

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES November 2019 – October 2021

I. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

1. Horizontal Action Capacity

UBC has been one of three coordinators, together with the Swedish Institute and Norden Association representing the Baltic Sea NGO Network, of the HA Capacity. Its task was to increase the project capacity, skills and competence of all stakeholders involved in the Strategy, through the training programs. The other dimension of the Horizontal Action Capacity was to ensure broad participation of local and regional authorities as well as all other stakeholders.

The objectives of HA Capacity have been implemented within the project PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP - implementing three work programmes 2018 – 2020 (extended until 2021) co-funded from the BSR INTERREG Programme. The project was led by Norden Association in Sweden, UBC was a project partner. The total project budget was 755,413.75 EUR.

The UBC contribution to the project culminated with 7 online workshops for the stakeholders from Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland, run in November-December 2020:

- Poland 23 November
- Lithuania 24 November
- Denmark 26 November
- Finland 27 November
- Latvia 1 December
- Estonia 2 December
- Germany 7 December

The objectives of each session were as follows:

- Promoting stakeholders and their involvement in each country
- Increasing the level of knowledge of macro-regional strategies
- Introducing concrete benefits for the stakeholders
- Brainstorming and suggesting potential follow-up actions within EUSBSR

The participants, including the stakeholders representing municipalities and regions, different institutions and organisations, business and academia, discussed the biggest challenges of the regional cooperation and ideas on how to face them. In total 233 participants took part in the workshops.

Results of the workshops:

- The visibility of EUSBSR and its benefits is increased in member states
- The support for shaping the national implementation of the strategy is increased within the pool of new stakeholders
- The higher commitment of new stakeholders to integrate the strategy in their strategic decisions or initiatives

2. EUSBSR Annual Fora

11th EUSBSR Annual Forum, 20 October 2020 (online)

The EUSBSR 11th Annual Forum “Our Region, Our Future – Towards a Decade of Innovation and Sustainability” was organised online as a virtual event, broadcasted from Turku, Finland on 20 October 2020. The themes of the Forum were sustainability and innovations. The UBC and its Commissions were co-organizers of several workshops.

- “Unlocking the nutrient recycling potential in the Baltic Sea Region”, 30 September 2020

The workshop discussed the state-of-the-art in nutrient recycling within and across the two sectors, agriculture and municipal wastewater management, raised a set of priority issues to address and outlined recommendations to stakeholders as input to the update of the post-2020 EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The workshop is organised jointly by the two Interreg-funded platform projects BSR WATER (bsrwater.eu) and SuMaNu (balticsumanu.eu).

- STEAM – Science and Technology Path for Every Child and Youngster, 2 October 2020

STEAM comes from the words Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. These are the skills needed in the future and this workshop concentrates on one very basic, yet extremely important question: how to build science and technology path for every child and youngster through the education.

The aim of this workshop was to discuss STEAM work, to share best practices and experiences and plan the future activities in the Baltic Sea Region.

Workshop included case studies (STEAM Turku and other best examples from the BSR) about STEAM-cooperation and youngsters role in this work. Moreover, participants took part in discussion about the future STEAM cooperation in the area. This part of the workshop utilized the best inclusive and innovative methods of inclusion of all the participants.

Participants of the workshop represented diversely different stakeholders (educational organizations, decision-makers, youth workers, youngsters, enterprises etc.).

The workshop was co-organized by the UBC Task Force for Youth Employment and Well-being.

- Common Road Map for COOPERATION in BSR: Joint actions for Sustainable Region, 6 October 2020

The Workshop aimed at discussing the possible formats, actions and measures to undertake for further development of the cooperation between multilevel stakeholders in the EU and the North Western Russia, especially in the areas where such cooperation is needed and improves the efficiency of the EUSBSR and addresses the interests of both.

The Workshop gathered the key actors from the BSR, including representatives from cooperation platforms, cities and regions to discuss the Road Map and possibility to draft a Joint Action Plan for Sustainability of the BS Region as well as the instruments and resources needed for that purpose.

