

INTERNATIONAL BLACK SEA CLUB MEETING IN TURKEY

The International Black Sea Club (IBSC) is a parallel organisation to the UBC, but located in the Black Sea region. Members are 19 cities from Ukraine, Russia, Romenia, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. The President is the Mayor from Odessa, and the secretariat is located in Varna, Bulgaria.

The IBSC held its General Assembly meeting in the City of Izmir, Turkey, October 31st to November 2nd 1997. The UBC was represented as an observer through the UBC Project Manager Juhan Janusson, who also presented UBC.

The Black Sea region is very different compared to our region. The political conflicts between Greece and Turkey casted its shadow on the assembly meeting. Among others it had a very



Representatives of the IBSC including the President Mr Eduard Gurvits, Mayor of Odessa, in the middle of the front row.

intense media coverage compared to the UBC meetings.

The main impression was, however, that the meetings were held among friends and in a very good spirit, in spite of the international conflicts. The Turkish hospitality showed itself from its best

side.

Several delegates expressed wishes to get closer contacts with the UBC and exchange views and experiences on City Networking. Also concrete wishes of cooperation projects were discussed, primarily regarding tourism and environmental projects.

UBC - 'THE CITY GATEWAY TO THE EU?' LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE GENERATING SKILLS

UBC is a fast growing organisation with a lot of international activities in the Baltic Sea Region. Therefore, it is necessary that local governments generate appropriate skills and coordinate their actions.

The UBC-EU Information Project development combined with the growing urge for EU funding, together with essential political questions can be perceived as means of searching the gateway for the Baltic cities to cope with the EU, especially while improving accession process and project development.

Further, it is in the UBC's interest to become a professional partner to the EU and translate its own strategy into the cities needs and serve as the Baltic cities gateway to the United Europe.

UBC-EU Information Project - update
The UBC-EU Information Project has already become the buzz-word of 1997 in the Baltic Region.

On 4-6 September 1997 Szczecin hosted the second seminar of the Project and focused on the situation in and the role of cities in the European integration process. The Szczecin seminar evaluated the situation in local governments and helped to identify their role in the integration process. It further concluded that it was of vital importance that the cities' voice should be better heard in Brussels and in this way they have more influence on the decisions taken there. Two year results of Swedish integration show that cities potential should be reorientated and made better use of to benefit from this long



Mr Mart Siimann, Prime Minister of Estonia, opened the UBC-EU Conference in Tallinn

awaited return to the EU family. The European integration in the Baltic governments - the conference in Tallinn

17th and 18th of November faced a major project event for the project hosted by Mayor of Tallinn. Here the UBC cities had been offered an impressive agenda on their table. With more than 200 participants, including all Baltic ambassadors, key Estonian politicians and the CNN coverage, the conference turned out to be a big success and greatly contributed to spreading the EU knowledge.

The integration process on the local and regional levels, its present status and future development, pre-accession processes and different levels of preparations in Estonia, Latvia,

Lithuania, and Poland, the Baltic interests in Brussels, transfer of the EU information on the EU related matters, are only a few examples of the topics focused on.

It has been highlighted during the conference that both regional and local levels with the local community support should work together to meet the challenge. Further, while talking about the democratic and institutional preparations towards the EU membership it should be not forgotten that it also brings massive investment efforts both into the human resources and the economic growth.

In this context, the UBC member cities have a potential in-house and immensely capable and determined people. Nevertheless, as in any enterprise, people need to feel

motivated and part of the enterprise. We can do better in creating a strong network of UBC cities and be even more efficient in what we do towards the European integration and better explain it to local communities.

The UBC-EU Information Project through 'the UBC Gateway' is aiming at achieving this objective. Again, it is anticipated that the project can be continued next year with more task force activities and more UBC cities involvement to secure that the cities are well equipped to introduce essential EU-oriented policies and strategies just in time.



*The conference attracted more than 200 participants from over 30 UBC member cities
photo: Teet Malsroos*