



UBC e-News

Number 40

22.05.2009

Editor: Anna Sośnicka anna.sosnicka@ubc.net

The UBC e-News is published by UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk and distributed to the UBC Contact Persons e-mail list. Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

Info

- Invitation to Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit, 2-4 June 2009, Copenhagen

Dear UBC friends,

The challenge of climate change is obvious to all of us. In December this year the COP15 will take place in Copenhagen.

To be able to influence the final document, the Local Government Denmark (LGDK) has arranged a summit for all local authorities in June.

I should like to call upon your attention to participate in this summit, as it is important, that the local authorities - who are going to make the decisions of the State Leaders become implemented - do have a clear voice before the final decisions.

Hope to meet a lot of You in Copenhagen in June.

Best regards,

Per Bødker Andersen
President of the UBC

The invitation and more information at:
<http://www.ubc.net/news,2,677.html>

- X General Conference of UBC, "Baltic cities for economic and climate solutions - a developed Baltic Sea strategy"

The X General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities titled "Baltic cities for economic and climate solutions - a developed Baltic Sea strategy" will be held in Kristiansand, Norway, on 24-25 September 2009.

On the first day - during the plenary session and four workshops - the conference will discuss the following issues: implementation of new EU Strategy for the BSR, the problem of climate change, impact of economic slowdown on cities. The second day will be devoted to internal UBC matters such as reports, elections, finances etc.

Keynote speakers who already confirmed their participation inter alia: Maria Åsenius State Secretary to Minister for EU Affairs Sweden, Luc Van den Brande President of the Committee of the Regions, Dirk Ahner Director General DG Regional Policy, Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids Michigan Chairman of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

Please fill out the registration form and fax or e-mail it by August 3 to the following address: ubc@sorlandet.com, fax: +47 38 02 52 55. Registration forms received later than this will be accepted if there are free hotel rooms. The conference fee is 200 € - circa

800 Nkr. Conference fee for participants from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia: 100 € - circa 900 Nkr.

You can also register through online registration form at www.ubc-kristiansand.com

In parallel with X General Conference the 4th UBC Youth Conference will be held in Kristiansand, see www.ubc-youth.org

Pawel Zaboklicki
Secretary General

Invitation: <http://www.ubc.net/plik,1812.html>
Regform: <http://www.ubc.net/plik,1813.html>



From UBC Commissions

- Commission on Business Cooperation

The City of Kiel and the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation invite to the

Commission's meeting that will be held on 4 June 2009 in Kiel.

Work Programme 2010/2011:

- Concept of the international region marketing. The concept of marketing will be worked out to help the cities and regions to form positive image at the international scale.

- Science parks. The aim is to ensure the effective exchange of experience and information increasing the competitiveness of the Baltic Sea Region.

- New contacts with the regions outside the Baltic Sea Region.

- Projects financed by the EU funds and other sources. Seeking to ensure the effectiveness of the Commission activities, the projects for additional financing will be prepared for the EU funds, Nordic Council of Ministers and other sources.

More information at:

http://www.ubc.net/events_calendar,22,680.html

Please don't forget to registrate by 27 May, 2009.

Horst Nimitz

e-mail: hnimitz@kiwi-kiel.de,
www.kiwi-kiel.de

- Commission on Transportation

Please find here:

http://www.ubc.net/events_calendar,22,682.html the invitation to the Annual Meeting of the UBC Commission on Transportation which will be held on 8-9 June in Szczecin (Poland).

This year's meeting will be devoted to the topic of "Finding innovative solutions to mobility development in the Baltic urban areas".

Zygmunt Zmuda-Trzebiatowski
Chairman

Grant Competition - "Car-Free Day"

The Commission on Transportation has decided to announce a "Car-Free Day" grant competition for UBC member cities.

Almost every day we get stuck in traffic jams. We spend money on fuel. Our cars move very slowly towards the traffic lights, and we get no chance to drive continually in our journeys. In rush hours there is no way of avoiding congestion. We hopelessly look for quicker routes to our destination. On top of all this other people's bad driving can cause us much stress. Who hasn't experienced such situations?

In order to reduce our stress and at the same time the exhaust fumes emission – let's try for at least one day a year to leave our cars in the garage. The World Car-Free Day is held annually on 22nd September. On this occasion we encourage all the people travelling to and from their workplaces to use any other means of transport – public transport, bicycles and first of all their feet - which keeps us in good condition!

