



## **Consolidation of the UBC Commissions**

The 67th UBC Executive Board Meeting held in Kiel on 20 June 2013 discussed inter alia the question of consolidation of the Commissions in order to improve the efficiency of the UBC work according to the decision at the General Conference in Kristiansand. Currently UBC has 13 Commissions.

The Board members expressed thoughts on the possible models of cooperation between different Commissions. The Board sent their proposals to the Secretariat (see below).

It was decided the proposals received shall be sent to the Commissions for consultations. Several Commissions responded (see below).

The Board shall consider all suggestions in an open procedure.

### **I. Ideas from the Board members**

#### **1. President Per Boedker Andersen**

1. Business + Education
2. Environment + Energy
3. Urban Planning + Local Safety + Transportation
4. Culture + Sport + Tourism
5. Health and Social Affairs

Horizontal Commissions or networks:

6. Gender Equality
7. Youth Issues

#### **2. City of Jyväskylä / sent by Marketta Makinen**

1. Business + Education
2. Environment + Energy + Transportation
3. Urban Planning + Health and Social Affairs + Local Safety
4. Culture + Sport + Tourism

Horizontal Commissions or networks:

5. Gender Equality
6. Youth Issues

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Or alternative 2:

1. Business + Tourism
2. Environment + Energy + Transportation
3. Urban Planning + Culture + Local Safety
4. Sport + Education + Health and Social Affairs



Horizontal Commissions or networks:

5. Gender Equality

6. Youth Issues

### **3. City of Umeå / sent by Charlotte Lundqvist**

- It's important that the Horizontal Commissions, as Gender and Youth, will stay Commissions – with full strength. The Gender Commission (and others) can be a good network/Project partners in the work of implementing The Baltic Sea Strategy. UBC provides the local platforms.

- The Clustering of Commissions – why not work with the EU 2020 strategy? (Smart growth means improving the EU's performance in education and encouraging citizens to learn study and update their skills, research/innovation that creates new products or services that generate growth and jobs and help address social challenges in the Member States and finally digital society by using information and communication technologies. Sustainable growth means building a more competitive low-carbon economy, protecting the environment by reducing emissions and preventing biodiversity loss, developing new green technologies, introducing efficient smart electricity grids, improve the business environment in particular for SMEs and finally consumer power and choices. Inclusive growth means raising Europe's employment rate with more and better jobs especially for women, young people and older workers, invest in skills and training to help people of all ages, modernizing the labour markets and welfare systems and finally ensure that benefits of growth reach all parts of the EU. The goal is to deliver economic, social and territorial cohesion through inclusive growth)

To get inspiration - look at the Nordic Council for clustering

- During 2012 The City of Umeå wrote a suggestion about a UBC Secretariat for inclusive growth. Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. The goal is to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. The Union has set five ambitious objectives on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas and has set up concrete actions. Umeå has a secretariat for gender equality and is a member of several other commissions. We would like to take this effort further by taking a broader approach. The creation of a secretariat for inclusive growth in the city of Umeå in Sweden, would act in line with EU's target goals and priorities. We have already identified some of the important issues for the secretariat to raise and work with – questions regarding gender equality, questions regarding culture, questions regarding integration or diversity, some areas concerning sustainable urban development, work with and encourage the inclusion of all young people, public health questions, accessibility questions etc. A secretariat can possess knowledge in the area and in the future become experts on questions regarding inclusive growth. The goal is to bring together projects and link them to the secretariat where all knowledge and experience is based. EU funds numerous programs that are channeled to contribute to EU 2020 growth strategy and there are many opportunities open for funding of a secretariat working with this kind of questions.



#### **4. Estonia cities and Vice-President Jaadla / sent by Tanel Mõistus**

1. To divide the coordination and responsibilities of commissions between Vice Presidents.

For example:

I Vice President - Culture + Sport + Health and Social Affairs Gender + Equality+ Youth Issues

II Vice President - Business + Education + Tourism + Transportation

2. With regards to consolidation of the Commissions we propose to set-up a task force who maps the current situation and addresses its proposals to the Board about the consolidation.

#### **5. City of Kristiansand / sent by Lukas Wedemeyer**

The City of Kristiansand welcomes the initiatives to strengthen and deepen collaboration within the UBC network based on the task force Conclusions and Proposals that were adopted by the executive board in Kiel.

