

# THE CITY OF VAASA AND THE BALTIC SEA COOPERATION

**With the motto "Think globally, act locally", the City of Vaasa has already for several years purposefully been developing the internationalization in the city.**

Internationalization is considered to be a far-reaching and many-sided process that, as far as the city's own organization is concerned, involves all the employees, no matter what tasks they accomplish or what positions they hold.

At the same time as Finland was preparing itself for its EU-membership, the City of Vaasa made efforts to prepare the knowledge level within its own administration for the new situation in the beginning of 1995.

## Strategy for international work

A report about Vaasa and the internationalization was handled to the city council in the autumn of 1994. The city council decided that a strategy of internationalization should be made for Vaasa. This report, "The Internationalization Development in Vaasa - a Strategy

for the 21st Century", is about to be presented for political discussion.

In accordance with the above mentioned motto the city has adopted, e.g., the following models of action:

- membership in organizations
- participation in projects
- international and European events
- creation of new activity networks
- supporting of internationalization within enterprises

The City of Vaasa is a member of the Baltic Ports Organization BPO, which has its secretariat in Copenhagen. As a rather new member of the UBC the City of Vaasa has not yet got properly started. Vaasa considers the fields traffic, environment and tourism to be especially interesting, because all these fields are mentioned as main focus areas in the Baltic Sea initiative of the European Commission.

## Projects on their way

Vaasa takes part in many projects, for example in Project Botnia, a three-year cooperation project between Umeå,

Vaasa and Örnsköldsvik and some industrial companies. The project has emphasized on the environmental profile to market these municipalities in order to strengthen their business life, research and education and to increase tourism in these areas. Vaasa is also actively marketing itself as a place where international events can be arranged. Such an event was for example the IV cooperation conference of BSSSC in the autumn of 1996. The CMPR-conference is planned to be arranged in Vaasa in 1999. Furthermore, Vaasa aims at arranging EU-meetings, when Finland holds the chairmanship of the EU during the second half of 1999.

## Business cooperation

Two offices that mainly serve small and middle-sized companies, Euro Info Centre (EIC) and Business and Innovation Centre (BIC), have been established in Vaasa and the surrounding province. The Interreg-programme concerning cross-border co-operation in the Kvarken region will be of great importance for the City of Vaasa as well.

# HANSEATIC DAYS IN VISBY ON 11-14 JUNE 1998

**The Hanseatic Days of 1998 will be held in the Town of Visby.**

A more appropriate location could hardly be found; in 1995 the UNESCO placed the Hanseatic Town of Visby on its World Heritage List as a cultural site of "exceptional and universal value." The Municipality of Gotland will host the meeting.

## Introducing the Youth Forum

All visitors from other Hanseatic



Towns are welcome to the meeting in Visby. The days are planned to be days of enjoyment, celebrating the transformation of the Medieval Hanseatic League into a modern

organisation for the implementation of a common future.

The youth is a part of the future. Therefore, the Hanseatic Days in Visby will be days devoted to the young with a special Youth Forum in addition to other themes, such as information technology, environmental protection and ecology.

## International Culture Projects in Visby

The work of the Commission on Culture is lead by the cultural offices for the Cities of Visby and Szczecin. The

cities are planning the third Session of the Commission in collaboration with the City of Kaliningrad that will be the host for this conference on 24 - 26 April 1998. The session will focus on cultural education.

The department of Culture and Leisure in Visby has also prepared the actualised UBC Catalogue of Cultural Institutions, which can be found on the UBC's homepage [www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net).

The Art Museum of Gotland has during a year taken part in the production of the first art magazine of the Baltic region, "Mare Articum". The first issue was printed and published in Szczecin in September 1997.

Mr Olov Gibson from the Department of Culture and Leisure took part in meetings in Thessaloniki this autumn, arranged by the cultural networking organisation "Les Rencontres". This

relatively new network is stimulating contacts all over Europe between people involved in cultural administration and cultural projects.

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## EIB FORUM TO BRIDGE THE NORTHERN SEAS

**The European Investment Bank's 1997 Forum on "Bridging the Seas in Northern Europe", held in Stockholm on October 23-24, focused on the considerable advance Northern Europe had achieved in developing inter-regional cooperation in preparation of the historic milestones of Economic and Monetary Union and further enlargement of the European Union.**

The Forum speakers examined the progress Northern European countries had made to modernise their economy, strengthen links both within the region and with a wider European continental market. Northern Europe is undergoing fundamental changes, with the impact of Sweden and Finland becoming Members of the European Union only three years ago, and other countries in the region are now preparing for wider European

integration.

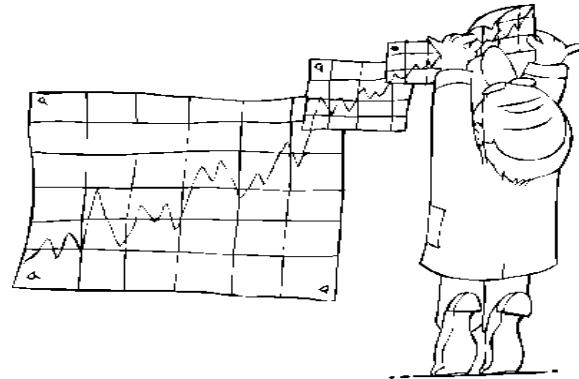
**Over 350 participants**

The Forum brought together over 350 senior government, business and banking officials, who were addressed by over 30 well-known speakers from the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe.

Opening the Forum, EIB President Sir Brian Unwin said: 'The development of Northern Europe is a priority, particularly the physical infrastructure necessary to inter-link the Northern European countries of the Union and link the Central and Eastern European applicant countries with the rest of Europe'.

### Enlargement of the EU

The Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson stated that the Baltic Sea had the potential to become the fastest-growing area in Europe for many years to come. 'In this region, there is a combination of rapidly growing young market economies such as Poland, the Baltic states and north-west Russia, and mature economies such as the Nordic countries, which have consolidated their government finances and are now once more on the way up. As I see it, enlargement of the European



Union is of crucial importance to Baltic Sea cooperation. Four more countries in our close neighbourhood are now knocking on the door of the EU, at the same time as the EU's relations with Russia are deepening. That clearly opens new opportunities for cooperation'.

Union of the Baltic Cities was represented in the EIB Forum in Stockholm by its Secretary General Mr Paweł Aboklicki who submitted a presentation titled 'UBC - promoting grass-roots integration' where he described UBC structure and activities to conference participants.

Mr Aboklicki called the European Investment Bank to establish a project fund eligible for NGOs and local authorities from the Baltic Sea Region. This fund could be used for projects aiming at levelling the development differences between present and future EU parts of the BSR.

### Correction

There was an error in the Baltic Cities Bulletin 2/97. Kristianstad's port is in Lübeck, not in Aarhus as we wrote. We apologize for the mistake.

Editorial Board