



REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES October 2013 – October 2015

Introduction

Since the XII General Conference in Mariehamn, 1-4 October 2013, UBC has been implementing the UBC Strategy 2010-2015 adopted at the X General Conference Kristiansand.

One of the most important tasks in the reported period was energizing and streamlining UBC Commissions' work. Their consolidation was part of the renewal process of UBC addressed by its Strategy. The goal of the new structure is to make UBC serve the interests of its members even better, as well as to ensure that UBC's voice is heard and interests taken into account in European decision-making.

Instead of thirteen, there are now seven new Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities.

In 2015 they held their kick-off meetings and highlighted the action plans within the new structure.

Also, the UBC has been working to raise its public profile and visibility in the region and in Europe. As a follow-up of the UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy, adopted in 2012, the communication specialist was appointed to improve communication within UBC. The modern website, logo facelift, social media, digital publications and improved internal and external communication will be the expected results of the process. The UBC Communications Network was established to help communicate about the UBC's services and know-how in a more effective way.

The Union has been active in implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The UBC and its Commissions have been the partners in the EUSBSR projects. "Baltic Sea Region Urban Forum for Smart Cities" has been the UBC flagship project that reflects the ideas and priorities of the EUSBSR.

The UBC representatives took part in the 5th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region held on 2 June 2014 in Turku, Finland and in the 6th Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, 'Achieving e-Quality by Connecting the Region', held on 15-16 June 2015 in Jūrmala, Latvia.

The UBC along with the Baltic Sea NGO Network and the Swedish Institute became a coordinator of the EUSBSR Horizontal Action Capacity. The aim of HA Capacity is to offer capacity building support for the implementing stakeholders, using multilevel governance as an overall guiding principle.

Moreover, the UBC called for more attention to the local level and better correlation between EUSBSR and the BSR Programme in its statement on the Operational Programme of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020.

The Union has intensified its involvement in the activities of the Conference of European Cross-Border and Interregional Cities Network (CECICN) established on 23 April 2010 in Santiago de Compostela to advocate the interests of the cities, border-regions and interregional territories. In 2014 Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC, was re-elected as the President of CECICN.

Examples of policy issues handled by UBC:

1. UBC Strategy 2010-2015 implementation.

a. Consolidation process of the UBC Commissions

The General Conference in Mariehamn, 2-3 October 2013, mandated the Executive Board of UBC to actively continue dialogue on the structure and content of the UBC Commissions and obliged the Executive Board to reach a decision on the issue during the year 2014, so that starting from 1.1.2015 the UBC shall have between five to seven Commissions. The consolidation process was one of the main goals of the UBC Strategy 2010-2015.

The Commissions' leaders and the cities were consulted on how to improve the structure of the commissions. Potential mergers of the Commissions shall improve their effectiveness and thus make their work more relevant to the UBC cities. The Board decided to establish a task force to propose the new division of commissions at the Board meeting in autumn 2014. The Presidium appointed small and operative task force consisting of city representatives of: Elva, Kristiansand, Naestved, Turku, and UBC Secretariat.

The Task Force proposed to create the following Commissions:

- Planning Cities - working on integrated planning for sustainable, inclusive, attractive and prospering cities, through peer review exchange;
- Sustainable cities - dealing with environment, energy, smart urban mobility;
- Safe cities - concerned with civil protection issues - prevention, preparedness, response, restoration;
- Youthful cities - engaged in promoting interests of the young;
- Smart and prospering cities - dealing with business development, employment, co-creation with researchers/universities, procurement policies, links between education and the labour market, smart citizens and governance, etc.;
- Cultural cities - working on issues linked to attractiveness, creativity, cultural heritage including maritime heritage, etc.;
- Inclusive and healthy cities - engaged in smart social and health services and new solutions, social cohesion and inclusiveness, diversity, equality, healthy habits including sport, etc.

The TF proposal was approved at the Board meeting in Växjö, on 29 October 2014. The member cities were asked to nominate a representative to each Commission they are going to participate during the period 2015-2017.

