a review of the youth rock bands from our member cities, is to be held at Dolina Charlotty on 12-13 June 2015. The results of the first stage of the festival have just been announced.

47 applications from 8 Baltic countries came in. The artistic level was assessed as very high. Headed by Jan Chojnacki from Polish Radio Channel 3, the Jury had to take a difficult decision favouring only 14 bands.

Chairman together with other jury members: Michał Owczarek, Polish Radio Channel 3, Sławomir Assendi, Polish Radio Channel 1, Agnieszka Sielańczyk, Rock Radio and Wojciech Kałuża, Dolina Charlotty, have qualified the following bands:

**Ortalion - Gdańsk, Poland**  
**Coal & Crayon - Bergen auf Rügen, Germany**  
**Ziggy Wild - Tallinn, Estonia**  
**Brontupisto - Kristiansand, Norway**  
**Garbanotas Bosistas - Vilnius, Lithuania**  
**Rock & Roll Train - Naestved, Denmark**



Carlos Santana at Dolina Charlotty Rock Legends Festival in 2013.

**Mike the Rooster - Chojnice, Poland**

**Dawn - Espoo, Finland**

**Kelvin - Kristiansand, Norway**

**Crow Mother - Riga, Latvia**

**Silhouette - Kolding, Denmark**

**Laima Pilniga - Riga, Latvia**

**Kitava - Šiauliai, Lithuania**

**Vanvidd - Arendal, Norway**

Beside financial prizes, three winners will perform as support bands for the headliners of the Charlotta Rock Festivals in July 2015, namely for ZZ Top, Carlos Santana and Robert Plant.

The UBC Charlotta Rock Festival is one of the accompanying events held in Dolina Charlotty in connection with the 73<sup>rd</sup> UBC Executive Board meeting.

The playlist is available at:

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHilum15mZlury5\\_RpQQHIS\\_6kwJmvbeZ](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHilum15mZlury5_RpQQHIS_6kwJmvbeZ)

MORE

[www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net)  
<http://www.legendyrocks.com/en/>



## Meeting Point Urban Magma - an Eruption of Innovative Energy

by Björn Grönholm & Esther Kreutz

The first annual conference of Meeting Point Urban Magma took place in Malmö on 18 – 19 March 2015. The conference was arranged by the Sustainable Business Hub, UBC Sustainable Cities Commission and the city of Malmö to discuss the potentials on circular economy, industrial symbiosis and clean tech business clusters for sustainable cities and growth among cities, businesses and academia.

The concepts of circular economy and industrial symbiosis are hot topics at the moment, due to the EU policies on Green and Clean Growth. These have also been highlighted in national strategies in the Baltic Sea Region.

Malmö's Deputy Mayor Milan Obradovic highlighted the need for cities and businesses to deepen discussions and cooperation in building efficient and sustainable cities and encouraged politicians to take leadership in ambitious developments.

Totally 14 UBC member cities took part in the conference which included plenary discussions, study visits in Malmö and 10 thematic workshops. UBC Sustainable Cities Commission organised two of the workshops: "Innovations in urban mobility through co-creative and integrated planning approach" with Malmö as a case example and "Nutrient neutral Municipalities – ideas for circular economy and Baltic Sea protection" including good practice cases from UBC coordinated projects and experiences in the Baltic Sea Region.

This first Urban Magma Conference had a strong focus on Sweden

and the Skåne Region with their expertise and sustainable business potential. The experiences of the conference are encouraging. As a summary of the conference it was broadly communicated that there is an interest for further development of the Urban Magma concept on circular economy and invite more participants from the Baltic Sea Region. At the conference, the city of Malmö took the initiative to facilitate a development processes with the goal to build up a large scale BSR Circular Economy project among UBC member cities. This project concept will be further developed during summer and autumn 2015.



Photo: Esther Kreutz

The next Urban Magma conference will take place in the UBC city Kristianstad in 2016.

MORE

Sustainable Cities Commission  
[www.ubc-sustainable.net](http://www.ubc-sustainable.net)

### Safe Cities Commission

## Citizens for Safety - Second Project Meeting

by Karolina Podoska

"Building urban safety through citizens participation" (Citizens for Safety - CiFoSa) project 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting took place on 19 - 20 February 2015, in Liepāja, Latvia.

The main objective of the CiFoSa project is to increase citizens sense of security using the modern model of interactive, multi-functional online platform or mobile application elaborated withing the project.

