



COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT

## ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2011 – SEPTEMBER 2013

### **Sustainable UBC Cities**

The mission of the UBC Commission on Environment is to tackle those challenges by all the means provided by our efficient network through sharing of problems, information and knowledge, approaches and solutions. In order to work more effectively we must improve our performance in all fields and have clear goals and targets for our activities. These tasks include knowledge based analyses, technical solutions, improved political planning and decision making processes to improved information and dissemination strategies. This is a task for the whole UBC network and all levels of the UBC organisation are needed in order to improve these internal and external practices.

The secretariat has been implementing the work with the cross-sectoral UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 approved in the General Conference in Kristiansand September 2009. The UBC EnvCom has been co-chaired by Ms Dace Liepnice from City of Liepaja and Mr Mikko Jokinen from City of Turku. The secretariat is located in the Baltic Sea House in the old centre of Turku. The basic resources provided by the host city and the UBC combined with the successful project funding have enabled the secretariat to carry on a strong coordination role with a staff of between 16 - 20 full-time professionals (Finnish-Swedish-Polish-Russian-German-Ukrainian-Danish). The commission has been active in different development projects and in policy- and capacity-building activities. 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.

During year 2012 - 2013 the focus has been on implementing projects and on further development of the cooperation between the UBC Commissions and UBC activities and networking in general. During the reporting period the UBC EnvCom has arranged several thematic seminar/workshop-type meetings within the different projects.

A successful joint UBC Commission meeting was held in Halmstad in May 2012, including UBC Commissions on Energy, Environment, Urban Planning and Transport including appr. 85 participants. In 2013 a successful Joint Commission meeting (UBC Commissions on Environment, Energy and Transport) was held in April 2013 focusing on “Saving energy and the environment through sustainable transport solutions”. This Commission meeting met up with over 90 participants from all UBC member countries. In addition to these above mentioned meeting the UBC EnvCom has been facilitating many meetings and workshops within project frameworks or together with several cooperation partners.

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin had the 1/2012 thematic edition on “Towards new city cooperation”. The 2/2012 edition focused on “Green Growth” with the editorial written by EU Commissioner on Climate Ms Connie Hedegaard. The 1/2013 edition focused on “Sustainable Transport” and the editorial written by EU Vice-President and Commissioner for Transport Mr Siim Kallas. The UBC Good Practice Database is working to better serve and collect information, data, good practices etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities. More than 650 Good Practice cases are already listed in the database (see [www.ubcwheel.eu](http://www.ubcwheel.eu)).

During the last years UBC EnvCom has been more and more involved in several consultation/development discussions (bilateral or multilateral) with UBC member cities in respect to applications, conferences or search for experts.

### **Successes in UBC EnvCom work during 2011 - 2013**

**Good coordination and follow up of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015** as a part of the UBC Strategy 2010 – 2015 implementation. Many goals of the Action Programme have already been fulfilled. The UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 has started well and has already committed several projects with a total budget of approximately 44 MEUR. These projects provide an excellent framework of action to address the challenges in practice. In 2013 a follow-up survey is planned to take place as an obligation included in the UBC Sustainability Action Programme and UBC Strategy.

**High level of external resource allocation for the development work of member cities via ongoing projects.** Altogether more than 40 cities have directly been or are currently involved in UBC EnvCom projects. A calculation of project staff shows that more than 50 full-time and 50 part-time employees are working and paid via above listed projects.

**Good competitive and skillful reputation.** The UBC EnvCom has a reputation of being skillful in project management. During 2011 - 2013 the UBC EnvCom staff has been asked to participate in EU funding programme trainings in the Baltic Sea Region to present the UBC, efficient project management and also to develop proposals for upcoming EU Programmes and EU funding periods. Successful project application work has led to a bigger project portfolio than ever.

UBC EnvCom has succeeded to be an active **and successful partner in the EUSBSR implementation.** UBC EnvCom is involved in several Flagship Projects. The Flagship Projects PURE (PA1), PRESTO(PA1) and INNOSHIP (PA4) are among the most successful Flagship Project implementation of the EUSBSR. Furthermore the UBC EnvCom is a central partner of the Turku Process into a Horizontal Action of the EUSBSR. In addition UBC EnvCom has been involved in priority area 5 “To mitigate & adapt to climate change” and priority area 8.4 “Make the Baltic Sea an Eco-efficient region”.

The PURE projects and the partners have managed to **remove three HELCOM “hot-spots”** from the HELCOM Hot-spot list (problem list). The processes in the water treatment plant of Kohtlajärve and two plants in Szezcin have been improved and now meet the demands of the HELCOM for phosphorous emissions, thanks to the PURE project.

