

ACTIVITY REPORT

UBC SUSTAINABLE CITIES COMMISSION

November 2021 – October 2023

1. General description

UBC Sustainable Cities Commission (UBC SCC), one of the 8 commissions of the Union of the Baltic Cities, is hosted by the City of Turku, Finland. The UBC SCC is responsible for the Union's work on sustainability issues including coordination of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030 and managing numerous projects in the field of urban sustainability. The Commission is operating in different policy-, networking-, and capacity-building activities and development projects. 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 UBC SCC Secretariat, led by Ms Esther Kreutz and a professional staff of 10 persons are coordinating the Commission and Secretariat related tasks. The UBC SCC is steered by three co-chairpersons in close cooperation with the Head and Deputy Head of the Secretariat of Sustainable Cities Commission and its Advisory Board. In addition, the work of UBC SCC is totally dependent on the interest and need of UBC member cities to propose activities and take a role in collaborative cooperation.

During 2022-2023, the Chairing Board of the UBC SCC consisted of the three Co-chairs: Dagmara Nagórka-Kmieciak (City of Gdańsk), Per-Arne Nilsson (City of Malmö) and Risto Veivo (City of Turku).

The Advisory Board members of the UBC SCC in 2022-2023 were; Mr. Andres Jaadla (City of Rakvere); Mr. Jaanus Tamm (City of Tartu); Ms. Elina Ojala (City of Lahti); Mr. Olli-Pekka Mäki (City of Turku); Mr. Stephan Braun (City of Greifswald); Ms. Dace Liepniece (City of Liepāja); Ms. Gunita Osite (City of Jelgava); Guntars Ruskuls (City of Riga), Ms. Ann Häger and Mr. Ola Nord (City of Malmö) and Ms Irena Sakaliene (City of Klaipėda, until 8/2022). The Advisory board has had 6 meetings during the years 2021 – 2023.

In its day to day work, UBC SCC staff has been mainly involved in the following activities:

Communication tasks, updating contact databases to UBC member cities, managing web- and social media pages, preparing ebulletins and newsletters, arranging commission and project related meetings and video conferencing facilities.

Project development and management, preparation of project applications, coordination and participation in the projects.

Event planning, coordinating and co-hosting conferences, workshops, meetings, capacity building activities on request.

Benchmarking, arrangement of benchmarking events, initiating surveys and questionnaires.

Organizing trainings in projects or on request by member cities and online UBC TALKS webinars on project related topics.

Involvement in policy development towards national and EU authorities. UBC SCC has been involved as observer in the HELCOM work; the Council of the Baltic Sea States Expert Group on Sustainable Development (EG SD); UBC SCC joined the Green City Accord (GCA) and signed official Supporters' statement in May 2021; support organisation for the Covenant of Mayors since 2011 and member of Energy Cities since 2008.

2. Meetings/seminars/conferences

Timeline of the events that UBC SCC participated or organised during 2021-2023. Please note, that the events listed are the major ones. UBC SCC have participated in several more events as a unit or within different projects.

Date	Place	Event	Short description and outcomes
27–28.04.22	Greifswald	UBC Sustainable Cities Commission meeting	Co-organised by UBC SCC with the hosting city of Greifswald, the meeting covered a wide range of topics, involving over 15 participating cities from the Baltic Sea Region. The Commission meeting was opened by the Lord Mayor of Greifswald Dr. Stefan Fassbinder, and the speakers throughout the event included representatives from both cities, and international organisations and initiatives, incl. the CDP global disclosure system, and Green City Accord initiative. The aim of the meeting was to share best practices on implementation of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme and important aspects of urban sustainability: smart mobility, energy efficiency, climate adaptation and
22.02.22	online	UBC TALKS webinar about holistic solutions to mobility in port areas	Aim: bringing the examples and available tools from the transnational project HUPMOBILE. Pilot cases and studies shared in this webinar were developed in the cities of Hamburg, Riga, Turku, and Tallinn. Altogether 67 participants and viewers of the webinar.
25.10.22	online	UBC TALKS webinar about EU Mission: climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030	The webinar on 25 October 2022 focused on the 100 Cities Mission and how UBC member cities included in this number plan to reach climate neutrality. The webinar was opened by the Deputy Director General Patrick Child, of DG Environment, European Commission; local insights were shared by representatives of Gävle, Tartu, Umeå and Liepaja. The webinar included a presentation about the

