



UBC e-News

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Welcome to the UBC e-News!

This issue is the first of the new UBC e-news, to be distributed to the UBC Contact Persons list and to other interested persons.

The purpose of the UBC e-News is

- to provide a short overview of news from the a Baltic Sea Region city perspective. The news will mainly be picked from the multitude of newsletters and information sources that prevail on the Internet, published by different EU organs and other networks and organisations.
- To give information on what happens in UBC and on UBC positions on different BSR issues
- To inform about events, partner search and activities that may be of interest for the BSR city.
- We plan to publish the UBC e-News every second week. We would also like to have a dialogue with our readers. So, please do not hesitate to send contributions, letters to the editors and information you think would be of interest to our readers.

Enjoyable reading!

The Editors

Welcome to the UBC General Conference!

The theme of the General Conference is „The Baltic Sea Wave – Business Development in the New Europe”.

The Baltic Sea Wave is a symbol of the business development in the Baltic Sea Region and its impact on the Region and the Europe after the EU Enlargement. We'll discuss the role of the cities in this process and share experiences how to facilitate economic activity.

We invited interesting speakers from the Committee of the Regions, governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the European Commission and representatives of the business community. Interesting workshops will cast further lights on city roles in business development.

The second day of the Conference will be devoted to the elections, adoption of a new membership fee system, budget, a new Strategy document and of course a Conference Resolution. The UBC Commissions and Networks will have their meetings and report about their activities and action plans.

The Host City of Klaipeda will be awarded with the Council of Europe „Europe Prize '2003", and the Baltic Cities Environmental Award 2003 will be granted during the General Conference.

The CBSS Committee of Senior Officials will also meet during the General Conference.

The deadline for registration is 20 September. You can find invitations and registration forms on the Internet at www.ubc.net.

Let's meet on 17-19 October in Klaipeda!

CBSS Ministerial Session in Pori

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Baltic Sea Countries met at the annual ministerial meeting in Pori, Finland, in June 2003. One of the important issues discussed was the 2nd Northern Dimension Action Plan (NDAP), where UBC has contributed actively. Another issue of direct interest for local authorities was Agenda 21 and Strengthening of Cross-border Co-operation.

The intensified co-operation on government level in the framework of CBSS, like Higher Education and Culture, Economic Co-operation, Maritime and Nuclear Safety, Civil Security and other fields, were met with satisfaction and further co-operation and development was welcomed.

The UBC contribution to the Northern Dimension 2nd Action Plan can be found at <http://www2.ubc.net/today/index.html> under "Statements".

The communiqué from the CBSS Pori Meeting can be found in the excellent CBSS newsletter "Baltinfo", which can be downloaded at <http://www.cbss.st/>

New Report on Future EU Transportation Policy

The European Commission published June 27th a report from the "High Level Group on the Trans-European Transport Network". The group was set up in order to evaluate the present TEN (Trans European Network) policies and to propose necessary adjustments. The group consists of one person from each old and future EU country.

UBC has for several years argued that the TEN and the EU Transportation Policy is not suitable for the Baltic Sea Region as it concentrates on land and air transportation, but tends to forget ferry transportation although they are so important for our region.

The report proposes some adjustments of the present policy on land transportation. The new Finnish suggestion on "Motorways of the

Sea"-concept has also been included, however in a way that might create problems in the future, for example when defining routing of the "Motorways of the Sea". The report proposes, among others:

"To launch projects in practice, the Group suggests that current and future Member States submit to the Commission proposals before 2007 in relation to the objective of creating motorways of the sea (.....). These projects could take the form of public-private partnerships schemes whereby financial aid from the Community and national budgets would be jointly granted (...).

To be eligible for Community funding, these projects should:

- be proposed at least by two Member States;*
- concern the smallest possible number of ports (ideally two in each different Member States);*
- alleviate road traffic congestion on the main axes (or improve accessibility in the case of island States)"*

It would be very difficult to define only one such Sea Motorway connection between two BSR states – if not handled properly, it could lead to fights between potential ports to get the proposed Sea Motorway to the own city.

It is probably time for lobbying already now from interested cities, and the first contact should be taken to the national member of the group, which is listed at the end of the report. UBC role is to lobby to upgrade Sea Transportation as a part of EU Transportation policy, but it becomes complicated if UBC would recommend one route before the other.

The full report can be downloaded at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/ten/transport/revisi on/hlg/2003_report_kvm_en.pdf

A Transportation Network in the Mediterranean Sea

The EU Commission wants to develop a sustainable and reliable transportation

network in the Mediterranean Sea. A new communication from the Commission describes problems with such a project in terms of financing and security. The focus is on air and sea transportation.

