

## COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT

ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2005 – SEPTEMBER 2007

### **Focus on the Environment and Sustainable Development of Baltic Sea cities**

The environmental work of the UBC is organized at the Commission on Environment. The UBC is also running a large cross-sectoral action programme on sustainable development, the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities. This report of the UBC activity report describes both the environmental and sustainable development work of the UBC. The main difference between these two is that environmental work concentrates on environmental issues only, whereas sustainable development aims at combining environmental, social and economic aspects of city development. Consequently, environmental work is mainly co-ordinated and lead at the cities by the environmental administration, whereas sustainable development work is often lead directly under the overall city leadership and is a joint effort of all sectoral administrations.

### **Implementation of the Agenda 21 Action Programme of UBC**

The secretariat has been actively working as the Agenda 21 Secretariat for the implementation of the cross-sectoral Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities (approved in the General Conference in Klaipėda 2003). The program is being implemented under the supervision of the Executive Board. Based on contributions of several UBC commissions and networks, the implementation has proceeded extremely well and the programme is most likely reaching a high concrete impact on the ground, at UBC member cities. The programme activities target five thematic focus areas: Good governance and sustainable urban management, Sustainable use of energy and resources, Good living environment and nature protection, Sustainable economy and transport, and Social integration and health.

The programme has reached its volume goal of over 10 MEUR. This funding is today committed by decisions and contracts of different partners and funding agencies to-wards the implementation of the projects and other program activities.

The first programme assessment, the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005 has been completed. The answering rate of 73% both reflects the interest and commitment of UBC members and provides an excellent basis for analysis. The second programme assessment, the second survey Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2006/2007 has been undertaken with 71 % answering rate. Results of this survey show that a lot of development steps have been taken among the UBC member cities and our Baltic Sea region is therefore clearly one of the forerunner regions globally. The programme activities and the surveys also support strongly and give valuable data for the European policy development on urban sustainability. Experiences of several projects have been used for the development of the Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment within the 6th Environmental Action Plan of the European Union, and UBC is seen as a key player, a forerunner network and an appreciated partner in the development of the Baltic Sea Region as an important part of Europe.

## **UBC Commission on Environment Actions**

The UBC Commission on Environment, co-chaired by Mr. Mikko Jokinen, Turku, and Mr. Guldbrand Skjönberg, Nacka, has worked very actively during the whole reporting period. They are assisted by the Environment and Agenda 21 Secretariat (renamed Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat in February 2007) that is being generously hosted by the City of Turku, where it is located by the decisions of the UBC and the City of Turku for the whole Action Programme period 2004-2009.

The basic resources provided by the host city and the UBC combined with the successful project funding have enabled the secretariat to carry on a strong coordination role with a current staff number of 17 full-time professionals (Finnish-Swedish-Estonian-Polish-Russian-German). The secretariat is now located in new premises in the city of Turku and to enable a better functioning service an internal team structure has been created into the Secretariat. Mr Risto Veivo has left the office after a long and successful period as the Head of Secretariat (1998 - 2006). A new Head of Secretariat for UBC Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat since October 2006 is Mr Björn Grönholm.

The commission has achieved a lot in different policy, networking, capacity-building and information activities. However, the most important resource of the commission are the active UBC member cities who contribute with their knowledge, experiences, motivation and strong involvement for the mutual benefit. The basic activities of the Commission on Environment have during the reporting period included several excellent thematic seminar/workshop-type meetings with. These were during the reporting period organised in Lübeck Germany, in May 2006 and in Liepaja in February 2007. In connection to the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2006/2007 the personnel of the Environmental Commission was in contact with all UBC member cities in order to check up contact information and possibility for participation in the survey. This has been much appreciated among the contact persons in the UBC member cities.

