

ACTIVITY REPORT

SAFE CITIES COMMISSION

November 2021 – October 2023

1. General description

Chair: Kaspars Vārpiņš, Liepāja

Vice Chair: Torbjörn Lindström, Turku

Secretariat: Liepāja Municipal Police (48 Jelgavas str., Liepāja, Latvia, LV-3401)

Mission: Improve security services as well as assure better safety standards and procedures for all Baltic Sea Region (BSR) citizens

2. Meetings/seminars/conferences

- Tartu (Estonia), June 1-3, 2022

- number of participants - 11

- short description – Meeting topic “Civil protection challenges for cities concerning the war in Ukraine”. First physical meeting after the Covid pandemic. Participant presentations on how civil protection activities have changed during the pandemic and Russian attack on Ukraine. As well examples from cities on how the help to refugees was organized. During the meeting the refugee support centre was visited.

- outcomes – increased knowledge and experience exchange on civil protection activities.

- Hamburg (Germany), December 13-15, 2022

- number of participants – 27 + meeting with the EUSBSR PA Secure Steering group

- short description – Topics highlighted - local early warning system, education about safety for practitioners and a study visit through the city of Hamburg to learn solutions to create a better and safer environment for all people. In addition a joint meeting with the EUSBSR PA Secure Steering group was organized where recommendations for online study course and community for societal security professionals were created.

- outcomes – increased knowledge and experience exchange. Created recommendations for the NEEDS project outcomes to be presented to EUSBSR PA Secure General Directors meeting.

- Gdansk (Poland), September 12-14, 2023

- number of participants – 34

- short description – Meeting topic – “Cooperation with volunteer organisations active in fields of civil protection and building resilient society”. Together with representatives from Ukraine - presentations and experience exchange on existing volunteer cooperation with municipalities and how to improve it. In addition the recommendations for project VOALA were created. Meeting was financed by Swedish Institute funded project “VOALA”.

- outcomes – increased knowledge and experience exchange. Created recommendations for the VOALA project outcomes and work on improving the volunteer organization and municipality cooperation.

3. Projects

- name – NEEDS - Needs-based education and studies in societal security

- duration - 01.09.2020. – 31.08.2023.

- financing – Erasmus+ / budget - 426 990 EUR

- projects partners - The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat (lead), The Main School of Fire Service (Poland), Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service (Germany), UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Liepaja Municipal Police (UBC Safe Cities Commission), Riga Technical University (Latvia), Swedish Defence University, Laurea University of Applied Science (Finland).

- short description - The Needs-based education and studies in societal security (NEEDS) project is addressing the skills gap and mismatch between the societal security education and the knowledge needs in the field as well as the fact that there is a lack of structured transnational cooperation and dialogue between Higher Education Institutes, practitioners, and experts in tackling these issues.

- aims & results - The NEEDS project will meet these societal security challenges by

- 1) establishing a “community of professionals” network and an interface for collaboration as well as
- 2) developing common learning materials for a short online course on societal security in the Baltic Sea Region.

- name – VOALA - Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network

- duration - 01.09.2022. – 29.02.2024.

- financing – Swedish Institute / budget – 499 940 SEK (~42 000 EUR)

- projects partners - The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat (lead), Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK), Ministry of the Interior of Finland, Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service, Danish Civil Protection League.

- short description - transnational project that aims to enhance society’s resilience to natural and man-made disasters by strengthening inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organisations in crisis management in the Baltic Sea Region.

- aims & results – Objectives:

- 1) To enhance practical international cooperation and joint preparedness among authorities, volunteer organisations and citizens in the field of civil protection.
- 2) To clarify and strengthen the role/mission of volunteers in national legislation, plans and operational procedures and to improve the overall coordination of volunteers.
- 3) To increase the appeal of volunteering with a particular focus on youth and promote the culture of volunteerism in the Baltic Sea Region.

- name – BYFORES - Baltic Youth for Resilient Society

- duration - 01.10.2022. – 29.02.2024.

