



UBC e-News

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UBC General Conference

The preparations for the UBC General Conference is very hectic, and it seems that we will have a very interesting General Conference in Klaipeda.

The list of key-note speakers is finally settled, as follows:

- Roger Kaliff, Vice-President of CoR
- Hans Karlsson, MEP, Member of the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy
- Emmanuel Berck, European Commission, Enterprise Directorate General,
- Birute Vesaite, MP of Lithuania , Head of the Commission for Entrepreneurship and Employment in Lithuanian Parliament
- Tapio Kuula, Fortum Corporation
- Piotr Chelkowski, NCC / Hydrobudowa SA

We will also have some interesting workshops on aspects on cities and business development.

The GC will be visited by representatives from several other regional cities networks from other parts of Europe, like the Mediterranean Region. UBC is the most experienced such network, and the plan is to form a loose network of regional cities network, especially in the light of the possibilities a new EU constitution can offer sub-national governments.

The venue, the Klaipeda Theatre, is very pleasant with a lot of space for interesting meetings with colleagues from all over the Baltic Sea Region.

Welcome to Klaipeda!

...And Latvia Makes it Ten

With a surprisingly large majority, Latvia voted "yes" to EU membership in its accession referendum on Saturday - completing the full series of endorsements by the ten acceding states.

72% of the population turned out to vote, and 67% of voters said "yes". The result showed a strong late swing in favour of membership. As recently as August, opinion polls indicated that less than half of the population was in favour of joining the EU.

Boosted by this year's "yes"-votes in all the other acceding states of central and eastern Europe and Malta, and parliamentary approval in Cyprus, the voters of Latvia took seriously the warnings from senior government and public figures that this small country risked being left out of Europe for at least another generation if this opportunity was not seized.

Across the country there was an air of excitement and involvement. On the eve of the referendum, parties and concerts and television debates gave a high profile to the issue. And on Saturday, the polling stations saw a heavy throughput of voters from early morning to late at night.

Now the way is open for the widest enlargement in the European Union's history, on 1 May 2004. The only remaining hurdle is the formal ratification of the Accession Treaty by all existing and acceding member states.

The European Commission issued a statement headlined: "Welcome home, Latvia!"

The result "should encourage all of us to work even harder in uniting the continent", said European Commission President Romano Prodi. "We are happy and proud that Latvian citizens decided to join the European Union as well. They will bring their own experience, talents and good will into our European family".

"Today is a great day for all Europeans", said European Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen. "We welcome a country that naturally belongs to us, and we trust, that Latvia, like the other future member states, will enrich and strengthen the European Union".

Source: *Enlargement Weekly*

European Conference on Local Energy Action

26-27 November 2003, Brussels, Belgium and on the Internet

The European Union has put forward challenging goals regarding the use of renewable, efficient use of energy and clean urban transport. Local and regional initiatives are of utmost importance in achieving this goal. Local and regional energy agencies and decision makers are an important resource of knowledge and experience. The conference will help to use this experience and to share success stories and good practice through a network of local and regional stakeholders.

This year's annual conference will focus on the latest policy issues and new energy programmes, directives and other action initiated by the Commission, with a look toward the future.

There will also be an emphasis on financial mechanisms available at local and regional level, especially related to the Structural Funds. Good examples from projects implemented under Structural Funds will be presented and discussed.

More info at:

<http://www.managenergy.net/conference/2003.html>

Denmark to limit worker access from new member states?

Danish trade unions seem to have persuaded the Danish government to impose tough controls on workers from the new member states in the years following enlargement. Under the government's plan, residence and work permits will be granted only when workers are appointed to jobs where the working conditions are in line with agreements between trade unions and employers.

In response to concerns about the labour market being undercut by cheaper labour from outside the country, Danish liberal minister of employment Claus Hjort Frederiksen is taking seriously demands from trade unions that permits must include declarations that the worker has been appointed in line with the general terms of work and payment agreed by the company and the trade unions. And as soon as the appointment ends, the worker will be obliged to leave the country.

Local labour market councils will automatically be informed of all permits given to employ foreign labour - and only employers registered with Danish tax and customs authorities will be able to obtain permits.

Member states are entitled to impose limits on employed workers from the acceding states in central and eastern Europe for up to seven years after their accession - although several member states have already indicated they will not exercise this right.

Source: *Enlaregement Weekly*

EU's net contributors

A new Commission report reveals that the Netherlands, Sweden, Luxembourg and Germany were the biggest net contributors to the EU budget in 2002, while Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain were the biggest

net recipients. The report states that total expenditures from the EU budget amounted to 85 billion euro in 2003. Some of the main findings of the report are:

- 10 of the 15 Member States were net contributors in 2002, four were net receivers. For Finland the balance was zero.
- As percentage of their Gross National Income (GNI), the largest net contributions were paid by the Netherlands, Sweden, Luxembourg, Germany and Italy. Without benefiting from its special correction, the UK would be the second biggest net contributor after the Netherlands.
- The largest net beneficiaries are Spain, Greece and Portugal and Ireland, the cohesion countries. In absolute amounts, Spain is the largest recipient of EU expenditure (around 21 per cent of total expenditure) followed by France. Germany is a very close third largest recipient.