Organisers: CBSS, HA Neighbours, CBSS, HA Capacity (Swedish Institute, UBC), City of Turku, St. Petersburg Government - Committee for External Relations of Saint-Petersburg, Leontief Centre

- Reducing security risks related to the climate change and mainstreaming climate agenda in EUSBSR after 2020? 12 October 2020

The workshop introduced the topic of reducing security risks related to the climate change. Climate related risks for municipalities are growing in number and intensity. The EU is supporting the development of tools for working with climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction on the local level. An important part of this is determining which climate related hazards municipalities might face and how they might play out in terms of consequences.

Furthermore, the workshop focused on the policy dialogues on climate change and risk reduction, and on the opportunities existing in the region for climate change cooperation and facilitation.

The workshop was organized by the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission.

12th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Lithuania, 27 September to 1 October 2021 (online)

The Forum focused on green recovery. The programme consisted of daily major events, workshops organised by the EUSBSR Policy Areas, and events dedicated to the youth. In addition, participants were invited to 3 different networking villages.

UBC, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Kaunas City Municipality, and Klaipėda City Municipality, was a co-organizer of the Forum. The project was co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

More than 30 workshops and other events were organized by the EUSBSR Policy Areas and other stakeholders, including UBC:

- Session I: “Cities leading positive social transformations”, 29 September, 15:00-18:00

The session was dedicated to showcasing cities’ strategic projects in promoting positive social movements in terms of social inclusion, participatory models in communities and decision making, citizenship initiatives, debating the role of new technologies in promoting social cohesion and finally reflecting on impacts of corona crisis on social movements. UBC cities presenting their experiences: Pruszcz Gd., Riga, Gdynia, Gdańsk, Kaunas.

- Session II: “Cities as leaders in Green recovery“, 30 September, 15:00-18:00

The session was dedicated to showcasing cities’ strategic projects in advancing green projects and initiatives in terms of transport, food, ecology, smart cities and discovering the role of European and cross-border cooperation in this matter. UBC cities presenting their experiences: Liepāja, Gdańsk, Gotland, Vaasa, Rakvere, Kalmar, Lahti, Kiel, Kemi, Kaunas, Riga.

- Networking Villages: “Meet the stakeholders” (28 September), „Meet the colleagues“ (29 September), “Foster green innovations” (30 September).
- Closing Session “Sustainable future of the BSR: what role for the youth?” – moderation. Mantas Jurgutis, President of UBC, was one of the panellists.

II. Questionnaire 'Mapping the needs of UBC Member Cities'

Questionnaire 'Mapping the needs of UBC Member Cities', sent out to the UBC member cities in the beginning of March 2020, aimed at identifying the cities’ needs and expectations towards the Union.

There were 37 responds from 35 cities. The questionnaire consisted of two parts “UBC now” and “UBC in the future”.

The survey questions included:

- What does UBC do best?
- What can be improved?
- What are the main internal challenges?
- What does your city expect from UBC?
- What are the main external trends and challenges UBC should address in the future?
- How do you see the future role of UBC?

According to the responds, UBC is a good networking provider that brings the cities and municipalities around the Baltic Sea together, sharing experience and expertise, good practices and information. Also, a big dissemination capacity of project results was recognized.

Referring to the question about the main internal challenges - members’ engagement, cooperation among cities, project opportunities and clear focus on strategic priorities were pointed out.

The cities gave some recommendations on what can be improved, including project development capacity or representation of cities’ interest on the EU level. This goes hand in hand with the future role of the UBC that appears from the picture framed by the respondents. The UBC cities want to see the UBC as a strong regional player that provides expertise, new ideas, projects, a leader trying to solve problems of the cities and a reliable and respected partner in EU decision-making.

Among the main trends that UBC should address in the future the cities listed: IT and digitalization, crisis response capacities, health issues, climate change, SDG2030, democracy challenges, migrations.

The questionnaire was conducted with the assistance of Out of the Box International.

III. UBC Antenna in Brussels

The UBC Executive Board at its online meeting, 17 April 2020, decided to re-activate the UBC Antenna in Brussels. The office is led by the Out of the Box International.