This kind of tools have been functioning well worldwide and have become more and more popular in supporting communal organizations. In France (Paris), United Kingdom or in India (New Delhi) different types of citizens open on-line systems were implemented.

The representatives of ten municipalities, namely Gdańsk (Municipal Guard), Jelgava (Municipality Operative), Jõhvi, Liepāja (Municipal Police), Riga (Municipal Police), Słupsk, Sosnowiec, Tallinn (Municipal Police), Tukums and Vilnius (City Municipal Administration) and professional speakers representing university field - Gdańsk University of Technology, NGO's - European Forum for Urban Se-



The meeting attracted 24 participants. The plan is now develop and practically implement the project idea in the municipalities.

curity based in Paris and Political Critique, Gdańsk took part in the meeting.

Its aim was to analyze the results of the survey on the citizens' sense of security. The survey was made in Gdańsk, Liepāja and Vilnius. On this basis the participants were drafting the plan of activities for the project in the future. The experts' presentations on wide, safety issues and creative, brainstorming discussions were the most important part of the meeting.

The ways on how to increase involvement of inhabitants in the active citizenship on safety issues and how to practically project and develop functional and friendly web-based tool combined with neighborhood watch

and general involving citizens on safety issue were worked out.

CiFoSa project activities under Seed Money Facility scheme were completed on 20 March 2015. At the moment the project group started research for new ways of funding.

MORE

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Working together to improve our communication

# A wind of change in UBC Communications and Marketing

by Irene Pendolin

*One of the goals of the UBC Strategy 2010-2015 has been to energize and streamline the UBC work and to optimise the use of resources. In addition to restructuring of the UBC Commissions, communications and marketing is one of the UBC's important development processes.*

In 2015, several communications-oriented UBC events have already been organised and there are more to follow. These include



"Communicating about Baltic Sea Region Cooperation" seminar gathered over 30 participants in Turku in April.

Cooperation within CECICN

## Together we can more

by Wolfgang Schmidt

In 2014 Per Bødker Andersen, the UBC President, was unanimously reelected as President of CECICN. The Political Board has nominated Wolfgang Schmidt, Chairman of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission as Secretary General of CECICN in 2015-2016. The Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives has taken over the Head Office.

"With these decisions we are fully operational and able to concentrate on the tasks ahead", says President Andersen.

President Andersen sees here added value for the UBC cities: "CECICN secures direct access of the UBC to high level EU institutions and ensures visibility for the UBC on the EU level. It reinforces the important role of the Baltic Sea Region in the EU and offers an EU wide platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas. This network of networks also facilitates the partner search for EU funding projects. For the UBC cities it provides a sound and solid basis for the development of policy positions and proposals".

The main CECICN targets for the years to come will be:

- direct access to the EU institutions,
- development of strategies, positions,
- enhancement and promotion of cooperation.

"Together we have a powerful voice in Europe. Together we can trigger developments and change", the President adds.

**MORE**

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a communications seminar in Turku in April which hosted over 30 participants from UBC cities and Commissions, a follow-up event in connection with UBC Executive Board meeting in Dolina Charlotty in June, as well as a communications workshop during UBC General Conference in Gdynia 27-30 October.

In the future, UBC will continue to develop especially in digital communications and ways of working together and sharing our know-how more efficiently. This may also include a renewal of UBC's visual outlook, website and other communications mediums.



Irene Pendolin,  
UBC Communications Manager

## UBC Communications Network – join in!

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

The aims of the network are:

- Improve communication among UBC and its member cities so that we can utilise all the potential and benefit from the cooperation.
- Share best practices and tools and provide a network for consultation and cooperation.
- Make sure that the UBC member cities are able to receive best benefit out of their membership, also in terms of communications and marketing.
- Each city can contribute to the network with the resources and time that they can offer.

We welcome even more member cities to name their representatives in the network and take part in all the events and benefits it offers!

Please don't hesitate to be in touch in matters regarding the Communications Network and all other UBC communications and marketing issues. More information is also available at [www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net).

**MORE**

UBC Communications and Marketing  
[www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net) > Organisation > Communications  
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# NEWS

## from Member Cities

### Fossil Fuel Free Växjö

By the year 2030, Växjö shall become a "fossil fuel free" place. To succeed, it is required that more players in the community join forces to work towards the same direction. On 25 March, the Växjö Municipality, Linnaeus University and Sustainable Småland (the business community organisation) signed the so called "Växjö Declaration". In the declaration, the Swedish Government was urged to set the goal of becoming the world's first fossil fuel free nation.