In relation to their GNI, Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain remain by far the biggest recipients. Funds from the EU budget amounts for these States to between 3.3 and 2.2 per cent of their GNI respectively.

Germany, France, Italy and the UK were the largest payers in 2002, measured in absolute amounts. Germany paid around 22.8 per cent of the total EU budget, followed by France with 18.2 per cent, Italy with 14.5 per cent and the UK with 13.1 per cent.

Source: EuroActiv

Mini-news:

Estonian Air bought by SAS

The Scandinavian airline group SAS is to buy Maersk Air of Denmark's 49 % share in the Estonian airline Estonian Air, but Estonian Air will continue to operate as an independent airline under its own brand. SAS may also buy the 17 % that the Estonian investment banking firm AS Cresco holds in Estonian Air. The remaining 34 % of the shares in

Estonian Air are held by the Estonian State. "Estonian Air is a profitable, strong and growing company in a strategically highly attractive region. Traffic to and from Estonia is expected to increase by at least 8-10 percent annually," said Gunnar Reitan, executive vice president of the SAS Group responsible for subsidiary and affiliated airlines.

Source: *Enlargement Weekly*

Latvia allocates money for EU projects

Latvia has set aside some €75 million in preparation for the EU funds it expects to receive in 2004. Part of the money is earmarked for providing the necessary national co-financing for much of the EU aid. And part of it is to be used for upgrading the administrative capacity of government departments that will be responsible for administering the EU funds.

Source: *Enlargement Weekly*

Estonia wants more power in EU

Estonia wants a voting commissioner's seat reserved for each member state in the new EU Treaty. And it wants a minimum of five European Parliament members from each country, rather than the four suggested in the present draft, according to Henrik Hololei, the Estonian government's representative in the Convention on the Future of Europe.

Source: *Enlargement Weekly*

Information on the new EU languages

The EU Commission has started to publish documents and spreading information on the languages of the new EU countries. A list of such publications can be found at

http://europa.eu.int/comm/publications/newmembers/index_en.htm

Also the European Parliament has adapted to the new situation. Information on the Parliament home-page can be found in 20 languages.

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/default.htm>

REMINDER!

Over 230 participants from UBC member cities and international BSR and European organisations already registered to the UBC VII General Conference in Klaipeda. There is still the possibility to register. Please send your registration forms by fax as soon as possible to Liturimex at: **+370 5 2314902**. The invitation and the registration form can be found at: <http://www.ubc.net/today/viith-general.html>

Info from the UBC Commission on Sport

Dear contact persons of the UBC network,

During the Commission on Tourism meeting in Cesis in August 2003 it was decided to update the Commission on Tourism contacts for tourism related issues from the member cities. I would please like you to send me the names, titles/functions and contact details of the following persons in your member cities:

- 1) the persons responsible for Tourism Offices and their activities
- 2) the politicians responsible for tourism related issues

Please send me these details as soon as possible, so that we may have our register updated before the General Conference in Klaipeda, October 17-20.

Best regards from Kalmar and the Commission on Tourism,

Viktor Rydell

Secretary

Info from the UBC Commission on Culture

Dear Sir,

The National Museum in Szczecin and Commission on Culture of the Union of the Baltic Cities cordially invite You to the opening of :the

Extra Strong Super Light - 5th international contemporary art exhibition

on: Friday, 3.10.2003, at 7 p.m.
Contemporary Art Gallery, Staromlynska 1,
Szczecin, Poland

artists:

Danuta Dąbrowska-Wojciechowska (Poland)
Gun Holmström (Finland)
Agnieszka Kalinowska (Poland)
Maix Mayer (Germany)
Lars Nilsson (Sweden)
Hanna Nowicka-Grochal (Poland)
Monika Nyström (Sweden)
Egle Rakauskaite (Lithuania)
Ene-Liis Semper (Estonia)
Jari Silomäki (Finland)
Jaan Toomik (Estonia)
Solveiga Vasiljeva (Latvia)
Monika Wiechowska (Poland)
Piotr Wyrzykowski & Iliya Chichkan
(Poland/ Ukraine)

More info at:

<http://www.ubc.net/commissions/culture.html>

From our BSR friends

The 5th Annual Baltic Development Forum Summit will be held in Riga on 5-7 October 2003. The main theme is: "New Europe Meets Old Europe - The Baltic Sea Region as a Global Frontrunner". The summit will focus on how the Baltic Sea Region can benefit from the mix of new and old democracies, of mature and emerging markets and of established structures and new alliances.

The aim of the summit is to give the participants the opportunity to network, to gain knowledge of key developments in the Baltic Sea region and the EU and to enhance the region's public-private partnership.

More information at:

<http://www.bdforum.org/>