



UBC e-News

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Info

- *Inauguration of the UBC Antenna in Brussels, 6 December 2006*

In October 2006 the UBC antenna office in Brussels began to operate. The aim is to lobby the UBC cities' interests more effectively, to increase UBC visibility among European institutions and to influence EU policies which have an impact on local authorities.

President of the Union of the Baltic Cities Per Boedker Andersen would like to warmly invite all member cities to take part in the opening celebration of UBC antenna which will take place in Brussels on 6 December 2006. Please find an invitation and the registration form at:

http://www.ubc.net/today/pictures/UBC_Brussels.pdf



From UBC Commissions

- Commission on Energy

The UBC Energy Commission is now officially established!

The Mayor of Oskarshamn presented the proposal for the establishing of an Energy Commission, at the UBC Executive Board Meeting in Gdynia October 19th 2006.

The Board agreed on the proposal, which was supported by UBC Cities Pärnu, Kalmar and Kolding. The UBC Energy Commission Board was appointed during the UBC Energy Meeting the 21-23rd of November in Oskarshamn. The future agenda was also discussed and set by the UBC representatives present at the meeting. The focus areas for the commission are energy efficiency, reduction of green house emissions and a strive for higher local self-reliance.

The appointed board members are as follows:

- Co-Chairman: Mr. Stefan Windh, representing Oskarshamn
- Board members: Pekka Sihvonen, Representing Kotka; Mats Brantsberg, representing Örebro; Jan Westerberg, representing Mariehamn.
- Chairman: pending

The UBC Energy Meeting was the official start for the concrete work of the commission. Experts and professors in the energy field will now take the lead in forming the research and development program for the energy commission together with the elected board of the commission led by a chairman and co-chairman.

The Energy Commission is open for all UBC city members to contribute and the secretariat

in Oskarshamn will coordinate the work with the other commissions and cities and organizations in the Baltic Sea region and within the EU. Please contact the secretariat for more information and to give Your input. For more information please visit www.ubcenergy.org

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▪ Commission on Culture

Meeting in Vaasa

The City Councils of the UBC member cities had earlier this year been invited to propose their candidates to be awarded the UBC Cultural Prize for the best Cultural festival of the years 2005 and 2006. The Board of the Commission on Culture had a meeting in Vaasa on 23 November 2006 and decided to give the prize to the City Council of Cesis for the festival Cesis 800th Anniversary "for the conscious use of cultural heritage to shape an image of the town and strengthen its identity and raise the awareness of cultural values of life". During the Board meeting board member Olga Cherkasova presented the publication of the 24 speeches held during the Session in St. Petersburg "The Role and Value of the Museums in the Modern World". The book will be presented at the General Conference in Pärnu next year. The board also decided to hold the next election of board members in connection with the General Conference in Pärnu. The following two days, Vaasa hosted the 9th Annual Working Session of the Commission on the theme "Cultural Festivals as Strengtheners of Local Identity" that gathered 40 participants from 9 countries. Various festivals were presented and discussed with speeches and group work.

It was concluded that a calendar of festivals in the Baltic countries could be useful, and that the sessions theme of cultural festivals related as well to the Session in St. Petersburg about museums, and to the next in Visby 4 - 5 May 2006 about the EU Programme Culture 2007. The representatives of Cesis and Rostock expressed their will to host one the commissions meetings in the near future.

Olov Gibson



The Chairman of the Commission on Culture, Tarja Hautamäki, gives the Cultural Prize to the representative from Cesis, Ms Jolanta Sausina

▪ Commission on Youth Issues

Meeting in Liepaja

The meeting of the Commission was held on 8-9 November in Liepaja.