Member Cities welcomed this change by signing up for the new Commissions – each of them gained more than 30 members. As a result, they would be more targeted, active and efficient, attracting more Member Cities and meeting their interests better.

At the Executive Board meeting in Kemi, 26 February 2015, the Commissions were asked to hold launch meetings, prepare actions plans and budgets. They were presented on 11 June 2015 at the Board meeting in Dolina Charlotty, where the Board authorized the Presidium to make a decision on Commissions funding in 2015 and 2016.

b. UBC Communication and Marketing

Another goal of the UBC Strategy was to raise public profile and visibility of UBC in the BSR. The UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy was adopted in 2012.

As a follow-up, the Executive Board at the meeting in Turku, 2 June 2014 decided to engage the communication specialist to improve communication within UBC. According to UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy the main goals of UBC communications and marketing are:

- Internal communications: Support the internal exchange and diffusion of ideas, inspiration and best practice within the UBC network of cities.
- Brand building: Establish UBC as a credible, future-oriented and relevant, leading Baltic Sea Region network, and a preferred partner in thematic issues that relate to e.g. urban development and city planning, sustainable cities, competitiveness of cities, social cohesiveness and integration etc.
- Lobbying: Help the UBC member cities to further their policy-advocacy goals vis-à-vis national government and the EU by leveraging its role as a major northern European network of more than 100 member cities.
- Marketing the BSR: Promote and market the Baltic Sea Region as a dynamic, competitive, prosperous and safe region.

According to the strategy, UBC's brand promise and core message should be:

"Union of the Baltic Cities is the leading network in Northern Europe, working to foster sustainable, smart and safe cities".

Core values should be reliability, friendliness, professionalism and orientation for the future. As well as that, themes should be prioritized and used in all communications and marketing: The Sustainable City – The Smart City – The Safe City.

At the 71st UBC Executive Board Meeting, Växjö, 28-30 October 2014, Irene Pendolin UBC Communications manager, presented the action plan, which included: developing UBC website, possibility of creating UBC intranet – internal website, strengthening the UBC brand among internal and external stakeholders, being active in social media, renewing UBC logo, visualities, typography, appointing people responsible for communications from the commissions and the member cities. The Executive Board approved the Plan of Action for UBC Communications and Marketing 2014–2015.

On 15-16 April 2015 the Communications Seminar for representatives of the new Commissions, cities' communication experts and other stakeholders was held in Turku. One of the issues discussed was the

UBC website. Its renewal is part of the larger process that would comprise renewing the whole UBC look: logo, visualities, typography, etc. All these elements are part of strengthening the UBC brand which should be more recognizable, both internally and externally. The UBC's services and know-how should be known to the member cities. The possibilities of getting involved and benefitting from the UBC activities and work should be widely communicated. The proposal of establishing the UBC Communications Network could help to meet this challenge.

33 participants from 14 UBC cities, namely Elva, Gdańsk, Gävle, Jelgava, Jyväskylä, Klaipeda, Kolding, Kotka, Liepaja, Pori, Trelleborg, Turku, Umeå, Växjö, including representatives of 4 Commissions and Secretariat, took part in the seminar. Seminar report was presented by Communication manager at the 73rd EB meeting, Dolina Charlotty, 11 June 2015.

Presidium decided to allocate appropriate resources for measures proposed by Communications Manager concerning the renewal of UBC website, UBC's visual look including UBC logo, design and production of UBC intranet, graphic guidelines and templates, layout design for Baltic Cities Bulletin, design of general brochure, and other measures considered needed in this renewal project. These funds can be used in 2015 and if needed in 2016.

2. Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being

UBC General Conference in Mariehamn, 1–4 October in 2013, decided to establish a Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being. Discussions in Mariehamn clearly indicated that UBC member cities and their partner organisations have a vast experience in these issues. What is more, it proved that they are interested to work together in order to seek practical and effective solutions to tackle youth unemployment and marginalization.

