

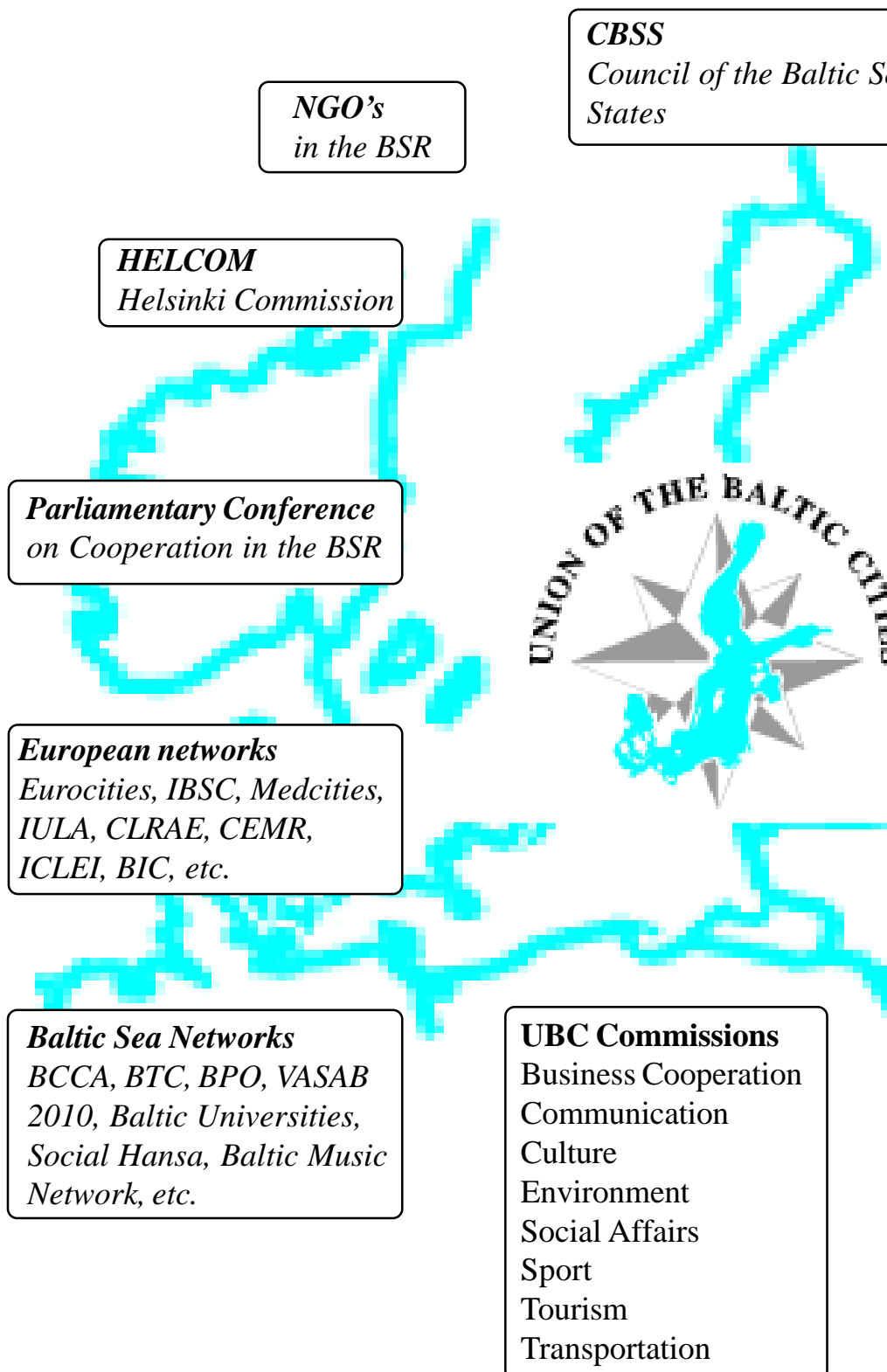
# I. Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

The Baltic Sea Region is unique in the world in terms of cooperation across the borders. Nowhere else network cooperation at all levels has emerged so fast, with such a wide scope and in such a good cooperation climate as in the Baltic Sea region.

