



***UBC Planning Cities Commission session
"Rediscovering water in the city: public realm
strategies on the waterfront"***

16-19 October 2016, KLAIPĖDA (LITHUANIA)



KLAIPEDA is the only sea port and the third largest city of Lithuania, situated on the South Baltic seashore with the population of 158 thous. people

HISTORY

Klaipeda is also the oldest city of the country with the most turbulent history. In 1252, after battles with the Baltic tribes, the German Livonian Order built a castle and established a town called Memelburg, later - Memel. For nine hundred years this town had been the heart of the so called Lithuania Minor – the German region, where local Lithuanians comprised majority in the countryside, and the minority - in town. Lithuanians stick to the original place name – Klaipeda and preserved their language and culture. During Napoleonic wars in 1806, the capital of the Prussian Kingdom was moved from Berlin to Klaipeda. For a period of more than a year King Friedrich Wilhelm III and the Queen Louise resided in Klaipeda. Over different periods of its long history, Klaipeda has always been a multinational city. Not only Germans and Lithuanians, but also English, Dutch, Scottish, Austrian, Swedish and Jewish people called Klaipeda their home. They mostly were merchants making business via the port of Klaipeda. Prosperity of Klaipeda as a city is mostly connected to the 19th century well-developed timber trade rather than its fortress or harbour status. Under advantageous political circumstances after WWI, in 1923, a successful Lithuanian revolt was organized, and Klaipeda together with its region, were incorporated into Lithuania Greater. In 1939 Klaipeda was occupied by Nazi Germany. During WWII the beautiful old city with a unique architecture was severely destroyed. In 1945 Soviets stepped into an empty city – under Hitler's order all its inhabitants withdrew to Germany. During the Soviet period Klaipeda was an important industrial city, and, as a military port, it was closed for foreigners. After restitution of the Lithuanian Independence in 1990, Klaipeda opened a new leaf of its history.

URBAN PLAN AND ARCHITECTURE

Before WWII, Klaipeda was even treated among the most beautiful towns of Northern Europe. The oldest part of the city is characterized by a regular network of streets, the peculiar to German towns half-timbered architecture and the preserved fragments of the 17th-18th century fortifications. The urban plan of the Old Town is geometrically very regular, almost all streets cross in right angles.

CONTEMPORARY KLAIPEDA

Having endured all historical cataclysms, today Klaipeda is an important economical, and cultural center of Western Lithuanian. It is an ice-free port, a significant business development point of the Baltic Sea Region. About 80 percent of the citizens are Lithuanians. The former German and Russian military headquarters now accommodate Klaipeda University. For international cooperation and propagation of European unity ideas, the City of Klaipeda was awarded the highest awards: the Council of Europe Flag of Honour, Plague of Honour, and Europe Prize.



CULTURE

Drama and Music Theatres, numerous cultural institutions and performing groups, different active unions of artists, museums and exhibition halls, lots of national and international cultural events all year round make Klaipeda an attractive place with a unique face. Many groups of Klaipeda performers are winners of international competitions. Annually since 1934, during the last weekend of July, the Sea Festival is celebrated. During the weekend no less than 100 cultural events with marine topics attract up to 1 million visitors. The International Klaipeda Castle Jazz Festival at the beginning of June is a musical fiesta of European level, local and world famous jazz stars perform there.



ECONOMICS

Klaipeda and its Region creates 11,5% of the country's GDP and is characterized as the leader in terms of economic and social welfare indicators. Klaipeda is a large Lithuanian transport hub connecting sea, land, air and rail routes from East to West. Klaipeda State Sea Port is of international importance as a major cargo transshipment and passenger transport center, creating favourable conditions for the rapid economic development of Klaipeda. Being a multi purpose all-year-round port with over 30 specialized cargo terminals, Klaipeda handles all types of cargo. The port can accommodate vessels up to 315 m in length and with the maximum draught of 13,5m. The port of Klaipeda is the leader among the ports of the Baltic Sea in terms of container handling. Klaipeda has the widest network of shipping lines in the Baltic States. 26 shipping lines connect Klaipeda with European ports and other countries. Over 8000 vessels from 60 countries call the port annually. The total port capacity comprises over 40 m. tons per year. Cruise tourism is rapidly developing in Klaipeda. During the season of 2016, 50 cruise vessels called Klaipeda bringing into the city about 55 thous. tourists from all over the world. Ship building and ship repairing are important branches of industry. For instance, Western Shipyard JSC is among the largest and most modern shipbuilding and ship repair companies in the whole Baltic Region. Wood processing and furniture industry are also among the leading branches in Klaipeda. Chemistry industry is represented by JSC NEO Group producing 10% of EU premium quality PET resin market and JSC Indorama producing 5% of EU PET materials for plastic packing market. Apart from other industries, the fields of wind energy, geothermic water energy and sapropel are developed.

KLAIPEDA FREE ECONOMIC ZONE

Klaipeda FEZ provides clients with opportunities for business development by offering industrial sites with physical and legal infrastructure, support services, and tax incentives. The assistance of FEZ Management Company includes complete and individualized start-up services which make business setting up easy. Klaipeda FEZ covers 412 ha territory. It currently accommodating 25 companies, they created 2500 new jobs. The total investment comprises 582 m Eur. In 2010 Klaipeda FEZ was rated the 5th best in the world according to the provided for businesses infrastructure.

EDUCATION

Klaipeda University is among the youngest universities of the country. It has just celebrated its 25th anniversary. 4500 students study at the Faculties of Marine Engineering and Natural Sciences, Humanities and Education Sciences, Social and Health Sciences, as well as at the Academy of Arts, the Institute of Continuous Studies, and the Institute of the Baltic Region History and Archaeology. Currently, the University implements over 100 study programmes in all three cycles, providing research and technological innovations-based contemporary knowledge which ensures advanced university education. Klaipeda Science and Technology Park established in Klaipeda University campus, promotes knowledge based business development. Lithuanian Christian College International University in Klaipeda is a private, internationally recognized liberal arts institution granting bachelor's degrees in business administration, English language and literature, Psychology and Theology. Current student enrollment is around 10 000: 60% from Lithuania, 40% international from 21 countries.

RECREATION AND TOURISM

Klaipeda is a resort city, too. Part of its territory is protected as the UNESCO natural heritage site. Wonderful recreation conditions are provided on Blue Flag beaches, cycling tracks in pine forests provide splendid outings for families and tourists. Yachting in the Curonian Bay and the Baltic sea becomes more and more popular each year. Klaipeda hosts national and international regattas. For three times already, the city has hosted the prestigious Tall Ships Races and Tall Ships Regattas attracting up to 100 vessels and 4000 young sailors from dozens of countries. In summer 2017, the wonderful fleet of historical sailing ships Tall Ships Races will call Klaipeda again. In no time one can reach other most beautiful summer resorts of Lithuania - Palanga and Neringa, located at the distance of 25 and 50 km from Klaipeda.





Klaipėdos turizmo ir
kultūros informacijos centras
Klaipėda Tourism and
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KLAIPĖDOS UOSTAS



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