



# UBC e-News

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## Info

- *57<sup>th</sup> UBC Executive Board meeting, Naestved, 17 February 2010*

The 57th meeting of the UBC Executive Board will be held in Naestved, on 17 February 2010, at the invitation of the Mayor of Naestved, Mr Henning Jensen.

During the meeting there will be discussed, among others, applications for membership from Östhammar and Söderhamn, report from X General Conference in Kristiansand, financial report for 2009, budget for 2010, flagship projects connected with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, proposal to create a conference of European trans-border and interregional networks, initiative on local safety and public order, and more.



*Photo from the 55th Executive Board meeting in Międzyzdroje*

- *UBC Cities Events Calendar 2010*

Following a big interest in the previous issue, the UBC Secretariat prepared the second edition of the UBC Cities Events Calendar. This publication contains the information on business, cultural, sporting, recreational activities and exhibitions organized in the UBC member cities in 2010. The publication has been sent to all UBC member cities and to over 1000 Baltic, European and world organisations and institutions. If you need more copies of the calendar, please contact UBC Secretariat at [info@ubc.net](mailto:info@ubc.net).

<http://www.ubc.net/podstrony/publications/bulletin/calendar2010/index.htm>



## From UBC Commissions

- *Joint meeting of the UBC Commissions on Energy, Environment and Transportation*

It is our honour and pleasure to invite you all to the Joint Meeting of UBC Commissions on

Energy, Environment and Transportation which will be held in Gdynia, Poland 17th – 19th March 2010. It will focus on Sustainable solutions for combating Climate Change in the Baltic Sea Region– implementing the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2009-2015 and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The joint meeting between three Commissions of UBC will tackle the challenges of Climate Change from these three angles.

The meeting will offer a networking and dissemination opportunity for the cities to exchange experiences. Therefore, the cities are welcome to submit proposals for topics, speakers or case studies they would like to present during the meeting. These proposals can be incorporated to the meeting programme.

Please find here the first invitation:  
<http://www.ubc.net/news,74,713.html>

Thorsten Geißler, Mikko Jokinen, Stefan Windh / Co-Chairs Commissions on Environment and Energy  
Zygmunt Zmuda-Trzebiatowski / Chair Commission on Transportation

- *Meeting of the UBC Commission on Urban Planning*

The UBC Commission on Urban Planning will have its next seminar in Tampere, Finland, between April 14th and 17th. The seminar theme “Edges of the City Centre and Reuse of Traffic Areas” concentrates on an acute question in many cities, namely increasing the density of city centres and avoiding urban sprawl. Also climate change and sustainability in urban planning are taken into account in the seminar programme. At: [http://www.ubc.net/events\\_calendar,74,715.html](http://www.ubc.net/events_calendar,74,715.html) there is the invitation to the seminar, the seminar programme, information of travelling to Tampere and registration form. Our hosts in Tampere have negotiated reasonable hotel

prices for the seminar participants either at Sokos Hotel Tammer (<http://www.sokoshotels.fi/en/hotels/tampere/tammer>) or at the Hostel Sofia (<http://www.hostelsofia.fi/>). You are expected to make your own reservation by March 3rd according to the instructions in the invitation. In order to get the discount room price, mention “UBC-Tampere” when you make your reservation!

Please send in your registration by February 28th to [UBC-seminar@tampere.fi](mailto:UBC-seminar@tampere.fi) and book your accommodation at the same time either to [sokos.hotels@sok.fi](mailto:sokos.hotels@sok.fi) (or phone +358201234 632) or to [hostelsofia@hostelsofia.fi](mailto:hostelsofia@hostelsofia.fi). When coming to Tampere, remember to pack your swim suit with you, because you cannot visit Finland without going to sauna (in the programme on Friday evening, April 16th)!

Sirpa Kallio  
Chairperson of the Commission  
[sirpa.kallio@hel.fi](mailto:sirpa.kallio@hel.fi)

- *UBC Commission on Gender Equality*

The Commission prepared the report “Women and Men in the Union of the Baltic Cities”. The printed version had been sent to all UBC members. The electronic version in English and translations of the complete report into Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian are now available as PDF-files on the website:

<http://www.ubc.net/commissions,28.html>

### **From UBC Cities**

- *Meeting of the Local Safety Working Group*

It is our honour and pleasure to invite you all to the first meeting of Local Safety Working Group which will be held in Gdańsk, Poland 25 – 27 March 2010.

