



UBC e-News

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Large representation at the UBC General Conference in Klaipeda

Almost 300 persons from more than 70 UBC member cities, plus representatives of organisations, networks and non-member cities, have so far registered to the UBC General Conference in Klaipeda October 17-18. The great interest certainly will give an impetus to a successful and interesting conference. The Conference Venue is the pleasant Klaipeda theatre building.



Two important documents will be adopted:

- The UBC Strategy, and
- UBC Agenda 21 Action Program.

The conference will also elect a new vice-president. The UBC Board has proposed the Mayor of Riga, Mr Gundars Bojars, to be a new UBC vice-president.

The UBC Board also proposes that the present President and vice-presidents shall continue one more period. If the General Conference agrees, Mr Per Boedker Andersen, Kolding, will continue as President, and Mr Armas Lahoniitty, Turku Mr Arno Poeker, Rostock, will continue as vice-presidents.

Enlarging Europe's Transport Networks "Will Boost Growth"

Boosting the competitiveness of the enlarged European Union is the underlying motivation for European Commission proposals last week for enlarging Europe's transport networks. It proposed a series of priority projects costing €220 billion - including the extension of the major routes to the future member states.

The list includes, among others, the "Rail Baltica" line linking Warsaw-Kaunas-Riga-Tallinn, and the Gdansk-Warsaw-Brno-Bratislava route, with branches to Katowice, Zilina and Nove Misto. The motorway Gdansk-Brno-Bratislava-Vienna is due for completion by 2010. Proposals for "motorways of the sea" include links between the Baltic Sea member states and member states in central Europe. Also the Fehmarn Belt Bridge between Denmark and Germany is on the agenda.

"The trans-European networks are a motor and precondition for Europe's economic development and cohesion", said European Transport Commissioner Loyola de Palacio.

The proposal follows up the report earlier this year by the High-Level Group on the TEN-T chaired by Karel Van Miert, and is part of the European growth initiative designed to mobilise new investment in the trans-European networks and in research, development and innovation in order to boost the competitiveness of the Union.

Source: Enlargement Weekly

Intergovernmental Conference' in Rome highlights divisions over draft Constitution

The official start of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) in Rome 4 October 2003 confirmed that several Member States are not willing to accept the proposed draft Constitution coming out of the Convention.

The IGC's work will be based on the draft EU Constitution, adopted by the 105-member European Convention on 10 July 2003.

The main topics of discussions has been majority rules, number of EU Commissioners and the issue of a reference to Christianity in the Constitution's final text. The smaller countries raised the issue of equality, fearing that the Constitution might favour the big Member States.

With so much division, it seems unlikely that the IGC will be concluded before the end of the Italian Presidency and might have to be finalised during the Irish Presidency.

One issue in the new Constitution has not been very much discussed namely the position and role of Local Authorities in the future European Union. The draft constitution strengthens local authorities' role with new and streamlined formal communication through the Committee of Regions, CoR. The role of UBC will probably be discussed very much in connection with that, and the General Conference Resolution will concentrate on this issue.

The next IGC meeting will take place on 14 October in Brussels. The first EU Constitution could be signed on 9 May 2004 - Europe Day, just before the next European elections.

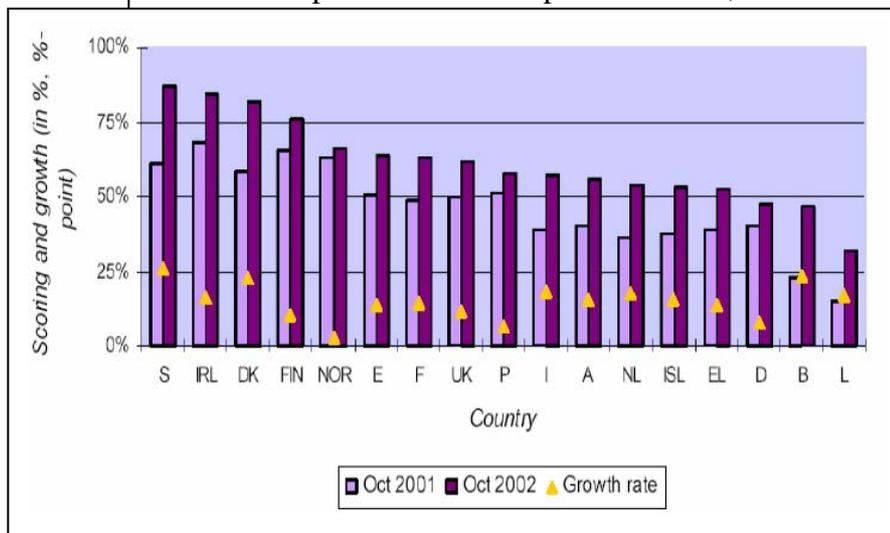
Between May 2004 and the end of 2005 the treaty will be ratified by the 25 EU parliaments, with referenda being held where necessary.