*One must set high goals! When Växjö decided in 1996 to become a fossil fuel free city, we were probably the first in the world with such a decision. The decision has been crucial to Växjö's success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, observes Bo Frank (M), Chairman of the Växjö City Council.*

*We believe that a business community in the forefront is the winner for the future. Our production of articulated haulers in Braås outside Växjö is already fossil fuel free, and we want, via the Växjö Declaration, to show that it is possible to switch to renewable sources of energy and to encourage other businesses to take similar initiatives, comments Niklas Nillroth, Chairman of the Sustainable Småland and Sustainability Manager at Volvo Construction Equipment.*

*We have expertise in areas such as wood technology and bioenergy, which will be useful when we discuss future solutions for a fossil fuel free society, remarks Stephen Hwang, Vice Chancellor of Linnaeus University.*



Signing Declaration was one of the key activities during the Earth Week.

The authors of the Växjö Declaration would like to create instruments to steer the direction to a society where waste is regarded as a resource in a circular economy. In Växjö, it is planned to build a "Reutilisation City" which will contribute to recycling, reuse, and circular economy. This idea will be realised via broad cooperation between multiple stakeholders in Växjö.

*It is important to think about the big picture. We believe that a Reutilisation City can benefit the local economy while reducing our environmental impact, asserts Bo Frank.*

Åsa Romson, Minister for Climate and the Environment stands as the recipient of the Växjö Declaration.

*The Växjö Declaration is a clear signal about the importance of working to achieve a fossil fuel future. I welcome the commitment. It inspires and strengthens the national government in its efforts to tighten up the climate policy. Climate change is the fateful issue of our time. Joint cooperation between companies, municipalities, regions and the national government is essential if we are to meet the challenge, remarks Åsa Romson on the local initiative.*

MORE

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### Jyväskylä - Ahead of its Time

The constant depletion of natural resources, population growth and climate change will force societies around the world to embrace change. Sustainable lifestyles, energy efficiency and re-cycling of materials from different products back into raw materials will reduce both costs and the burden on the environment.

#### Jyväskylä wants to be a forerunner in resource wisdom

Over the period 2013-2015 the City of Jyväskylä and Sitra, the Finnish Innovation Fund, implemented a project entitled Towards Resource Wisdom to promote wiser use of resources and to reduce impacts on the environment in cooperation with residents, enterprises and different organisations.

#### Trials and pilot projects as tools

By means of trials and pilot projects linked to renewable local energy, energy saving at home, efficiency regarding the use of space and the material cycle, replacing mobility with virtual solutions, developing public transport and cycle paths, local food and urban farming, reducing food waste, and the sharing economy - in other words common use of resources - an attempt was made to find new ways of saving natural resources, raw materials and energy or using them in a more considered manner.

#### Solutions for living the biggest influence on our carbon footprint

In the Jyväskylä project efforts were made to identify and test concrete ways of promoting wiser use of natural resources and reducing

emissions in partnership with four housing corporations. These included investigating the potential of solar power, the impacts of LED lighting, and various mechanisms for saving water. The results were highly encouraging.

#### Leftover food practice set for national adoption

In the Leftover Food trial food left over from school meals was distributed at nominal cost to residents in the local area. If in Jyväskylä (135 000 people) all schools and sheltered housing were to make use of leftover lunchtime food, the quantity of biowaste would fall by the equivalent of 50 000 meals each year. In Finnish schools the practice of using leftover food would result in a saving of approximately two million meals each year. With a small idea significant impacts can thus be brought about.



*By the year 2050 Jyväskylä is to become a waste-free, emission-free city that has renounced over-consumption - one that is inhabited by contented citizens.*

MORE

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# Bergen auf Rügen – a City in the Heart of Europe

Bergen auf Rügen is a UBC member since February 2015. Being a part of the Union, Bergen auf Rügen awaits a positive development of the international activities for the young and the old living in the city. Cultural exchange and information amongst all neighbouring countries should be improved. We hope for support in partner searching for activities and projects.