The first meeting of the TF was held on 17 March 2014 in Tampere. Matti Mäkelä, Chair of the TF, introduced its results at the Board meeting on 18 March in Tampere. It was decided that all the UBC cities involved in the TF would provide an overview on challenges, good practices and innovations/new ideas in their cities/regions on following themes:

- guidance and support
- flexible educational paths
- cooperation between different actors
- participation
- taking special groups into account
- other services that prevent social exclusion

The TF continued its work in Turku on June 2014 and in Karlskrona on October 2014. As a result of these two meetings an interim report of the TF was published. It is divided in three sections:

- statistics from different countries and cities
- where are we now? where will we be tomorrow?
- where the magic happens (true success stories)

Report shows that in most UBC countries youth unemployment rates have raised during the last two years due to the well-known problems in European and global economy. However, report also shows

that there are, after all, many reasons for optimism; for instance, multivocational co-operation, guidance and support and many other services are extremely functional in many UBC cities. These practices are vital in supporting the well-being of youngsters and ensuring the availability of the future's work force when the economy finally turns to better.

By the meeting on 29-30 January 2015 in Riga, 22 experts representing 14 UBC cities contributed to the work providing the answers and solutions to the top 7 questions:

- 1) How to motivate youngsters? Tools and methods
- 2) How to promote social entrepreneurship and social economics?
- 3) How to recognize and validate skills of the youngsters?
- 4) New ways for guidance and support of Immigrant-youngsters that arrived in their teens
- 5) How we can use new technology more efficiently in guidance, support and education?
- 6) Steps from ill-being to well-being and employment
- 7) How we help the system to become more diversity-friendly?

In Riga the TF concluded that there was a real need for a joint project in the Baltic Sea Region concentrating on advancing youth employment. The idea was presented to UBC Board in Kemi (February 2015), where it was decided that the TF should start preparations for a new project that will gather and disseminate existing best practices on the topic as well as support the development of new practices and models to promote Youth Guarantee and support Youth employment in the Region.

The final work on the report was carried out at the 6th meeting of the Task Force in Espoo, Finland, on 15-16 September 2015.

The report of the TF on Youth Employment & Well-being is to be printed out and presented at the XIII UBC General Conference in Gdynia on 28 October 2015.

3. BSR Urban Forum for Smart Cities project

As the cities are playing a crucial role in the Baltic Sea Region development, UBC Board has, together with Smart City Lab in Tartu and City of Turku taken the initiative to prepare a concept for a "Baltic Sea Region Urban Forum for Smart Cities". It was launched at the UBC General Conference in Mariehamn. The project idea was discussed at the initiative group workshop on 19-20 January 2014 in Tartu, Estonia.

The project received approval and financial support by the Seed Money Facility of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The project seeks to enable urban areas in the Baltic Sea Region to move beyond "pockets of smartness" to become genuinely smart, by establishing a regional platform for capacity building and knowledge exchange. Key challenges identified and addressed include: - How to make a green transition towards smart and sustainable societies? - How to boost innovation and cooperation with the private sector? - How to engage citizens to those processes?

The urban forum should be useful for the cities in the region. It will serve as a meeting point and a platform for knowledge exchange for actors from different sectors and from across the region.

BUF will encourage its participants to communicate their needs and interests in relation to the challenges that the cities face. The platform will serve as a systematic tool for bringing together cities and countries that share a common issue with existing knowledge, experience and innovations, thereby creating dialogue on consensus-based or ad hoc topics.

Its added value will be involving various stakeholders (cities, experts, researchers, businesses, citizens groups) in active dialogue and solution provision.

In particular, it would facilitate public-private relationships. The urban forum would build capacity of the cities in the BSR in applying the smart city concept by providing access to knowledge, connect them with each other in order to share experiences, and facilitate relationships with the private sector.

The urban forum has the potential to bring benefits on both city level and regional level and could also help sell the Baltic Sea Region as a smart region.

Baltic Sea Forum for Smart Cities has been submitted to the Baltic Sea Programme by a consortium including UBC as key partner. The project was positively assessed by the INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Monitoring Committee. The concept note demonstrated sufficient relevance and potential to become a good quality project in the Programme.