			support available for both Mission cities and those following their steps – offered by the NetZeroCities project. 90 participants and viewers.
29.11.22	online	UBC TALKS webinar about local activities contributing to the global sustainability	The webinar on 29 November 2022 investigated how cities can successfully work on the UN 2030 Agenda. The webinar shared best practices on localising Sustainable Development Goals with presentations from the Swedish think-tank Global Utmaning that interviewed BSR cities, and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities supporting the cooperation between 6 Finnish cities. Webinar collected 29 participants and viewers.
1–3.06.22	Helsingborg, Sweden	Urban Future Conference	<p>UBC SCC has been a networking partner of the conference for several years, and this cooperation successfully continued in 2022, when over 1600 participants from over 100 cities joined the global event in Helsingborg.</p> <p>In 2022, we joined forces with the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission in organising a session within the Urban Future program. The session “Baltic Cities collaborate for change” focused on the BSR leadership in urban transformation and attracted ca. 60 city leaders from our region and beyond. This session brought the insights from the international companies leading the innovation in the private sector, and the global perspective merging the private and public from CDP Europe. The highlight of the session was the Mayors’ debate with Ulf Kämpfer (Mayor of the City of Kiel), Elina Rantanen (Deputy Mayor of the City of Turku), and Karin Pleijel (Deputy Mayor of the City of Gothenburg). A lively discussion reflecting on local challenges and offering strategic visions brought different examples from the cities’ paths to success.</p>
11-15.09.22	Copenhagen, Denmark	IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition	The theme for the 2022 IWA World Water Congress and Exhibition held in Copenhagen was “Water for smart liveable cities”. As urbanization means more people living in cities, and a great number of the major cities in the world are located near the oceans, this raises the issue of the effect of human activities on our seas. The UBC SCC together with the SIWI Source-to-Sea Platform and Danish Water and Wastewater Association organised a workshop “Coordinated management from source to sea – in the Baltic Sea and other basins” attended by over 60 participants.

			The focus of the discussion circulated around a holistic approach to prevent pollution of the seas, from land-based activities, thus aiming to ensure coordinated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on water and sanitation (SDG 6) and oceans (SDG 14).
28-29.09.22	Lappeenranta, Finland	13th Annual Forum for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region	UBC SCC organised a networking stand. Other UBC commissions were invited to join, and altogether the UBC was represented in the Forum by UBC SCC (Esther Kreutz-Hassinen and Mariia Andreeva), Safe Cities (Kaspars Varpins) and the Learning Cities Commission (Matti Mäkelä), together with the UBC communication manager Irene Pendolin. Besides the stand representation, UBC SCC was also an invited speaker in the panel of the session “Contribution of EUSBSR cities and regions to combating climate change”. There, Esther presented the UBC SCC work with cities in terms of tools and methods for climate change activities. The Annual Forum, attended by ca. 400 participants, was a great place for networking with different partners and stakeholders incl. HELCOM and VASAB, Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, and representatives of different cities in BSR.
19-20.10.22	Hamburg, Germany	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Conference	Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme is one of the key instruments for funding the sustainable change in our region. The Programme Conference organised in 2022 gathered ca. 300 participants from the running and future projects to inspire each other with past project achievements and ambitions met by the opening opportunities. Two of the projects led by the UBC SCC during the previous Programme period (2014–2020) were privileged to be able to share their stories during the event. During the conference’s first panel discussion, Agnieszka Ilola presented the highlights of the IWAMA project, which focused on resource-efficient wastewater treatment. Later that day, Agnieszka also pitched the BSR WATER for holistic water cooperation and one of its outputs Baltic Smart Water Hub – at the inspirational corner for water-smart societies.
13-15.09.23	Turku, Finland	UBC Planning and Sustainable	The meeting focused on the theme “Revitalizing urban space connected to the Sea”. The visioning workshop organized in the framework of the meeting

		Cities Commissions	contributed to the development of the Maritime Western Turku 2050 strategy as well as revitalization of five concrete districts of the city connect to the sealine. The Commission meeting gathered ideas and suggestions from more than 60 participants that will be further feed into the city’s work in the future planning and design of the areas. In the meeting multidisciplinary expertise in urban planning, climate change, transport, water management and related sustainable urban development was utilized to address social and environmental challenges.
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3. Projects (only major projects)

a. EMPEREST – Eliminating Micro-Pollutants from Effluents for Reuse Strategies (2023-2025)

Financing: Interreg BSR Programme 2021-2027; budget: 5.4M EUR

Project partners: 14 project partners from Finland, Estonia, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Aims and results: EMPEREST aims at the elimination of hazardous substances, and specifically emerging pollutants (PFAS) from the wastewater stream. Project results: regional recommendations for monitoring and assessment of PFAS in the aquatic environments, local risk assessment plans in five municipalities (test in 18 municipalities), advanced mobile technology form micropollutants removal from wastewater and training package for the capacity development of water experts.

Short description: UBC SCC is the Lead Partner of the project, and the cooperation will address both local and regional level actions. From the local level, the project targets both cities and the local water service providers. Water service operators will test advanced treatment technology that helps better remove organic micropollutants from wastewaters.

More information: <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/emperest/>

b. BALTIPLAST – Baltic Approaches to Handling Plastic Pollution under a Circular Economy Context (2023-2025)

Financing: Interreg BSR Programme 2021-2027; budget: 4.3M EUR

Project partners: 18 project partners from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Finland.

Summary: The project BALTIPLAST brings technological solutions to help public authorities reduce plastic waste and trigger investments in sustainable sorting and recycling. The project targets municipalities, businesses, NGOs and citizens with different measures and tools for plastic reduction and recycling.

Short description: UBC SCC is the leader of the WP3 transfer activities and is particularly involved in developing the BALTIPLAST Plastic Waste Management Platform and an educational kit for addressing plastic waste targeting BSR municipalities.