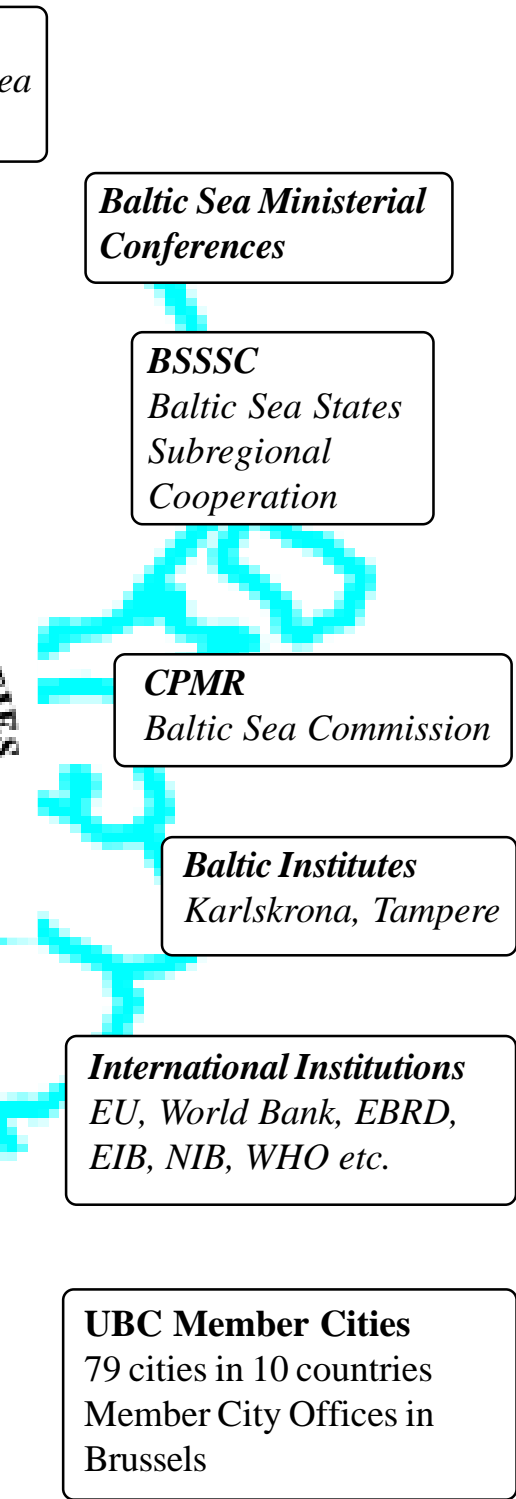
Now it is important to coordinate the efforts of the networks, and one main objective of the UBC General Conference in Gdańsk was to create a forum for the general, larger networks of our region for cooperation. The cooperation should aim at carrying out common projects, of which the Baltic Sea Alliance is the first. Other purposes are to enhance the Baltic Sea Region as such in Europe, and to exchange experiences and views on the development in our region.

## Cooperation with Baltic Organisations

The UBC has contacts with many networks, as seen at the outline above. Specially worth of mentioning are the CBSS, which is the cooperation between the nations, and BSSSC, which is a forum for regions. We also have a very close cooperation with the Helsinki Commission, which is the governmental network for protection of the Baltic Sea, and



# Region



also is the oldest of the networks, created already in the seventies.

The ministers of the governments often meet once a year, and the UBC is regularly invited to the meetings of the Planning, Environmental and Transportation ministers of the countries of our region.

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conferences meet once a year. There parliamentarians of all parliaments meet, and the UBC has always been invited.

There are many special or sectoral BSR networks. We keep close contact with the Baltic Sea Chamber of Commerce Association with the tourist network, the Baltic Sea Tourism Commission. Apart from these, we have numerous networks, from Baltic Ports and Baltic Universities to Baltic Music Network.

We must enhance our relations with the EU, which until now have been too weak, with only minor personal contacts with the Commission. A strategy of this is at present worked out by the UBC board.

Of course, our main network is our member cities and the UBC Commissions. Our 79 cities constitute a great resource of devoted, skilled specialists at all thinkable fields of interest, to be utilised in common strategies and projects. Many of our cities have special resources, like an office in Brussels, or special contacts or experiences that can be useful for the UBC network.

All networks in our region have a great combined strength and makes our region very special, compared to other regions in the world, where cross-border cooperation often mainly takes place on national level.

## BALTIC SEA NETWORKS IN NEW COOPERATION

On the initiative of Anders Engström, the President of the Union of the Baltic Cities, the leaders of the major networks in the Baltic Sea Region met to decide about closer cooperation. Together with the UBC also the BSSSC, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and the BCCA were represented in the meeting on October 27, 1997. The meeting was held in connection with the Baltic Sea Subregional Conference in Gdańsk.

The cooperation between these large Baltic Sea networks has two aims: to start

joint projects and to enhance the Baltic Sea Region as an important region in Europe and in the world.

Two examples of important fields for cooperation are the preparation of the local and regional authorities for the future enlargement of the European Union as well as the local implementation of the Agenda 21. The emphasis is on concrete and practical projects and issues. The next meeting of the presidents of these networks will take place in February 1998.