Source: EurActiv

The EU Commission urges for a faster development of e-governance.

e-Governance plays an important role in forfeiting the Lisbon Strategy. In a Communication September 29, the Commission underlined the importance of e-Governance for the future development of EU. The Communication also presents the implementation of e-Governance in the nations, and urged for more efforts in the field.

Sweden, Ireland and Denmark are on the top of the e-Governance implementation process, which is shown in the graph above. The Commissions point out that the growth rate is more important that the present status, but



also there Sweden and Denmark are on the top in Europe.

The communication also gives 18 proposals on how to speed up the process.

The Communication is very interesting reading for those interested in e-governance. You can find it at:

http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2005/doc/all_about/egov_communication_en.pdf

The 55th session of the Nordic Council

The main topics during the 55th Nordic Council meeting in Oslo October 27-29 will focus on free movement across borders and The Nordic Countries in Europe. Special interest will be given to the role of the Nordic Countries in the Northern Dimension.

The Nordic Council is a co-operation between the Nordic Countries and their Parliaments. More info at www.norden.org

Baltic Development Forum's Riga Summit

Baltic Development Forum calls itself the Baltic Sea region's main summit organiser and networking forum. It is probably true, at least in the field of big business networking.

BDF had their annual meeting, called Summit, in Riga October 5-7. The theme was "New Europe Meets Old Europe - - The Baltic Sea Region as a Global Frontrunner".

BDF Chairman, Uffe Elleman-Jensen, had managed to arrange an impressive number of interesting workshops with highly qualified panelists. Among the highlights was a discussion between the tree presidents of the Baltic States, Rolandas Paksas, Arnold Rüütel and Vaira Vike-Freiberga, on the famous division of Europe by the US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld into the "new" and "old" Europe.

More info at <http://www.bdforum.org/>

City Councillors of East Africa and Baltic Sea Region meet

The UBC-LVRLAC Co-operation Project contains a large number of different activities. One of them is a city council exchange program. City councilors from three local authorities in East Africa have visited Kalmar, Kolding and Tampere and studied the political system on local authority level. In November city councilors from these three

cities will pay a return visit to the three East African local authorities.

The result of the project will be a small book where African local level politician look at our local level democracy, and BSR local level politicians will give a review on African local level democracy. The book will be published and distributed to UBC member cities in the spring.

A LVRLAC-delegation, consisting of the presidium of LVRLAC and the Secretary General, will attend the UBC General Conference in Klaipeda.

The UBC-LVRLAC Project phase two will continue until July 2004. Sida has raised the budget for phase two with 231 000 Euro, which gives a total of 775 000 Euro (Oct 2002-July 2004). Discussions on phase three have already started.

More information from the UBC-LVRLAC Co-operation Project can be obtained from juhan@janusson.net

Lithuanian MP calls for baby boom

At a time when governments in some parts of the world are encouraging their citizens to have fewer children, a number of Lithuanian politicians are uniting in their calls for a Baltic baby boom. At a press conference held Sept. 29, Andrius Kubilius, leader of the conservative Homeland Union party, unveiled an appeal to Lithuanian families to have at least two children each.

Called 2V—a title derived from du vaikai (two children)—the program envisages a government-led push to increase the national birth rate per woman from the current 1.27 to a level that would at least sustain the current population of 3.46 million.

"Every righteous and young Lithuanian must understand that patriotism is not just rooting for basketball players but implementing the 2V program," read the Homeland Union's official statement.

Homeland Union is hoping that the issue of population decline will strike a chord with voters worried about the possibility of a dying Lithuanian nation. Negative population growth is becoming an ever-greater for the Baltic States. Whereas in 1995 Lithuania had 3.62 million inhabitants, this figure had dropped by 4.4 percent by 2002. Numbers for the same period in Latvia and Estonia are cause for even greater concern in those countries.

Source: Baltic Times

No EU support to twinning

The EU Commission has announced that it will not be possible to receive funding from the EU Twinning fund, starting from January 2004.

The problems are legal problems in connection with EU enlargement.

“It is not acceptable that local authorities all over Europe will suffer because the EU Commission has not reacted on a problem known already since a long time. There must be a solution”, says Mr Henning Jensen, Mayor of Næstved and chairman of the International Committee in the Danish Local Authorities Organisation.

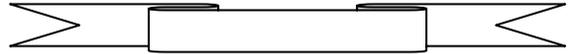
The stop for funding of twinning will last until April 2004.

Source: KL

Ireland plans enlargement ceremony in May 2004

Ireland will preside over the European Union when the enlargement takes place. Irish Minister for European Affairs Dick Roche announced on 3 August that a special ceremony to commemorate EU enlargement will be held by the Irish Presidency of the Union in Dublin next May. Minister Roche said the purpose of the ceremony was "to display the diversity of the European culture and the unity of the European peoples".

Irish Prime Minister has invited heads of state and government from the other 24 countries of the enlarged Union to Dublin for the ceremony.