The partnership between UBC and OTB offers the opportunity for more effective advocacy and lobbying of the UBC cities' interests, increasing the visibility of UBC among European institutions, thus influencing EU policies, which impact local member cities' authorities in the long term. The expected results of the cooperation between UBC and OTB would be: better visibility of UBC at the EU level, UBC taking part in some of the most relevant policy dialogues with the European Commission / European Parliament, increasing financing coming from the projects.

The activities of the UBC Antenna in the reported period included:

- updates on relevant EU policies;
- supporting UBC Secretariat in preparing project applications;
- organization of events on EU level ("Bridging citizens with SMART cooperation" during the European Week of Regions and Cities, 7 October 2020; "Building innovative and effective policies stimulating behavior changes in modern cities – towards zero pollution" workshop within EU Green Week, 7 June 2021)
- participation in BSSSC and CBSS online meetings
- preparation of Positioning Road Map for Brussels.
- meetings aimed at renewal of partnerships with UBC partners (Eurocities, Committee of the Regions)

Positioning Road Map for Brussels

According to questionnaire sent out to member cities, UBC as a representative regional organization should promote the interests of its members and the region in European decision-making. Furthermore, UBC members expect the organisation to work towards Agenda 2030 and to be a strong regional player and reliable body for European consultations. At the 86th UBC Executive Board Meeting, on-line, 28 October 2020, Positioning Road Map for Brussels was presented.

The document was aimed to achieve the following results by the end of 2021:

- Improved visibility of UBC at the EU level
- Improved involvement of UBC in relevant EU policy dialogues
- Increased project financing with the current budget

The visibility and positioning strategy provides basic information about key stakeholders and the UBC approach working with them.

Meetings

- “Bridging citizens with SMART cooperation” during the European Week of Regions and Cities, 7 October 2020

During the session some solutions were explored on how to stimulate and help citizens build local projects and initiatives. The participants discussed how COVID-19 has influenced citizenship initiatives. Among the speakers there was Mantas Jurgutis, UBC President.

The session was co-organized by UBC, European Projects Association (EPA), Metropolitan City of Venice, Municipality of Fažana, Out of The Box International, and Unioncamere del Veneto.

- “Building innovative and effective policies stimulating behavior changes in modern cities – towards zero pollution” workshop within EU Green Week, 7 June 2021

The aim of this workshop was to provide different views how diverse stakeholders from European Networks, representing cities, innovators, policy makers, ICT sector, could provoke individual changes and work together to contribute to the current climate emergency.

UBC President Mantas Jurgutis was speaking about UBC, its policy and how to use city perspective in changing behaviour.

IV. Task Force on Policy and Projects – 4 position papers

In 2020, the Executive Board at its 85th meeting authorised the Presidium to set up a new Task Force on Policy & Projects, with Brussels Antenna as a leader, and Chairs of the UBC Commissions, some city representatives and the UBC Secretariat as members.

Among the goals of this Task Force there was creating a comprehensive policy framework and policy papers on topics relevant for UBC, related to its core values and priorities of member cities. Another step will be developing project concept notes.

In 2020 a couple of meetings were held. Four working groups were working on the main topics:

- Urban Agenda for EU
- Cohesion policies beyond 2020
- Climate Change and Sustainable Development
- Resilient UBC Cities

As a result of the work, four policy position papers were prepared.

“Climate Change and Sustainable Development Until 2030”

“UBC cities will be climate-smart, providing a good ground for the green economy to grow (...). They will increasingly be known as global forerunners to create a high-quality living environment for their inhabitants.” This ambitious vision of the UBC cities, as well as historic background of 30 years’ UBC battle towards sustainable Baltic Sea Region is included in this paper.

The paper highlights the importance of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, with indicating all international initiatives and organisation in which UBC is partaking.

The core part of the paper includes positions of UBC, like the UBC support to the European Green Deal.

“Resilient Cities – beyond 2020”

The paper indicates that Post Covid-19 times will require increasing the resilience capacities of cities. Local authorities need to face challenges like health problems, growing number of disadvantaged citizens among whom young people are especially vulnerable, temporary unemployment. But there are also other questions that have to be tackled: digitalisation and cyber-security, climate change and threats to environmental sustainability.

In the UBC positions the emphasis is put especially on New City Planning, New Partnerships, Funding and Innovative, New City Services.

