



## II. UBC today

### 17TH MEETING OF THE UBC EXECUTIVE BOARD

The 17th meeting of the Executive Board of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on the 6-7th of June 1997 in the City of Bergen, Norway, upon the invitation of Mr Ingmar Ljones, Mayor of the City of Bergen.

The meeting was divided into two days. The first day was attended only by the members of the Executive Board. The second day was attended by the members of the Board, chairmen of the Commissions and invited guests.

The Executive Board meeting was opened by Mr Anders Engström, UBC President. Mr Engström indicated that last Executive Board meetings were attended by the large number of participants which made it difficult for the Board to perform its functions optimally. On the other hand the President stressed that participation of interested member cities in the Board meetings boosts activity of the cities.

After discussion the Board decided to maintain its sessions at the week-ends. The Executive Board will meet at the closed sessions on Friday afternoon. Saturday will be an open day to which all member cities are allowed to send one representative.

Mr Paweł Łaboklicki, the Secretary of the Union, presented the programme of the IV UBC General Conference "*Baltic Sea Cooperation Forum*". Mr Łaboklicki emphasized that EU Commissioner for Regional Policies, Foreign Ministers of Poland and Sweden as well as the chairmen of CBSS, Nordic Council, BSSSC, CPMR, BCCA accepted UBC invitation to speak at the conference.

The President introduced possible subjects of the workshops to be carried out during the conference. The aim



*These are the persons behind the decisions made in Bergen.*

to organise the workshops is to enable a more efficient work at the conference. The Board decided the conference workshops will deal with the following subjects: Agenda 21, EU expansion in the BSR, local government role, the Baltic Actors.

The Board decided to recommend the General Conference to make some changes in the UBC Statute. For example the Board expressed the opinion that other organisations and institutions interested in UBC work may become the supporting members of the Union. The Executive Board shall be authorized to decide upon the acceptance and fees for supporting members. As regards the membership fees for member cities it was recommended that fees shall be proposed by the Executive Board but decided by the General Conference.

Mr Kari Salmi, Mayor of Lahti, made a presentation about his city and asked the Board to accept Lahti as UBC member. The Board decided to accept the City of Lahti as a Member of the Union of the Baltic Cities and wished Lahti successful cooperation with other UBC members. The number of Union member cities reached the figure of 70.

Furthermore representatives of seven UBC working Commissions submitted reports and answered questions on Commissions' activities since last Executive Board Meeting in Stockholm, 25 January 1997.

The Commission on Communication proposed to organise a seminar for city officials and politicians interested in Internet, to be held in October in Kalmar.

Mr Mikko Jokinen, Turku, Commission on Environment, informed about successful implementation of *Municipal Environmental Auditing* project and introduced the next issue of *Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin*.

Mr Ulrich Bauermeister, Rostock, Commission on Social Affairs, reported from the Conference on Labour Market and Social Policy, held in Rostock and attended by 120 participants from 35 cities.

Mr Jussi Kautto, Helsinki Planning Office, referred to the last meeting of Executive Board where it was decided that UBC should become active in the field of urban and spatial planning. Mr Kautto presented an action plan proposing to start the work as a project



to prepare background for future commission. The Board accepted the proposal and authorized Helsinki together with Elbląg, Malmö, St. Petersburg and Umeå to go on with project implementation.

Mr Juhan Janusson, UBC Project Manager, reported on the present status of ongoing UBC projects. Mr Janusson informed also about the rules and deadlines of present EU programmes related to the BSR such as

Ecos-Ouverture and CREDO. Project Manager mentioned that UBC submitted a letter to the European Commission pointing out, from the user perspective, the advantages and disadvantages of existing EU programmes directed to BSR.

Secretary Paweł aboklicki introduced the last issue of *Baltic Cities Bulletin* devoted to *Information Technology and Communication*. Besides the general articles introducing the

subject, the member cities had an opportunity to present their projects and achievements in this field. The Board expressed its satisfaction to the Editorial Board for the professional level of the bulletin and strongly encouraged all member cities to actively contribute to the next issues.

Mrs Hjördis Höglund, Leader of UBC Women's Network, reported from the seminar organised by the Network in Kalmar on 24 May 1997, in association with the *Nordic Women Week*.

The Board decided to hold its next meeting in the eve of the General Conference in Gdańsk on 11 September 1997.

## THE UBC-EU INFORMATION PROJECT ON THE MOVE

### Interim results and perspectives from the "take-off" seminar in Copenhagen

Referring to the previous presentation of "The UBC-EU Information Project" in the *Baltic Cities Bulletin*, the main purpose of the project is to prepare the UBC member cities for the enlargement of the EU in the Baltic Sea Region. The first event raised a number of questions which need to be addressed and further discussed in the



*The Mayor of Szczecin, Mr. Bartłomiej Sochański stated the importance of the cities, the local and regional authorities, when EU policy has to be implemented and explained to the citizens.*

nearest future: How do the cities fulfil their Union membership obligations? How shall the UBC help member cities to integrate? What impact will an implementation of European Legislation, policies, etc. have on the cities? How should the UBC member cities best prepare for the integration process? Why do cities have to use a lot of resources on international activities e.g. having permanent representations in Brussels? How to make our regional partnership more active and more efficient?

