



## **COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT**

### **ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2010 – SEPTEMBER 2011**

#### **Focus on Sustainable Development in Baltic Sea cities**

UBC is extremely well placed to be involved and tackle many challenges the Baltic Cities and the Baltic Sea Region is facing. At the same time, we also have very good possibilities to contribute to improve the sustainable development in our region and we want to be a preferred partner in different tasks, projects and events. The past years of UBC's environmental work and the highly successful implementation of several Sustainability Action Programmes have taken us to the point where we have both an explicit responsibility and a potential to make an impact, if we so want to.

Good basis for our work is provided by the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 1998, 2001, 2004/2005, 2006/2007 and 2009, where a clear majority of the UBC member contributed. The state of the Baltic Sea and increasing effects of Climate change are perhaps two of the main challenges to work on with during the upcoming years, but we still have tasks like, cleaner wastewater, sustainable transport, rebuilding and revitalizing of city districts and air quality as huge tasks for many of us. Several of our cities will face challenges with these issues and need all assistance that can be mobilised. Many of the tasks are not limited to border so UBC as a regional city network have the possibilities to act together and bring added value.

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 the fields and have clear goals and targets for our activities. From knowledge based analyses, technical solutions, improved political planning and decision making processes to improved information and dissemination strategies. One important task is that the UBC need to continue the development and to implement its Communication Strategy in order to improve actions and performances for the benefit of our member cities. 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 UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 has started well and has already committed several projects with a total budget on approximately 10 MEUR. These projects provide an excellent framework of action to address the challenges in practice.

#### **UBC Commission on Environment Actions**

The UBC Commission on Environment (UBC EnvCom), chaired by Mr. Mikko Jokinen, Turku, has worked very actively during the whole reporting period. Mr Jokinen is assisted by the Environ-

ment and Sustainable Development Secretariat and the secretariat is generously hosted by the City 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 current staff number of 20 full-time professionals (Finnish-Lithuanian-Polish-Russian-German-Ukrainian). The secretariat is now located in the so called Baltic Sea House in the old centre of Turku.

The UBC EnvCom has achieved a lot in different policy, networking, capacity-building and information 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 the reporting period the UBC EnvCom have arranged several thematic seminar/workshop-type meetings with. During the reporting period these meetings were organised in Kristiansand September 2009, Gdynia March 2010 and in Turku in February 2011. In addition a joint UBC Commission meeting was held in Turku in November 2010. In this meeting discussions about the implementation of the UBC Strategy and UBC Sustainability Action Programme as well as common preparations for the upcoming UBC IX General Conference took place. In these commission meetings, broad participation took place both in terms of participants (approximately 60 – 80 persons per meeting) including several UBC Commissions, but also in terms of activity and need for discussion. In connection to the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2009 the personnel of the UBC EnvCom secretariat was in contact with all UBC member cities in order to check up contact information and possibility for participation in the survey. This has been much appreciated among the contact persons in the UBC member cities.

The UBC EnvCom web-site has been totally up-dated and contact databases maintained. 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 530 Good Practice cases are already listed in the database (see [www.ubcwheel.eu](http://www.ubcwheel.eu)).

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has continued with thematic editions on “Improving the state of the Baltic Sea” 2/2009, “sustainable Solutions for cities” 1/2010, “Quality of Life in Baltic Cities” 2/2010 and “Inspiring local level Decisions steer innovative cities” 1/2011 have been published. Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has a broad edition and it receives a high interest from member cities and partner organisations. The electronically version of the Environmental Bulletin is more and more requested. UBC Commission on Energy has own pages in the Environmental Bulletin since 2006. New posters and material has been produced depending on the need and events where UBC Commission on Environment has participated. The Commission website, [www.ubc-environment.net](http://www.ubc-environment.net) has been further developed. Analyses on how to improve the network services have been carried out and there will be further improvements in this area in the near future.