### **Strong involvement in European Union Policy co-operation on macro-regional development, environment and sustainable development**

In line with the working principles of the UBC, EnvCom has also contributed strongly to Baltic Sea Regional and European policy co-operation processes on cities’ environmental governance and sustainable urban development. The commission has represented the UBC at the CBSS - Baltic 21, has an observer status in the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and is partner of the European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign. The main focus during the last two year period has been in the implementation of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. This strategy goes hand in hand with the new UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme and therefore there has been a need to combine the development of both processes simultaneously. Participation in the EU strategy implementation has taken a lot of resources. The UBC EnvCom is despite this convinced that added value can be reached by taking an active role.

## Evaluation

UBC's EnvCom services are continuously evaluated and improved. In 2013 the UBC EnvCom is undertaking the 4<sup>th</sup> Baltic Cities Sustainability Survey. These evaluations are extremely valuable as they provide our city network with information on development trends, possible problems and good practices, all important for a balanced and dynamic development of the Baltic Sea Region.

The development of UBC has been long and successful. Success, good service and a strong network can only be maintained through continuous development and improvements of all the activities among those involved in the organization. Interaction and good communication is one of the key elements of continuing development and improvement. The network service of the UBC EnvCom is a combination of projects, regular meetings and workshops, information work and policy liaison with other organisations, environmental and sustainable development policy processes and policy-makers. As an example of this is the strategic approach to arrange joint UBC Commission meetings together with UBC Commission on Energy, Commission on Transport and Commission on Urban Planning. This joint action has been successful and is supporting the needs of the UBC member cities very well.

For UBC it is important that the whole region develops in a balanced way and this work will be coordinated with the support and guidance of the UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 and implemented as actions connected to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). In order to do this, the following activities will be carried out:

- **Meetings and workshops of the UBC EnvCom** twice a year – providing opportunity to develop projects and other activities as well as for sharing of experiences.
- **Development and investment projects addressing the challenges** in Baltic Cities and implementing the thematic goals of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 - 2015.
- **Capacity-building** – organising opportunities for the cities to update their knowledge and competencies on environmental policies, practices and legislation.
- **Effective communication** Improving the meeting and workshop methods and techniques has been a core task for the UBC EnvCom.
- **Interactive information services** – further development of the Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin, further development and updating of the UBC Good Practice database. Improving the UBC web-services on sustainable development.
- **Good Practice work** – promotion of good practice and exchange of excellence will continue on the web-site, databases and other information services.

## Resources

The activities and services of the UBC Commission on Environment are closely tied to funding possibilities. Cooperation between several UBC Commissions has been successful and can also lead to increased efficiency and resourcing possibilities. However, the most important resource of the commission is the active UBC member cities who contribute with their knowledge, experiences and strong involvement for mutual benefit. The best motivation for the secretariat and staff is therefore the motivation and positive spirit we meet among the UBC member cities.

## Projects of UBC Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat

### Climate related projects

- **CHAMP** – Combating Climate Change. LIFE+ funded project. Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy 2009 – 2011. Based on UBC Climate Change resolution in 2007.
- **BaltCICA** – Climate Change: Impact, Costs and Adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region. UBC EnvCom partner in the project. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2009 – 2011.
- **GREENCITIZENS** - Demonstrate how environmental policy can be interpreted and implemented into concrete citizen-oriented actions in cities. Life + funding
- **NetCom** IEE funding. Strengthening the Covenant of Mayors work and networking in the Baltic Sea region.
- **Nordlead** project. A survey on success factors of local climate change management was conducted. Publication in the Nordic Council of Ministers TemaNord serie Nov/2012. Nordic Council of Ministers funding.

### Wastewater/eutrophication related projects

- **PURE Phosphorous Reduction in Baltic Cities.** 7 UBC cities. 11 partners and 18 associated partners. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2009 – 2013.
- **PRESTO** - Combat eutrophication of the Baltic Sea by reducing nutrient load. Investments in wastewater treatment plants of Baranovichi, Grodno, Molodechno and Vitebsk (Belarus). BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2012 - 2014
- **BSR Water cluster.** BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2012 - 2013

### Maritime policy/development related projects

- **SNOOP project.** Ship exhausts emissions effects on marine environment and human health. Central Baltic BSR INTERREG IV A, Neighborhood programme. 6 partners. 2009 – 2013
- **INNOSHIP Project – Sustainable Ports and Cities.** 6 UBC cities. 19 partners. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2010 – 2013.
- **SmartComp** project aims to support smart, environmentally sustainable growth and cooperation between maritime clusters, cities and universities in the Central Baltic Region. Central Baltic BSR INTERREG IV A. 7 Partners, 3 UBC cities. 2012 – 2013.

### Sustainable transport related projects

- **NEW BRIDGES** – Strengthening Quality of Life through improved Management of Urban Rural Interaction. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 12 partners and 13 associated partners. 2009 – 2011.
- **ELTIS** + database and Sustainable Urban Transport EU IIE funding
- **Quest** Quality management tool for Urban Energy efficient Sustainable Transport. EU IIE funding.
- **Challenge.** Addressing the Key Challenges of Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning  
Funded by IEE-Intelligent Energy Europe Programme
- **Civitas Dynamo** building sustainable transport systems. Two UBC cities. EU Civitas programme 2013 – 2015.