The meeting will focus on local safety and public order in the light of national and local regulations. This will also be a great opportunity to exchange experiences and information, learn from each other, discuss and develop way ahead of our Working Group and therefore ask you to submit proposals for additional topics you want to be discussed during the meeting.

These proposals can be incorporated to the meeting programme. Please send your proposals to [ubc@strazmiejska.gda.pl](mailto:ubc@strazmiejska.gda.pl) by 19 February 2010.

A preliminary programme, practical information and registration form are at: <http://www.ubc.net/news,2,717.html>. Please return the registration form latest by 19 February 2010 to the address mentioned above.

Leszek Walczak  
Chief of Municipal Guard, Gdańsk  
[komendant@strazmiejska.gda.pl](mailto:komendant@strazmiejska.gda.pl)

- *Kalmar International Environmental Award*

Here: <http://www.ubc.net/plik,2106.html>  
please find information about Kalmar International Environmental Award. We ask you kindly to distribute the information in order to find a prize-winner.

Gunnel Hermansson  
Project Leader  
[gunnel.hermansson@kalmar.se](mailto:gunnel.hermansson@kalmar.se)

- *New social jobs in the city*

Tallinn City has initiated a number of measures to fight the economic recession and the effects of the economic crisis for the citizens of the capital of Estonia. You can read more about it in the article „Tallinn Fights the Recession“ in the Baltic Cities

Bulletin No 2/2009, at  
[http://www.ubc.net/podstrony/publications/bulletin/bulletin2\\_09/08.htm](http://www.ubc.net/podstrony/publications/bulletin/bulletin2_09/08.htm).

We are sincerely interested to learn from the experience of other UBC member cities how you have created new public (social) jobs for fighting unemployment in your cities. We plan to arrange a round-table conference of EU cities on this topic in Tallinn in April 2010.

Please send us information about the measures for fighting the economic recession in your cities and please indicate your interest to participate in the planned conference.

Tonu Karu  
UBC Contact person, Tallinn  
[tonu.karu@tallinnlv.ee](mailto:tonu.karu@tallinnlv.ee)

### **Partner search**

- *South Baltic programme - partner search from Gdańsk*

The next call for proposals within the South Baltic Programme is planned for 1 April 2010. The City of Gdańsk is looking for partners within the following actions:

- maritime, sailing education; eco-education;
- tourism, eco-tourism, sustainable tourism, maritime tourism;
- promoting the South Baltic area as a tourist destination;
- sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage for regional development (festivals, maritime museums, maritime cultural monuments, historical sites, etc.)

85% of the project/investment costs can be covered by the programme.

Please inform us if your authority/institution is interested to cooperate with the city of Gdańsk within the South Baltic Programme for project funding.

Please distribute this call among potential partners in your region.

South Baltic Programme website:  
<http://en.southbaltic.eu/index/>

For more info contact: [info@ubc.net](mailto:info@ubc.net)

- *Partner Search from the city of Pruszcz Gdański*

The City of Pruszcz Gdański is searching for partners from regions of Baltic countries eligible in the South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 (map available on [www.southbaltic.eu](http://www.southbaltic.eu)) in order to implement a common project within the frames of Priority Axis 2 – Attractiveness and common identity, Measure 2.4 – Local community initiatives.

The project lasting three years aims to create a strong partnership in the South Baltic region able to organise a range of cultural events increasing attractiveness of the region and strengthening the cross-border identity.

The planned project through different kinds of cultural events among others concerts, workshops for children and youth, historical reconstructions, festivals, early dance and music groups' performances will intensify local communities' actions and will help them develop their historical awareness. Thanks to cooperation with international partners the citizens of each partner city will be able to intensify dialogue with other cultures and meet their neighbours crossing psychological barriers and breaking stereotypes. Awareness about cultural diversity as well as common history and identity of this part of Baltic Sea will rise. Therefore we search for partners interested in exchange of cultural experiences and common application to the South Baltic Programme. We would like each partner to organise a historical festival in their city as well as take part in events organised in other cities and enrich them with an artistic programme.

More informat at:

<http://www.ubc.net/plik,2100.html>

Anna Knoch

[knoch@pruszcz-gdanski.pl](mailto:knoch@pruszcz-gdanski.pl)

#### • *Youth Houses*

Liepajas Youth centre (more info - <http://www.jauns.lv/en/>) are interested to create new cooperation in Baltic Sea Region.