The project partners are: Smart City Lab (Estonia), UBC/Turku, Baltic Environmental Forum Germany (BEF), Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), Institute of Baltic Studies (IBS, Estonia), Riga Technical University (RTU), City of Tartu, City of Malmö, Riga City Council, City of Hamburg, City of Kaunas, Municipality of Lębork, Positium LBS (Estonia).

The Monitoring Committee will decide on projects in November 2015.

4. EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region

The UBC has been emphasizing the cities role in the implementation of the EUSBSR. Since the EUSBSR objectives have been included in all INTERREG programmes in the BSR in 2014-2020, the UBC Executive Board at its meeting in Tampere on 18 March 2014 discussed the draft Operational Programme for 2014-2020 calling for more attention to the local level and better correlation between EUSBSR and the BSR Programme.

UBC statement on the Operational Programme of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020 was submitted to the Programme authorities on 28 March 2014.

The 70th meeting of the UBC Executive Board in Turku was held on 2 June in conjunction with the 5th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The UBC representatives also participated in the VI Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, 'Achieving e-Quality by Connecting the Region', held on 15-16 June in Jūrmala, Latvia.

These meetings serve as a major gathering of regional experts, stakeholders, government officials, and representatives from non-governmental organisations (NGO), students and academics, and other interested parties and present an opportunity to discuss common challenges, analyse the overall progress of the Strategy and develop recommendations for its future implementation.

It was decided that UBC along with the Baltic Sea NGO Network and the Swedish Institute will be a coordinator of the EUSBSR Horizontal Action Capacity.

The aim of HA Capacity is to offer capacity building support for the implementing stakeholders, using multilevel governance as an overall guiding principle. In practice, this will be carried out by means of:

- Developing and operating a capacity building platform for the implementing stakeholders.
- Involving and utilizing networks across sectors in the Baltic Sea Region, supporting involvement of local- and regional authorities, NGOs, business and academia to ensure that all levels will be mobilized to the full extent.

A key factor of success for the EUSBSR is the integrated and coordinated governance of the Baltic Sea region, between sectors of society as well as between regional and local authorities, business, academia, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the respective countries.

Through active involvement of all potential stakeholders in promoting and implementing the goals of the EUSBSR and its Action Plan the words are translated into action.

The UBC, through its Commissions, is also involved in the EUSBSR implementation. Sustainable Cities Commission has been a lead partner in PRESTO and PURE projects, and a project partner in the BSR Innoship project. The Safe Cities Commission was a leader of CIFOSA (Citizens for Safety) project financed by EUSBSR Seed Money Facility. These are the EUSBSR flagship projects.

5. Promoting gender equality issues within UBC

At the 69th UBC Executive Board Meeting, Tampere, 18 March 2014, the outcomes of the report Women and Men in the UBC, published in the autumn 2013, were presented. The report highlights the importance of a continuous work to promote gender equality as well as the need for further action to improve the status of women around the Baltic Sea. It shows that some progress has been made, for example in the distribution of income between women and men, but gender inequalities are still dominant. For example, women are still underrepresented in political and economic decision making and have a limited access to the labour market as well as lower incomes. The report also shows that human trafficking and men's violence against women are still major problems in the region that need to be addressed.

It is worth to remind that the UBC Statement against trafficking, was adopted at the 45th UBC Executive Board meeting in Kaunas, on 10-12 February 2006, to once again focus on this important issue.

On 12 May 2014 the Commission on Gender Equality sent out to all UBC contact persons two follow-up questions:

- What action has been taken by your city in combating trafficking of women and children since 2006?
- Does your city have an action plan for working with gender equality and/or trafficking of women and children?

7 UBC member cities responded: Kristiansand, Växjö, Gdynia, Arendal, Kristianstad, Karlstad, Umeå. They informed about different actions and activities taken to minimize this problem.