Hopefully some day the Commission in a near future also investigates transportation problems in the Baltic Sea ...

The report can be downloaded at:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/886/0/RAPID&lg=EN&display=

A New EU Instrument for Cross-border Co-operation

The European Union has adopted a communication on new instruments for cross-border co-operation in the new EU border regions with Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and other non-EU countries further south. The development of the new instrument will be carried out in two phases: One that combines the present funding sources (Interreg, Phare, Tacis) into a better functioning instrument, and one that foresees a new instrument that will start with the new EU budget from 2006.

UBC has for a long time argued that the EU Cross-border concepts and rules are not suitable for the Baltic Sea Region since they punish maritime borders. Only about 2% of the available EU funding for cross-border co-operation is allocated to the BSR, even though we do have more than 2% of the borders.

This new instrument will be excellent for the countries with land borders to Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. For cross-border co-operation between the Kaliningrad region and Sweden or Denmark the new instrument cannot be used. The conclusion is that UBC of course welcomes this new initiative, but should continue its efforts to adopt the cross-border concepts so they fit to the realities of the Baltic Sea Region.

The first call for project under this new instrument is expected at the end of August 2003.

The whole communication can be downloaded at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/wider/wider_en.pdf

New guidelines for the INTERREG-programs

The EU Commission has published a guide for rewriting the rules and concepts of the Interreg programs in the Baltic Sea Region. The Monitoring Committee of the Interreg III BSR has nominated a working group that will deal with the practicalities. Each BSR Country has nominated one delegate to this Working Group. Bo Löwendahl from the Interreg III B Joint Secretariat is co-ordinating the group. The result shall be finished already in September, which gives UBC very limited time to intervene.

The guide and also more information can be found at:

http://www.interreg.nu/news_proj.asp?CategoryID=1119

Poland ratifies EU Accession Treaty

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski ratified the Treaty of Accession on 23 July, completing the legal steps needed for his country to join the EU on 1 May 2004.

Upon ratifying the Accession Treaty, Mr Kwasniewski stated that "Poland is ready to do everything to make Europe stronger thanks to our presence in the EU". "I am sure that Poland's accession to the EU will be successful and will be satisfying for all of us," he added.

President Kwasniewski said that the most important tasks that Poland has to fulfill in the final months before joining the EU were setting up an effective system for Polish

farmers to be able to obtain direct payments, adjusting Polish laws to EU standards and preparing local governments to be able to absorb EU development assistance.

Polish voters endorsed their country's EU membership in a 7-8 June referendum.

Latvia: Support for EU Integration Drops Below 50 %

Barely two months ahead of the 20 September referendum, has the Latvian public's support for the country's EU membership dropped below the 50 per cent mark, according to a survey conducted by an independent research company. The opposition gained 9.9 per cent to 34.5 per cent in July. 15.9 per cent had not made up their mind yet (against 18.4 per cent in June). In April, the independent pollster SKDS registered 53.8 per cent support for EU membership in the country.

Latvia is the last of the 10 new EU Member States to hold a referendum, which will be binding.

Estonian Politicians Argue on EU Accession

Mr. Edgar Savisaar, Mayor of Tallinn, influential politician and leader of the largest political party in Estonia, the Center Party, has supported a party recommendation to vote NO at the Estonian EU referendum September 14. The Center Party, with 25 % share, is the only party in the Estonian Riigikogu (Parliament) that does not support EU accession.

Recently leading Estonian political figures - including President Arnold Rüütel, the parliament speaker, Ene Ergma, and the prime minister Juhan Parts - made a strong recommendation pro-EU joint statement.

The latest polls show accession support from 53 percent of voting-age citizens in the first half of July. In particular, support seems to be growing in the fifty-plus age group where support for accession is 61 percent, while among the young it remains below 50 percent.

Eastern Europe overtakes South and North in e-government

Eastern Europe in general has overtaken several Southern and Northern European countries in ICT use in the public sector and e-government, a new survey reveals.

The findings of the e-Forum Public Services Requirements Survey will be officially announced at the e-Forum Summit 2003 on 15-16 September in Valencia, Spain.

The goal of the survey, which was completed in two waves in the 15 EU Member States and in the enlargement countries, is to identify the key issues in successful implementation of e-government applications as seen by senior public sector officials. According to the survey, some 90 per cent of Eastern Europe's public sector employees have access to the Internet, compared to 81 per cent in Northern Europe and 74 per cent in the South.

e-Forum is a project co-funded by the Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme. It seeks to promote the spread of e-government solutions throughout the EU of 25 over the next ten to 15 years.

