

MINUTES OF THE 94th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Elva/Tartu, Estonia, 22 May 2025

1. Opening of the meeting by UBC President and adoption of the agenda. Election of two persons who, together with the President, will check the minutes.

UBC President Mantas Jurgutis welcomed all participants at the 94th UBC Executive Board meeting held in Elva/Tartu, Estonia.

The Board adopted the agenda, attached to the minutes. Malin Lauber, Växjö, and Heiki Hansen, Elva, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

2. Welcome by the Cities of Elva and Tartu, presentation of the cities.

Welcome by Priit Värvi, Mayor of Elva, presentation of the City of Elva.

Priit Värvi, Mayor of the City of Elva, warmly welcomed the participants and made a presentation of the city.

Elva is the largest settlement in Elva municipality, which in 2017 was merged with few other municipalities. The population is 14 588 (01.05.2025) on area of 732 km². Budget of the city is 38 mil and about 63% of its expenses are spent on education.

The city has a number of managed institutions, including 5 schools, 5 kindergartens, 2 hobby centres, 7 culture and community centre, 6 libraries, 1 day centre for the elderly and holdings in 6 enterprises.

After 2017 merging the municipality council includes 29 people, but Mayor seeks to reduce the number to 25 since, as the Mr Värvi informed, the merging period has ended. Municipality government is 54 people, consolidation group is 760 and education is 437.

Mr Värvi informed, that one of the main problems of municipality is to manage accommodation for schools, some of which are not efficient because of too few students attending. To solve this problem some of the schools had to be closed and moved to other places. The process, as the Mayor emphasized, is usually causing social protests.

The City of Elva is developing infrastructure such as new accommodation for the Community Centre, Reku river port area, Elva sports park, SPA Hotel with swimming pool and GMP shopping and business centre.

The Mayor mentioned, that City of Elva is involved in various initiatives promoting sports and became European Town of Sport and held a sports festival in 2022.

Presentation of the City of Tartu

The City of Tartu was presented during Executive Board Meeting using a promotional video.

Tartu is a second largest city in Estonia after its capital Tallinn with population of 95 776 (2021) and an area of 38,8 km². It has a Smart Bike Share system, and the city can be easily passed on foot – around 15 minutes from the centre to its borders. It uses green gas buses and 100% of renewable energy in city institutions. The city is planning to become a completely climate neutral city.

Tartu advertises itself as a city with rich history and emphasizes its heritage as a university location since XVII century.

Tartu is a city that can hosts large events with nearly 3000 accommodation places in various hotels. It became an European Capital of Culture in 2024.

The City of Tartu has a developed network of communication with other cities by plane, train or bus.

The Tartu region hosts, inter alia, various cultural and sports events, Estonian National Museum, Aviation Museum.

3. Applications from Kolomyia and Myrove to join UBC.

UBC has received applications from Kolomyia and Myrove, Ukraine, to join UBC. The applications are attached.

Kolomyia is located on the Prut River in Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast in the west of Ukraine. Kolomyia municipality encompasses the city and 10 villages. The population is 74490 inhabitants. Numerous companies operate in different business sectors, like manufacturing cable and electronic equipment, agricultural products, clothing, etc. The biggest export is in textiles and wood.

Myrove municipality is situated in the southern part of the Dnipropetrovsk Region, but closer to the neighbouring regional centre of Zaporizhia. The population is 8236 inhabitants.

Industrial enterprises of Myrove municipality extract and process minerals. More than 40 enterprises and farms operating in the territory of Myrove specialize in the cultivation and production of food.

Proposal:

The Board to accept Kolomyia and Myrove as UBC Associated Cities.

4. XVIII UBC General Conference, Słupsk/Dolina Charlotty, 4-7 November 2025. 'Reinforcing UBC Member Cities' role in EU policymaking and participation in EU funded projects'.

4.1 Practical information from the hosts, conference venue, hotel, airport etc – presentations.

Presentation of Słupsk

Mateusz Marecki, Specialist for cultural promotion and education from the City of Słupsk, made a presentation about the host city.

In 2025 Słupsk will celebrate 760 years of city rights, 715 years of their renewal and 80 years of returning back to Poland.

The population is ca. 86 000. In the multicultural community there are newcomers from Ukraine, Latin America and Asia.

