Press release, 16 March 2016

The Baltic Sea cities find refugees as a chance for future

"Feel free to steal good ideas", said Jørgen Kristiansen, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand (Norway) welcoming the participants of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) conference on the refugee situation in the Baltic Sea cities held in Rostock on 15-16 March. The conference gathered together around 70 civil servants from the region.

The conference, organized by the City of Rostock and the UBC, aimed at sharing ideas and practical solutions on how to integrate the newcomers.

-Recent weeks are holding us under constant tension because the conflicts in Middle East and Africa have reached the Baltic Sea Region, **Roland Methling**, Mayor of Rostock, said.

-Hundreds of thousands persons from those regions are trying to get away from imminent danger and pain looking for shelter, a safe stay and opportunities in our cities, he added.

The prominent speakers, representing the European and regional organizations, e.g. the Committee of the Regions, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the German Government and the Parliament, as well as the UBC cities, presented their experiences, challenges and also best practices and solutions on how to use the potential that the refugees bring to the cities. Attitude of the host society and its involvement in the reception of refugees, education, labour and co-operation with NGOs seem to be the key elements for good integration.

The UBC adopted a resolution "Refugees - a challenge and a chance for the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region" during the conference. The resolution calls after solidarity between EU countries and states that the UBC cities take the massive immigration not only as a challenge but also as a chance for further development – all inhabitants contribute to the local well-being.

UBC is the leading city network in the Baltic Sea region with around 100 member cities.

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