*The German name "Bergen" relates to a mountain, from whatever direction you approach it always goes uphill. On one of the hills you find the historical centre of Bergen auf Rügen.*

Bergen auf Rügen may look back on more than thousand year's history. But only in 1613 Bergen was granted the town charter. Be invited to stay in the well restored ensemble of the former monastery. Visit the town museum with an impressive collection of worthwhile exhibits like a blanket from middle age. It is the only museum on

Rügen depicting the history of the entire island. St. Mary's church was consecrated in 1193.

Today, Bergen auf Rügen is the centre of administration, health, education on the Island of Rügen. Modernized infrastructure ensures outstanding traffic connections by trains, bus with all the parts of the island and to the mainland.

A common history connects our city with our neighbouring countries. Bergen auf Rügen has taken over responsibility and provides a reliable framework for transnational activities and contacts. Activities with Bergen's twin towns Oldenburg i.H. in Germany, Svedala in Sweden, Goleniów in Poland and Palanga, Lithuania give the inhabitants a chance to know each other's culture and to find friends. Also, there are much more cross-border contacts, thematic projects and cultural events with neighbouring towns in the North and East Europe, but especially in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2015, because of its fruitful and active transnational activities, Bergen auf Rügen was awarded with the Plaque of Honour, the third stage of the Europe Prize.

Over the year, several events are organized to get across the European idea to the inhabitants and guests, through cultural exchange, exhibitions, meetings and information, e.g. the "Baltic Weeks" or the "Europedays".

**MORE**

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## Happy Pori

Pori is a city of maritime industry with strong knowhow on Arctic conditions. The competences and advanced technical solutions of the maritime industry are developed and fostered by an extensive network of shipyards, suppliers, marine engineering companies, systems and services providers, public authorities, R&D organisations and educational institutions.

The first offshore wind park in Finland will be built in Pori and local companies are rapidly developing their competencies in this field.

Pori has strong expertise in energy solutions. The latest highlights in this sector include LNG (liquefied natural gas). Finland's first LNG terminal (30,000 cubic metres) is under construction and is scheduled for completion in Tahkoluoto harbour in autumn 2016.

Pori is the festival capital of Finland. It offers cultural enjoyment, the bustle of a city and the peace of nature – something for everyone. The most well known events, such as the public discussion forum SuomiAreena (turning 10 this year) and Pori Jazz Festival (turning 50), attract tens of thousands of visitors every year. Several famous performers have been secured for Pori Jazz this summer. Teaching and culture have been chosen as the themes for SuomiAreena in 2015, and the main sponsor will be the Ministry of Education and Culture.

This year Pori is also the venue for the Finnish Athletics Championships. The event will be held at Pori Stadium, which was upgraded during 2014 to meet modern requirements. The organisers hope to attract 20 000 spectators.

Besides these special events, Pori invites tourists to visit its various attractions, e.g. the six-kilometre-long beach of Yyteri, the river Kokemäenjoki, the three-hectare playground park for children, exhibition gardens, scenic outdoor routes, and many more.

**MORE**

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## The Taste of the City

It was the idea of the Department for Economy and Development of Narva City Government to organize a city event that would introduce the local culinary outlets, cafes, bars, and restaurants with their most delicious dishes and delicacies.

This year on 2 May the specialties of each of the participating restaurants, available to everyone for a reasonable price of 2 euros a portion, satisfied even most exquisite tastes. Dishes from fish assortment of sturgeon, royal eel and smoked bream to chicken barbeque in sea buckthorn marinade, from regular cheesecake to the unusual beetroot bread were making their way to the menus. In addition to the food feast, the programme of the event included fun activities for children, a concert by the local dancing and singing groups, and a lottery for the visitors. Some of the restaurants offered a short teaching course for kids on proper setting of the table, usage of appropriate items of silverware, as well as basics of table manners. Another prominent feature of the festival is that no alcohol was sold at the event, thus, making it an excellent family outing at weekend.

"The Tastes of Narva", aiming to become a traditional annual event, took place on the grounds of the most popular location in the city – Narva Castle.



*The inaugural event "The Tastes of Narva", which took place in May last year, was a success.*

**MORE**

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## Fair Winds to Partnership

Recently Klaipėda hosted the first ever Twin-City Partnership Event, to which all its European twin cities were invited. Since contacts with them also needed a new impetus, a weather vane was chosen as the logo of the event. It serves as a symbol of fair winds blowing the sails of the cities' friendship vessel.