The preliminary answer to some of these questions - and the present results of the seminar - are:

- to prepare cities regarding: understanding how the impact of an EU membership affects city actions and strategies, development of democracy in the European context, the relation between cities and government and regions, a better understanding of what EU membership actually means, possibilities and obligations etc.

- an improved dialogue and information exchange between the cities, respective governments and the EU system during the EU projects application evaluation processes.

The cities will be better prepared to obtain the benefits and fulfil their obligations of the membership as well as contributing to the EU from their own experiences. In any case, as a result of the project - membership or not

- the cities will obtain a better understanding of how the European Union works.

The seminar took place in Copenhagen 22-24 May 1997 and was attended by approximately 40 participants, including the project cities, speakers from the European Commission, European Parliament, Copenhagen EU Office in Brussels and local representatives. The project is supported by the EU programme Baltic Small Project Facility (BSPF), preliminary planned for one year and is expected to be continued.

### The Project focus

Setting up the Copenhagen seminar's programme, the leading cities had the intention of presenting a broad picture of the EU experiences and future expectations from a view of the Baltic cities, members and non-members.

The mayors of Szczecin, Tampere and Copenhagen described different situations and experiences of their cities. The mayors recognized that the new situation in the Baltic Region with the support from the European Union gives a historic opportunity to support a strong political and economic development in the whole region.

The process of greater regional involvement offers an excellent opportunity for developing a new and dynamic economy with support from the EU. This is why the combat against un-



employment must be given a higher priority on the agenda when the Union's structural policy is renewed.

### **Partnership and decision-making**

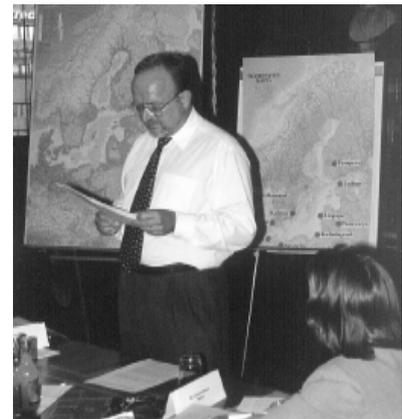
It was broadly recognized in the discussions that the principle of subsidiarity and the active involvement of the cities will help to create an understanding and familiarity with EU and its institutions among the citizens. Decisions should be made as close to the citizens as possible. The regions can decide and carry out policies in these matters which are adapted by their own populations and economies, policies that relate to their specific socio-economic needs and values. The regions are therefore considered to be carriers of democracy, cultural diversity, socio-economic development and territorial cohesion in Europe. In this sense the Maastricht Treaty with its inclusion of regional policy and the principle of subsidiarity has developed a new spirit of cooperation between the regions, the Member States and the European institutions. But also needed is a increased awareness of democracy, more transparency, simpler decision-making processes, more efficient administrative procedures and development of regional partnership.

### **Project evaluation**

Mr. Dominik Górski, the project leader, encouraged the cities to work out their common vision for the proposal, in particular its contents should be made more attractive through task force activities. Steering Group seminars will be continued in a new application as a very important element in the overall project management. Task Force activities and their results shall be reported to the Steering Group and presented at the UBC General Conference. Mr. Anders Engström, UBC President, concluded during the seminar that it is time to realise that dialogues and goal-orientated actions must be increased in order to achieve the appropriate results.

The next Steering Group seminar will be held in Szczecin on 4-6 September 1997. It will be focused on the situation and the role of local governments in the European integration process. The project cities will meet at a conference on 17-18 November which will be hosted by the city of Tallinn. The aim behind the conference is a further strengthening of the engagement of each partner participating in the project and the integration concept behind it.

In summary, "The UBC-EU Infor-



*The Lord Mayor of Copenhagen, Mr. Jens Kramer Mikkelsen, stressed that the European Union can be a complicated thing to handle and sometimes difficult for the citizens to understand and relate to.*

mation Project" is considered to be of strategic importance to the UBC. Therefore, it is our hope and ambition that the active participation of all project working cities and their activities will have a considerable impact improving the co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region in the years to come.

*by Ewa Kurjata and Klaus Svendsen*

The report of the seminar is available on request:

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## **URBAN PLANNING AROUND THE BALTIC SEA**

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**In Stockholm on 25 Jan 1997 in the meeting of the Executive Board of the UBC the Board discussed the idea to establish a Commission on Urban Planning into the UBC.**

There were discussions in small groups on how to continue. Especially the city commissioner Ilmar Reepalu from Malmö, first vice-governor Vyacheslav N Tserbakov and head of department Igor O Lonsky from St. Petersburg were interested in the idea.

The Executive Board decided that the UBC should become active in the field of urban and spatial planning. The board decided to appoint a working group consisting of Helsinki, Malmö,

St. Petersburg, Umeå and Elbl'g, if interested. They have as a task to find out the best model for UBC involment in this field.

One of the ideas is a network on professional urban physical planners - those, who are working in the field of town planning, master planning and building. In cooperation they can exchange information and experiences of actual issues. Maybe they can also find partners into some EU-projects. Perhaps by this means they can also open doors for the private companies to operate.

In the first phase the UBC needs the network of the planners. Then the UBC needs the book, were the member cit-

ies of the UBC would tell themselves about their physical urban planning and give basic information about the city.

In Bergen 6.-7. June 1997 in the meeting of the UBC executive board the board accepted the proposal and authorized to carry on its realisation.

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