

BALTIC LOCAL AGENDA 21 - HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES CONFERENCE

The Baltic Local Agenda 21 - Health and Sustainable Cities Conference (The Turku Conference) was organised in Turku 3-5 September. UBC was one of the main organisers of this important international conference which gathered in Turku about 400 participants from all around the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe. There were even participants from as far as Peru, China and South Africa. The Conference belongs to a series of European Sustainable Cities and Towns conferences supported by the European Commission.

The Turku conference sought fruitful partnerships and other means for the local implementation of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic 21). Local authorities play a key role in bringing about sustainable development. It is their responsibility to take the initiative and gather all

good use of other resources, e.g., information, know-how and innovative human resources.

The first group of theme sessions "Principles and Processes" examined some of the basic principles and elements behind sustainable development and the Local Agenda 21 process. It provided the opportunity to discuss working examples, lessons learnt and problems encountered. The second, "Integrated Solutions" explored how cross-cutting policy themes can be implemented within the local government that normally is sectoral divided. The third and final group "How to move Forward" introduced means how the Local Agenda 21 process can be progressed further. Each session emphasised how each specific topic is linked to the Local Agenda 21 process. The objective was to give the au-



partners together for starting and carrying on the Local Agenda 21 process. During two days of intensive workshops and plenaries the participants had a great opportunity to exchange experiences and opinions, to learn more together and to find useful new contacts. A special emphasis in many plenaries and workshops was put on health issues with regards to sustainable urban development.

It was once more found out that there is a constant need to simultaneously focus on economic, environmental, social and health concerns in Local Agenda 21 initiatives. The strategies have to be integrated as opposed to single sector responses on both the environment and human well-being. Many examples of good practice provided lots of new ideas and inspiration. Especially the Eastern participants presented many excellent cases where the lack of one resource (economical) can be overcome by

diencing a wide overview on Local Agenda 21 and the different approaches to it in different municipalities.

The conference also adopted a wide statement which was prepared by its international planning group and further developed in the working groups and discussions during the conference. The purpose of this statement is to express a common will to work for sustainable development recognising the characteristics of the Baltic Sea Region and to call for support to this work. The statement will be sent as a message to the following European Sustainable Cities and Towns Conferences. In this way the work done together by all the participants in the conference in Turku will also contribute to the further development of these issues in the whole Europe. The Baltic link was added to the European chain for sustainable development.

SAIL PROJECT

A new Local Agenda 21 project is on its way. It will start at the end of this year and is to promote local sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. Financing has been approved by the Phare Baltic Sea Region Cross-Border Cooperation Small Project Facility (BSPF) and the Tacis Cross-Border Cooperation Small Project Facility.

SAIL - which is short for 'Spreading Awareness to foster the Implementation of Local Agenda 21' - will enable to develop study and awareness raising material for municipal decision-makers in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. During the project activities the city networks of UBC and ICLEI will provide the knowledge and experience which they compiled from Western European municipalities for their adaptation to the Eastern European situation.

Following a series of essential topics of Local Agenda 21, the transfer of this know-how will be realised in the course of 5 workshops organised by the Eastern European partners in Gdańsk, Tartu, Jurmala, Kaunas and St. Petersburg. Also, in between these workshops, ICLEI will act as a consultant to give its advice to all Eastern European partners via e-mail, fax and phone and via a special WebSite, which will enable everybody to download and use the material, developed.

At the end of the project, the Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian partners will invite approx. 15 high-level municipal decision-makers, such as mayors and experts, in their countries for the promotion and dissemination of the material which can then be used to further spread information and motivation in order to get more Local Agenda 21 processes started in the target countries.

Further information:

Mr Kari Porra
Environmental Protection Centre
City of Lahti
Tel. +358 381 65121
Fax +358 381 65100
e-mail: kari.porra@lahti.fi