

VI UBC GENERAL CONFERENCE

COMMISSION ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 1999 – SEPTEMBER 2001

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I. PUBLICATIONS - UBC - Social and Health Bulletin

In the reported period only one edition could be issued, mainly by reasons of insufficient engagement by the Commission's partners. This was not satisfactory although the Commission Coordinators from Rostock tried to challenge other cities to contribute with articles and ideas.

II. MEETING of the COMMISSION

In Karlstad, Sweden on 23-24 March 2001

Main items of our discussion were the structure of the Commission and its co-operation, the preparation of the Thematic Conference during the UBC General Conference in Rostock in October 2001, the UBC Social Charter, information to planned and ongoing EU supported projects, project proposals, UBC Bulletin on Health and Social Affairs, Commission's leaflet.

We hope to further enhance our regular exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices.

III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Different projects ideas and applications for funding by EU Programmes have been elaborated. The Commission's Office is very active in a UBC-wide partner search for different projects

III.1. Questionnaire on Volunteer's Organisations in the Baltic Sea Region

The Commission started together and on initiative of the international organisation 'Social Hansa' a new UBC-wide project on volunteer work in accordance to the world-wide initiative of the General Assembly of the United Nations the 'International Year of Volunteers' proclaimed for the year 2001. Aim should be to draw the attention to the great importance of volunteers for the welfare and advancement of all nations as well as our common future. Objectives are increased recognition of the voluntary sector to national welfare, increased facilitation of volunteer action by governments, cities and institutions, improved networking of volunteers and exchanging of best practices and knowledge in order to increase the effectiveness of voluntary actions and promotion of Volunteer's Work to enhancing and supporting people and volunteer activities

A questionnaire has been published in our Bulletin on Health and Social Affairs and distributed by mail and via e-mail to all of your cities and many other NGOs, Institutions and Organisations collect and summarise data concerning the volunteer work in the cities of the Baltic Sea Region and to publish the results

You can still participate in our project until 31 of December 2001.

III.2. International Ecos-Ouverture/PHARE Project "BABS" (Business around the Baltic Sea), 1999-2001

Since August 97 our office has been contributing to the project. Main objectives are development of a network of newly established business centres for providing information and help for SMEs in respect of business contacts, export facilities and regulations, language and technology education. Thus access to the European market will be improved for SMEs. It will be realised in close connection with educational institutions, commercial centres, chambers of commerce and departments for economic development. Partners are Germany-Rostock, Finland-Kirkkonummen Kunta, Sweden-Norrköping, Estonia-Saaremaa, Hiiumaa, Paldiski, Läänemaa, the budget is total EURO 430.000, EU Grant ECOS-O EURO 210.000, PHARE EURO 64.000.

The UBC Office was present in the first German project meetings and has been actively involved in networking and reporting. The final report is due in November 2001.

III.3. Book about the Social State of Elderly Citizens around the Baltic Sea

Our call for a partnership within UBC was made via UBC mailing list to reach all member cities. Finally 17 UBC member cities from 8 countries participated. The book was published with financial means of the regional funds of the international Year of Senior Citizens in summer 2000. Not only the editing of a book has been the aim but also further common project activities, building up of senior partnerships and exchange of best practice.

V. PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

IV.1. 'Gender Equality and the Future' - 2nd Baltic Sea Women's Conference in Helsinki, 9-11 March 2000

The aim of the conference has been to create new networks and combine forces in our common aim to create a society without gender differences and sexualised violence. 450 women from 10 Baltic Sea states gathered at the conference and worked together in workshops with following topics: 'Women and Democracy', 'Empowering Women on Environmental Challenges', 'Sustainable Development', 'Women's Position in Working Life and Family Life', 'Gender Equality Policy', 'Women and Power, Local and Regional Decision Makers', 'Women and Health', 'Male Violence', 'Pornography and Prostitution', 'Protection and Prosecution'.

IV.2. CBSS 'First Baltic Sea Area NGO Forum' in Lübeck, Germany, 28-29 May 2001

Aim of the Conference was to offer a platform for NGOs in the Baltic Sea region where they could discuss the specialities of their work and develop further aims and visions as a framework for their activities and how NGOs could contribute to the realisation of the global aims in the Baltic Sea region. The results should be presented to the ministers on their CBSS session on 7th June 2001 in Hamburg.

The conference has been prepared by an organising committee consisting of 15 NGOs (human rights and youth organisations, environmental organisations). The committee has been responsible not only for the invitations but also for the main topics which should be discussed: environment/sustainable development, civil society/ participation/ human rights, youth cooperation, voluntary services, access to information and cooperation between NGOs and GOs. The results will be published under www.cbss-ngo.dk.