After Commissions consolidation, the Board meeting in Kemi, 26 February 2015, discussed the ways how the work on gender equality could be carried out. The Board invited the city of Umeå to start the preparations of the Working Group on Gender Equality, including invitations to member cities to nominate their representatives to the WG.

At the meeting in Dolina Charlotty, 12 June 2015, the Board decided to ask the city of Umeå to check which UBC member cities have already signed the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life and to draft the action plan of the Working Group on Gender Equality.

6. Cooperation within Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks

In 2014 Per Bødker Andersen, the UBC President, was unanimously reelected as the CECICN President. The Political Board has nominated Wolfgang Schmidt, Chairman of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission as Secretary General of CECICN in 2015-2016.

The network handed two position papers (DG REGIO and DG MARKT), visited Territorial and Urban Unit at DG REGIO and participated in public consultations on budget, roaming fees, urban agenda and EU2020 Strategy. In 2015, the further cooperation was planned on the EU policies that affect the regions, and the dialogue with EU and CoR.

In April 2015, CECICN supported the REPLICATE Project to boost a coherent urban development in Europe in the field of renewable energy and thus contribute towards the ambitious targets fixed by the EU in this area.

The Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks (CECICN) has been set up in 2010. The UBC is one of the founding members. This European conference gathers nine cross-border and interregional city networks, representing more than 500 cities in Europe, situated both at internal and external borders of the European Union, which is 37% of the EU population.

UBC Executives during two-year period

Per Bødker Andersen, Kolding, President
Marie-Louise Rönmark, Umeå, First Vice-President
Jarkko Virtanen, Turku, Vice-President
Taavi Aas, Tallinn, Vice-President
Paweł Żaboklicki, Gdańsk, Secretary General

Executive Board during two-year period

Næstved	Denmark
Elva	Estonia
Jyväskylä	Finland
Rostock	Germany
Liepāja	Latvia
Šiauliai	Lithuania
Kristiansand	Norway
Gdańsk	Poland
St. Petersburg	Russia
Växjö	Sweden

Executive Board Meetings

Six Executive Board meetings took place during the reporting period between Mariehamn and Gdynia General Conferences:

- 69th Executive Board meeting, Tampere, 18 March 2014
- 70th Executive Board meeting, Turku, 2 June 2014
- 71st Executive Board meeting, Växjö, 29 October 2014
- 72nd Executive Board meeting, Kemi, 26 February 2015
- 73rd Executive Board meeting, Dolina Charlotty, 11-12 June 2015
- 74th Executive Board meeting, Gdynia, 27 October 2015

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

Ewa Back, Councillor, Västernorrland
Marta Chełkowska, Director of Tourism Department, Pomorskie Voivodship
Jukka Vilen, City Director, Kemi

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(ies):
Cultural Cities Formerly: Culture	Kolding (until May 2014), Pori
Inclusive and Healthy Cities Formerly: Health and Social Affairs, Sport	Elbląg (until December 2014), Gdynia
Planning Cities Formerly: Urban Planning	Aarhus
Safe Cities Formerly: Local Safety	Gdańsk (until May 2015), Liepāja
Smart and Prospering Cities Formerly: Business and Tourism, Education	Kiel
Sustainable Cities Formerly: Environment, Energy, Transportation	Turku
Youthful Cities Formerly: Youth Issues	Turku

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

1. Cultural Cities Commission (former Commission on Culture)

The Commission was chaired by Lone Leth Larsen, City of Kolding (until May 2014) and Jaana Simula, City of Pori.

Meetings

The Commission's Board held a meeting in connection with the 4th Annual Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) on 12 November 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Board members took part in Culturability BSR seminars in Rendsburg and in Riga. Culturability BSR aims to bring knowledge on culture as a driver for sustainable development. Commission's Board meeting was held in Rendsburg during Culturability BSR seminar.

The Commission arranged Midnordic Culture Days 2014 in cooperation with the provinces of Satakunta and Ostrobothnia held in Pori and Rauma on 25 - 26 September 2014.