“Social Cohesion in Cities – beyond 2020”

One of the EU priorities for 2022-2027 is mainstreaming social cohesion perspective in different activities.

The UBC positions in this policy paper reflect on four different aspects in building cohesive cities: Vulnerable groups, Youth, that require support in health problems, risk of early school leaving, finding jobs and participation in decision making process, Education and Culture.

“Urban Agenda for the EU”

The paper presents key objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU, like reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions.

The main UBC positions in the framework of the Urban Agenda concern integrated urban development, innovative and resilient cities, inclusive communities and inclusion of migrants and refugees.

The process was facilitated by the Chair Igor Jojkic and supported by UBC Antenna from Brussels.

V. Projects

UBC has increased its involvement in the externally funded projects, especially from INTERREG BSR, Erasmus+ and Swedish Institute.

There have been 8 projects run in the reported period with UBC as a partner/co-beneficiary (HA Capacity/ INTERREG BSR, CREST/ Erasmus+, Baltic Sea Youth Platform/ Erasmus+,

CULTURE4CLIMATE/ INTERREG BSR Seed Money, Umbrella 2.0/ Swedish Institute, SPORT4VALUES/ Erasmus+) or an associated partner (NOAH, EmPaci). 9 applications for projects have been submitted in 2021 so far.

- PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP / INTERREG BSR

The objectives of HA Capacity have been implemented within the project PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP - implementing three work programmes 2018 – 2020 co-funded from the BSR INTERREG Programme. The project was led by Norden Association in Sweden, UBC was a project partner. The total project budget was 755,413.75 EUR.

Project outcomes:

- CAPACITY BUILDING. Supporting stakeholders to develop skills and competencies to succeed in their respective roles in the implementation of the Action Plan.
- PROMOTION OF INVOLVEMENT AND PARTICIPATION: The EUSBSR has created a coherent and structured framework for joint actions to address common challenges and mobilize regional resources in the Baltic Sea Region;
- COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION. The third building block of activities included the general coordination and anchoring of the activities of HA Capacity as well as other horizontal activities.

- EUSBSR AF 2021/ INTERREG 2021

At its online meeting on 5 May 2021, the Monitoring Committee of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme selected the application of Lithuania to organise the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2021 in Lithuania for approval. The theme of this year's EUSBSR Annual Forum was *Revitalise, Recover, Recharge*. Around 1700 persons registered to the Forum. The project was implemented together with Kaunas City Municipality, Klaipėda City Municipality and the Union of the Baltic Cities. Project budget: 299,350.00 EUR, UBC budget: 69,800.00 EUR. The Forum is the largest EUSBSR event, taking place on an annual basis in EUSBSR Member States.

- CREST/ Erasmus+

The project “Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments” addresses the challenges of HE institutions in the processes of re-purposing of educational buildings and spaces, including the lack of professional expertise when it comes to creating and sustaining learning environments that support student centered learning and implement principles of learning ergonomics.

The activities include the mapping of existing practices models of repurposing educational buildings and spaces, creation of a model for HE institutions on how to implement re-purposing that is adapted to the contemporary needs and their piloting in the partner countries and finally dissemination and advocacy.

The project will be implemented in 2020-2022 by 6 partners from 5 countries: Slovenia (University of Ljubljana), Lithuania (MB HOMO EMINENS, VDU), Croatia (Culture Hub), Poland (UBC) and Belgium (Out of the Box International).

- Baltic Sea Youth Platform/ Erasmus+

The project is to empower youth in the Baltic Sea Region by improving the political impact of the youth on Baltic Sea policymaking, enabling knowledge transfer amongst the organisations, and facilitating innovative projects planned and implemented by youth. The project will end in August 2022. The total budget is 239,829 EUR.

Project partners: CBSS, BSSSC, UBC, Euroregion Baltic, Lithuanian Youth Council, Erasmus Student Network Finland.

- Umbrella 2.0/ Swedish Institute

UMBRELLA 2.0- Boosting transnational cooperation capacities for multilevel actors in the Baltic Sea Region goal is to increase awareness and knowledge of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. The project aims at initiating a process for the development of strong multi-actor and multilevel governance partnerships that can undertake cross-sectoral sustainable solutions while following the principles and objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EU Green Deal and UN SDG.