We are searching for potential partners for common Project (Central Baltic INTERREG IV A – see below) to create or support the youth centre. Our idea is create the Youth house in Liepaja, support some local youth house/centre activities (for example exchange experience of dance, graffiti, bands, youth NGO's work, outdoor, non formal activities, photo workshops etc.) in cross border and made common activities with similar youth house in other countries.

The Central Baltic Programme covers the following regions and adjacent areas:

- Estonia Kesk-Eesti (Järvamaa, Lääne-Virumaa, Raplamaa), Kirde-Eesti (Ida-Virumaa), Lääne-Eesti (Hiiumaa, Läänemaa, Pärnumaa, Saaremaa) Põhja-Eesti (Harjumaa)
- Finland Itä-Uusimaa, Kymenlaakso, Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Åland
- Sweden Gotlands län, Gävleborg län, Östergötlands län, Södermanlands län, Stockholms län, Uppsala län

We consider youth different needs in Baltic Sea Region, but the same time youth life style is common. The partnership between youth houses between different countries could be good start to common activities, ideas & futures projects.

The Central Baltic INTERREG IV A program rules include common planning between Project partners, Liepaja are ready to take lead partner role in Project.

If you can please forward this message to your partners who can be interested of this idea.

Pavels Jurs  
[ljc@jauns.lv](mailto:ljc@jauns.lv)

- *Aesthetic learning processes and young people's creativity*

The creativity of young people has become an ever more important issue. Cultural expressions, stimulating and using one's all senses like art, film, media, theatre, dance, music and other cultural forms, are closely connected to creativity and innovation. Schools focus on reading- writing- mathematics but would have much to gain by opening for the broader potential of creativity that lies in the human nature.

It is important that young people, both in there leisure time and in school, have better access to creative activities than they have now. Contact between artists and art institutions, which possess the skill and competence, and schools who need it, is lacking. The international dialogue in these matters needs improving.

Objectives: We want to develop the role of culture and creativity in school, within all subjects, related to the tasks and goals in school. We want to develop new and more open structures in leisure activities for young people to reach wider ranges of creativity, which has the potential to lead to a professional career. We want to develop contacts and a flexible form of cooperation between artists, cultural institutions and schools and find new and better ways to create culture/creative activities for young people in their leisure time. We want to develop contacts, concrete cooperation and interchange of ideas in these matters around the Baltic, both on the level of organizations and between young people.

Activities: Create a dialogue between artists and pedagogues in school to develop new and more creative ways of learning. Development projects to reach young people in their leisure time. Evaluation and research is to be continued in cooperation with universities. A bank of methods and experience, where project partners, schools, cultural institutions, universities etc collaborate, is created as a ground for long time development in the field. In this way we want to create a lasting dialogue for development in these matters around the Baltic Sea.

This is what we would like to reach in the project:

Young people get better access to their creative capabilities. Possibilities for increased cooperation and mutual understanding is created between the representatives of the cultural sector, school and professional life. Open and interdisciplinary methods to increase creativity connected to work in art is created for use in school and inspiring young people in their leisure time. To establish arenas in the participating municipalities/regions with partners from schools, cultural organisations and institutions, cultural workers and universities. Methods for grades related to the goals in school are developed. Scientific research and analysis to support the development to a more creative school has been carried out. The ground is set for a lasting development for how the arts can support creativity in schools, professional life and in meeting young people in their leisure time. A ground is set for a lasting cooperation around the Baltic in development of methods and work between the participating partners both on organizational level and individual level.

Contact: Jan Martinsson  
[jan.martinsson@kalmar.se](mailto:jan.martinsson@kalmar.se)



- *Baltic Sea Identity*

I would very much like to draw your interest to the proposal for an EU Funding Project, called Baltic Sea Identity. More info here:

<http://www.ubc.net/plik,2101.html> Point of departure for the project is the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Especially Work Package 6 "Baltic Sea Brand, Marketing & Internet Platform" is very interesting. In case, that you are interested in a participation, please contact Wolfgang Schmidt by 5 February 2010.