With an unemployment rate: 4% Słupsk is an economically developing city. There is Słupsk Special Economic Zone and its 18 subzones, also Słupsk Technology Incubator. Słupsk is a home for 5463 active enterprises. Key sectors: industrial automation, green technologies, furniture design, sustainable manufacturing.

The city also supports education and culture. In the Pomeranian University in Słupsk around 4000 students gain knowledge. There are different cultural institutions like Museum of Central Pomerania in the Castle of the Dukes of Pomerania.

It's a city of festivals: Scene of Freedom (theatre), Komeda Jazz Festival, Polish Piano Festival.

At the General Conference two study tours will be a good opportunity to learn more about the city: Visit to the Museum of Middle Pomerania, White & Red Granary, including Witkacy paintings exhibition and the Witches' Tower, <https://muzeum.slupsk.pl/en/home-en/>

Study visit to Viscon - innovative solutions in food production automation, <https://www.viscongroup.pl/>

Charlotta Valley

Charlotta Valley, a location of UBC General Conference is planned for 4-7 November 2025, was presented with a promotional film. It is a resort located close to City of Słupsk, Poland with area of over 1 mil. m². The resort provides, inter alia, 100 rooms with 250 beds, swimming pool, fitness area, spa, pubs and restaurants.

Charlotta Valley provides amphitheatre fit for hosting mass events with over 12 000 seats, that hosts big music festivals.

<https://www.dolinacharlotty.pl/>

4.2 Programme update.

Opening plenary session:

Mantas Jurgutis, President of UBC (confirmed)

Krystyna Danilecka-Wojewódzka, Mayor of Słupsk (confirmed)

Marek Prawda, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland (tbc)

Magdalena Adamowicz, Member of the European Parliament (confirmed)

Mieczysław Struk, Marshal of Pomorskie Voivodeship (tbc)

Gustav Lindström, Director General, Council of the Baltic Sea States (confirmed)

Themis Christophidou, Director General, DG Regio (invited)

Kata Tüttö, President of the Committee of the Regions (invited)

Burkhard Jung, President of Eurocities (invited)

2nd plenary session:

'EU funding and advocacy: the role of cities in the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2028-2035)'

Interactive workshops:

- Shaping Future Support: UBC Task Force on Ukraine – Impact review and goal setting / UBC Brussels Antenna
- Empowering Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction: The PA Secure Kids Initiative / UBC Safe Cities Commission
- Urban sustainability arena for sharing success strategies and solutions / UBC Sustainable Cities Commission
- Climate-Neutral & Regenerative Tourism – a strategic priority for cities / EUSBSR PA Tourism
- Network of Liveable Cities - a journey towards future city making / Liveability Interreg BSR project
- Urban Risks today and in the future. Urban Priorities in EU Policies / Nordic Urban Resilience Institute (NURI)
- Facing the biggest challenges of education systems / Learning Cities Commission & Youthful Cities Commission
- Minecrafting resilient Cities: innovative YOUTH-led policy process for sustainable Europe / UBC, MC-YOU Erasmus+ project
- Transforming Urban Mobility Across Europe - insights from the Decarbomile / Out of the box, UBC, Horizon project
- Pathways of transforming smaller harbours into inclusive Maritime Experience Points / UBC, MariEx Interreg project

The General Assembly will take place on 6 November 2025 and will include elections, reports etc.

5. Information from the Commissions on current and planned activities.

Cultural Cities Commission, Espoo

Tiina Kasvi, Chair of the Commission, stressed that this year the Commission continues the work to rebuild the network. The Chair completed a survey to all commission members at the end of 2024. The

answers will be used to plan the autumn onsite meeting and to modify the action plan during the year as needed.

Ms Kasvi also presented the commission aims for 2025, inter alia:

- to strengthen joint voice of arts and culture of UBC member cities in the BSR
- to promote the use of Cultural Cities Commission members expertise
- to use arts and culture to strengthen the resilience of citizens as well as the BSR cultural identity and heritage.

The Chair informed about the activities for 2025. On 3 February a webinar was held where Kaunas Artist House presented how to Bridge Culture and Data: Opportunities and Challenges of a Digital Platform. Cultural Cities Commission also had a joint meeting with Safe Cities Commission in Espoo on 19-21 March. The main theme was “Exploring Safety and Security Through Culture and in Culture Events”.

The Commission plans its next meeting in autumn 2025.