Project partners: Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic (ERB) – lead, UBC, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) - Associated partner.

- C4C CULTURE4CLIMATE/ INTERREG BSR Seed Money

The seed-money-project C4C will develop a pathway for harnessing voluntary environmental action among cultural and education institutions in the BSR. The certification of progress towards reducing direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions will monitor a trajectory towards sustainability among participating organizations. The project is led by Ars Baltica, UBC (Cultural Cities Commission) is a partner.

- SPORT4VALUES/ Erasmus+

'Sport for Values' ended in September 2020. It aimed at identifying good practices, developing practical tools and disseminating them through a series of workshops, training and conferences for urban sports development.

The partners were: Kaunas, Lithuania (Applicant), La Rissa, Greece, Portimao, Portugal, Umeå, Sweden, Campobasso, Italy, Fazana, Croatia, Sandanski, Bulgaria, Thermi, Greece, Liepaja, Latvia and UBC.

- PITCH: A model for gender-sensitive intergration strategies based on Personalised, particiPaTory, loCal, and multistakeHolder approaches / Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (approved in September 2021)

PITCH is a 36-months project, aimed at establishing a common European ground to support the design and implementation of local integration strategies addressed to migrant women, based on a personalised, participatory, and multi-stakeholder approach. The project will do so

by co-designing a model, translating it into 7 local strategies, and pilot-testing it with migrant women in Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania and Sweden. UBC is a partner.

VI. UBC30

The UBC celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2021. On this occasion, the jubilee book “UBC – 30 years of boosting cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region” was prepared by the UBC Secretariat.

It includes e.g. the stories of people who initiated the establishment of the organisation and influenced its development. Also, the main achievements of the UBC and its Commissions are highlighted.

The jubilee book is available at: https://ubc.net/sites/default/files/ubc30lr_corr.pdf

<https://issuu.com/unionofthebalticcities/docs/ubc30lr>

VII. New UBC Strategy

The Executive Board at the meeting on 17 April 2020 authorized the Presidium to set up the Task Force on new Strategy. Its aim was to develop an outlook for the next 10 years with active involvement of all UBC bodies. Three meetings / webinar workshops were held using different tools and methods to brainstorm on the vision of UBC in the coming years, what are the lessons from the past of our organisation, what is the purpose and mission of the network.

The new Strategy is a concise document expressing the mission of the UBC, its values and areas of cooperation.

The Strategy is to be adopted at the XVI UBC General Conference on 29 October 2021 (online).

VIII. Pandemic stories

The COVID-19 pandemic effected UBC’s work. The activities and meeting were moved online. The UBC supported its member cities by providing a space where all experiences, challenges and solutions could be shared. In 2020 the cities’ experiences from the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic were published on the UBC website and social media. In 2021 the members were asked for their plans of recovery: how is your city planning and making its way out of the crisis and in to the new normal? What are the issues, aspects investments as well as practical solutions you are taking up?

All stories are published at: <https://ubc.net/content/recovery-coronavirus-crisis-share-your-cities-stories>

IX. Bulletins

The Baltic Cities Bulletin published by the UBC Secretariat provides information about the work of the Union and news from the member cities. Moreover, an emphasis is put on covering some specific fields of general interest which are presented as main themes of each issue.

In the last period the following issues have been published: “Safe city for everyone”, “Livable cities for residents of all age groups”, “Smart Development”, “Resilient Baltic Sea Cities. Tackling the challenges and creating the future(s).”

UBC Executives during two-year period

Mantas Jurgutis, Kaunas, President
Elina Rantanen, Turku, First Vice-President
Piotr Grzelak, Gdańsk, Vice-President
Vyacheslav Kalganov, St. Petersburg, Vice-President
Jørgen H. Kristiansen, Kristiansand, Vice-President
Paweł Żaboklicki, Gdańsk, Secretary General

Executive Board during two-year period

Elva, Estonia
Gdynia, Poland
Kemi, Finland
Kolding, Denmark
Liepāja, Latvia
Rostock, Germany
Panevėžys, Lithuania
St. Petersburg, Russia
Umeå, Sweden

Executive Board Meetings

Three Executive Board meetings took place during the reporting period between XV and XVI General Conferences. Due to the pandemic, they were held online:

85th Executive Board meeting, 17 April 2020
86th Executive Board meeting, 28 October 2020
87th Executive Board meeting, 10 June 2021

The Executive Board played meaningful role in the development of UBC activities. The Board considered and endorsed a number of actions, initiatives and projects submitted by the Presidium, Commissions and Member Cities. The projects, initiatives, activities, events and other actions carried out by UBC during the described period are outlined in this report.