More information: <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/baltiplast/>

c. SUMP for BSR – enhancing effective Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning for supporting active mobility in BSR cities (2023-2026)

Financing: Interreg BSR Programme 2021-2027; budget: 4.3M EUR

Project partners: 9 Project partners from Finland, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden. UBC SCC Lead partner of the project.

Aims and results: The project aims to increase the uptake of SUMP as a strategic tool for sustainable mobility planning. Project will focus on a common framework for monitoring and evaluation of sustainable urban mobility planning in cities. Following outputs will be developed in the project: monitoring and evaluation framework for effective sustainable urban mobility planning, tested approaches for collection of data on active mobility modes, concept for the training package on SUMP, adapted BSR SUMP Competence Centre Platform – the main information point on SUMP in the BSR.

Short description: UBC SCC is the Lead Partner of the project. The project supports cities in shifting their planning practices towards people-centered sustainable urban mobility planning, focusing on active mobility modes and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for citizens, while reducing emissions from traffic. Special focus lies on small and mid-sized BSR cities in preparing and implementing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP).

d. Climate-4-CAST – A Climate Action decision Support Tool to accelerate cities’ progress towards climate neutrality (2023 – 2026)

Financing: Interreg BSR Programme 2021-2027; budget: 3.8M EUR

Project partners: 10 project partners from Germany, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Finland, Sweden and Poland.

Aims and results: Climate-4-CAST contributes to climate neutrality by empowering local authorities to integrate climate concerns into urban governance processes. The project equips local administrations with an open source decision support tool to allow visualisation of individual measures’ emissions impacts in different scenarios and a cost-benefit analysis of the measures’ performance against city goals. The project accelerates cities’ climate actions and improves policy implementation for climate neutrality.

Short description: UBC SCC is the leader of the WP3 transfer activities and is particularly involved in organising 2 Climate Budget Summits, and development of the Climate Budget training course.

The UBC SCC has a reputation for being highly requested to participate in international projects, supporting the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In the period 2021 – 2023, UBC SCC has been involved in numerous projects as associated organization: ZeroPfas II (led by Swedish Institute), CliMaLoc (led by Council of the Baltic Sea States), ChemClimCircle (led by City Stockholm), NonHazCity 3 (led by Riga City Council) and Change(K)Now! (led by Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences).

4. Cooperation with other organisations

During 2021-2023, the UBC SCC continued active cooperation with various important stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region.

Union of the Baltic Cities has been for 6 years cooperating with CDP – one of the leading voluntary climate reporting organizations, for the common efforts of the sustainable development of the UBC members. In 2022, the disclosure period took place from April till the end of July. The cities that reported before the end of July had had their reports rated. Despite

the hardships and aftershocks of the recent pandemic, as well as the economic and energy crises that sprung up from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the number of disclosing cities remained consistent with newcomers joining the common effort. This year has marked the commencement of the disclosure of environmental data by the City of Kiel. Altogether, 16 cities disclosed their environmental data through the CDP-ICLEI Track in 2022. In 2022, many cities have shown remarkable resilience in their environmental activities, and cities have been actively engaging in environmental disclosure. The slight dip in the number of disclosing cities might be attributed to the fact that some cities have adopted the disclosure on a two or three-year cycle.

Furthermore, UBC SCC is in a close cooperation (as observer) with Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission known as HELCOM. UBC SCC has an observatory status with the body and contributes to the matters dealt with by HELCOM.

UBC SCC has also a well-established cooperation with VASAB – inter-governmental multilateral cooperation of 11 Baltic Sea Region states. Together we are working on sustainability matters on both local (UBC) and transnational level (VASAB) across wide array of activities, such as environment, transport, education, culture, tourism, business development, youth issues, gender equality as well as urban planning.

In the framework of the CBSS – Baltic2030 Action Plan UBC SCC is a member of the Expert Group on Sustainable Development. Organisations lead close cooperation related to management of projects, event planning and mutual support.

Last, but not least, UBC SCC constantly cooperates with multiple public organisations and other relevant stakeholders in the region while implementing various projects (eg. Urban Future Conference, European City Facility, EUSBSR PA Nutri and Hazards).

5. Other activities

During 2021-2023 UBC SCC has concentrated primarily in raising awareness of the Commission and UBC in general to interest groups and secondly in informing and promoting co-operation to its member cities. Thirdly the communication efforts have consisted of disseminating information and educating about the various sustainability themed projects the UBC SCC is involved with. The communication strategy for the UBC SCC has been to use more online tools and channels of communication in its activities and to have a more targeted presence in social media. These tools have among other things helped to facilitate the participation especially to the online events more efficiently. Below is listed the description of the most important channels used in the Commission's day-to-day communication activities: online meetings, UBC Sustainable Cities Commission website, the Sustainable Cities Bulletin, e-Newsletters and Invitations, webinars, UBC SCC Facebook, UBC SCC Twitter account, UBC SCC Instagram, UBC SCC YouTube account, UBC SCC LinkedIn account (used back-to-back with the main Secretariat of UBC).