Ms Charlotte Gustafsson, the Chairperson of the Commission informed about the project "Different history – common future. Youth as a resource for a sustainable future", which was accepted by EU for the years 2007-2009. Part of this project will be a big Youth Conference in Pärnu in September 2007, held parallelly to the UBC General Conference. The task force on this conference was presented. During the meeting in Liepaja,

there was a workshop on preparations for this Youth Conference. The participants were divided into 3 groups: youth group, civil servants and UBC/BSSYA secretariats and they brainstormed their expectations for the conference. Many good ideas were presented later on, including proposed workshop themes on e.g. history or self-development, also contacts of the young people with politicians and drawing their attention on the youth problems, evaluating a Book of Possibilities, and many more. The other workshop in Liepaja was devoted to the topic: Youth and NGO's.

On the meeting there was also presented the new website of the Commission, which is at: www.ubc-youth.org. There was also a suggestion that the members could use Skype to enable cheap and easy communication between the member cities.

- Commission on Environment

Call for Stories

Theme for the UBC Environmental bulletin 1/2007 is Active UBC Cities.

The next Environmental Bulletin is dedicated for the UBC cities and their actions towards sustainable development. We warmly welcome stories from all Baltic cities and partner organisations. How has your city, municipality or organisation solved problems related to sustainable development challenges? What have been the most challenging tasks and what still needs to be done? What have you learnt and would wish to share with others?

Stories on your experiences, innovations and lessons learnt will be invaluable for others to learn about. One of the most important intentions of the UBC network is to share good examples. In our 100 member cities there is a huge amount of good work being carried out. Let's promote this good work and make it visible and useful for others too!

All articles can be send to address: stella.aaltonen@ubc.net The deadline for all stories is 31 January 2007. The recommended

length of the articles is 300 to 900 words. Good quality photos are always welcome. They should be in tif - or jpg -format, with resolution of min. 300 dpi. For further instructions and inspiration, please, see the following file "Guidelines for authors" at: http://www.ubc.net/today/e_News/documents/EnvBull1_07.pdf

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the EnvCom Secretariat ubcenv@ubc.net.

Stella Aaltonen

From UBC Secretariat

- 47th UBC Executive Board meeting

The 47th UBC Executive Board meeting was held in Gdynia on 19-20 October 2006. The meeting was attended by the Board members, leaders of the Commissions and delegates of member cities.

Secretary General Pawel Zaboklicki on behalf of the task force presented the possible themes to be discussed at the General Conference in Parnu, 27-28 September 2007 – security and threats, communication, culture as driving force for development, youth involvement in democracy. Also the potential speakers were discussed.

Peter Wretlund Mayor of Oskarshamn submitted the proposal to establish the UBC Commission on Energy. The Board decided to create the Commission on Energy. The main areas of interest will be: renewable energy, safety of supplies, how to increase the efficiency, exchange of best practices etc. The Board accepted Robertsfors and Jyvaskyla as new members of UBC and wished them a fruitful cooperation with other member cities.

President Per B. Andersen reminded that on 2 October 2006 the UBC antenna office in Brussels began to operate. The goal is to represent the member cities' interests more effectively, to increase UBC visibility in

Brussels, to influence EU policies which affect local authorities. The Board encouraged member cities to attend the opening event which will be held in Brussels on 6 December. Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, presented ideas for UBC further development. UBC shall constantly discuss how to improve its structure and operations in order to serve better the citizens of our cities. Member cities will be asked to comment the ideas for Union development.

Earlier this year, at the UBC initiative, major Baltic Sea organisations issued a 2nd statement on new EU Cohesion Policy 3rd objective – the territorial cooperation, questioning the 150 km limit for cross (maritime) border cooperation. The limit was finally maintained by the EC but thanks to the lobbying of Baltic Sea organisations, regions and cities, the cross-border cooperation program for southern Baltic will be established next year. Currently concerned regions prepare the contents of the program.

President Andersen informed about the positive letter reactions of President Barroso and Commissioner Borg on UBC maritime logistics policy. Both EC executives strongly encouraged UBC to contribute to the Green Paper on future European maritime policy. UBC will submit its contribution.

UBC Secretariat will produce a publication called “UBC Business Mixer”. The aim is to encourage the cities business environment to effectively use the Union as economic forum for establishing partnerships and initiating ventures.