Board of Audit during two-year period

Marta Chełkowska, Director of Tourism Department, Pomorskie Voivodship
Maria Santana, International Consultant, Næstved
Roger Kaliff, Chairman of the City Council, Kalmar

UBC Secretariat

Union of the Baltic Cities Secretariat is located in the City of Gdańsk at the residence of the City Council. The Secretariat provides daily service to the UBC and its members. The Union has been satisfied with the work performed by the Secretariat. The financial matters have been

handled properly as confirmed by the auditor. The Union would like to express its thanks to the City of Gdańsk for its contribution to the UBC.

UBC Commissions

In the reported period the UBC Commissions have been led by the following Cities:

Commission:	Lead City:
Cultural Cities	Kaunas
Inclusive and Healthy Cities	-
Planning Cities	Gdynia
Safe Cities	Liepāja
Smart and Prospering Cities	Kiel
Sustainable Cities	Turku
Youthful Cities	Riga

Examples of projects, activities and events carried out by the Commissions within the reporting period are concisely described below.

Cultural Cities Commission

The Commission was chaired by Rūta Stepanovaitė, Kaunas until 17 September 2021.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

All meetings during the 2020-2021 were held online, and included:

- 1st Cultural Cities Commission webinar “Culture and politics in the COVID-19/post COVID-19 times”, 9 June 2020
- 2nd Cultural Cities Commission webinar "Pandemic and border closures – how to sustain cultural exchange?", 4 August 2020
- Project meetings

Projects

- ARS BALTICA Creative Dialogue (ABCD) / CBSS Project Support Facility
- UrbCulturalPlanning / INTERREG BSR
- Baltic Sea Cultural Cities & Regions (BSCCR) / Swedish Institute Seed Money
- Culture 4 Climate (C4C) / INTERREG BSR Seed Money

Planning Cities Commission

The Members of the Steering Committee: Paulina Szewczyk from Gdynia (Chairperson), Christian Hegardt from Visby (Vice Chairperson), Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå, Björn Grönholm from Turku. Tomas Strömberg passed away during this year after many years of dedicated work for City of Umeå and the Planning Cities Commission. Secretariat is located in Gdynia.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- „Liveable city Combining history and contemporary life in urban space” was planned to be held in Turku, Finland, 24-27 May 2020 in cooperation with Sustainable Cities Commission and the city of Turku. The Seminar was postponed due to the pandemic situation.
- „The impact of coronavirus on the city planning. Experiences of the Baltic Cities”, 19 November 2020 using Zoom tele-conference platform. Over 40 participants took part.
- Meeting ”UBC Planning Cities Commission welcomes new UBC Member Cities”, 19 April 2021, using Zoom tele-conference platform. Nearly 40 participants took part.
- Seminar “Rostock NW 2035+. How to make 5 absolutely solid satellite towns even better”, 26-29 September 2022, Rostock.

Cooperation with other organisations

- Baltic Urban Cultural Planning Conference 2020
- NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS Conversation 4: Connections – activating networks
- 15th international Crisis Management Conference

Safe Cities Commission

UBC Safe Cities Commission Chairman Kaspars Vārpiņš (Deputy Chief of Liepāja Municipal Police) and the Vice-Chairman is Torbjörn Lindström (Development manager of Southwest Finland Emergency Services). Secretariat is located in Liepāja Municipal Police.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- Commission meeting and project “Youth for safer youth” kick-off meeting, 10-12 December 2019, Liepāja

Safe Cities Commission members together with youth representatives from the CBSS PSF funded project “Youth for safer youth” met to work on a questionnaire about youth safety feeling and the possible solutions to raise the safety in the Baltic Sea Region.