The Chair will also take part in:

- EUSBSR Annual Forum and Policy Area Culture steering group meeting in Gdańsk on 28 October 2025
- InnoCulture Conference – Culture and Creativity Driving Innovative Solutions, Tallinn, 19–20 November 2025.

Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission, Gdańsk (online)

Katarzyna Ziemann, Chair of Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission, informed, that key topics in 2025 would be social cohesion and inclusive growth, implementation of Human Rights into local policies and navigating the demographic shifts. It should be addressed by strengthening UBC cooperation on the topic, organisation of workshops, webinars and conferences, dissemination of good practices, deepening cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency and other networks.

Ms Ziemann emphasised, that implementing Human Rights into local strategies will increase accountability of local governments and allow citizens to claim their rights and hold authorities responsible. Integrating Human Rights into local policies will contribute to building cities, that are environmentally sustainable and socially just.

Chair of Inclusive and Healthy Cities informed, that they participated in creating Blue Sneakers – the first point in a shopping mall specialised in psychological support for young people. The result of cooperation was a success, and next goal is to open more Blue Sneakers points and develop standards for the organisation of youth spaces.

Ms Ziemann invited to participate in Healthy and Inclusive Cities from the human rights perspective webinar on June 30 and a Second International Conference of Human Rights Cities in Poland “Human Rights in Urban Practice” in European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk, 2-3 December.

Learning Cities Commission, Turku (online)

Matti Mäkelä, Chair of the Commission informed, that this year main objectives of the Commission would be to strengthen cooperation between Commissions in the field of education, planning BSR Education Conference in Stockholm, implementation of the GREEN Steam project, deepening cooperation with the EUSBSR PA.

Mr Mäkelä also presented commissions planned activities for 2025, inter alia:

- Live meeting and study visit in Hamburg in April
- Continuing the implementation of Green STEAM ecosystems, Erasmus+ project
- UBC Education Conference in Stockholm (in cooperation with EUSBSR PA)
- UBC General Conference (workshop: Facing the biggest challenges of education systems)
- Planning and implementation of new project initiatives

The Commission plans its next meeting online on 17 June.

Planning Cities Commission, Gdynia

Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the Planning Cities Commission presented, that Commissions goals are:

- creating a network of professional planner around the Baltic Sea Region
- supporting city servants in building high quality, economically strong, resilient, sustainable cities
- promoting interaction and cooperation in field of urban planning and construction in practice
- organising 3-day Seminars in the host city, that wants expertise of UBC Member Cities for a challenging area

Chair informed, that in spring the Planning Cities Commission prepared a cover story article for Baltic Cities Bulletin *Creating healthy urban environments in Baltic Sea cities*.

Ms Szewczyk informed that Planning Cities Commission meetings are focused on resolving practical issues in certain cities. For example, during a planned seminar in Riga 30 September – 3 October, the Commission will be working on the problem of connecting Central Market with Old Town and unlocking its social and economic potentials. She emphasised, that similar problems are common in other cities, where old architecture is present. The Commission presents its conclusions to the city institutions.

Safe Cities Commission, Liepaja

Kaspars Vārpiņš, Chair of the Commission informed, that the Commission concluded activities such as Project PA Secure Kids, Project Resilient Cities, joint meeting with UBC Cultural Cities Commission, participation in EUSBSR PA Secure activities.

Mr Vārpiņš highly appreciated joint meeting with Cultural Commission and emphasised, that taking a different view is very important for creating complex safety strategies. Safe Cities Commission would like to extend this approach to other Commissions and partners. In his opinion, feedback from Ukrainian cities would be very useful, because of their current war experience. Chair informed, that small and medium sized events are usually the most vulnerable to safety crises.

Chair also informed about remaining tasks for 2025 which are:

- talks with Sustainable Cities Commission
- Resilient Cities project conference in Rostock
- UBC General Conference and EUSBSR Annual Forum and PA Secure Steering group
- work on the projects: Resilient Cities, RAZOM, ClimaResponse.

Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, Kiel

Sustainable Cities Commission, Turku (online)

Agnieszka Ilola, Head of the Sustainable Cities Commission Secretariat, presented the ongoing activities and plans for 2025:

- Development and implementation of projects supporting the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030
- Plan to participate in Interreg BSR Conference 2025, Sustainable Cities Commission meeting, General Conference, EUSBSR Annual Forum
- Communications: UBC TALKS, webinars, Sustainable Cities Bulletin, newsletter, website, social media, Baltic Smart Water Hub.