During the open session the commissions’ leaders presented annual activity reports. The Board appreciated efforts and actions carried out by the commissions.

The next Board meeting will be held in Gavle on 9 March 2007.

Paweł Żaboklicki
Secretary General



▪ News from member cities – REMINDER

UBC Secretariat provides a promotional tool on the UBC website – News from the Member Cities at:

http://www.ubc.net/News_from_cities.html.

You are very welcome to present in this section all interesting events, projects and daily life of your cities. This will be a great opportunity to promote the city and to make all future visitors or investors more familiarised with it.

The stories may have not more than 300 words and can be illustrated by one photo and one logo.

Please send your information to info@ubc.net

From member cities

▪ City of Nykobing/ Falster – Guldborgsund

Since the 1 January 2007, due to the reform of Danish local government structure, the Nykobing Falster municipality together with 5 other municipalities will form a new municipality of Guldborgsund.

Guldborgsund will succeed Nykobing F. in UBC.

▪ City of Kalmar

Environmental Award 2007

In connection with the annual Hanseatic celebrations which will be held next year, 10th-13th May, in Lippstadt, Germany, the City of Kalmar, Sweden, will distribute an environmental award. This award was established at the Hansa Meeting in Kalmar in 1987. The prize, which amounts to SEK 30.000, will be awarded a private individual, an organization or a school that has made contributions to the improvement of the environmental conditions in and around the Baltic Sea. The prize is not intended for municipalities and their normal activities within the environmental area or commercial companies. At present we are looking for the prize-winner of the year 2007 and therefore we would like to ask for your help. We enclose one leaflet in English and one in German describing the award and how to make an application. We ask you to distribute the leaflets in your particular district by whatever method you find suitable. You can also find information about the environmental prize on our web site:

<http://www.kalmar.se/mk/utskrift/Page.aspx?id=3437>

Anders Engström
Project Leader

Conferences attended by UBC representatives:

- 8th Baltic Development Forum, Helsinki, 29-31 October (Aleksi Randell, UBC Vice-President, Chairman of the City Board of Turku, Mikko Lohikoski, City of Turku)
- VASAB Conference "Future of our Baltic Europe Territory", Warsaw, 6-7 November, (Lars-Goran Bostrom, City of Umea; Bjorn Gronholm, City of Turku)
- Special consultation with the Swedish CBSS Presidency, and the CBSS Troika in Kalmar, Sweden, on 8 November (Marie-Louise Rönmark, UBC Vice-President, Mayor of Umeå)

- CLRAE Session, Moscow, 14-15 November, (Ligita Pudza, City of Liepaja)
- B7 General Conference, 21 November, (Maciej Lisicki, City of Gdansk)

UBC will be represented at the conferences:

- EUROCITIES General Meeting, Manchester, November 2006 (Soeren Revsbaek, City of Naestved)
- Committee of the Regions, 67th Plenary Session (Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President, Mayor of Kolding / Pawel Zaboklicki, UBC Secretary General)

Partner Search

▪ Project CIVITAS+

The city of Poitiers, France is looking for partners for the project named CIVITAS+ (urban mobility, individual marketing, clean vehicles...) within the context of the 7th Framework Programme.

The major objectives are:

- to promote and implement sustainable, clean and (energy) efficient urban transport measures
- to implement integrated packages of technology and policy measures in the field of energy and transport in 8 categories of measures
- to build up critical mass and markets for innovation

More information at:

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

Please contact directly Poitiers if you are interested:

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Racism on the rise in Europe, new study says