- Safe Cities Commission four virtual meetings on Covid-19 questions, March - May 2020

When the Covid-19 pandemic became an issue and was quite big unknown, UBC Safe Cities Commission organized four online meetings to discuss the situation in their cities and shared their experience.

- Project “ReSit – Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region” final conference, 11 March 2021, online

During the project “ReSit” final conference together with the project partners the results of the project were presented and discussed about volunteerism and societal resilience in the Baltic Sea Region.

- UBC Talks Webinar “Cascading consequences of climate hazards – How to make cities more resilient in the Baltic Sea Region?” together with UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, 30 March 2021, online

The first UBC TALKS webinar of 2021 discussed climate hazards and how cities in the Baltic Sea Region can build resilience.

- Safe Cities Commission meeting, 15 April 2021, online

Working meeting during which representatives from new UBC member cities (Hamburg and Valmiera) took part and introduced themselves.

- Webinar “How to make cities more resilient?” Results and recommendations from the CASCADE project final conference together with UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, 8 June 2021

The final conference brought forward the results and recommendations from the project, including the launch the Climate Risk Preparedness Toolbox, and discussed future of climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and resilience.

Projects

- NEEDS - Needs-based education and studies in societal security / Erasmus+
- CASCADE (Community safety action for supporting climate adaptation and development) / DG ECHO
- Youth for safer youth / CBSS Project Support Facility
- ReSit - Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland

Smart and Prospering Cities Commission

The commission’s secretariat is run by Wolfgang Schmidt and fully financed by the City of Kiel.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- Future of Tourism, 16 June 2020

More than 60 experts from the tourism and marketing sector have discussed ways out of the lockdown, future region marketing and changes in the tourism industry.

- Successful Webinar, 29 September 2020

The practical webinar aimed to show how to create an influencing and successful webinar. The trainer was Annelie Herwig, former rhetoric trainer for Amazon executives.

- Resilient City, 23 April 2021

The resilient city, capable of coping with these challenges was discussed as a goal and way of ensuring continuity in our urban societies.

- Digital Delegation, 17 June 2021

A seminar about a 100 % digital delegation journey as a safe, environmental friendly and cost-effective complement to traditional in-person. Experiences of Kiel and Aarhus were presented.

- The City of the Future, 22 October 2021

In this seminar the thesis was discussed that the city of the future has these four key characteristics: Part of a mega-region. Caring. Radically digital. International.

Projects

Creative Ports

Creative Ports, internationalisation of the Cultural and Creative Industries in the Baltic Sea Region is an initiative of the Goethe-Institute in the Baltic Sea Region for the younger generation of cultural and creative entrepreneurs.

Cooperation with other organisations

- Goethe-Institute
- Swedish Institute
- STRING
- INTA International Urban Development Association
- Digital Week Kiel
- Waterkant startup festival

Sustainable Cities Commission

Sustainable Cities Commission (UBC SCC) is hosted by the City of Turku, Finland. The UBC SCC Secretariat, led by Björn Grönholm, and a professional staff of 14 persons from Finland, Poland, Germany, Russia, Ukraine and Estonia are coordinating the Commission and Secretariat related tasks. The UBC SCC is steered by three co-chairpersons in close cooperation with the Head of the UBC Secretariat of Sustainable Cities Commission and its Advisory Board.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- UBC TALKS webinar series (January, March, April, May, September, October, November, December 2020, March 2021)
- Project meetings
- EUSBSR workshops

Projects

- CIVITAS ECCENTRIC – 2016-2020 / 7th Framework Programme - CIVITAS Initiative
- SUMP UP – 2016-2020 / 7th Framework Programme - CIVITAS Initiative
- Cities.multimodal – October 2017-2020 / BSR INTERREG Programme 2014-2020
- CASCADE 2019-2020 (A Flagship project of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) / DG ECHO Civil Protection
- BSR WATER 2018 - 2021 (A Flagship project of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) / BSR INTERREG Programme 2014-2020
- HUPMOBILE 2019 – 2021 / BSR INTERREG Programme 2014-2020
- The European City Facility (EUCF) August 2019 – July 2023 / The EUCF is funded by Horizon 2020
- And more