Here: <http://www.ubc.net/news,2,681.html> please find the rules of participation in the "Car-Free Day" grant competition together with the application form. Only municipalities are eligible to enter the competition. NGOs and other institutions willing to apply for a grant are obliged to submit their application forms by the agency of a municipality. Each UBC member may submit only one application.

The deadline for sending project proposals is 30th June 2009. Completed application forms should be sent to the UBC Commission on Transportation Secretariat by e-mail (ubctransport@gdynia.pl) or by fax: +4858 621 86 20.

Should you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the UBC Commission on Transportation Secretariat.

Monika Pawlinska

- Commission on Sport

The international conference "Always Active", 4-5 June 2009 in Gdynia (Poland).

The international conference "Always Active" will be held in Gdynia, Poland on 4-5 June 2009. It will gather speakers from Denmark, Germany, Finland, Norway, Poland and Sweden who will present best practices from their cities as well as innovative projects concerning active lifestyle among elderly people.

The conference is a part of the social campaign entitled "Always Active" initiated by the UBC Commission on Sport. The campaign has been launched in order to counteract social exclusion originating from advanced age as well as to prevent consequent physical mobility restrictions. The main objective of the campaign is to promote an active lifestyle as a factor enhancing health and functional capacity. On Thursday (4th June) all the participants will have the opportunity to watch (and listen!) music classes for senior citizens of Gdynia and on Friday (5th June) there will be a dancing show with participants from an elder generation.

The conference participants will also get acquainted with regional cuisine during the Kashubian Evening.

All of the people taking part in this event are also invited to the End of Academic Year Celebration on the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of establishing Gdynia University of the Third Age. It will take place in the Musical Theatre on Friday (5th June).

The programme of this event is very rich and we hope that it will serve as a great opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences from various cities from the Baltic Sea region, which will result in encouraging elderly people to remain physically and mentally active even in their advanced age and retirement years.

We look forward to meeting you in Gdynia.

The contact person for this event is Ms. Agata Lewandowska from UBC Commission on Sport Secretariat:

Tel.: +4858 6688 208 /Fax: + 48586218620

e-mail: ubcsport@gdynia.pl

- Commission on Environment

UBC Sustainability Survey 2009

Dear UBC Contact Person,

Union of the Baltic Cities invites your city to participate in a survey to monitor the sustainable development of UBC member cities. This survey is a one of the only in the region as it covers more than 100 cities across 10 countries in the Baltic Sea Region. It is a great opportunity to evaluate how the quality of life in your city compares to that in other cities in the same region.

The survey is an integral part of our common UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004 - 2009 – The Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities. The sustainability of cities will be monitored three times during this six-year period. The first evaluation took place in 2004-2005 the second in 2006-2007 and now the third is at hand. This survey is joint survey together with Åbo Akademi University and Södertörn Högskola and their project RISKGOV funded by the Baltic Sea Region BONUS programme (Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science EEIG, see <http://www.bonusportal.org/>).

The survey includes several parts of sustainable development and is also including questions about important general trends in near future as well as specific needs of your city administration. The questionnaire is built upon indicators related to the Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 and also all the themes of the Aalborg Commitments. We would like to clarify that the information will be handled confidentially.

We kindly ask You to be the person who will be responsible in coordinating the completion of the survey in your city as agreed in the telephone. The whole survey includes different parts and can therefore be divided and answered by several persons in your city. Please note that more detailed information and guidance to fill in the survey you will find from the attached annex.

Please return the filled in survey latest by June 8 2009 to: tim.ng@turku.fi or UBC Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat, Vanha Suurtori 7, FIN - 20500 Turku, Finland.

If you have any questions about the survey, do not hesitate to contact Mr. Björn Grönholm at UBC EnvCom Secretariat, phone +35844 9075987 or by e-mail bjorn.gronholm@ubc.net.

Björn Grönholm
Head of Secretariat

The Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award 2009

From Local Action To Sustainable Development

UBC has the honour to invite your city to present a good practice/s under the title of state of the Baltic Sea. The Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award will be presented to one city with a grant of 5.000 Euros donated by VESTA.

Application forms and more information at www.ubc-environment.net

Deadline for application is 15th of June 2009!

