

A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE UBC

Since its creation in 1991, the Union of the Baltic Cities faced a number of political changes within the Baltic Sea Region and in Europe. Also, the UBC experienced a dynamic growth from 32 founding cities to 80 members in 1997.

Democratisation of life, changing environment, as well as new challenges for the cities in this context evoked the need to develop the strategy for the Union of Baltic Cities that would contribute to the "sustainable development of the Baltic cities and this Region in Europe. Especially, as it is the common desire that the Baltic Sea Region shall be a region with a strong identity enabling it to play an important role within Europe and the world, as well as a region of diversity of mutual relations.

The Baltic Cities are crucial players in the Region, who can be also perceived as a central gateway for trans-national cooperation, expanding very rapidly in

these days due to its concerted teamwork of cities undertaking international activities in the BSR.

With its unquestionable position and role in the Region, the Union of the Baltic Cities should adapt the new quality of its activities to produce a recognisable hallmark. Prompted to start writing the Strategy, the first meeting of the working group was held in Copenhagen on 30th January '98, where the UBC Presidency decided to take the lead in drafting out a possible long-term vision that could form the basis of a coherent UBC Strategy, relevant to all the member cities.

The purpose of the said Strategy would be to increase the UBC's profile in the Baltic Sea Region and to achieve sustainability of the Region by developing UBC's role as a major actor facilitating the cooperation and relationships between the Baltic cities, as well as representing their interests.

A successful UBC Strategy will give rise to a number of benefits. A more active role for the UBC and cities in the wider European arena will generate a more positive image of the BSR. The Strategy will provide a clear framework through which future development of the BSR may be resolved. The UBC members participating in the overall strategic partnership will benefit in a number of ways. Through the co-ordinated drive to seize opportunities, the Strategy will maximise the benefits for the cities, their citizens and the UBC. In terms of the member cities the Strategy will ensure the quality of life is improved, appreciate the significance of interest and practical value.

It is also hoped that with the coherent Strategy, the UBC will facilitate joint efforts to tap European Funds to the organisation.

STRATEGY TIME-TABLE

On March 27-28 the UBC Board met in Kalmar. The main point discussed was the new UBC Strategy. It is important for the democratic process in the UBC that as many cities as possible can take part of the creation process of the Strategy and give their views.

A working plan for the process was discussed and adopted by the Board, as follows:

Kalmar, Board Meeting, March 27-28

- Circulation for comments to UBC Commissions and the UBC Board cities. Deadline for comments May 15th.
- UBC Strategy Working Group meeting May 28th. Preparation of final proposal.

Klaipėda, Board Meeting, June 26-27

- Circulation for comments to all UBC Member Cities
- National meetings if necessary

Szczecin, Board Meeting, November 6-7

- Adaptation of final proposal.

CITIES OPINION ON THE UBC AIMS



The UBC Board Meeting in Aalborg decided that a simple questionnaire should be sent to the UBC Member Cities. The cities have been asked what they expect from the UBC membership and what aims should be included in the UBC Strategy. The answers are used as a background in the process of shaping the new UBC Strategy.

The City of Copenhagen has compiled the results of the questionnaire in the table. The alternatives shown in the table were not given in the questionnaire. Instead the classification was done during

the compilation. The table is not intended to give a scientific view. In spite of this it gives an interesting view of what the cities expect from the UBC. Issues like experience exchange and projects are often mentioned, as well as EU issues. Surprisingly many cities mentioned different issues to be changed or added to the UBC activities, like the UBC structure and strategies. This is encouraging, since the member cities wishes to develop the UBC to a strong organisation that is able to look after the interests of its members.