Cooperation with other organisations

- EUSBSR
- CDP
- HELCOM
- VASAB
- CBSS

Youthful Cities Commission

As agreed by the members of the Commission in autumn of 2019, in January 2021 the chairmanship was taken over by the city of Riga (Latvia) for a two-year term.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- Future Workshops, 8 and 22 October 2020 (with 6 and 7 people participating in them respectively). During the online workshops participants analysed the results of the questionnaire about previous work of the Commission and shared their ideas about ways how to improve communication, structure, topic coverage, youth participation and external partnerships within the Commission.
- Commission's online meeting, 3 December 2020. 11 participants discussed practical steps how to put into practice ideas from the Future Workshops (topics of particular interest were identified and ideas for possible events were elaborated).

Projects

- Baltic Sea Youth Platform / Erasmus+
- YUPAD – YoUth PArticipatory Budgets Empowering Young People Using Big Data / Erasmus+ (submitted application)

Cooperation with other organisations

BSYP project has created a natural framework for cooperation on youth issues among the biggest networks of public bodies (CBSS, BSSSC and UBC) in the region. The stakeholders exchange information between themselves via the platform and run joint events (such as “Baltic Sea Youth Camp”).

Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being

In 2020 and 2021 UBC Task Force Supporting Youth Employment and Well-Being concentrated on three major themes, which are as follows:

- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) Path for every child and youngster
- Basic Skills or Upgrading Pathways (youngsters with problems with basic skills, such as math, literacy and IT)
- Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- STEAM BSR study visit and workshop in Tallinn, 11.-12.2.2020 (18 participants). Best practices around the BSR, Road Map for the STEAM BSR Cooperation (first step), Tallinn's best STEAM practices;
- TF Planning Meeting: STEAM Activities 26.8.2020 (8 participants). The Aim of the meeting was to continue the work started in Tallinn. Participants discussed about STEAM activities in BSR Cities and planned coming STEAM events
- STEAM workshop as a part of Annual Forum 2.10. (26 participants). Best practices and a concrete plan for the future cooperation (collection of tools and practices, joint trainings, study visits, workshops, seminars, new projects, BSR science competition)
- School to Work seminar, 21.10. (68 participants). Themes: STEAM, basic skills, NEETs, Early School Leaving and attractiveness of VET
- Webinar / Online Study Visit: STEAM in Turku 18.5.2021 (58 participants). STEAM Turku in a nutshell: aims and goals, values, activities.
- Webinar: Today's Truants – The best practices to manage school attendance problems, PART I 20.5.2021 (11 participants). In this webinar Jukka Laine, rector of a comprehensive education, introduced the topic of SAPs.
- Webinar: Today's Truants – The best practices to manage school attendance problems, PART II 7.9.2021 (18 participants). In this webinar Malin Gren Landell, a psychologist, psychotherapist, researcher, and a renowned author gave a presentation that addressed what we know and what we need to know more about to deal better with SAPs.

Projects

Transnational ESF project BSR Neets supported the work of the Task Force by, for example, arranging a transnational meetings and disseminating best practices. BSR Neets project ended in April 2020.

During the year 2021 organisations from four BSR countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Finland) started to plan a STEAM based Erasmus project. This work continues.

Cooperation with other organisations

Task Force has worked very closely with Norden Association and SALAR (leading organisations in the School to Work network) and Goethe Institute Brussels (leading organisation in the StartNet network).

Working Group on Gender Equality

Ann-Sofie Lagercrantz and Katarina Johansson Storm from the city of Kalmar we the WG's coordinators. They were also responsible for the secretariat tasks.

Meetings/seminars/conferences

- On-line Development Day 2021” From knowledge to action in the UBC” was held on Monday February 8. Speakers among others were Jamie Just, CEMR, Catriona

Graham, EWL to give an overview on what's going on in Europe. 45 representatives from cities and civic organizations around the Baltic Sea participated.

Cooperation with other organisations

There has been a discussion with the organization Women's Baltic Peacebuilding Initiative (a political and religious independent association) for closer cooperation between the working group and the association, in the matter of running the working group.