



SIX CITIES MASTERING THE METHODS OF EU COOPERATION

City board meetings all over the region frequently deal with EU related matters, and BCB interviewed people behind these decisions. Seems that the UBC cities on both sides of the sea are successfully paving their way for ever-increasing international cooperation. This small comparative study reveals many similarities and some differences in cities' approaches. Summing up one can conclude that EU is part of daily office work equally within and outside the Union and the UBC is seen as one tool for it.

This was asked:

1. Is your City presently involved in EU financed projects?
2. Name one of the main goals of your City regarding cooperation with the EU?
3. What difficulties has your city administration encountered regarding international cooperation? How to solve them?
4. How are the international affairs organized in your city?
5. Wishes for UBC in terms of international cooperation?

Mr Bart³omiej Sochański, Mayor of Szczecin, Poland.

1. Yes. Szczecin is involved in, e.g. Ecos-Ouverture programme through the UBC as well as in Phare Cross-Border Programme regarding water purification and road modernization. We see communication and environment as important issues for cooperation.

2. One of the main goals is to prepare the city administration and the citizens to the EU membership, which is an issue reaching far beyond the financial terms only. We need to learn and be prepared to live within this new structure with all its complexities and potentials.

3. There has been some reluctance to invest in international relations by some city politicians. The lack of in-

formation about EU structures and procedures is sometimes a problem, which also can create exaggerated hopes towards the European Union. We are presently putting quite a lot of emphasis on information flow and communication with people to overcome these difficulties.

4. The international office has four employees and is placed under the Department of Organisation, which is led by the Secretary of the City. The Mayor is mostly responsible for representation. Different international projects are managed and followed-up in the departments of the projects' respective fields. Soon there will also be appointed a person who will be responsible for overall policies and operations towards the EU. City employees are also sent to training courses to keep up with these issues.

5. The UBC should claim a more re-cognized position in the EU. The present focus on EU as a financing source should be shifted to the strengthening of the relative importance of the whole Baltic Sea Region in Europe.

Mr Michael Bouteiller, Mayor of Lübeck, Germany

1. Yes, even though not being able to use the EU structural funds is a problem for Lübeck. In general, we regard employment projects as particularly important.

2. One of the main goals is to develop Lübeck as a European town within networks on regional, European and global level. The city departments need to have a European perspective in their operations. The Lübeck companies must be competitive to European competition as well as the municipal expertise also needs to be able to match the international competence in their respective sectors. It is also important to build up and monitor European democratic processes.

3. Because of several shortcomings the European region needs reorganisation on town level and particularly new emphasis on the bottom-up approach regarding projects. Also, city officials need to be involved in life-long-learning processes in order to manage the constantly changing situations. In general, there is a need to emphasize more the role of schools in European education for different issues and possibilities. Schools can be used to tackle different problems through, e.g. implementing anti-violence programmes.

4. The international affairs are decentralized to the city departments, and there is one person in the Mayor's office, who acts as the coordinator for all this information.

5. The UBC should nourish the Baltic tradition and heritage as well as emphasize the idea of "European town" identity. The UBC can build the bridge between east and west and close the gap of possibilities between cities.

Mr Ingmar Ljones, Mayor of Bergen, Norway

1. Yes. Norway cooperates with the European Union through the EES, The European Economic Space arrangement. One of the largest undertakings is the nomination of Bergen to become one of the cultural cities of Europe in the year 2000. We also emphasize the importance of environmental cooperation.

2. The implementation of the Agenda 21 together with other environmental issues is important. The standard of living in Norway is high, but it is important to care for the environment, too.

3. Companies in Bergen face some difficulties in taxation, but in general, more contacts to other countries are necessary. For the export of salmon and other merchandise the EU is the nearest market.



Six views from around the Baltic unite in promoting international cooperation within the UBC. From left to right: Mr Bart³omiej Soc-hañski, Mayor of Szczecin, Mr Michael Bouteiller, Mayor of Lübeck, Mr Vello Järvesalu, Mayor of Pärnu, Ms Hjördis Höglund, member of the City Board, Sundsvall, Mr Ingmar Ljones, Mayor of Bergen and Mr Timo Kvist, Vice-Mayor of Turku.

4. The international affairs are divided in the city to different sectors. The knowledge of these activities is collected into the international office, which has 4-5 persons and is lead by the municipal counsellor of economy and trade. There is an ongoing process of restructuring and building a database of international projects. There is also an overall international training programme in the city.

5. Contacts between cities and countries are important for mutual learning of best practices. UBC opens up a good informal way of communication.

Mr Vello Järvesalu, Mayor of Pärnu, Estonia

1. Yes. There is Phare financing for e.g. water purification projects. Tourism is also one of the focal areas for cooperation.

2. We wish for EU assistance in implementing several highly necessary environmental projects.

3. The national bureaucracy regarding EU operations is very time-consuming. It is good to get direct contacts to other partners for instance through the UBC.

4. The office of international relations is directly under the Mayor and a contact person is nominated to each UBC commission. Otherwise, each municipal sector is responsible for projects and their follow-up.

5. It is important to assure the continuity of UBC activities and contacts in individual cities, so that there are several persons who know about the benefits of this organisation. The UBC offers many possibilities for utilization and its up to the cities to play an active role in this cooperation.

Mr Timo Kvist, Vice-Mayor of Turku, Finland

1. Yes, Turku is involved in many undertakings even though it belongs to the so called "white areas" in terms of EU. We regard youth unemployment as well as other social and environmental issues as key areas for cooperation.

2. One main goal is to utilize the wide development potential offered by the EU. By using the networks it is possible to get new ideas for city development, which possibly also can be partly financed by the EU.

3. There is some lack of knowledge and capability to work with these new developments and therefore there is a systematic training process going on. EU and the networks form a new element to the traditional twin city cooperation.

4. There is a small international office in the central city administration reporting directly to the Mayor. This office supports the decentralized international activities of the city and produces international expertise on

political level for the Mayor. There is a plan to collect a database of city's international projects.

5. UBC's role should be to facilitate networking and partner search and to act as an umbrella for Baltic Sea Cooperation. The main idea is, however, to have very concrete project-level cooperation.

Ms Hjördis Höglund, City board member of Sundsvall, Sweden

1. Yes. The focus is particularly on employment and environment.

2. One of the main goals is to cooperate within the region to promote private sector, particularly the SME's.

3. There is some lack of knowledge about adopting the new rules and procedures, but there is also a training process going on.

4. At the moment the international affairs are divided among different municipal sectors, but there is a need for coordination. Therefore a new international office will soon be opened in the city administration. The city also works with a joint regional representative, who is located in Brussels.

5. UBC is a network and every member city is responsible for supporting this cooperation. Sundsvall seeks for mutual exchange of experiences in e.g. environmental sector. It would also be important to involve more women in the UBC work, and UBC Women's Network is formed to support this development.