The commission has continued the Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award scheme and has developed further UBC's good practice work. The prize winning award 2007 and two special certificates will be published at the UBC General Conference in Pärnu, September 2007. The web-site has been regularly up-dated and contact databases maintained. During 2006 and 2007 much emphasis has been allocated to strengthen the Communication strategy of Commission on Environment as an important element of improved quality of UBC services and the network as such. Also a so called Knowledge Management Database is under construction to better serve and collect information, data, good practises etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities In such cutting-edge European activities the commission and its active members have contributed remarkably to advancing environmental protection and management not only in the Baltic Sea Region, but also in Europe and even globally.

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has been developed and thematic editions on Air Quality Management (2005), Aalborg Commitments in Action (2006) and Practical Tools and Methods for cities (2007) have been published. Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has an edition of 2500 copies and it receives a high interest from member cities and partner organisations. UBC Commission on Energy has had their own pages in the Environmental Bulletin during year 2007. Also, the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005 was published in autumn 2005 as separate posters of the results of each of the survey focus points and the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2006/2007 was published both in short and long version in September 2007. A leaflet of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities was published in summer 2006 in English and Russian. A full poster material representing UBC was produced for the 5th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in March 2007 in Seville. The Commission website has been further developed and changed into UBC Action 21 website ([www.ubc-agenda21.net](http://www.ubc-agenda21.net)). Analyses on

how to improve the network services have been carried out and there will be further improvements in this area in the near future.

#### European Union Policy co-operation on environment and sustainable development

In line with the working principles of the UBC, the Commission on Environment has also contributed strongly to Baltic Sea Regional and European policy co-operation processes on cities' environmental governance and sustainable urban development. The commission has represented the UBC at the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic 21), Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign and at European expert and working groups such as in EMAS revision.

The renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy adopted in June, 2006 (Document 10117/06) acknowledges the important role of local and regional levels in delivering sustainable development. Furthermore, it emphasizes that approaches like Local Agenda 21 and other processes with broad public participation must be strengthened and promoted. The Strategy also stresses that municipalities, cities and towns should be invited to sign and implement the Aalborg Commitments (<http://www.aalborgplus10.dk/>) and highlights the important role that networks at different levels have in supporting these activities. Launch of the EU SDS gives supports the Agenda21 Programme and provides a good basis for the future work of UBC.

In October 2006 UBC Executive Board accepted a statement where "Union of the Baltic Cities stresses the importance of addressing the Aalborg Commitments as the common element for the work promoting sustainable development". Since January 2007 UBC Commission on Environment is also responsible, together with the Finnish Association of Municipalities and Regions, to coordinate and support the "Nordic Baltic Aalborg Commitment Network" activities. This goes well in line with the statement mentioned above. UBC Commission on Environment has also been approached by several national, regional and EU level authorities for commenting on strategies and new EU programmes.

During the reporting period the European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign is still going through an evaluation period. Despite this ongoing evaluation the Campaign managed to arrange a mayor conference the 5th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in 21-24 March 2007 in Seville. This was one of the biggest milestones during the last two year period for UBC Commission on Environment and we were actively planning and participating in the conference. The conference was one of the main forums for cities being forerunners in sustainable development in Europe meeting up with approximately 1700 participants. The conference was a success from an UBC point of view as high number of participants was present, UBC representatives had several key note speeches and the impact and visibility of UBC member cities were in all respects very strong.

Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (UTS) was finally adopted by the Commission in January 2006. EU Commission encourages local authorities to use integrated environmental management (plans and systems) and sustainable urban transport plans and has initiated a process to further develop this. Through our projects Managing Urban Europe-25, BUSTRIP and Sustainment, UBC is developing models of such plans and systems and carrying out their pilot testing in Baltic Sea Regional and European co-operation. The results of these projects will then feed into the technical guidance to implement UTS.

#### **Main Projects of the UBC Environment and Agenda 21 Secretariat**

- **Managing Urban Europe -25** (MUE-25), Developing cities' environmental managements systems to address the whole functional urban area. Partners: EnvCom,

ICLEI, UNEP etc (altogether 24 partners, inc. 15 cities), 2005-08. 2.9 MEUR - DG Environment, Finnish Ministry of Environment + other funders.