The board took part in the EUSBSR PA Culture meeting in Tallinn on 13 - 14 November 2014 and held a board meeting.

In 2015, the first board meeting was held during the International conference "Cultural and Creative Crossovers - Partnering culture with other sectors to maximize creativity, growth and innovation", on 11-12 March 2015 in Riga.

The VI Annual Forum of the EUSBSR, 'Achieving e-Quality by Connecting the Region', 15-16 June 2015 in Jūrmala was attended by Jaana Simula, who took part also in 5th EUSBSR PA Culture Steering Group Meeting.

The Vision and Action Plan of the Cultural Cities Commission was presented at the 73rd Executive Board meeting, Dolina Charlotty, 10-14 June 2015.

The board meeting was held during the Baltic Sea Culture Gathering, 15-17 September 2015 in Gdańsk. The Cultural Gathering was arranged by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland and the main event was the conference "Culture as a driving force for social and economic development of the region". The chairperson also took part in the 6th EUSBSR PA Culture Steering Group Meeting.

The Commission opened Facebook page in October 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/ubcccc>

2. Inclusive and Healthy Cities (former Commission on Health and Social Affairs)

The Commission was led by the City of Elbląg until the end of 2014 (Chair Paweł Galiński) and the City of Gdynia since January 2015. Jarosław Józefczyk, Gdynia Social Welfare Centre, was a Chair in 2015.

The Commission was co-chaired by the city of Trelleborg since 2015. The steering group consisted also of the cities of Karlstad, Klaipeda and Tartu.

Meetings

22-23 September 2014, Elbląg

The aim of the meeting, entitled: "People with disabilities in the era of the twenty-first century", was to exchange thoughts, ideas, experiences and information about the activities in creating the environment without barriers and ways of overcoming them. Participants from Poland, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia discussed the question of social inclusion of the disabled. The study tour to the Therapy Workshops in Elbląg was held on the second day of the conference. Participants were acquainted with the possibilities the disabled are offered, e.g. the workshops on tailoring, floristics, eco-recycling, etc.

9-10 June 2015, Gdynia

The kick-off meeting was held to discuss the organization of the new Commission, its priorities and action plan. As the topic to work on the Commission chose the Open Social Spaces idea. Member cities decided to undertake research to deepen the idea locally and then to prepare reports and disseminate widely examples of good practices. Other topics highlighted by members touched service and administrative system management and quality, employment and creative involvement in the social life by many demographic groups, forms of dialog with the citizens (amongst others meeting places, consultations, participative planning).

The Commission's concept was defined, as follows:

- Commission is a space for exchange information, experience, good practices and knowledge (including research on the most advanced level)
- Commission is a place for reinventing tools for daily work, methods of actions, services and innovations in the fields of inclusion and health
- Commission gives the opportunity for professional excellence (workshops/ seminars for employees/ commission members)
- Commission can be also a tool for building good image of the institutions, organisations, cities which are involved in the commission's activity.

3. Planning Cities Commission (former Commission on Urban Planning)

The Steering Group

The members of the Steering Group in the reported period were as follows: Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Marek Karzyński from Gdynia, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå and Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus (Chairman).

Meetings

Seminar in Örebro, 18-21 May 2014, "From a Traffic corridor and a wasteland to a lively city"

The seminar in Örebro was the 29th seminar in the history of the Commission on Urban Planning/Planning Cities Commission. It was a joint seminar with the commission on Environment and the commission on Transport.

Seminar in Riga, 14-17 September 2014, “Urban streams”

The seminar in Riga was a joint seminar with the commission on Environment.

The theme of the seminar was water as an important resource for the urban environment, looking at its recreational, aesthetic and ecological potential in the city.

Seminar in Gdansk, 18-21 October 2015, “Developing sea coast – local and city-wide perspective”

During the seminar there was a focus on Gdańsk city coastal zone.

4. Safe Cities Commission (former Commission on Safety)

The Commission was chaired by Leszek Walczak, the City Guard of Gdańsk until May 2015, when the chairmanship was taken over by Kaspars Vārpiņš, the City of Liepāja.