Although there is a lack of objective data on discrimination and racist violence in several EU member states, a new study suggests that racism has increased in Europe, particularly towards the Roma community, Muslims, Jews and immigrants. According to the 2006 Annual Report by the Vienna-based European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), published on 28 November, only two EU countries - the UK and Finland - have a sufficient mechanism in place for collecting data on xenophobia and intolerance-related incidents. Five countries - Greece, Spain, Italy, Cyprus and Malta - provided no such information to the centre, which EUMC director Beate Winkler says not only makes it difficult to analyse the trends and compare member states, but also "means ignoring the problem." "Victims remain invisible, often without support," she said, adding that neglecting this phenomenon also prevents the development of effective policies for tackling the issue. "Roma are a particular target for racist violence and crime, both at the hands of the general public and public officials. Members of the Jewish community continue to experience anti-Semitic incidents. Rising Islamophobia is an issue of particular concern," noted Anastasia Crickley, chair of the EUMC management board. "In effect, in spite of some heartening examples of good practice, I stand here today unable to say that there has been a substantial improvement with regard to racism and xenophobia in the EU member states," she added. Within the countries that have filed data on the issue, eight countries - Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia and UK - have recorded a rise in racist crimes or violence. On the other hand, the Czech Republic, Austria and Sweden "experienced a general downward trend in recorded racist crime", according to the study. The report highlighted two events last year that particularly contributed to rising racial tensions among some countries' citizens - the

July terrorist attacks in London and violent urban disturbances in the suburbs of French cities. "The situation in general is influenced by fear and suspicion, the feeling and experience of not belonging," noted the study's authors. They suggested that "there has never been such an urgent need for implementation of concerted action" which should however not lead to taking "advantage of such violent incidents as a means of making short-term political capital." Discrimination has also been reported in the labour market, mainly in case of the younger generations of immigrants to the EU, as well as ethnic minorities, such as Roma citizens. The study referred to the situation in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Finland.

Source: EUobserver

Human rights watchdog campaigns to end violence against women

One fifth to one quarter of all women in Europe have experienced physical violence at least once during their lives while more than one tenth have suffered sexual violence, according to a new report by Europe's main human rights watchdog. In a campaign launched on 27 November called "stop domestic violence", the Council of Europe calls for domestic violence to be criminalised, victims to be protected and perpetrators to be punished across Europe. In some of the organisation's 46 member states, as much as 45 percent of women experience some form of violence, including stalking, with most violent acts being carried out by men in their immediate social environment such as partners and ex-partners, the Strasbourg-based body said. The campaign "is a message to ... all of us to stop looking the other way and to stop minimising the scale and the gravity of this problem," said Terry Davis, head of the Council of Europe. Reminding the organisation's member states that they have a responsibility to protect all their inhabitants, he stressed that governments "must therefore take all reasonable measures to prevent,

investigate and punish all forms of violence against women, including violence within the family." "Most importantly, the message of the campaign must reach the victims and tell them that they are not alone," he added when speaking at the launch of the campaign in Madrid. Figures gathered by the organisation show that violence happens in every European country and the cost to society of domestic violence is enormous with studies in individual countries indicating it costs from €2.4 billion per year in Spain to €34 billion in the UK in social, judicial, police and health bills. The Council of Europe chose Spain to launch the campaign in recognition of the Spanish government's efforts to crack down on domestic violence, including a 2004 law that toughens penalties against men who commit domestic violence and the appointment of special judges to investigate suspected cases. Spain's prime minister Jose Louis Zapatero, who has described domestic violence as his country's "greatest national disgrace," said 40 courts dealing specifically with domestic violence had been set up and the number of police agents who work with abused women boosted by nearly 90 percent to some 1,400, according to the Associated Press. The council also positively highlighted efforts in Austria, where police have been trained to expel perpetrators from the home and where special outreach services for victims with information and advice have been set up. Slovenia was also praised for training nursing staff in all hospitals to screen for domestic violence. The campaign will run until 2008 and work through governments, parliaments and regional and local authorities, creating partnerships with leading NGOs to ensure wide-ranging action.