The biggest single activity during 2011 was the arrangement and hosting of the “Solutions local, together – Nordic Conference on Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region 31.1.–2.2.2011 in Turku, Finland. This Conference opened the Finnish presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2011 and was opened by the Finnish Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi. The conference took place at the Turku city theatre and includes several side events, markets, meetings and shows around the city of Turku. UBC EnvCom had the coordination responsibility

of this mayor sustainability conference in the Baltic Sea region. The Conference takes place during 31.1. – 2.2. 2011 in City of Turku and had approximately 650 conference participants. This Conference was supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, 10 different ministries in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, Nordic and Baltic Associations of Municipalities and Regions in which were also strongly involved. Participants from whole Baltic Sea Region were represented and a lot of UBC member cities participated and also presented issues, topics and sustainable solutions at the conference. For more info see [www.solutions2011.fi](http://www.solutions2011.fi)

### **Activities – Serving UBC cities**

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 activities. Interaction and good communication is one of the key elements of continuing development and improvement. The development of Baltic Sea cities has been long and successful. 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. Such policy-makers include Baltic Sea Regional actors like national ministries of the environment and foreign affairs, Nordic Council of Ministers, European Environment Agency, Baltic 21 and HELCOM, as well as the European Union – especially European Commission DG Environment, DG Regio and Committee of Regions.

The UBC EnvCom builds its activities on principles of stable continuing development. 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 hopefully implemented as much as possible 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 discuss and plan projects and other activities as well as for direct learning and sharing.
- **Development and investment projects addressing the challenges** in Baltic Cities and implementing the thematic goals of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 - 2015 – the UBC EnvCom is involved in several large co-operation projects during the period and will continue to create development projects supporting our member cities.
- **Capacity-building** – organising opportunities for the cities to up-date their knowledge and competencies on environmental policies, practices and legislation, communicating different target groups and organisational setup, strengthening efficient Sustainability Management.
- **Internal development of cooperation** Improving the meeting and workshop methods and techniques has been a core task for the UBC EnvCom. UBC EnvCom has with great success used ADOBE Connect Pro as a communication tool. The tool has been used in bilateral discussions, smaller and large meetings and also training events.
- **Information services** – publishing Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin development and updating of the UBC Good Practice database on sustainable development issues in the Baltic Cities and partner organisations. Improving the UBC web-services on environment and sustainable development.

- **Good Practice work** – promotion of good practice and exchange of excellence will continue by the web-site, databases and other information services. Improve our surveys and find more use of the work put into the collection of data by liaison activities with other similar activities with Universities, evaluating and supporting sustainable development.

### **Resources**

The Commission on Environment has an effective secretariat with good resources, located in the City of Turku. The secretariat has an international staff between 12 - 20 full-time professionals. The purpose of the secretariat is to serve the UBC network and to manage and co-ordinate the implementation of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010-2015. The activities and services of the UBC Commission on Environment are closely tied to funding possibilities. Cooperation between several UBC Commission has been successful and can also lead to more efficiency and increased 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.

### **Evaluation**

UBC's EnvCom services are continuously evaluated and improved. These evaluations are extremely valuable as they provide our city network with information on development trends, possible problems and good practises all important for a balanced and dynamic development of the Baltic Sea Region.

### **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 has represented the UBC at the CBSS - Baltic 21, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign and at European expert and working groups such as in EMAS revision.

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. The role should include involvement in policy development, surveys, collection of good practice and assisting in arrangements of meetings. The UBC EnvCom has been involved in all these activities during the last two years. So far the cooperation with different stakeholders and coordination units dealing with the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has been successful and requests from EU authorities has increased. UBC EnvCom was also in 2009 requested to cooperate and assist the Swedish EU Presidency with conferences, speakers and information about the cities in the Baltic Sea Region. We these activities as important tasks for the whole UBC and our UBC member cities.

During the reporting period the UBC EnvCom was involved in arrangements of the European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign continued with the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns in Dunkirk France in 20 – 21 May 2010.

#### **Main Projects of the UBC Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat**

- **CHAMP** – Combating Climate Change. LIFE+ funded project including Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy. 2009 – 2011. Based on the 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.
- **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.
- **PURE Phosphorous Reduction in Baltic Cities.** 7 UBC cities. 11 partners and 18 associated partners. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighborhood programme. 2009 – 2013.
- **PRESTO Project** on Reduction of the eutrophication of the Baltic Sea today.
- **Coordination activities: Russian neighborhood, Awareness Raising in Russia, Blue Pack and NEAT.** Several Awareness and neighborhood involvement projects between UBC and Russian cities. Ministry on Foreign Affairs and Environment in Finland. 2010 – 2011
- **Solution 2011 Conference.** Coordination and responsibility of a mayor sustainability conference in the Baltic Sea region. To take place during 31.1. – 2.2. 2011 in Turku.
- **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.
- **ELTIS + SUTP and Sustainable Transport** EU IIE funding
- **Quest SUTP and Sustainable Transport** EU IIE funding
- **GREENCITY Project** together with City of Umeå. Life + funding
- **NetCom** IEE funding. Strengthening the Covenant of Mayors work and networking

#### **ACTION PLAN OCTOBER 2012 - SEPTEMBER 2013**

##### **UBC Commission on Environment activities in 2012 -**

The commission is activated in different development projects, policy-, networking-, 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.

