



Inclusion in the Baltic Sea Region

**Speech by Per Bødker Andersen
President of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC)
Kieler Woche International City Forum**

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Check against delivery!

Dear Dr. Susanne Gaschke,

[Mayor of Kiel]

Dear Astrid Witte,

[Head of Department for Families and Social
Affairs]

Dear Finn Walden,

[Moderator]

Kære honorær konsul Götz Bormann

[Honorary Consul of Denmark and CEO
Förde Sparkasse]

Ladies and Gentleman,

Friends and colleagues,

It is my great honor and pleasure to speak to you as President of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC). The UBC is the leading city network in Northern Europe, representing over 100 cities of the 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Baltic Sea Region comprises 11 nations and more than 100 million inhabitants. It boasts stable democracies, institutional structures favorable to business, proximity of markets, good infrastructure, high levels of education, strong industrial traditions and a shared history of co-operation and trade.

Our region is in many ways a role model, also with regard to inclusion.

The Baltic Sea Region and most of its countries have a long tradition in recognizing and protecting the basic rights, the human rights of all people, including those with disabilities and of working hard to be at the forefront of a global movement to improve



access to the basic and essential aspects of productive daily life for those with disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006 has transformed the world, from one divided by disability, into a world where persons with and without disabilities can work side by side toward the same goal of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. We owe this victory to the leaders of the disability community who have tirelessly demonstrated how the battle against discrimination and oppression can be won by determination, hard work, perseverance and flexible and innovative minds. Under the superb leadership of these advocates, the Convention process matured, involving more of both new and traditional stakeholders, and, as a result, the disability rights movement grew as a universal movement toward human rights for all mankind.

The ratification of the international convention has a profound meaning not only for the dignity of individuals with disabilities, but also for us all: a person is either born with a disability, or acquires it during his lifetime by sickness, accident, war, natural disaster, climate change, underdevelopment. Nevertheless, it is almost certain that we all will have a disability as we age, in a world that is ageing at a growing rate.

What is the status of implementation in the cities of the Baltic Sea Region? To get to this question in more detail, we conducted a survey among the more than 100 member cities of the UBC in April / May this year.

At this point I would like to thank the Chairman of the UBC Business Commission, Wolfgang Schmidt and Astrid Witte from the City of Kiel and her colleagues, who were responsible for conducting and analyzing the survey.

Please let me present the main results of our survey.



In general we have interrogated the following 5 key issues:

1. Level of commitment to the UN convention
2. Listing of initiatives in the cities
3. Impact of the measures
4. Quality and sustainability of the results
5. Inclusion of people with disabilities and key partners

1. Level of commitment to the UN convention

To our question if there is a general approach to improve barrier freedom in the city, 92.3 % have answered with Yes and 7.7 % with No.

2. Listing of initiatives in the cities

We have asked the following questions:

Is the accessibility to public buildings, rooms and services improved by reducing existing barriers.

Yes: 100 %.

Is accessibility / barrier freedom in public buildings (e.g. buildings, sports facilities, roads, public places) paid attention to?

Yes: 100 %.

Are public buildings accessible to all people?

Yes: 30.8 %

No 7.7 %

Only approximate: 61.5 %.

Can public services or services with no special requirements be used?

Yes: 92.3 %

No: 7.7 %



Is the traffic, such as bus, tram or train, and the appropriate infrastructure barrier free accessible?

Yes: 61.5 %

No: 7.7 %

Only up to approx.: 30.8 %

Is there barrier free information system for traffic?

Yes: 76.9 %

No: 23.1 %

Is information, including information and communication technology, about your city barrier free accessible?

Yes: 69.2 %

No: 30.8 %

3. Impact of the measures

We have asked, whether there are specific initiatives, councils, committees and the like to improve the participation of people with disabilities in the cities?

Yes: 84.6 %

No: 15.4 %

4. Quality and sustainability of the results

It was asked, how quality and sustainability of measures for barrier freedom can be secured?

76.9 % have special institutions and also nearly 77 % have associations.

Nearly 70 % of all asked cities trust on councils and the power of civic involvement.

5. Inclusion of people with disabilities and key partners

Only 38.5 % of the cities have measures which are able to sensitize people to barrier freedom.

Nearly half of the asked cities (46.2 % work together with other municipalities.



This fact shows one more time the need of organizations like the Union of the Baltic Cities, where municipalities have the chance to exchange ideas and good practices. In addition to a huge amount of data many interesting measures were called to us. These will be discussed in the Commissions of the UBC further and we will make these findings available to all UBC member cities.

Dear friends, dear colleagues,
we must work with everybody in order to foster the enforceable application of the Convention. In each country we must teach and convince every person, with or without a disability, to join the movement toward a more holistic society that values difference, recognizes diversity and is willing to challenge those that try to oppose our just cause. Our work has just begun. Our resolve to make this Convention a reality from a metropolis, to the smallest rural village in our world would present us with a great challenge in this ever changing world.

Our vision, our goal is the inclusion. We are on the way, that we will one day live in a society in which it in stores, on streets, in hotels, in a pizzeria, on TV, at work, in the tram, wherever we move, people are with different physical, intellectual or mental conditions who live with great naturalness with each other without separation, and that we experience as self-evident. That's the big idea we should follow in our cities.

Thank you!