In 2025 the Commission will continue implement the projects, inter alia:

- EMPEREST – eliminating micropollutants from wastewater for reuse strategies. The Final Conference will be held on 19-20 November in Berlin.
- BALTIPLAST – prevention and reduction of plastic waste in the Baltic Sea Region. Three project training webinars will be held in June.
- SUMP for BSR – effective Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning to support active mobility.

Sustainable Cities Commission is holding a yearly meeting in Malmö on 1-3 October 2025. The main theme is: Creating climate-proof and nature-positive cities together.

Sustainable Cities Commission will organize a workshop on “Urban sustainability arena for sharing success strategies and solution” at the General Conference in Słupsk.

Ms Ilola invited to participate in UBC TALKS webinars 2025, dealing with e.g.: Building local climate and disaster risk preparedness, Climate Budget tools for cities.

Youthful Cities Commission, Riga

Chair of the Youthful Cities Commission Dmitrijs Zverevs reminded, that last year in Espoo the Commission has observed the work of local Youth Board and proposed to establish a UBC Youth Board. In June 2025 active members of the Commission will meet to establish criteria and principles how to pick about 10-12 young people to join the General Conference. Mr Zverevs informed that summer months will be used to prepare those young people for participation in General Conference. The Chair mentioned that Commission did not prepare the promised Youth Board concept for the Executive Board Meeting in Tartu since the concept was not yet discussed with other Commissions and was not ready.

Mr Zverevs informed, that Commission would like to use the opportunity of General Conference to add new cities to the Youthful Cities Commission and rethink how it works.

President of the UBC Mantas Jurgutis assured Mr Zverevs, that he has full support of UBC and encouraged other cities to help the Youthful Cities Commission to acquire new members.

6. Task Force on Ukraine. UBC guide on Ukrainian cities integration.

UBC Task Force on Ukraine was established in 2024 in order to support the alignment of Ukrainian municipal governance with EU standards, develop forceful communication channels for effective dialogue, and inform Ukrainian cities about EU funding opportunities. These efforts are aimed at facilitating a smoother integration process and fostering mutually beneficial cooperation between UBC member cities and Ukrainian associated cities.

The work of the Task Force has culminated in the creation of the guide for cooperation with Ukrainian associated cities, attached.

Marko Paunovic, Head of UBC Antenna in Brussels, informed the guide is focused on:

- EU supported projects development

- exchange of best practices among the cities
- establishing stronger linkages for future cooperation

The guide defines the tasks and activities of the UBC bodies.

UBC Secretariat has already compiled a list of Ukrainian experts in different fields as well as Ukrainian speaking interpreters. The role of the Secretariat is also to promote the integration of Ukrainian associated cities in the UBC network and the promotion of successful practices and projects for/led by Ukrainian cities.

The task of the Brussels Antenna is to keep a regularly updated calendar of EU project calls. On 18 June, the Antenna will organize an online capacity building event “EU Accession and Funding for Ukraine” to explore EU funding opportunities available to Ukrainian and BSR cities.

The tasks of UBC Commissions defined in the guide:

- to appoint liaison officers from the members
- to assess needs of Ukrainian cities regarding further support within the scope of work of each Commission
- to propose relevant actions for further supporting Ukrainian cities by liaison officers

The Presidium and the Board shall discuss the report on carried out action, approve relevant actions for further support of Ukrainian cities proposed by the Commissions, set priorities for the next year.

Mr Paunovic also informed about other activities of UBC Brussels Antenna, information in the attached presentation.

7. Next meeting of the Executive Board, Słupsk/Dolina Charlotty, 4 November 2025.

Next meeting of the Executive Board will be held during the XVIII UBC General Conference in Słupsk/Dolina Charlotty on 4 November 2025.

Dr Stefan Fassbinder, Mayor of Greifswald, proposed to hold the 96th UBC Executive Board meeting in Greifswald in May/June 2026.

The Board warmly accepted the proposal and thanked the Mayor of Greifswald for the invitation.

Mantas Jurgutis
Chair

Paweł Żaboklicki
Secretary

Malin Lauber
Adjuster

Heiki Hansen
Adjuster

Link to the documents:

<https://ubc.net/documents/executive-board-meeting-documents/94th-executive-board-meeting-elva-tartu-22-may-2025/>