We understand that the thoughts on the possible cooperation between different commissions expressed by the president are suggestions and that other board members expressed other ideas. We welcome that the president is giving the board members the possibility to contribute with their own proposals.

The commissions' evaluation conducted in 2012 shows some weaknesses both regarding methodology and participation of the member cities. The survey should be understood as indicator for the activities and ambitions of about one third of the members that answered the questions rather than as a representative status description of the UBC as a whole. It should therefore not be used as the basis of comprehensive restructuring.

The restructuring of the commissions should in our opinion anyhow not be conducted exclusively as a top-down process run by the presidency and the board but rather be driven by the commissions themselves. This would also provide a good opportunity to assess their ambitions focal areas for the future. It is our understanding that the commissions are forming the core of the union; they should play an initiating role in our network. A more bottom-up oriented process should anyhow result in a more limited scope for the organization and thus a smaller number of commissions. Not only the merging of commissions should be discussed but also the termination of commissions has to be a possibility. For the future development of the commission's work there should be established indicators to measure their quality and added value produce that have to go beyond those used in the evaluation.

Our general input regarding the structure of commissions is that they should be based on a few long term overall aims for the UBC decided upon by the general conference. These should be oriented towards both the Europe 2020 strategy and more specific the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.



This is not least important to empower the UBC for future EU project funding. Against this background a few overall thematic areas should be formulated and emphasized through action plans by the commissions and general UBC communication. Commissions should subsequently find partners among other UBC commissions as well as external entities to commonly put their strategies into action and contribute to reach the defined UBC goals.

A differentiation between horizontal and vertical commissions is furthermore not desirable. All commissions should be open for cooperation with all other commissions. We should neither confine cooperation across commissions to only a few of them nor should we establish two classes of commissions.

We are looking forward to discuss these matters more detailed in Mariehamn during the executive board meeting and the general conference.

## **II. Ideas from the Commissions**

### **1. Commission on Culture, sent by Lone Leth Larsen**

Proposal:

The cultural Commission should not be merged but seen as a commission that runs through the other commissions.

To compare with other neighbor institutions:

Nordic council:

1. Culture education, training
2. Citizens/ consumers rights
3. Environment and natural resources
4. Business and industry
5. Welfare

CBSS.org:

1. Environment and sustainability
2. Economical development
3. Energy
4. Education and culture
5. Civil society and human rights

UNESCO sees culture as the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of sustainability

Nordic council has just launched its new Baltic strategy where culture plays a major role as driver for the economic and sustainable development, and so has the EU for the Baltic sea strategy.

### **2. Commission on Energy, sent by Eva Hjalmered**

The Commissions' role are to serve the needs of the member cities of the UBC. The commissions are constructed in different way in order to best serve and support the member cities. For examples we can in many municipalities find a Head of Environment, but rarely a Head of Energy.

Energy issues can sometimes be handled in terms of environment, sometimes urban planning, sometimes technical departments etc. The need and importance of the member cities are the reason and basis of the Commissions. The added value must always be central.

Cooperation between the Commissions are valued and important. We can find ways of cooperating in order to find new ways to support the UBC member cities, reduce travelling, administration etc.



For the Commissions on Energy it has been easy to cooperate with the Commissions on Environment, Urban Planning and Transport since they are closely related. A consolidation of Commissions might cement the cooperation, but discourage future new cooperations. An examples we have been working with is a cooperation between Energy and Education and maybe Youth issues in order to discuss and enhance the need of making are vykorten and youth interested in energy, technique and environmental issues, which we can see will be needed in a general perspective as well as future work force. We see it as a possible problem to not find these kind of cooperations if a consolidation of commissions will be made.

We believe the cities are attracted to different issues and ways of working. We want to have as many of the UBC member cities as possible active and the commissions are good, variable and flexible ways of attracting the cities.

We support the proposal for dividing the vice-presidents as key contact persons for the Commissions in order to strengthen the information between the UBC Executive Board and the Commissions. We belive that "rapporteurship" is a very good way to go in order to make the work more seethrough and complementary.

It is unclear to us the division between Commissions and horizontal Commissions. What Will this mean in practice?

A more acute and practical issue is the fact that the Commissions will hold Commission meetings on Thursday morning, the 3rd of October. In the afternoon the same day the general meeting will be held. Chairman or Co-chairman will be elected. Will this be dissolved after a few hours? Preparatory work will perhaps be for nothing, and the credibility of the UBC will in that case not be good.