Source: EUobserver

Report: 'EU needs effective urban-planning policy'

Many environmental problems are caused by the rapid expansion of urban areas, according to a new report on "urban sprawl" published

by the European Environment Agency on 24 November. Europe is one of the most urbanised continents in the world, with some 75% of its population living in cities. The continuing expansion of urban into surrounding countryside ("urban sprawl"), effected with little planning and driven by market forces, is fast becoming one of the main 'ignored' challenges facing Europe. This is the main conclusion of a new report presented by the European Environment Agency (EEA) on 24 November 2006. The report 'Urban sprawl in Europe. The ignored challenge' looks at the origins, drivers and impacts of this phenomenon. It concludes that the EU needs policies to "co-ordinate and control" urban planning. Urban sprawl has major negative impacts on the quality of life of citizens living in and around cities. Increased consumption of energy, land and soil as well as the need for more transport infrastructure lead to serious environmental problems. Sprawling cities are also a source of increasing greenhouse-gas emissions. As middle- and upper-income families tend to find housing in the greener peripheral areas, poorer citizens who do not have the same financial mobility are stuck in the inner cities. This leads to greater segregation of residential development and exacerbates economic divisions. These socio-economic impacts were clearly demonstrated in the 2005 riots in French cities. The report indicated that EU cohesion and structural funds are among the major contributors to urban sprawl in Europe. New member states, therefore, should be provided with "policy guidelines to help avoid the environmental pitfalls that a sudden injection of funds can encourage", said Professor Jacqueline McGlade, EEA executive director. Although the EU has little or no competences in the area, urban development is fast moving up the European political agenda. One of the priorities of the upcoming German EU Presidency will be the role of cities as motors for economic growth and sustainability. Germany will be holding an informal ministerial meeting on territorial

cohesion and urban development in Leipzig on 24-25 May 2007. On the occasion of this meeting, the EU will adopt a Territorial Agenda for the European Union. In January 2006, the Commission launched a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment as part of the seven strategies called for by the 6th Environmental Action Programme). It is also preparing a Green Paper on Urban Transport (expected for September 2007).

Source: EurActiv

Brussels urges creation of EU embassy services

All national passports will contain a page setting out EU rights to consular advice, under new European commission proposals published on Tuesday. Under new plans Europeans will be encouraged to register at "common" EU consulates for aid or rescue in the event of disasters, terror attacks or violent conflicts. The European commission is calling for "common offices" in the Caribbean, Balkans, Indian Ocean and west Africa to provide assistance to distressed EU citizens lacking home country representation. "Setting up common offices would help to streamline functions and save on the fixed costs of the structures of member state diplomatic and consular networks," say draft proposals. The four "experimental" pilot offices have been chosen because of high numbers of EU visitors, low numbers of national representations and "the presence of commission delegations". Plans to turn commission offices into consulates are potentially controversial, mirroring rejected EU constitution measures on creating a European diplomatic service. European justice chief Franco Frattini is also urging that all national passports contain an adhesive label spelling out EU rights in the event of arrest, financial need or stolen passports. In the future, the insert is set to become a regular page in all EU passports replacing traditional national pledges of protection. "Perhaps at first we will a sticker... in the final stage there should be a page of passports setting out

rights," said Frattini. The EU treaty, Article 20, states that every European citizen travelling or living in a third country in which their home country is not represented has the right to diplomatic and consular protection by the authorities of any other EU member state. "Adequate protection of EU citizens abroad has to be granted to the increasing number of people who travel, work and live outside the EU," Frattini said. "The EU is the guardian of its citizens worldwide. Article 20 ensures that every European citizen can find a safe place wherever they are in the world." But official Eurobarometer polling finds that 39 per cent of citizens would prefer aid from their own country with only a minority of those, 21 per cent, wanting an EU service. Only 23 per cent of citizens know their EU consular rights and Brussels is planning "Europe close to her citizens" information poster campaign at airports, ports and stations.