### Russian coordination activities:

- **Finnish-Russian neighborhood cooperation.** Awareness raising, Blue Pack, NEAT and NEAT 2, BSNA projects. Awareness and neighborhood involvement projects between UBC and Russia. Funding from Ministry on Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment in Finland. 2010 – 2013
- **Gulf of Finland year 2014** event preparations. Ministry of Foreign affairs and Ministry of Environment funding. 2013 – 2014.

**Björn Grönholm**

**Head of Secretariat, Union of Baltic Cities - Commission on Environment**

## **ACTION PLAN OCTOBER 2014 - SEPTEMBER 2015**

### **UBC Commission on Environment activities 2014 - 2015**

In line with the current UBC communication strategy, development process of various activities will be initiated to optimize our service to our member cities as well as strengthen the integrity within the network to attract future projects. The UBC EnvCom is activated in different development projects and policy-, networking-, and capacity-building activities. This is done in the combination of internal processes, the UBC fourth Baltic Cities Sustainability survey 2013 and the planned study of sustainability & environmental administration in member cities. This will result in the necessary knowledge on: where UBC EnvCom excel, members cities' specific needs for support and a status of member cities' administration on environmental and sustainable issues. These three steps will show not only *how* to support and *who* to support, but also signal future focus areas of UBC EnvCom. This evaluation is crucial also with the focus on starting the work with renewing the UBC strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016 – 2020.

The EU funding period 2008 – 2014 is approaching its end and the need for good positioning and finding suitable funding is evident in 2014 and 2015. The situation also bring up a need for broadening the activities and project portfolio. For this purpose and with the good reputation of UBC in mind, the UBC EnvCom plans to launch communication among the UBC member cities, funding organisations instruments and other policy related stakeholders such as the EUSBSR, INTERACT etc. In practice the intention is to get invited to a increasing number of events (UBC member city, regional or international conferences) as speakers and experts.

Improvements in publication activities. The future change of concept for the UBC Environmental Bulletin is a part of a larger change of the UBC EnvCom's general outlook. This will affect the UBC Environmental bulletin, the website and the other communication produced in-house. The further use of the UBC Good Practice Database to better serve UBC cities and collect information, data, good practices etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities will continue. The Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin will be developed further and thematic editions on relevant topics will continue to be published several times a year. The Bulletin is made together with UBC Commission on Energy. Discussions with other UBC Commissions concerning their involvement are ongoing. The Commission website is to be rebuilt in autumn 2013. Please see [www.ubc-environment.net](http://www.ubc-environment.net).

### **European Union Policy co-operation on environment and sustainable development**

In line with the working principles of the UBC, the Commission on Environment has also contributed strongly to Baltic Sea Regional and European policy co-operation processes on cities' environmental governance and sustainable urban development. The commission is representing the UBC at the CBSS/Baltic 21 and the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM).

The implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will continue and the UBC Commission will be actively involved in several actions and flagship activities. This strategy goes hand in hand with the new UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme and therefore there has been a need to combine the development of both processes.

## **Internal UBC activities**

In connection with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region we should promote the UBC Baltic cities Political Forum as an important forum for strengthening the policy development and political commitment.

UBC will finalize the implementation of the current UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 and start planning the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016 – 2020 together with the UBC Executive Board and UBC Commissions.

An important and a crucial task for the UBC network is to continuously improve the meeting and workshop methods and techniques. Social media is becoming more and more used. Technological development also opens up the possibility for more cities to be involved in UBC activities without huge economical input.

UBC EnvCom will work for building up new cooperation based on smart city concepts including involvement of public – private partnerships.

Engagement of UBC member cities in international cross-border cooperation will be one of the main goals of the internal UBC EnvCom activities. The UBC EnvCom will also put focus on engaging more cities in the operative UBC EnvCom work.

## **Main Projects focuses of the UBC EnvCom in 2014 - 2015**

UBC EnvCom will focus on applications in the field of regional development, sustainable transport, green smart growth, reduction of nutrients from rivers and water bodies, Research of Mandate and responsibilities of local authorities in the Baltic Sea Region – changes in municipal organizations are under preparation. In addition the UBC EnvCom is ready to build a support service to UBC member cities for upcoming EU funding period 2014 – 2020. This support service would consist of a number of evaluation meetings and direct consultation in relation to funding opportunities and needs of external funding in UBC member cities.

The upcoming EU budget will put focus on the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy and in particularly on the transformation of EU towards a sustainable economy and promoting a transition to a low carbon society. UBC and our member cities will have huge tasks with the EU goals and tasks of the EU 2020 Strategy. The economical situation put pressure on investments, but one of the key issues in the upcoming EU budget will be the building of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth! With this we will have one of the major tasks for the upcoming years of succesful UBC cooperation and work.

**Björn Grönholm**

**Head of Secretariat, Union of Baltic Cities - Commission on Environment**