Wolfgang Schmidt  
Chairman  
UBC Commission on Business Cooperation  
[wschmidt@kiwi-kiel.de](mailto:wschmidt@kiwi-kiel.de)

- *Social Economy BSR*

Consortium of Gdansk State University and Regional Information and Support Center for NGOs is long time, active supporter of different initiatives undertaken in area of social economy and implemented in Pomerania Region. Between many different instruments and methods, those with informational and educational dimension, developing entrepreneurial attitude among youth, are considered as a high priority.

Currently our Consortium is working out a project, focused on forming a platform for experiences exchange as well as creating mechanisms of cooperation between different actors engaged in promoting and monitoring social economy development within Baltic Sea Region.

Potential Project partners have been identified as:

- local government
- educational units
- job center and all institutions supporting labor market development.
- business/private companies
- non-governmental organizations

Here: <http://www.ubc.net/plik,2105.html> you will find draft of the abovementioned project, that we hope to submit under South Baltic Programme regulations. Presented scheme has been simplified to make the content more visible and easier to identified aims and results, that are to be achieved in cooperation with our international partners. Full version of the project will be result of mutual consultations between partners, planed on second part of January 2010.

All potential partners interested in cooperation, are kindly invited to submit their offers.

Dr. hab. Witold Toczyski

For more information please contact Agnieszka Grafińska Dejna (mail: [agnieszka.grafinska-dejna@rci.org.pl](mailto:agnieszka.grafinska-dejna@rci.org.pl)) from Regional Information and Support Centre for NGOs.

## **Other info**

- *Crans Montana Forum*

The Crans Montana Forum Session will take place on 18-19 March 2010 in Bucharest (Romania). The Session will be devoted to the role of cities facing climate change and global warming.

The purpose of this meeting is to exchange knowledge, discover new technologies, share experience and improve the cooperation between participants.

Enclosed please find the invitation <http://www.ubc.net/plik,2104.html> as well as programme of the session <http://www.ubc.net/plik,2103.html>.

For more information please contact:

Christophe Brico, Executive Manager  
[cpb@cmf.ch](mailto:cpb@cmf.ch)

## EU 2020 seeks to balance green growth and jobs

Governments, industry and stakeholders have weighed into the debate on the EU's new growth strategy, urging a stronger social dimension and the completion of the internal market. The EU has been preparing a strategy to replace the Lisbon Agenda for Growth and Jobs, which expires this year (2010).

A new document, EU 2020, was presented for consultation. A broad range of perspectives have emerged, amid criticism that the time allotted for feedback was too short. The European Commission received over 1,500 responses from stakeholders.

The new plan comes at a time of rising unemployment in Europe following a deep recession that wiped out billions in wealth. EU 2020 also takes on a greener hue than the Lisbon Agenda, focusing on sustainable growth through innovation.

A number of member states have called on the European Commission to develop links between economic, social and environmental elements of the plan, as well as demanding better links between EU '2020' and existing social policy.

According to the EU's overview of the 1,500 submissions received as part of a public consultation process, several governments have stressed the need for new investment in fresh sources of growth.

There is widespread concern that the jobs crisis is continuing to deepen, making the need for a comprehensive roadmap to recovery even more pressing.

The role of manufacturing industries and SMEs in job creation is highlighted by a number of member states, and there is a degree of consensus on the need for robust governance structures to ensure the EU 2020 strategy is implemented.

### Social NGOs move beyond GDP

Stakeholders specialising in social issues used the consultation process to repeat their

criticism that the draft strategy is "too narrow" in scope.

They also suggest setting targets that foster delivery, suggesting the indicators used to measure success should move "beyond GDP". The research community stressed the need to develop the European Research Area while welcoming the imminent appointment of a Chief Scientific Advisor.

According to the Commission, most academics agree with the challenged identified in the draft EU 2020 strategy and broadly support the thematic priorities. However, several academic contributors argued that Europe's current growth model is unsustainable and that the benefits of growth should be shared more fairly.

Submissions were also received from beyond the EU, with governments from Japan and Norway expressing support, while the IMF and the American Chamber of Commerce emphasised the importance of creating a pro-market environment and improved competitiveness.

*Source: EurActiv*

## Social networks put careers at risk, survey finds

Almost half of European recruiters seek information on potential candidates using online social networks and almost a quarter have rejected candidacies on the basis of their research, according to a survey released for EU Data Protection Day.

A social networking site is a website on which users can post personal information. It resembles a blog, but with the added value of providing tools for developing interaction with other users and filters to determine who has access to the data available.

The main online social networking sites are FaceBook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace.