Klaipėda is twinned with eighteen cities, the majority of them come from the Baltic Sea Region and some are also members of the UBC. 46 delegates from eleven cities and eight countries arrived for the Partnership Event: Lübeck, Mannheim and Sassnitz from Germany, Liepāja - Latvia, Cherepovets and Kaliningrad - Russia, Mogilev - Belarus. All partners together celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cooperation with Karlskrona, and the 20<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the friendship with Kotka. The Polish partner cities were represented by Szczecin. New colours of the sunny Caucasus Region were added by the delegation of a Georgian harbour Poti, which will soon become Klaipėda's new twin-city. Odessa had to postpone their travel to Klaipėda for calmer times.

An open conference "The role of international cooperation on the local level for the future of Europe" became a platform to exchange ideas and inspirations on how cities from different countries can successfully face similar urban challenges thanks to international cooperation.

The cross-border contacts help to overcome mistrust and promote mutual understanding. Though local governments have no instruments to influence high level international policies, still international cooperation shapes people's mentality, gives a sense of shared



*The Partnership Memorandum signed! May the symbolic weather vane continue showing fair winds to twin-city cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region!*

identity and responsibility to protect the ultimate values: stability and peace.

A long-term cooperation with our partners was presented. The visitors were also introduced to information about attractions in the twin-cities by a promotional film. During the ceremony at Klaipėda Concert Hall, representatives of all partner delegations signed the Partnership Memorandum, where the signatories expressed their will to continue cooperation, to support partnership initiatives on concrete projects, to expand knowledge-base in the priority sectors defined by strategic documents. The cities will also activate information sharing on large cultural events to attract more

participants from twin-cities.

A wonderful Friendship Concert crowned the partners' meeting on the third day.

The open, friendly atmosphere during all meetings and sincerity in communication were the intrinsic surplus to the official program.

**MORE**

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## Twinning Link Between Gdynia and Kiel



*In 2015 the cities of Gdynia and Kiel celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the twinning. The cooperation was initiated on 25 June 1985. The first unofficial contacts started as far back as in the early 1970s.*

Gdynia and Kiel have prepared the all-year programme of the jubilee celebrations. The youth from both cities participated in the sports events. The Esthetics band from Gdynia plays a concert in June during the Kieler Woche [Kiel Week] within the Junge Bühne Kiel. The band members will take part in the intercultural thematic workshops and in the meeting in the city hall. They will also visit the city cultural attractions.

Kiel will organise a relay race from Kiel through Stralsund to Gdynia. The relay will start on 28 June from Gdynia stand at Kiel Week. The group of runners will consist of 18 people who will run in turns. The runners will reach Gdynia on 4 July.

The main anniversary celebrations will be held in Gdynia on 11 - 15 September. The inhabitants will have an opportunity to see the performance of the Die Komödianten theatre, entitled: *Der Kleine Prinz*. An open-air picnic will be organised in Gdynia on 13 September where the Kiel musician Nico Chavez will play a concert with his band. The concert of other young Kiel classical musicians will be held in the Musical School in Gdynia.

On 14 September Gdynia and Kiel experts will discuss the civic participation and social innovations during the panel organised in the Pomeranian Science and Technology Park Gdynia.

Also, a joint photography exhibition in the premises of the Tourist Information Centre in Gdynia will take place in October.

**MORE**

[www.gdynia.pl](http://www.gdynia.pl)  
[www.kiel.de](http://www.kiel.de)

## New Project News from Elva



March was full of good news to Elva. Firstly, Elva received state funding to reconstruct one of the busiest traffic junctions in the town to make it safer. The state's contribution to this project is 100 000 euros and comes from the programme addressed to parishes

or towns with under 15 000 citizens. Also, Elva received state funding to another road project. From the light traffic road programme Elva got 304 827,23 euros to build the road to Kāo Street which has now decrepit sidewalk. This road will allow for active leisure in the town's centre.

In addition, Elva is preparing another project for building the creative economy centre. Elva and its region have a lot of creative people. Since creative economy is gaining more popularity, this project would contribute to creating jobs, services, products and liven up the local culture.