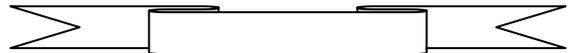


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We would like the readers of UBC e-News to voice their opinion on all matters that is of interest to UBC members and all other readers of UBC e-News under this head-line.

Please submit an opinion, a correction or clarification, some interesting information – or perhaps just some interesting gossip!

Send your contribution to Anna Sosnicka at UBC Secretariat, anna.sosnicka@ubc.net



**Information from the
Commission on Culture**

The 7th Working Session of the UBC Commission on Culture, held in Szczecin, Poland, on 2-5 Oct., resulted in a new board and new vision for the organisation, which aims to boost cultural co-operation among partner cities in the UBC. The meeting, held in conjunction with the opening of the Baltic Biennial of Contemporary Art, drew representatives from 14 UBC cities.

The new Board of the Commission:

- Slawomir Szafranski, Director of Culture and Promotion Department, City of Szczecin
- Olga Cherkasova, Director of the Mension- Museum of Revikh, Leningradskaja oblast Volosovsky region, Izvara, museum of Rerikh, City of St. Petersburg
- Tarja Hautamaki, Director of Culture Services, City of Vaasa, Finland
- Olov Gibson, Cultural Official, City of Visby

**Info from the Commission on
Tourism**

Dear members of the UBC network,

Please be informed that the homepage of the Commission on Tourism has been updated. Here

<http://www.ubc.net/commissions/tourism>, among other things, you may find the minutes from the latest Commission on Tourism meeting in Cesis, Latvia 23-25 of August 2003. Pictures from the meeting's activities are also available.

The new *Steering Committee* of the Commission (active from October 2003 to September 2005),

Mr Kyrre Dahl, Kalmar, Chairman
kyrre.dahl@kalmar.se

Mrs Irena Satkauskiene, Palanga
pletra@palanga.lt

Mr Vladislav Andreev, Kaliningrad
ums@klgd.ru

Mr Armands Muiznieks, Jurmala
armands@jpd.gov.lv

The next meeting of the Commission on Tourism will take place during the General Conference in Klaipeda 17-20 October. Please remember to register!

Best regards from the Commission on
Tourism,

Viktor Rydell, Secretary

Partner Search

Baltic education centre Vikings are looking for co-operation partners in Nordic countries in project supported by Nordic Council of Ministries. Priority of Baltic education centre Vikings is training in field of sustainable tourism development and nature protection. More detail information at:

http://www.ubc.net/today/e_News/documents/pieteikums-NCM.doc

You may also contact: Marika Radele, Project co-ordinator

Tel: +371 6389117 Fax: +371 3427076

Art Gallery on UBC website

All the works sent in for the competition "Dreams Without Limits" can already be seen on the UBC website. Some of them can also be downloaded as wallpapers. We invite you to visit the virtual gallery at http://www.ubc.net/art_gallery.html In case you have problems with downloading a given wallpaper, please feel free to contact UBC Secretariat.

Calendar “Dreams without limits”



In 2002 Union of the Baltic Cities initiated the Social Campaign "Without Limits", aimed at raising consciousness of member cities in respect to people with disabilities, their needs as well as expectations towards the rest of the society. In order to continue the realisation of the UBC Social Campaign as well as in response to the Council of European Union announcing 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities, UBC Commission on Sport announced an International Art Competition entitled "Dreams Without Limits", addressed to disabled children and youth at the age of 10 - 16, coming from the 105 UBC members.

The works of Baltic artists which were sent in for the competition have been used to create a 2004 UBC calendar entitled “Dreams Without Limits”. The calendar shows desires and feelings hidden at the bottom of the hearts of the disabled dreamers. It will be distributed at the VII UBC General Conference in Klaipeda, Lithuania. Further information:

Ewa Depka

UBC Commission on Sport Coordinator

“The Baltic Fantasia”

The City of Kronstad, Russia, and the Children’s Art School announce the International Drawing Competition entitled "The Baltic Fantasia" addressed to children from the UBC member cities. The competition is organised in connection with

300 anniversary of the foundation of the fortress of Kronstadt.

The Competition should show the life of the Baltic region in all its diversity and to remind of that common details, which integrates us, despite of boundaries, to reveal the significance and originality of each national culture.

The competition is addressed to children in the age of 10-15 from Kronstadt, twin-cities of Kronstadt and cities - members of The Union of Baltic cities.

The competition will be organised in two stages: local and international. Each city should choose one local Co-ordinator, who will be responsible for works collecting and sending them to Kronstadt. The international stage will be co-ordinated by the Organising Committee formed by Administration of Kronstadt.

After the final which will take place in Kronstadt, works of young artists will be exhibited during the period Of 300-years anniversary of Kronstadt celebration in the Main exhibition hall of Kronstadt.

More information at:

http://www.ubc.net/today/e_News/documents/Letter.doc