- Commission on Tourism

A working meeting of the UBC Commission on Tourism, Liepaja, 17 April 2009

The main theme of the meeting was: “How to make the Baltic Sea Region more accessible and attractive”.

Liepaja welcomed participants from: Kaunas, Cēsis, Riga, Jekabpils, Palanga, Tukums, Pärnu, Gragždai, Koszalin and Szczecin.

The first part of the meeting was chaired by Mr. Ryszard Zdrojewski, CoT chairman. The working meeting started with the presentation by Ms. Ewa Kurjata, Szczecin Municipality, CoT co-chair, and was devoted to “Baltic Sea Region branding and its significance for the UBC. The leading theme of the presentation was that UBC needs to position itself in the BSR. So should the UBC member cities. There is a need to think over cities’ international policies and how they should focus their work in the UBC. The CoT cities were invited to join the Task Force to prepare the UBC Member City Marketing Guidelines.

Mr. Zdrojewski presented the Heritage Tourism for increased BSR Identity project Agora 2.0 under Interreg IV B. The presentation was followed by the X General Conference workshop procedures and brainstorming activity. The following questions were worked out during the meeting:

1. How can UBC lobby for better accessibility and reducing the travel time in the region? (accessibility)
2. How to develop a comprehensive travel info system or new technologies to be exchanged in the BSR to secure better attractiveness? (new technologies to support attractiveness)
3. How to brand the BSR and its identity? (attractiveness)
4. How to support the multi-modal transportation system development in the BSR? (accessibility / new technologies)
5. How to use modern technologies to make the BSR a better tourist destination? (new

technologies)

These questions shall be then discussed with other supporting commissions responsible for preparing the X GC workshop.

The participants also discussed the questions of accessibility and attractiveness from the perspective of a tourist, an inhabitant and tourism industry.

The second session was chaired by Ms. Ewa Kurjata and mainly concerned internal matters of the Commission. The co-chair covered the CoT competition procedures. The gathering adopted the idea of the competition, its schedule and prizes, as well as jury. The following cities were selected to sit on the jury: Trelleborg, Szczecin, Pärnu, Cesis and Kaunas. Mr. Zdrojewski also presented the overall budget of the Commission and the action plan for 2009.

Ewa Kurjata

Vice-Chairperson of the Commission



- Commission on Urban Planning

The Commission on Urban Planning had a seminar and meeting in Gdansk, Poland, between April 2nd and 4th, 2009. The seminar theme was “Baltic Towers – Contribution to the City and the Community”. According to an American definition, high rise buildings are less than 150 metres high and sky-scrapers are higher than 150 metres.

The seminar theme is a burning question around the Baltic Sea Region, as many cities are trying to find their identity and at the same time find ways to accommodate future growth and avoid further urban sprawl. One possibility is efficient and dense development – and redevelopment – in the inner city. High rise buildings may be a solution, but a complex one, as they also evoke difficult questions about transformation of landscape, design, safety, transport and car parking as well as physical, social, economic and environmental impacts. A demand for high rise buildings is also connected to global economy – the higher the stock exchange rates are, the stronger is the demand on high rise buildings.

In this seminar the Commission on Urban Planning tried a new method of approaching the theme by sending a questionnaire to the members of the UBC network, and although the number of answers was limited, the answers were interesting. It is clear that high rise buildings are a “hot” issue in many bigger cities, but the approach to the question varies a lot from eagerness to careful-ness.

During the seminar there were once again very interesting presentations about high rise buildings, how they fit in their environment and how different are the policies of urban planning in the Baltic Cities. We saw and heard controversial examples from Aarhus, Rostock, Malmö, Gdynia, Riga, Tallinn and Helsinki. On the first day also local inhabitants expressed their thoughts about high rise buildings with opinions alike every city with high rise plans.

We also heard about a very interesting study of Growth Possibilities for Baltic Cities that woke many thoughts about creative possibilities for the future in cities around the Baltic. As the Commission on Urban Planning seminars always, also in Gdansk an essential part of the seminar was workshops about a concrete plan to build high rise buildings in Wrzeszcz, a vivid but somewhat confusing commercial centre close to the centre of Gdansk. The Gdansk Development Agency got many new ideas and

perspectives to continue its work on developing this area from the workshops’ results.