Meetings

Karlstad, October 2013

Participants from 6 cities discussed mainly on systems of safety and crises respond management in the cities. The main goal was to implement in the cities better policy of safety and security for the citizens and visitors.

Vilnius, May 2014

Commission on Local Safety meeting in Vilnius was held together with 2nd International Municipal Police Conference. The main goal of the conference was to establish point of contacts among municipal police officers from various cities in Europe and exchange of experience in the maintenance of law and order in the cities.

Gdańsk, June 2014

Safe Cities Commission meeting was organized in connection to CiFoSa project. The main objective of the meeting was to extend initial partnership and to exchange information on the project S-37 “Building urban safety through citizens participation (Citizens for Safety).”

Liepaja, February 2015

This meeting was organized again in connection to CiFoSa project. The main objective of the meeting was to analyze the survey reports which was made in Gdańsk (Poland), Liepaja (Latvia) and Vilnius (Lithuania).

Gdańsk, May 2015

It was the kick-off meeting of UBC Safe Cities Commission. The new authorities of the Commission were elected. The main focus of the adopted action plan was to encourage and activate the international collaboration between the safety organizations and as well to educate the society in safety questions.

Citizens for Safety project

Member cities of Safe Cities Commission – Gdańsk, Liepaja, Vilnius – implemented the project S37 ‘Building urban safety through citizens participation (Citizens for Safety)’ under EUSBSR Seed money facility.

5. Smart and Prospering Cities Commission (former Commission on Business & Tourism)

The Commission was chaired by Wolfgang Schmidt, City of Kiel.

Meetings

Commission's meeting Kristiansand, 8 - 9 April 2014

The main topic was talent attraction and place branding with regards to both workforce and tourism.

UBC Baltic Sailing Camp Seminar, 10-11 September 2014

The projects UBC Baltic Sailing Camp and Improvement of Higher Maritime Education as well as the strategy 2015 were discussed.

Strategy workshop Malmö, 26-27 May 2015

The new UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission chose during its first strategy workshop "Attractive Cities" and "Innovation Ecosystems" as focus areas for the period of 2015-2017.

Projects

Enjoy South Baltic

The project Enjoy South Baltic (ESB) aimed to develop joint actions promoting the South Baltic area as a tourist destination.

Baltic Culinary Route

The project Baltic Culinary Route (BCR) aimed to prepare a final tourist product with the involvement of the UBC member cities.

UBC Baltic Sailing Camp

The sailing camp is an ideal platform to show children, adolescents and family's the proper handling of the ocean while leading them to water sports. In the long term the cooperation could lead to a common EU project with the purpose to develop a toolbox about how to use water sports for location marketing, tourist attraction and investment promotion.

Improvement of Higher Maritime Education

The commission and the Department Maritime Systems (MTS), Faculty of Interdisciplinary Research, University of Rostock have agreed to improve higher maritime education and to strengthen the co-operation between academia and the maritime sector.

Go Green, Stay Global

The goal of "Go Green, Stay Global" is to provide a platform for local firms and industries to strengthen their ability to act on global market opportunities in environmental-sound and sustainable areas of business without cannibalizing on existing technical and organizational competences.

S3-Empowering for Innovation and Growth in Medium-Sized Cities and Regions

EmplInno fosters the implementation and improvement of research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (RIS3) in medium-sized cities and regions in the BSR. It exploits the transnational value of mutual learning and joint networking in common priority areas.

Baltic Sea Region Urban Forum for Smart Cities (BUF)

The objective of BUF project is to strengthen the innovation capacities of BSR local authorities and related innovation actors for the implementation of sustainable urban development by providing the model for smart city early dialogue model and implementation throughout the BSR.

Creative Ports

The cultural and creative industry stands for growth and innovation. It is an important driving force in every knowledge society and stands behind its economic strength.

6. Sustainable Cities Commission (former Commissions on Environment, Energy and Transportation)

The Commission was led by 3 co-chairs: Risto Veivo, City of Turku, Dace Liepnice, City of Liepaja and Per-Arne Nilsson, City of Malmö.