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# A South-Baltic Project on School Education

The project "Exchanges for All" has been prepared for a long time and is in many ways based on the INTERREG South-Baltic project "CreatLearn", which was developed in 2012-13. The new ERASMUS+ EU Learning Programme, launched on 1 January 2014, gives the possibility of making strategic partnerships. The project was developed by Guldborgsund (DK) as coordinator with CultHus, the Culture House of Nykøbing F and the following partners: Rostocker Freizeitzentrum (DE), University College Zealand (DK), Center for Education (Guldborgsund, DK), Liepāja Children & Youth Ctr. (LV), Kleipėda Children & Youth Ctr. (LT), Wejherowo Cultural Ctr (PL), Falkenbergsskolan (Kalmar, SE).

## What is the "Exchanges for All" about?

The project has a long-term aim of exporting art-based, international youth exchanges (mobility camps) from the youth-field into the schools and make them a free, integrated learning-tool for all 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

But at first the project is making a cost-benefit analysis of such exchanges. The researchers from University College Zealand will investigate on the learning outcome for the young participants, while CultHus is setting up, and testing, different models of exchanges.

## Art as a Tool

The exchanges are following the programme, developed within the international network "Drums for Peace", and are using art-forms as dance, music, drama and circus as catalysts for communication.

Basically, for the first 3 days of the exchange-week the young people are taking part in intensive art workshops, run by professionals, and then all are put together into performances, shown to the public at schools and cultural-centres.

To make such exchanges a free offer for students, it is necessary to keep expenses very low (e.g. bus travel instead of flights).



*The young people are taking part in intensive art-workshops run by professionals.*

## International Dimension as a Learning Tool

The partnership has recently submitted 2 more applications, both named "IDALT-International Dimension as a Learning Tool". The following schools are directly involved:

- Fjordskolen, Nykøbing F, Guldborgsund, DK
- Stubbekøbing Skole, Stubbekøbing, Guldborgsund, DK
- Liepājas Valsts 1.ģimnāzija, Liepāja, LV
- Liepājas A.Puškina 2.vidusskola, Liepāja, LV
- Draudzīgā aicinājuma Liepājas pilsētas 5. Vidusskola, Liepāja
- Gargzdu Minijos progimnazija, Garždai, LT
- Klaipėdos Sendvario progimnazija, Klaipėda, LT
- Społeczna Szkoła Podstawowa I Gimnazjum, Wejherowo, PL
- Zespół Szkół nr 3, Gimnazjum, Wejherowo, PL
- Falkenbergsskolan, Kalmar, SE
- Södermöraskolan, Kalmar, SE

While "Exchanges for All" focuses on the specific exchange-week, IDALT wants to see, if participating in international mobilities increases the learning motivation during the whole school-year and how the teachers can use this in their daily work.

## How is it possible to take part in this project?

At a conference in Guldborgsund in November 2015 University College Zealand will present the results from their research, and if they are positive, and if, at the same time, it is possible to make exchange costs really low, then more schools will be invited to take part in similar actions.

**MORE**

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[www.exchangesforall.eu](http://www.exchangesforall.eu)

# USE IT in Schools

In Europe2020 digital competence was identified as one of eight key competences for the EU citizens. Digital agendas have been created on national and regional levels. On the local level the municipality of Oskarshamn adopted the strategy regarding school development by using digital tools. Students leaving the schools shall be prepared to further education, competitive on the global



job market and also aware and active members in a democratic society.

A three year long process called "USE IT 2.0" was created to realize the work in the strategy. The first phase has been completed,

which included an analysis of the current situation, workshops and study visits for pedagogues, school leaders and IT staff and creation of a development plan. A continuation of education and exchange is needed during the entire process. New research

will be evaluated and proved. Further on a clearer and closer support to the leaders is needed.

According to the research, skills of a teacher are a key factor for a successful school attendance of students. It is also known that individual teachers have great difficulties to change education on their own to a large extent. Therefore, it is also essential to include leaders in the developmental work. For both leaders and pedagogues it is an opportunity to develop in their professional role, to discuss teaching methodology, and to exchange pedagogic experiences and to get a deeper insight in another country's school system.

A pedagogic and systematic use of digital tools in the organization can lead to gaining new and needful ways of learning. We need to improve our own knowledge of using the tools in a successful way, and the ability of converting the new knowledge into practice to reach the targets set on the local, regional, national and European level. The goal is to gain higher effectiveness with the right knowledge and the right tools.

**MORE**

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## Art and Nature Pearls on the Shore of the Baltic Sea



Jūrmala has been constantly working on restoration and protection of its boons. It has been awarded European Destination of Excellence Award.