Source: EUPolitix

Desperately seeking drink-driving solutions

Of the 41,000 deaths on European roads each year, 13,000 to 17,000 are caused by drunk drivers. Tackling this issue is becoming a priority for the EU, NGOs and the alcohol industry. In a bid to tackle drink-driving, members of the Parliament's Transport Committee attempted to pass a report recommending that the Commission propose an EU-wide upper limit of 0.5% for blood alcohol levels for all drivers. A number of MEPs also suggested a zero alcohol limit for new drivers and professional drivers involved in passenger transport. But, these amendments were rejected in a vote on 22 November 2006. Angered Green group transport spokespersons said: "Given the undeniable dangers of drink driving, it is nothing short of a disgrace that a majority of MEPs opposed setting an EU-wide limit for blood alcohol levels." Even if the amendments had been accepted, the Commission's recent Communication on "Reducing alcohol-related harm in Europe" (see EurActiv 25 October 2006) reaffirms that alcohol policy is a national competence, only

allowing the Commission a co-ordination role. In an attempt to identify policy solutions to reduce drink-driving offences in Europe, the road safety lobby group ETSC is launching a research programme in partnership with the world's largest premium drinks business Diageo – that creates alcohols such as Smirnoff, Johnnie Walker, Baileys, and Guinness. The programme will focus on drivers that regularly take the wheel with high blood alcohol content (BAC) and on young and novice drivers. Diageo's Chief Executive Paul Walsh said: "This new partnership with the ETSC will play a key role in adding to the sum of public knowledge to tackle drink driving." Although a long way from cutting annual road deaths to 25,000 by 2010, the EU is nevertheless performing better than in the US, where the road fatality rate per million people is around 1.5 times higher. Europe and the US tend to follow diverging approaches to drink driving among young people: Whereas the US places the emphasis on the drinking – with an age limit set at 21 but less stringent BAC limits – the EU relies on stiffer rules while allowing youths to begin drinking at a much younger age.

Source: EurActiv

Industry urged to tackle obesity as Europeans get fatter

People in Luxembourg, Denmark and Ireland are gaining weight at the fastest rate in the EU, according to a survey conducted for the European Commission. Published on 9 November, last year's research shows that Luxembourgers put on an average of 2.7 kg since 2002, the Danes 1.7 kg and the Irish 1.6 kg. The average weight in the EU clocks in at 72.2 kg with the Danes (75.9 kg) and the Dutch (75.9) coming in at the weightier end of the scale. Non-EU member Croatia has the heaviest citizens of the 29 countries surveyed with an average of 76.3kg. At the other end of the weight scale, the French (69.7kg), Portuguese (69kg) and Italians (68.7kg) appear to be the most svelte in the EU. Since

the last survey in 2002, where the 15 member states of the time were examined, the average weight has increased in 11 of the countries. Using a height-rate ratio – known as Body Mass Index - which the report says provide a more accurate corpulent picture in the EU, Croatians and Luxembourgers have the highest index while France and Italy once again emerge at the thinner end of the scale. Meanwhile, one in five people in the EU had dieted in the 12 months prior to the study – with the Maltese turning out to be the most likely to diet (34%) – while respondents averaged six hours of sitting per day and a relatively small 22% said they had performed a lot of physical activity in the previous week. The results the survey come as Europe is waking up to what health commissioner Markos Kyprianou called an "obesity epidemic." Focusing on children, the commissioner said there were some 14 million overweight children in the EU with an extra 400,000 joining the ranks every year. Fearful of being regulated by the EU and prodded into action by public opinion – nine out of ten Europeans believe that advertising influences children food and drink choice – a series of companies yesterday announced voluntary measures to tackle obesity.

"We are facing a complex problem that cannot be solved by legislation," Mr Kyprianou said adding that he is willing to publicly laud companies if they take own-initiative fat-cutting action.

On Thursday it was Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, McDonald's, Unilever and Kraft praised on the EU podium.

Of the measures taken, Kraft has said it will stop selling in primary schools, Unilever has reduced salt and sugar content in its products while the nine companies that are members of the Union of European Beverages Associations have said they will stop advertising to under-12s.

Source: EUobserver