- **SUSTAINMENT** (Integrated solutions for the sustainability management in the Baltic Cities), Partners: EnvCom, Baltic University programme, 12 partner cities in the Baltic Sea Region, 2006-2007. 1.4 MEUR – BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood programme, TACIS, Finnish Ministry of Environment
- **BUSTRIP** (Baltic Urban Sustainable Transport Implementation and Planning). BUSTRIP - Developing sustainable urban transport planning. Partners: EnvCom, TransCom, Chalmers Technical University, 14 Baltic Cities, 2005-2007. 3.1 MEUR - BSR INTERREG III B and Finnish Ministry of Environment.
- **LVRLAC – UBC co-operation**, facilitating sustainable development in the Lake Victoria Region through Local Authority Action. Phase I and II, and a new phase III started, - Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency.
- **Asia Pro Eco**, developing policy formulation and implementation tools for providing support for ecological forest management in China's urban and Peri-urban areas (2006-2008).
- **MATRUSCHKA** – Integrated Management System for Russian Cities. Partners: EnvCom, 8 partner cities and Åbo Akademi University, 2007–2009. Funded by BSR INTERREG IIIB Neighbourhood Programme TACIS on 0,7 MEUR.
- **Support Facility**. Meetings and coordination of the Nordic Baltic Aalborg Commitment Network. Funding from Nordic Council of Ministers for year 2007.
- **Actor** (Aalborg Commitments Tools and Resources). (January 2006 - September 2007). Funded by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme, Priority 8.1: Policy-orientated Research. Partners: Sustainable Cities Research Institute, Northumbria University, Åbo Akademi University, ICLEI European Secretariat, Ambiente Italia, Regional Environment Centre, Poland, UBC Env-Com, MedCities.
- **Status** (Tools and Targets for the Urban Thematic Strategy), Partners: University of Northumbria, Åbo Akademi University, ICLEI Europe, The Provost Fellows and Scholars of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of Queen Elizabeth, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Ambiente Italia, UBC EnvCom

Björn Grönholm

Head of Secretariat, Union of Baltic Cities - Commission on Environment

## DRAFT ACTION PLAN 2008 –2009

### **Starting point – challenges of Baltic Cities**

Today, the UBC is extremely well placed to tackle the urgent environmental challenges that the Baltic Cities are facing. At the same time, we also have very good possibilities to contribute to sustainable development at our region and we want to be a preferred partner in different tasks, projects and events. The past years of UBC's environmental work and the highly successful implementation of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities, have taken us to the point where we have both an explicit responsibility and a potential to make an impact, if we so want to. This is very necessary, as

many serious environmental problems remain unsolved, and cities' environmental work bears new challenges continuously.

As mentioned before, good information basis for our work is provided by the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005 and 2006/2007, where a clear majority of the UBC member contributed. According to the survey, especially hard challenges are for example climate change, excessive use of natural resources, wealth gaps and demographic changes. Dominance of private car over public transport remains also strong as ever. However, according to the survey, there are also promising sustainable development trends and commitments in the cities. The state of the Baltic Sea and in-creasing effects of Climate change are perhaps two of the main challenges to work on with during the upcoming years. We also know that several of our cities will face challenges with these issues and will need all the assistance that can be mobilised. As a regional city network we have all the possibilities to act together and be efficient.

The mission of the UBC Commission on Environment is to tackle those challenges by all the means provided by our efficient network through sharing of problems, information and knowledge, approaches and solutions. In order to work more effectively we must improve our performance in all the fields. From knowledge based analyses, technical solutions, improved political planning and decision making processes to improved in-formation and dissemination strategies. As one important task the UBC Commission will continue to develop and put into practise its Communication Strategy, developed during 2006 – 2007 in order to improve actions and performances for the benefit of our member cities. For this task the whole network and all levels of the UBC organisation are needed.