The risks related to naïve usage of these sites, especially for online reputation, have been raised on many occasions. In November 2007, ENISA, the EU agency for network and information security, warned in a special

report against so-called 'digital dossier aggregation', after many cases of career-related negative consequences had been reported (EurActiv 01/11/07). ENISA - located in Heraklion, Crete - was established as an EU agency in September 2005, in recognition of the increased importance that the EU attaches to communication networks.

When asked how they collect information about people they plan to hire, 43% of European human resources professionals surveyed reply that they analyse the online reputation of the candidate, mainly through search engines, social networking websites, personal sites and blogs.

In Germany, 59% of recruiters make use of personal data collected on the Internet for the evaluation of a candidate, 47% in the UK, and 23% in France. The EU average is much lower than the US, where 79% of HR experts scan the Web in search of personal information for recruiting purposes.

The report, carried out by market research firm Cross-Tab and commissioned by Microsoft, shows that 23% of recruiters have rejected candidates on the basis of their online reputation. This percentage hits 41% in the UK, while it remains at 16% in Germany and 14% in France. In the US, which is at the cutting edge of the online world, 70% of HR professionals have refused job-seekers based on data found online.

The main reason for rejecting candidates is the discovery of "inappropriate comments and text written by the candidate online". Recruiters admit to being negatively influenced by information on the candidate's lifestyle seen on the Web, or by "unsuitable photos or videos" found on the Internet.

Consumers underestimate impact of online reputation. Although recruiters acknowledge that they rely heavily on information collected online, consumers continue to underestimate the value of their online reputation.

Only 9% of British consumers interviewed think that personal information available on the Web can affect their job-seeking, but 41% of UK recruiters confirmed they have rejected

candidates on the basis of their online reputation. Likewise in Germany and France, consumers tend not to be concerned enough about the private data they put online. Only 13% of Germans and 10% of French admit to such fears. The survey was conducted between 10 and 23 December 2009, using as a sample 1,010 European HR professionals and 831 consumers from Germany, Britain and France. The same poll was carried out in parallel in the US.

#### The EU response

The incoming EU commissioner in charge of data protection, Viviane Reding, has made clear in a number of speeches that she intends to work on increasing citizens' awareness of the dangers of spreading their personal information across the Web. She also stressed that "data protection rules must be updated to keep abreast of technological change to ensure the right to privacy," clearly citing online social networks, such as Facebook, MySpace or Twitter, as sources of danger for naïve users. The EU has already pushed social network managers to make the online profiles of under-18s non-searchable and private by default. On 9 February, while celebrating Safer Internet Day, the Commission will publish an assessment of the recommendation's implementation.

New initiatives are in the pipeline too. Reding has already underlined that during her new five-year mandate she plans to review the two main pieces of legislation on online privacy: the Data Protection Directive and the E-Privacy Directive.

*Source: EurActiv*

#### **EU facing potential heart disease 'catastrophe'**

MEPs have called on the EU and member states to do more to combat the growing threat of heart disease. Members of the European parliament's MEP heart group met in Brussels on Wednesday and heard from a range of experts who warned that



cardiovascular disease (CVD) was the EU's leading cause of death, despite being largely preventable.

Linda McAvan, co-chair of the parliament group, which was the largest forum on health in the parliament in the last legislature, told the audience at the event in the European parliament that cardiovascular disease was the number one killer in Europe, but said policymakers can help to combat the disease through strong EU action.

The MEP heart group has seen its numbers fall from 81 to 38 following June's parliamentary elections. But McAvan and her co-chair colleague Dirk Sterckx called on their fellow deputies to back the group's cause by signing up to a call for action on heart health. The group wants to press the European commission to adopt a comprehensive CVD prevention strategy. Referring to parliament's 2007 resolution on action to tackle CVD, which was approved by an "overwhelming majority" (607 votes for, two against and nine abstentions), Sterckx said that MEPs were "willing to combat cardiovascular disease and promote heart health". However, he added that "policymakers must engage actively" as "the battle is far from finished". "A comprehensive strategy on cardiovascular health is still needed," he warned.

With commissioner-designate for health John Dalli due to appear before the ENVI committee in January, McAvan gave notice that the committee's MEPs would be grilling him on his plans in the field of heart health.

