

## Baltic Sea Cities - Sharing the European Dream

The Conference is not expected to just deliver a summary of presentations and monologues. It will show how to, with good will and efforts from all sides, make cohabitation possible. It shall illuminate the question:

### How should our cities be in 20 years? How could we achieve it together?

All UBC member cities are invited to join the Conference. In your delegation there should be one or two integration workers as well as at least one immigrant who started to live in your city. We do not want to talk about their lives specifically, but everyone together WITH them about how to build a common future. Every delegate should send in a photo along with a very short description of her/his family's migration background (recent or maybe some generations behind), if there is any.

The conference will be accompanied by examples of immigrants who greatly helped shape the current culture. Let's enchant our senses with beautiful experiences of food, music, dance, and crafts from different cultures that have been, are and will continue to benefit the diversity the future surely holds. As a special highlight we are going to present the Syrian Expat Orchestra.



### Please, save the date and feel free to spread this announcement!

Concrete Information to be distributed soon via all communication channels served by the Union of the Baltic Cities ([www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net)) as well as by the host, the Hanseatic City of Rostock ([www.rostock.de](http://www.rostock.de)).

Venue: Hotel Radisson Blu

For more information or interest to lead or enrich a workshop or other conference module check [www.rostock-international.de](http://www.rostock-international.de) and contact: [karin.wohlgemuth@rostock.de](mailto:karin.wohlgemuth@rostock.de)

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UBC Conference on Integration of New Citizens

Rostock / Germany, 12-14 March 2018

The sudden influx of thousands of persons in 2015/16, fleeing from war or in search of better economical possibilities lead UBC cities to discuss the challenge at the

**UBC CONFERENCE**  
**ON THE IMPACT OF THE EUROPEAN REFUGEES CRISIS IN BALTIC CITIES**  
**ROSTOCK, GERMANY, 14-16 MARCH 2016**



Today, the main challenge is to help the newcomers to integrate into our societies and understand all rights, privileges, but also duties that come with integration. It should be clear that most of our new citizens will not return to their homeland even if they had the chance to do so. Their lives went on: Children are enjoying the benefits of our educational systems and skilled workers are striving to get or already have a job and can feed their families on their own without dependence

on social relief. So the question should be: How to master their integration into fully fledged members of their new society while allowing them to keep their own cultural identity?

Hundreds of thousands refugees arrived in Europe. For many locals that seems to be a problem hard to resolve. And they are right. We can find proof, looking a few generations back, towards the last century. Due to war, millions of people all over Europe were displaced and had to be newly settled. Many European families had such an experience. The problems seemed to be insurmountable. Now we know, migration was one of the most important factors in forming today's cities. But how would we evaluate such a situation looking back from the future, for example, in 20 years?

During eight workshops, using modern analytical methods, equipped with the lessons of the past, and using all experience available, participants from the Baltic Sea region including Newcomers are expected to find creative, new and hopefully helpful concepts. Trained moderators will handle the discussions. In a plenary after one day of work, all groups will be interviewed by a journalist. This way, all the fresh knowledge will be reflected to the entire audience.



### **W1. Sharing online and offline communication – a multicultural package**

W1. Communication is a challenge in a diverse society. Language and cultural barriers can make life difficult, but what makes it even harder is a lack of any dialogue and mutual understanding. Communication is an essential human need. It is impossible to build up the good relationships without knowing each other. Media, stereotypes and prejudices have a tremendous impact on the imagination of people who are both at the sending and receiving end of the migration experience. The workshop seeks answers to the following questions: how to make a shift in thinking: 'from a stranger to a neighbour'; how to overcome the language and cultural barriers; how to communicate beyond the stereotypes and media picture, can we influence it?; how to ensure the equal access to relevant, reliable information, both online and offline; how to take advantage of Internet, social media, apps and other digital tools in communication.

### **W5. Using, developing, creating and designing the city together**

Think of yourself: coming to a city starting a new life, what do you need first? Second, how will you satisfy your basic needs e.g. search for the nearest doctor, school for your children, market, job, apartment? How will e-government be available for those, who do not speak the language? How should we all together design the city, for people of different religions, interests, cuisines to live together or next to each other? There are not so many people, who spend their entire life in one city. We should use their knowledge and experience to make our cities friendly for newcomers.

### **W2. Equal Access to Education**

Education is one of the most effective means to prevent the social exclusion and social inequity. The main question of this workshop is how to ensure that our educational and guidance models not only allow refugees and immigrants to get into education but also to identify and support the most vulnerable groups and tackle all forms of discrimination in education.

## **WORKSHOPS**

### **W6. Safe and healthy life for all**

In near future everyone should be able to feel and be safe wherever they are. Nobody will should be looked at as a potential threat only because they may look bit different (skin color, spoken language, clothing, etc.) and the possible attack threats in public places would be reduced to minimum. Everyone should be able to receive the same medical help if needed, despite their origins or status in the country. By collaboration between different races and statuses will lead to improved life quality and reduce inequality.

### **W3. Creating a Stronger and More Inclusive Economy and Job Market**

Many studies across the Europe show that people with certain ethnic backgrounds face more discrimination in job market than the others. This workshop seeks answers to the following questions: How we tackle existing forms of discrimination? How we make sure that immigrants/refugees and their children can use all their competences and potential to benefit themselves and society as a whole? How do we make sure that climbing the social ladders and fulfilling the European Dream is possible for anybody, not only a mere exception.

### **W7. Sharing culture**

Culture is how we behave, what norms we believe in and according to which we take decisions. Culture is our cuisine, how do we create art, spend free time and have fun. Culture is also our heritage from our ancestors: language, traditions, religion, history - all that was left by our grandparents and predecessors. Generally, Culture is how humans express themselves in various forms, by various means. Today's world gives us the opportunity to observe, participate and try many culture patterns. How to create a city which gives the opportunities to get to know others' culture in a true, deep, direct and secure way – avoiding simplified and stereotyping narration? What kind of features should city have to generate positive energy from cultures' cohabitation? Are there limits of cultural expression in local communities? How to stay in the multicultural dialogue, even when it leads to the painful areas? Is there a common ground on which we can start to get to know each other?

### **W4. Gender and minority's equality and linking cultures**

Looking through the politically correct European perspective we can easily get the impression that the public sphere is quite inclusive but in fact the diversified groups and individuals representing them don't and can't ever share their very personal experiences with the others. The complex matters concerning gender (in)equality and the visibility of minorities regarding gender identity and sexual orientation come up somewhere in between the public and private space. Gender equality and the fundamental rights of LGBTQ+ community members means something completely different even amongst the Baltic cities citizens and including the perspectives of immigrants and refugees from variety of regions, while respecting their religious beliefs and the very unique background, makes it even more complicated. We cannot become a monolith regarding such sensitive issues but what we can do is creating a safe space for all the groups taken into account, pointing out what's crucial to stay open and focused on the constant debate. This workshop is one way of sharing the tools to make it the most effective and inclusive way we can.

### **W8. Cohabitation of religions and traditions in our cities**

History often underlines the wars and conflicts which differences of opinion have caused. However if we reflect on whether there were more wars than times of cohabitation and peace, the mathematical result could be a surprise. Welcoming someone to my home, in all religious traditions is a fundamental cornerstone, in some it even cannot be refused. How do we, as cities/communities welcome the others, get to know them, change ourselves, exchange on our religious beliefs, in a true dialogue?