The Dzintari Concert Hall history dates back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. This year after the renovation it has entered a new dimension as a unique and modern two-concert-hall centre, consisting of an elegant neo-eclectic concert hall in the style of the 1930s — the Small Hall, and the acoustically superb

1960s summer concert garden — the Great Hall.

Following extensive restoration, the Small Hall is open to audiences starting from May 2015, and will be available to culture enthusiasts throughout the year. It combines elements from classicism and national romanticism. The biggest value is its outstanding acoustics. The Great Hall is open during the summer season and it is the first open-type concert hall in Latvia.

Starting from May 2015, many high-level concerts will be included in the repertoire, performed by geniuses of the world music stage: B. Skride, Kremerata Baltica, V. Šimkus, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Z. Mehta, and many other distinguished performers.

The beach in the City of Jūrmala is unique — 26 kilometres covered in fine, white quartz sand and dunes that form an especially protected habitat - forest seaside dunes, which can be hardly encountered in any other European country.

To ensure the protection of the beach shore and to improve the degraded condition of dunes within the territory of the seashore of Jūrmala, the measures have been taken on the stabilisation of coastal dunes of the Kaugurciems beach. This area is a subject to the greatest coastal erosion and its compensation at this section occurs slowly. To compensate for losses of silts created by winds and ensure the continuity of geological processes related to coastal development, the sand of appropriate coarseness is brought to the beach. The sand is extracted from the soil excavated during the cleaning of the water area of Lielupe Port without affecting the natural environment. Almost 4000 cubic metres of sand have been moved to the Kaugurciems beach to stabilise the shore. Measures on the stabilisation of dunes and the shore are carried out in compliance with the environmental expert's recommendations without affecting the natural environment, osiers and habitats. The formation of plantings typical for dunes, restoration of the osier belt, and construction of special osier wattled fences, etc. are planned to be carried out this year.

**MORE**

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## A City of Good Changes

Since 2008, 37 large scale projects have been implemented in Jēkabpils, investing in its development more than 75.8 million euros (involving funding both from municipal and state budget, EU funds and other external financial instruments).

Today Jēkabpils is a city of continuous development. It values the heritage of the past – the wooden architecture and narrow streets rub along with contemporary buildings, renovated roads and production enterprises.

On the way towards good changes, the city is open to forming new production units and new businesses and can provide several territories for industrial establishments with the necessary infrastructure in place. The industrial territories mostly are situated in the north-east part of the city, close to the railway and the main motorways, providing additional advantages for manufacturing enterprises.

In the new planning period 2014 – 2020 Jēkabpils is seeking for new, innovative and sustainable collaboration forms that can promote economic growth of the city and surrounding region.



Located about 145 km away from Riga, Jēkabpils is an essential point of intersection of motorways and railways of international significance.

**MORE**

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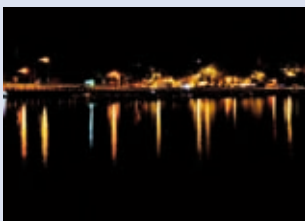
## Upcoming Events in Gävle 2015



**SUMMER IN THE CITY**, during four Wednesdays in July the city centre turns into a real party! Music, entertainment and fun activities for the whole family. Join us in Gävle on the 1, 8, 15 and 22 July 2015!



**GETAWAY ROCK FESTIVAL** important metal and rock festival in the great surroundings of the old Gasometers, on 6-8 August 2015. More information at: [www.getawayrock.se](http://www.getawayrock.se).



**RIVER FESTIVAL AND SWEDISH TASTES FAIR** The River Festival å-draget celebrates the arrival of the autumn, showcasing cultural and leisure activities by the river. [www.adraget.se](http://www.adraget.se).

Svenska Smaker (Swedish Tastes) is a new fair focusing on Swedish food and drinks. More at: [www.svenskasmaker.nu](http://www.svenskasmaker.nu). Welcome on 4-6 September 2015.

**MORE**

[www.gavle.se](http://www.gavle.se)

## CITIES - MEMBERS OF THE UBC EXECUTIVE BOARD



Kemi hosted the 72<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the UBC Executive Board



Welcome to Gdynia at the XIII UBC General Conference, 27-30 October 2015

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The Union has based its operational activities on the following Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities. The Commissions coordinate and execute specific projects, activities and special events. Each city is capable to have its own creative and fully independent input to the Commissions' work.

Please contact the UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk for more information about the UBC work and the rules of entering the Union.