Speakers at the event told the audience that the need for action was clear, both in terms of economic and personal costs. In total, CVD is estimated to cost the EU over €192bn every year – roughly four times the total spent on bloc's annual agriculture budget.

It is also the EU's number one killer, claiming the lives of over two million people in every year – and 4.3 million in Europe as a whole – accounting for 45 per cent of female deaths and 38 per cent of male deaths. But as many as 80 per cent of the deaths caused by the

disease are preventable, the audience was told.

Professor Simon Capewell, of Liverpool university, said the existence of CVD "has nothing to do with genetics and everything to do with diet", explaining that the prevalence of the disease has increased throughout the world as the westernised, American diet has "swept" the globe.

Increased blood pressure and high cholesterol, two of the disease's key risk factors, are directly related to the levels of salt and trans-fat in our modern diet. "Our diet is a catastrophe for cardiovascular disease," said Capewell.

But strong policies have worked in countries such as Finland and Denmark, said Capewell, with studies proving a direct link between a higher level of "nannyng" by the state and lower instances of CVD. McAvan insisted that policymakers could make a difference in tackling the disease, as strong action had been proven to cause dramatic improvements in heart health in a relatively short period of time. With obesity levels rising across the EU, Capewell warned that the EU and national governments had a moral responsibility to take action now. "We have a moral duty to look after our children... It goes beyond politics. This is humanity," he said.

*Source: TheParliament*

### **Popularity of wind farms growing in EU**

New figures reveal that more wind power capacity was installed in the EU last year than any other electricity-generating technology.

According to the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA), the body that represents the wind power industry, 39 per cent of all new capacity installed in 2009 was wind power, followed by gas (26 per cent) and solar (16 per cent).

In addition, Europe decommissioned more coal and nuclear capacity than it installed in 2009, says the Brussels-based EWEA.

Renewable energy technologies account for 61 per cent of new power generating capacity in 2009, said the EWEA report.

Investment in new European wind farms in 2009 reached €13 billion, including €1.5 billion offshore.

The EWEA says 2009 is the second year running that more wind power capacity has been installed than any other electricity-generating technology.

The data was released at a EWEA news conference in Brussels on Wednesday.

"It is a remarkable result in a difficult year" said Christian Kjaer, said its CEO.

"The figures, once again, confirm that wind power, together with other renewable energy technologies and a shift from coal to gas, are delivering massive European carbon reductions, while creating much needed economic activity and new jobs for Europe's citizens."

The countries with the biggest share of new capacity installed in 2009 were Spain (24 per cent) followed by Germany (19 per cent), Italy (11 per cent), France (11 per cent) and the UK (10 per cent).

Germany remains the EU country with the largest installed capacity, followed by Spain, Italy, France and the UK.

Kjaer added, "I am quite optimistic about the medium-term outlook for wind power in Europe, but project finance is still tight and it is clear that more orders must be announced in the coming months for the sector to repeat the 10 GW installed this year."

*Source: TheParliament*

### **Euro-Mediterranean partnership starts work in Barcelona**

Committee of the Regions' president Luc Van den Brande has hailed the inaugural meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (Arlem) as "the start of a new era". Speaking as the assembly met for its first session in Barcelona on Thursday, Van den Brande spoke of the need for "dialogue and partnership" to enhance

cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean. Arlem is made up of 84 members, bringing together local and regional authorities from the three shores of the Mediterranean, 30 members of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and 10 representatives from organisations engaged in Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.

Co-chaired by the CoR president in office and Mohamed Boudra, mayor of the Moroccan city of Al Hoceima, the club aims to give local and regional representatives greater access to the European institutions.

Its work programme will focus on infrastructure development, cultural cooperation and addressing issues such as immigration or climate change. Mayors of major EU cities and from Mediterranean partner countries ranging from Israel to Egypt, Morocco to Malta, were in the Catalan city for the meeting at the grand Pedralbes palace, where the Arlem secretariat will be based. Arlem comes as part of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched by the French presidency in 2008.

And Van den Brande said that "one of the failures of the Barcelona process in 1995 was that there was no place given to local and regional authorities". Co-president Boudra said Arlem was very important in terms of regional democracy, and called for wide ranging dialogue with citizenship. "[Arlem] is responsible for increasing quality of life in Euro-Mediterranean countries," he said. While he acknowledged disparities between EU countries and those in the Mediterranean - for example gender equality and religion, he described the launch as a "fantastic day".

*Source: TheParliament*