The next seminar of the Commission on Urban Planning will be in Linköping, Sweden in September 9th -12th, 2009. The Linköping seminar theme is Sustainability in Urban Planning.

Sirpa Kallio
Chairperson of the Commission



From UBC cities

- Project proposal from Tallinn

Tallinn 2011 asks all the UBC members to comment the proposed project and to think with us how to bring innovative environmental robotic project into your cities the way it points also to situation of Baltic Sea.

I am very open to have closer discussions on mentioned topic.

More information about the project:

<http://www.ubc.net/plik,1814.html>

Kati Remmelkoor

- City of Kiel

The City of Kiel cordially invites you to the 2nd International Strategy Meeting from June, 4th to 6th 2009, in Kiel.

In the context of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009, the City of Kiel is organising an International Strategy Meeting. The Meeting will demonstrate the importance of creativity and innovation for economic development and will be a platform for experts in promoting creative industries and innovative approaches in local and regional development. The areas are Arts and Culture; Science, Research and Innovation; Media, Information and Communication Technologies; Urban Development and Urban Creativity; and Social Innovations.

Listen to the presentations, take part in the workshops and discuss with leading academics, business people and institutional representatives.

The presentations will be held by:

- Rainer Wietstock and Dr. Astrid Könönen, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Prof. Dr. Ingrid Ott, Hamburg Institute of International Economics
- Prof. Dr. Robert Hassink, Christian Albrechts University Kiel
- Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Soltwedel, Kiel Institute for the World Economy
- Prof. Rainer W. Ernst, President Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts and Design

The conference language is English.

Please don't forget to register by 27 May, 2009. Additional information on the event is available at:

http://kiwi-kiel.de/main.php?active_id=85&active_nav_id=63

Regional governance boosts economic success, says report

The economies of Europe's decentralised countries regions are performing better than those of highly centralised states, according to a new report. A study from the Assembly of European Regions (AER) published on Monday found higher levels of GDP and growth in regions with more competences. AER secretary Klaus Klipp told reporters that the study proved the importance of regionalism. "Realistically a lot of countries are very centralistic," he said. "You could say that centralism hampers development at the cost of citizens." He added, "The application of the subsidiarity principle is key to economic success. "A country's economic performance can be improved by more decentralisation. "In the economic downturn we are facing, I think it's time rethink our priorities for economic development." AER president Michèle Sabban said the findings were set to "open a crucial debate, particularly among policymakers in highly centralised countries, as Europe struggles to reverse the effects of the global economic downturn". "We need long-term solutions to the economic crisis," she added. "And that is why national and regional governments must agree on an optimal balance in their distribution of powers, one that maximises their territories' economic growth potential. "These results prove definitively what AER has known anecdotally for a long time: that the economies of regions with greater competences are performing better as a result than those within more centralised countries."

The research, carried out by the independent Bak Basel institute over two years, compiled a "decentralisation index" taking into account the key indicators for dispersing power. Based on these assessments Switzerland, Germany and Belgium came top of the index, while Bulgaria, Greece and the Baltic states were at the bottom. According to the report, regions are more effective in understanding the needs of their citizens and more familiar with local circumstances and therefore more efficient. Bak Basel director Urs Müller said,

"Decentralisation has a positive effect both on GDP capita and on GDP growth. "The higher the financial decentralisation the better for innovation capacity. "We really can learn that there is a clear positive impact on GDP levels and GDP growth."

Source: The Parliament

EU begins to rethink growth and jobs strategy

In 2000, the EU launched its ambitious 'Lisbon Strategy' to become "the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010". The European Commission is preparing a broad Internet consultation on revising the Lisbon Strategy "in early autumn 2009". According to Commission sources, topics likely to feature in the consultation include:

- Improving the business environment;
- the knowledge 'triangle' (education, research, innovation);
- energy and climate change, and;
- access to the internal market.

Commission spokesman Mark English said the EU executive will present its formal proposals "in late 2009 or early 2010" in view of final adoption under Spanish EU Presidency in the first half of next year.

The spring summit of EU leaders, which is traditionally devoted to economic issues, will adopt the main policy orientations, he said, with more detailed decisions expected at the June summit. These could cover areas such as "integrated guidelines, country-specific recommendations, a new type of Community Lisbon Programme and more developed proposals in specific policy areas, such as innovation strategy," English said.

