

# COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT

## ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2007 – SEPTEMBER 2009

### **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 the 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 up to over 16 MEUR including more than 25 projects. This funding is today committed by decisions and contracts of different partners and funding agencies towards the implementation of the projects and other program activities.

The programme assessment, the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005, 2006/2007 has been completed and the last survey 2009 is in its final stage. The answering rate has been high and reflects the interest and commitment of UBC members and provides an excellent basis for analysis. Results of the surveys 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. Mr Guldbrand Skjönberg is functioning as co-chairman of UBC Environment Commission for the last year as he has been retired in 2009. He has been functioning as co-chairman since 2000.

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 12 full-time professionals (Finnish-Swedish-Polish-Russian-German). The secretariat is now located in the so called Baltic Sea House in the old centre of Turku.

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 Tampere Finland, in March 2008 and in Tallinn in October 2009 and in St Petersburg. In these commission meetings a broad participation taken place both in terms of participants (appr. 60 – 80 per Commission meeting including several other UBC Commissions) and also in the activity level as the main focus in the last Commission meetings has been on the drafting on a new UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015. In connection to the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2009 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 2009 will be published at the UBC General Conference in Kristiansand, September 2007. The web-site has been totally updated and contact databases maintained. The newly opened UBC Good Practice Database is working to better serve and collect information, data, good practises etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities. More than 350 Good Practice cases are already listed in the database (see [www.ubcwheel.eu](http://www.ubcwheel.eu)).

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has been developed and thematic editions on Practical Tools and Methods for cities 2/2007, Vision for the Future 1/2008, Innovative Sustainable Thinking 2/2008 and Active Stakeholder Involvement 1/2009 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. The electronically version of the Environmental Bulletin is more and more requested. UBC Commission on Energy has own pages in the Environmental Bulletin during year 2008 mad 2009. New posters and material has been produced depending on the need and events where UBC Commission on Environment has participated. The Commission website has been further developed and

changed into [www.ubc-environment.net](http://www.ubc-environment.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 main focus during the last two year period has been on the development and communication process of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. This strategy goes hand in hand with the new UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme and therefore there has been a need to combine the development of both processes simultaneously.

During the reporting period the European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign is continuing in planning and arranging large scale Urban Sustainability Conferences. Despite The 5<sup>th</sup> European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns was held in 21-24 March 2007 in Seville and will be followed by the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Dunkirk France in 20 – 21 May 2010.

### **Main Projects of the UBC Environment and Sustainable Development 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
- **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.
- **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.
- **We choose life – Youth Against HIV/AIDS** – UBC EnvCom partner in the project coordinated by WHO Healthy Cities Network. 4 Russian cities involved and several expert organizations. TACIS funding 40000 €
- **SUITS** – Sustainable Indicators and Target Setting. Nordic Council of Ministers. UBC and Association of Municipalities in Nordic and Baltic Countries as partners. 64000 € budget
- **CHAMP** – Combating Climate Change. LIFE+ funded project including Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy. 2009 – 2011. Total 2.1 MEUR

- **NEW BRIDGES** – Strengthening Quality of Life through improved Management of Urban Rural Interaction. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighbourhood programme. 12 partners and 13 Associated partners. 2009 – 2011. 2,8 MEUR
- **BaltCICA** – Climate Change: Impact, Costs and Adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region. UBC EnvCom partner in the project. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighbourhood programme. 2009 – 2011. 120000 €.

## ACTION PLAN 2009- SEPTEMBER 2011

### **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.

As mentioned before, good information basis for our work is provided by the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005, 2006/2007 and 2009, 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 increasing 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 and have clear goals and targets for our activities. From knowledge based analyses, technical solutions, improved political planning and decision making processes to improved information and dissemination strategies. As one important task the UBC Commission will continue to develop and put into practise its Communication Strategy in order to improve actions and performances for the benefit of our member cities. This is a task for the whole UBC network and all levels of the UBC organisation are needed in order to improve these internal and external practices.

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 its already committed total project budget of appr. 16 MEUR provides an excellent framework of action to address the challenges in practice. Plans and activities for the new UBC Sustainability Action Period 2010 – 2015 have already taken place and ambitious goals have been listed. Work practices

and methods will be evaluated and new services for our UBC members will occur. In the communication in connection to the development of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme a need to more exact tailor made actions have been foreseen. The UBC and the UBC Commission on Environment has to develop the working methods in order to support our UBC member cities more efficiently. This will be one of our main tasks during the upcoming years!

### **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 one 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 sustainable 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 and this work will be coordinated with the support and guidance of the UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 and hopefully implemented as much as possible as actions connected to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. 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. The Commission meetings are hopefully arranged together with other UBC Commissions. UBC EnvCom is planning a large scale top level conference in January 2011 in Turku called “The Nordic Sustainability Conference in the Baltic Sea Region” with approximately 700 participants from all over the Baltic Sea Region.
- **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, further development and updating of the UBC Good Practice database on sustainable development issues in the Baltic Cities and partner organisations. Improving the UBC web-services on environment and sustainable development.
- **Good Practice work** – the successful good practice promotion and exchange will be continued by the environmental award scheme, web-site and other information 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 12 full-time professionals. The purpose of the secretariat is to serve the commission and to manage and co-ordinate the implementation of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010-2015. 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 will be evaluated and improved. 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.

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

UBC Commission on Environment and its Secretariat will actively support the network in implementing UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010-2015.

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