Meetings

18-21 May 2014, Örebro

A joint commission meeting was held in Örebro, organized by the Commissions on Environment, Transport and Urban Planning, with the thematic focus on “From wasteland and transport corridor to lively city”.

14-17 September 2014, Riga

A joint commission meeting (UBC EnvCom and UBC Commission on Urban Planning), focused on “Urban streams – rebuilding the waterfront of Daugava River”.

23-24 October 2014, Gdynia

A Joint Conference entitled “Baltic Sea Region advancing towards Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning” was organised within CIVITAS DYN@MO European project. The conference was organised with a view to supporting cities, focusing on the Baltic Sea Region in their efforts to elaborate the SUMP.

19-20 March 2015, Malmö

The first UBC Sustainable Cities Commission meeting was arranged back to back with the Urban Magma Conference in Malmö. The Urban Magma conference focus was on Circular economy in the BSR and the UBC SCC was one of the co-organizers of the conference.

3-4 June 2015, Turku

The UBC SCC arranged a meeting with the main agenda focusing on the re-establishment of the UBC SCC Commission, including appointment of co-chairs, advisory board, deciding in reporting and communication procedures.

30 September 2015, Turku

UBC SCC visited the UBC Safe City Commission and presented the activities and plans for upcoming years.

Implementation of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme

The proposal of the new UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016–2021 was presented during the Executive board meeting in Dolina Charlotty, 11-12 June 2015. The final version will be presented at the General Conference in Gdynia in October 2015.

Strategic Partnerships and Co-operation

Commission on Environment has also contributed to Baltic Sea Regional and European policy co-operation processes on cities' environmental governance and sustainable urban development.

Involvement in EUSBSR implementation

The SCC has been involved in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the BSR. SCC has received flagship status for projects PURE, PRESTO, BSR Innoship. SCC participated in the EUSBSR Annual meeting in Jurmala 15–16 June 2015 and several PA meetings.

Project activities

A number of project applications have been accepted and resulted in external resources and increased cooperation among the UBC member cities. During 2014-2015 SCC successfully finalized large scale investment projects in Belarus. During 2010-2015 the SCC has been involved in 25 projects, with a total budget of over 52 million eur.

7. Youthful Cities Commission (former Commission on Youth Issues)

Hasan Habib, City of Turku was the chair of the Commission and Lena Modin, City of Gävle, was a Vice-chair. The secretariat and administration of the Commission was coordinated by Turku Youth Services.

Meetings

1-4 April 2014, Kaunas

The main aim of the meeting was to develop a strategy and action plan for the period of 2015-2017. 20 youngsters and 16 civil servants from Kolding, Guldborgsund, Karlstad, Falun, Gävle, Turku, Kotka, Tallinn, Maardu, Kuressaare, Riga, Liepaja, Kaunas and Gdańsk took part.

8-11 October 2014, Riga

30 Young people and civil servants were gathered to shed light on issues as non-formal learning, social exclusion and also to talk about the UBC General Conference in Gdynia.

26-29 May 2015, Kolding

The topic for the meeting was gender equality. There were participants from 8 different countries and 15 cities from the Baltic region: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany.

Other activities

In 2014 & 2015 UBC Youthful Cities Commission's representatives participated in the UBC Executive Board meetings in Tampere, Växjö and Dolina Charlotty.

Baltic Cities Bulletin

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. The bulletin is printed ca. 4000 copies and sent out to over 200 Baltic cities as well as to the number of Baltic and European organizations and institutions including the EU. The bulletin is also available on the internet at <http://www.ubc.net/publications>

In the last period the following issues have been published: “How to develop and keep an attractive city”, “Town Twinning in the Baltic Sea Region”, “Smart Baltic City Landscape”, “Building up the new UBC”.

UBC Cities Events Calendars 2014 and 2015 were published online: <http://www.ubc.net/calendar>

The UBC website and Facebook profile have been updated regularly.