The potentiality of our network to support our member cities in treating the challenges is good and it is at the moment also fairly well mobilised. The highly successful Agenda 21 Action Programme with is already committed total project budget of 10 MEUR provides an excellent framework of action to address the challenges in practice. Even though we have already reached the budget goal we will continue to build up new projects and activities where we will work together with our member cities.

### **Activities – the network service**

Success, good service and a strong network can only be maintained through continuous development and improvements of all the activities among those involved in the activities. Interaction and good communication is on of the key elements of continuing development and improvement. The development of Baltic Sea cities has been long and successful. Starting from Agenda 21 activities, continuing to sustain-able development processes and now more closely focusing on sustainability management in cities! The network service of the UBC Commission on Environment is a combination of projects, regular meetings and workshops, information work and policy liaison with other organisations, environmental and sustainable development policy processes and policy-makers. Such policy-makers include Baltic Sea Regional actors like national ministries of the environment and foreign affairs, Nordic Council of Ministers, European Environment Agency, Baltic 21 and HELCOM, as well as the European Union – especially European Commission DG Environment and DG Region.

The UBC Commission on Environment builds its activities on principles of stable continuing development. For us it is important that the whole region develops in a balanced way. During the period of the next two years the Commission on Environment will put special emphasis on treating the challenges introduced above. In order to do this, the following activities will be carried out:

- **Meetings and workshops of the commission** twice a year – providing opportunity to discuss and plan projects and other activities as well as for direct learning and

sharing. In addition other supporting activities will take place such as the Nordic Baltic Aalborg Commitment Network meetings.

- **Projects addressing the challenges** in Baltic Cities and implementing the thematic goals of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme – the commission is involved in several large co-operation projects during the period and will continue to create development projects supporting our member cities.
- **Capacity-building** – organising opportunities for the cities to up-date their knowledge and competencies on environmental policies, practices and legislation, communicating different target groups and organisational setup, strengthening efficient Sustainability Management..
- **Information services** – publishing Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin, developing, launching in year 2008 and maintaining of the Knowledge Management data-base on sustainable development issues in the Baltic Cities and partner organisations. Improving the UBC web-services on environment and sustainable development. Aiming to support UBC member cities more closely and with an aim to be in direct contact with all UBC Agenda 21 contact persons in the member cities.
- **Good Practice work** – the successful good practice promotion and exchange will be continued by the environmental award scheme, web-site and other in-formation services. Improve our surveys and find more use of the work put into the collection of data by liaison activities with other similar activities with Universities, evaluating and supporting sustainable development.

### **Resources**

The Commission on Environment has an effective secretariat with good resources, located in the City of Turku. The secretariat has an international staff of 17 full-time professionals. The purpose of the secretariat is to serve the commission and to manage and co-ordinate the implementation of the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009. The activities and services of the UBC Commission on Environment are closely tied to funding possibilities and the secretariat is therefore put under pressure of the EU funding programmes.

However, the most important resource of the commission is the active UBC member cities who contribute with their knowledge, experiences and strong involvement for mutual benefit. The best motivation for the secretariat and staff is therefore the motivation and positive spirit we meet among the UBC member cities.

### **Evaluation**

UBC's environmental and sustainable development services have been evaluated as part of the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005 and 2006/2007. These evaluations are extremely valuable as they provide our city network with information on development trends, possible problems and good practises all important for a balanced and dynamic development of the Baltic Sea Region. Next comprehensive evaluation will take place in 2009. Meanwhile, the most important activities will be specifically evaluated case-by-case and fed into the Knowledge Management Database. With this database we expect to be able to use data and information more thoroughly and systematic than before.

### **Action Programme for 2010-2015**

UBC Commission on Environment and its Secretariat will actively support the network in planning for the new Action Programme for 2010-2015.

Björn Grönholm  
Head of Secretariat  
City of Turku