Speaking at the Brussels Economic Forum last week, EU Economy Commissioner Joaquín Almunia said the economic and financial crisis was adding a new sense of urgency and political relevance to the revision process. Almunia warned that EU companies will have to rely less on financial institutions as a result

of the credit crunch. "So the dynamism that previously came from the financial markets will have to be found elsewhere."

Almunia said this is where the revised strategy will come into play, with "an acceleration of structural measures" focusing on the following areas:

- Reform of product and labour markets,
- R&D and innovation,
- education and skills, and;
- green growth.

"Our exit strategy in terms of structural policy must put green growth at the heart of the agenda," Almunia said. "The world's shift to low carbon offers huge possibilities for business and industry. Only by investing in renewable energies, low-carbon technologies and green infrastructure will Europe maintain its place at the frontier of this revolution and tackle climate change that risks being so costly for our societies and economies."

Almunia admitted that "most of these initiatives are not new" and have formed "the core recommendations of the EU's Lisbon Strategy for some time". Yet "the crisis makes an ambitious and coordinated implementation of this agenda more necessary than ever," he added.

Source: EurActiv

Most EU member states 'lagging behind' on gender equality

A new survey has found that most political parties do not consider equality between women and men a key priority for the upcoming European elections. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) says this comes despite the 'strong' competence of the EU in the area of gender equality. Its 'gender audit' looked at the presence of women on national electoral lists, including as heads of lists, for the 4-7 June EU-wide poll. It shows that in 17 of the 27 member states, there are more women on the electoral lists than there are female MEPs who served in parliament, currently in recess until the election. In parliament, 31 per

cent of deputies are women. However, looking at where women are placed as heads of lists, there are only seven countries where this occurs – Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Sweden and the UK.

EWL says the review of current representation of women in parliament for the four main political groups – EPP, PES, ALDE and Greens – is an indication of the commitment of these groups to the promotion of women in decision-making roles.

Big differences in national delegations also exist, with 47 per cent of the Swedish delegation being women compared with none in the Maltese and Cypriot delegations. However, women occupy 30 per cent of the list in Cyprus for next month's poll.

The results are also based on the importance the parties' manifestos give to four issues that the EWL sees as relevant for the fulfilment of equality between women and men, such as reconciliation of private and working life or violence against women.

Source: The Parliament

Commission launches €4 million call for sport projects

The European Commission last week launched a call for proposals for transnational projects to prepare the ground for a future EU sport programme. The future scheme itself could be worth tens of millions of euros per year.

In March 2009, the Commission adopted its €7.5 million 2009 annual work programme on grants and contracts for the preparatory actions for sport, as well as special events. The main objective of the preparatory actions is to lay the ground for future EU sports measures in view of the future EU competence. The aim is to provide policy support and identify future policy actions, test the establishment and functioning of suitable networks and good practices, and promote greater European visibility at sporting events. The call for proposals for "preparatory actions in the field

of sport" was launched on 15 May and totals €4 million. The EU executive is expecting public bodies and civil society organisations to submit proposals for projects which will identify and test suitable networks and good practices in four specific areas. Support under the health-enhancing physical activity (€1.4 million) heading is dedicated to networking and best-practice exchange between the sport sector and other civil society organisations, such as schools, public authorities, municipalities and local enterprises. The aim is to strengthen the contribution of the sport sector to healthier lifestyles. Measures proposed under education and training in sport (€1 million) are expected to promote physical activity in a school environment and encourage knowledge exchange between sport organisations and clubs involved in the training of young athletes.

Projects under sport for persons with disabilities (€1 million) should test the integration of disability sport components into mainstream sport events and the organisation of competitions bringing together athletes with and without disabilities. Here, the aim is to improve the sustainability of sport competitions for people with disabilities. As for gender equality in sport (€0.6 million), the Commission will fund networking and best-practice exchange in view of strengthening women's access to decision-making positions in sport. The EU executive expects to fund three to five projects per area. Depending on the area, the consortia should have partners from at least four to nine countries. EU co-financing can cover up to 80% of the total cost of the projects. Under the 2009 proposals, the Commission will also allocate a further €1 million to supporting studies, surveys, conferences and seminars which aim to identify future sport policy actions and test the establishment and the functioning of networks and best practices in sports training, disability sports and volunteering, for example.

Source: EurActiv