The *UBC Good Practice Database* is working to better serve and collect information, data, good practises etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities. More than 530 Good Practice cases are already listed in the database (see [www.ubcwheel.eu](http://www.ubcwheel.eu)). These cases and pages have been visited by more than 1 million visitors!

*Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin* will be developed further and thematic editions on relevant topics will continue to be published twice a year. The Bulletin is made together with UBC Commission on Energy and discussions with other UBC Commission concerning involvement of them too take place for the moment. The electronically version of the Environmental Bulletin is more and more requested. The Commission website has continuously been developed. 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). UBC Commission on Environment will have a role in the planning of the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns. UBC EnvCom will support the city of Umeå in their planning for the Cultural Capital Year in 2014 and also in the preparations of the next Nordic Sustainability Conference also to be held in city of Umeå.

The implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region will continue and the UBC Commission will actively been 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 simultaneously. The UBC Commission on Environment has evaluated the different EU BSR Strategy Flagships and is for the moment closely involved in following flagship processes;

#### **Priority area 1 “To reduce nutrient inputs to the sea to acceptable levels”**

##### **1.2 “Cleaner wastewater**

UBC EnvCom and UBC Energy. How; Follow the policy development, Implementation via following projects, PURE and PRESTO projects (coordinated by UBC EnvCom) and ITEST project (by UBC Energy). PRESTO has recieved Flagship status.

#### **Priority area 4. “To become a model region for clean shipping”**

##### **4.1. “Promote measures to collect ship generated waste”**

##### **4.2. “Promote measures to reduce emissions from ships and enhance the development”**

##### **4.3. “Introduce differentiated port dues depending on the environmental impact of ships”**

##### **4.4. “Eliminate the discharge of sewage from ships”**

##### **4.5. “Improve the waste handling on board and in ports”**

UBC EnvCom involved in the project INNOSHIP (with Flagship status) adressing above mentioned issues and tasks. Tasks; Follow the policy development, Implementation via possible upcoming development projects,

#### **Priority area 5. “To mitigate and adapt to climate change and”**

##### **5.3 “Create a network of sustainable cities and villages”**

UBC EnvCom. Tasks; Follow the policy development, cooperation with responsible country and organisation (Request by the Swedish Ministry of Environment and Boverket). UBC EnvCom has also been running several climate change related projects and continue to be active in this field. A part of this is to support the Covenant of Mayors concept via the multi stakeholder project NetCom.

**Priority area 8. “Implementing the Small Business Act: to promote entrepreneurship, strengthen SMEs and increase the efficient use of human resources”**

**8.4 “Make the Baltic Sea an Eco-efficient region”**

Appointed by the UBC Executive board the UBC EnvCom is following the policy development and discussion in a project called Ecoregion project. Similar tasks are handled in the UBC EnvCom project New Bridges

**Internal UBC activities**

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

A important and for the UBC network crucial task is to continuously improve the meeting and workshop methods and techniques. This will also be one of the core tasks for the UBC EnvCom. UBC EnvCom has with great success used ADOBE Connect Pro as a communication tool. The tool has been used in bilateral discussions, smaller and large meetings and also training events. In end of 2011 UBC EnvCom will use and test ADOBE Connect Pro as a virtual conference facility in the LIFE+ financed CHAMP project.

UBC will continue to cooperate and implement the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015 together with the other UBC Commissions. One concrete task will be to arrange the joint UBC Commission meeting in Halmstad 9 – 11 may 2012.

**Main Projects focuses of the UBC EnvCom**

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 continuation UBC EnvCom will continue to support the UBC member cities and will try to assist them in solving challenges.

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 promote 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 key issues in the upcoming EU budget will be on building on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth! With this we will have one of the mayor tasks for the upcoming years of succesful UBC cooperation and work.

**Evaluation**

The Commission on Environment has an effective secretariat with good resources, hosted and located in the City of Turku. The secretariat has an international staff of 20 full-time professionals. The purpose of the secretariat is to serve the UBC EnvCom and to manage and co-ordinate the implementation of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010-2015. The activities and services of the UBC EnvCom are closely tied to funding possibilities and the secretariat is therefore dependent of external funding programmes.

Björn Grönholm

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