Source: www.euractiv.com, Governance

Coming UBC activities

- The UBC Commission on **Culture** will have a meeting in Szczecin on 2-5 October. The meeting will be connected together with the V Baltic Biennial of Contemporary Art "Extra Strong-Super Light". Participants are also invited for a one-day trip to Art Forum Berlin in Berlin on 5 October. Information at: <http://www.ubc.net/calendar/doc/2-5-10-2003/index.htm>
- The Commission on **Urban Planning** will have the second seminar of the ABC-project in Vaasa on 16-19 October. Co-incidentally the date of the seminar is the same as the date of the General Conference in Klaipeda. The theme will be: "Cities as Regional Engines. Urban Design and Regional Development". More Information can be found here: http://www.ubc.net/calendar/doc/16-19-10-2003/Invitation_Vasa.doc

Past UBC activities

- The 37th **UBC Executive Board** meeting was held on 18 June in Rostock. The Board discussed and accepted among others the proposals of the candidates to the UBC Presidium for 2003-2005 and the proposal of the new membership fee system. The voting for the proposals will be held during the VII General Conference in Klaipeda. Also the new Strategy and creation of the UBC Youth Network were discussed. More details at: <http://www.ubc.net/today/37th-executive.html>
- UBC Commission on **Tourism** met in Cesis on 23-25 August. Among others, there were elections for the Steering Committee of the Commission for the years 2003-2005. The new members are:
Chairman: Mr Kyrre Dahl, Kalmar
Mrs Irena Satkauskiena, Palanga
Mr Armands Muiznieks, Jurmala
Mr Vladislav Andreev, Kaliningrad
Secretary: Mr Viktor Rydell, Kalmar
You will find more information at: <http://www.ubc.net/calendar/doc/23-25-08-2003/index.htm>

Drawing Competition

The great final of the UBC international art competition for disabled children took place on 2 July in Gdynia. 78 works from 18 cities from 7 countries took part in the competition. The jury, including the representatives of UBC, the diplomatic corps, the authorities of Gdynia, Gdynia's organisations acting for the benefit of the disabled, representatives of Polish Foundation of Disabled Rehabilitation, journalists and the renown artists, chose 3 winners and 4 finalists. To see the list of winners and their works look at: http://www.ubc.net/commissions/sport_drawing_competition.html

Hanse –Tour Sonnenschein

This good will cycle ride organised by professor Ingo Richter, the retired director of the Children's and Youth Clinic at the Rostock University and the Rostock Authorities started at 25.07. Circa 100 participants rode a bike for two weeks for about 4.000 km around the Baltic Sea to deliver medicines, office equipment and other goods for the social institutions taking care of the ill children, like hospitals, hospices, care centres, children's houses in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Russia. The money and the goods were collected in UBC cities: Rostock, Wismar, Lubeck, Kiel, Kolding, Copenhagen, Malmo, Kristianstad, Karlskrona, Kalmar, Oskarshamn, Vastervik, Nykoping, Stockholm, Turku and Helsinki and delivered to the institutions in Tallinn, Parnu, Riga, Liepaja, Palanga, Klaipeda, Kaliningrad, Baltijsk, Elblag, Gdansk, Gdynia, Koszalin, Szczecin and some other non-member cities. The first Hanse-Tour Sonnenschein was held in 1995.

Internal Events

- The **UBC Board of Audit** had a meeting in UBC Secretariat on 1-2 August. The report will be presented during the VII General Conference in Klaipeda.

Call for stories!

The next issue of our BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN will have the same cover theme as the UBC General Conference: "THE BALTIC SEA WAVE - BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW EUROPE".

Most economic activities take place in cities. The ideas, the money and the people meet there and push the development forward. The political and administrative capacity of cities is also an important growth factor in the process.

The Bulletin intends to share best practices of local authorities to promote business in your cities.

What are the priorities, policies, projects and activities in this field in your city? The cities have an important role in this process.

The editorial board welcomes also news and information about other interesting events, projects and activities taking place in Member Cities. The bulletin is distributed to over 200 Baltic cities and many key organisations and institutions including the EU.

Please follow these guidelines, when submitting your story:

- Deliver the story by e-mail to: iwona.belczak@ubc.net in MS WORD format, remember to kill the viruses before sending.
- Each member city may submit two articles - one related to the cover theme and one to the chapter "Cities in Action". Naturally all stories shall be sent in English.
- Each article may have max 400 words. It is also important to include the author's name and contact numbers for possible further questions related to the story.
- Please make all efforts to include a smashing photo or a digital picture to illustrate the article (JPG format, min. 400 ppi, one e-mail - one picture, the file should not exceed 2MB). Remember to send us also

the code of arms of your city, if you have not sent it earlier.

- The deadline for stories to the Bulletin is 12 September 2003, please respect this timetable!