The final declaration, already prepared by the preparatory committee, includes the environmental and human-rights demands. As well as a whole catalogue of demands to GOs, like regular financial contributions and permanent NGO fora, more effective influence in GOs decision making.

All represented NGOs face similar problems like lack of finances for their work and projects, esp. for national and international cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. Another problem is the

competition between NGOs working on similar fields when it comes to applications for projects, furthering of activities and acceptance by political parties.

IV.3. International Congress 'Instruments and Strategies for a Sustainable Development of Culture and Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region', 5 September 2001 in Wismar

The participation in the Round Table Discussion on Strategies and Instruments for a Common Tourism Marketing in the Baltic Sea Region had a direct relation to the successful project design and EU funding acquirement for the Baltic City Tourism Project. The expertise was given in themes like problems, possibilities, potentials and perspectives of transnational project work.

V. Preparation to the VI UBC General Conference in Rostock 11-13 October 2001

The topic for the first thematic day under the topic 'Social Justice in the new Millennium' has been accepted by the board. A working team from different departments of the Hanseatic City of Rostock elaborated topics for the workshops. The same group started to organise everything needed for a successful conference. A call for proposals for speakers was sent out to the UBC contact person network and in the UBC Bulletin. The following activities were given especial attention: elaboration of the Conference topic, workshop topics and content, Acquirement of most of the speakers, organisational work, permanent introductions to the Board, publication of the invitations and programmes.

Rostock, 24.9.2001

ACTION PLAN 2002 – 2003

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I. Structure and Network

Interactive networking seems to be a permanent difficult task, also in our Commission. A regular exchange of experiences and information actually takes places only between a few persons. They often assume the task to inform, to activate and to motivate passive cities. Since the Commission strives a broad range of themes like Labour Market, Local Health Policy and Charity for many target groups like Youth, Children, Women, Handicapped and Elderly, it seems to be useful to spread the thematic coordination between the Commission's members.

One basic problem we should overcome very soon: We will have to motivate the interested cities to come from passive and receptive cooperation to an active one.

In March 2001 a Commission Meeting took place in Karlstad / Sweden. All participants were very interested in the exchange of experience in mastering social problems in their cities. This seems to be the most effective way of cooperation: to meet and to learn from each other. But most of the interested cities are not ready to take part of the responsibility of the networking.

II. Publications

The Edition of the Bulletin on Health and Social Affairs should be retaken. The last number was edited in 2000. Here the initiative of Commission's members is requested. This could be an interesting field for young people to develop this medium.

A Commission flyer is planned to be edited latest in Spring 2002.

III. Project Activities

The Commission's office staff in Rostock will be steadily evaluating project ideas under the respect of feasibility, topic, network. Here the constant update by the UBC EU Project Coordinator will be as essential as in the recent period.

Impulses for project ideas and the realisation of project design and further technical project procedures should be come more often from member cities.

IV. Cooperation with other Entities of the UBC

The cooperation with the UBC Commission on Environment and the BLA21 working group has developed very good. We understand that the issues treated in those networks are strongly related to themes in health and social affairs.

The same can be stated for the relationship to the UBC Women's Network. Many contacts of our Commission develop via the Women's Network.

A strong working contact has developed with the UBC EU Coordinator. The Commission has a lot of profit out of latest information on EU matters.

Coming from the interpretation that business development is labour market policy, our Commission cooperated strongly in the development of the project 'Baltic City Tourism', including acquirement of EU funding, which is currently culminating successfully in the UBC Commission on Tourism.

V. Cooperation with Entities outside UBC

There is a steady and successful cooperation with the Social Hansa which already led to project activities and positive involvement in each others organisation.

VI. Political Activities

Under coordination of the Commission and as a result of an evaluation process, the edition of the Social Charter of the Union of the Baltic Cities has been achieved. The finally adopted Social Charter could be valid for many years and is supposed to be understood as a voluntary goal to which our cities aim to reach. We would like to get reports about the state of fulfilment of the goals of the charter in each city. In order to make the aims comparable it is planned, that the Commission shall elaborate for the next General Conference indicators like this has been done for the Local Agenda 21 process. It is also planned to have regular exchanges of best practices, both in common projects and in written form using the publication of the Commission on Health and Social Affairs.

This document is thought to be the basic guideline for all social political activities of the UBC and is proposed to be adopted by the General Assembly of the VI UBC General Conference on 13 October 2001 in Rostock .

Rostock, 24 September 2001