- financing – CBSS Project Support Facility / budget – ~104 000 EUR

- projects partners – The Finnish National Rescue Association (SPEK) (lead), Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), State Fire and Rescue Service of Latvia, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), Ministry of the Interior of Finland, Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service, Danish Civil Protection League.

- short description - project aims to enhance resilience to natural and man-made disasters by strengthening inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organisations in crisis management in the Baltic Sea Region with special focus on youth engagement. The project looks into the role that young people can play in managing and coping with disaster risks and reducing vulnerability through capacity building, education, and awareness raising.

- aims & results - activities and outcomes of the project include a joint international scenario-based exercise for young people, international training workshop and an international conference. The project will also update the recommendations of volunteer-authority cooperation so that both actors are able to respond better to the current safety risks in BSR and to execute the cooperation effectively also in the near future.

- name – PA Secure Kids - Strengthening children’s participation in civil protection and building resilient societies

- duration - 01.03.2023. – 28.02.2025.

- financing – DG Justice / budget – ~696 000 EUR

- projects partners - The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat (lead), Creative Association for Youth TREPES (Latvia), Liepaja Municipal Police (Latvia) and Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC).

- short description - The PA Secure Kids project aims to contribute to sustainable and inclusive mechanisms for child participation in planning, implementation and follow up of national and local measures for building resilient societies that are equipped to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions.

- aims & results - Specific objectives of the project:

- 1) Developing and strengthening child participation mechanisms in disaster risk reduction activities.
- 2) Developing strategic guidance for the implementation of inclusive crisis communication considering children’s needs, concerns, facilitating factors and barriers in crisis communication.
- 3) Equipping relevant actors and children with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and confidence to ensure children’s participation in disaster risk reduction activities.
- 4) Building awareness on children’s rights and their role in disaster risk reduction activities among children, policy makers and various professionals working with children.

- name – From NEEDS to SEEDS

- duration - 01.08.2023. – 30.04.2024.

- financing – CBSS Project Support Facility / budget - 23 874 EUR

- projects partners – Swedish Defence University (lead), Riga Technical University (Latvia), Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC).

- short description - This project will have an enduring impact long after the project ends with regard to the professionalization of the work force in this area of work. It will also help build a shared culture of professionalism in the societal security field. It will draw upon the BSYD 2022 Engagement Roadmap as well as the project results from the Erasmus+ NEEDS project (Needs-based education and studies in societal security): in particular, the online course for societal security which was co-created by practitioners, experts, educators, and students from several of the countries in the Baltic Sea region.

- aims & results - The overall aim of this project is to

- 1) Contribute to the Joint position on enhancing cooperation in Civil Protection Area
- 2) Build and strengthen strategic partnerships and increased trust in the BSR
- 3) Strengthen a common societal security culture in the BSR
- 4) Harmonize and facilitate trans-border cooperation between different sectors, services, and countries in the BSR
- 5) Support Finland's CBSS presidency priority areas for BSR, including civil defence and comprehensive security, early warning systems, climate adaptation, youth engagement, and communication

4. Cooperation with other organisations

During 2021-2023 UBC Safe Cities Commission continued to have an active cooperation with various stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. Cooperation included the collaboration with all the partners from projects, as well in addition strong cooperation was with the following organizations:

- Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat
- EUSBSR PA Secure (Member of Steering group)
- European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)

5. Other activities

Mainly all activities include to strengthening the cooperation and recognition of UBC and UBC Safe Cities Commission in the Baltic Sea Region with the stakeholders in field of safety. I.e. there were various discussions with non-UBC member city representatives in promoting UBC and its activities.

With Higher Education institutions there is work in strengthening the educations of the safety professionals around the Baltic Sea Region.

Lately there has been an effort in supporting Ukrainian partners through their participation in the UBC Safe Cities Commission meeting in Gdansk (September 2023), as well as project is prepared together with other stakeholders to create a joint activities between Baltic Sea Region and Ukrainian stakeholders to improve cooperation and learning from each other.

Kaspars Vārpiņš
UBC Safe Cities Commission Chairman