We support the opinion of Kristiansand on having a thourough discussion and a thourough evaluation with the reports sent in by the Commissions in the autumn 2013 as central.

### **3. Commission on Environment, sent by Björn Grönholm**

We have been following the discussion and studying the proposals of UBC Board members concerning the future role and work of the UBC Commissions.

#### **Situation of UBC Commissions (Backgrounds)**

The current UBC Commissions work in different ways due to many reasons such as

- nature of the Commission field/sector/topic
- existing and potential resources
- relevance of each Commission (field and topics dealt) for respective UBC member city

The current UBC Commissions are obviously covering quite well the main sectors and fields of responsibilities in member cities. Biggest differences are in the deal of labour between the city and other local and regional authorities and agencies. Traditionally Nordic cities have quite wide mandate in producing services to citizens compared to eastern Baltic cities, where central government still has strong role in many sectors.

The UBC Commissions primary role is to serve and support the needs of the UBC member cities. The UBC Commissions offer today the most convenient and easy way to engaged in UBC activities as the Commissions provide different activities closely connected to cities every day work (professional expert meetings, joint projects, publications, surveys etc.). Many UBC member cities evaluate



critically their UBC membership (as any other network) via the activities and the added value the network can offer for the city and therefore services provided with different Commissions is very important for the whole organisation.

UBC Commissions have also an important role in supporting and implementing the UBC strategy as well as the UBC Sustainability Action Programme and other similar programmes and strategies which are also very important for the organisation.

The UBC Commissions have different backgrounds and reasons for being established. Always there has been voluntary cities who have been interested to establish and run the Commission's work. Running the Commission in different roles (chairmanship, secretary) has been perhaps one of the most important reasons for many cities to be the member of the Union.

It is important to evaluate and discuss of the work of UBC Commissions as part of the evaluation of the whole UBC organisation. The evaluation of the UBC Commission took place autumn 2012, but the summary of these is still waiting to be published. It would be important to evaluate also the work and role of the executive board and annual meeting of the organisation as part of the ongoing development work of UBC.

Response of UBC Commission on Environment to the proposals;

- It is important, that all the Commissions had the opportunity to comment the ideas of Executive Boards member
- Taking into consideration the structure of our decision making procedures, we understand, that the possible changes we are now discussing, may come into force only after the following annual conference in 2015
- We see, that there is an added value in having as many cities as possible in active role in the UBC network. Commission has crucial role in this (decentralization instead of concentration) is by giving a role for cities to be active.
- Cooperation between Commissions is important objective and the activities and focus of each Commission decides how and with what Commissions it is suitable to cooperate. It might also be suitable to cooperate differently with some Commissions than others, depending on topic.
- *Current cooperation between UBC Commissions on Environment, Energy, Transport and Urban planning has been based on the above mentioned principle.* UBC Commission on Environment would like to cooperate with the above mentioned Commissions also in the future. Instead of emerging the Commissions (and thus decreasing the number of responsible and committed cities) we see as an relevant option to study possibilities to strengthen the cooperation in their supporting activities, e.g. in the work of secretaries.
- We see it also important to establish new rules for subsidising the commissions based on the evaluation criteria developed so far
- We do not understand or support the division between Commissions and horizontal Commissions. Instead a division of UBC Commissions and ad hoc groups (expert groups, preparatory groups etc.) would perhaps support the purposes better.
- We very strongly support the proposal to add to the responsibilities of the UBC vice-presidents a task to act as a key contact person of the executive board for named



Commissions. This would strengthen the flow of information between the UBC Executive Board and the Commissions.

- We support the proposal by Kristiansand on having a thorough discussion of “*the restructuring of the commissions to be driven by the commissions themselves*”. We therefore support a continuation of the discussion after the Mariehamn General Conference (many UBC Commissions are selecting Chairpersons already in the UBC Commission meetings on Thursday morning, 3 October before the general assembly.).
- We also want to remind, that UBC don't have any general rules made for the commissions. We proposed, that the Executive Board would start a process to develop a model rules which each Commission should modify and submit to Executive Board for approval. This should be done by the 2015 Annual Meeting at latest

#### **4. Commission on Sport, sent by Joanna Leman**

UBC Commission on Sport fully agrees with the position proposed by City of Kristiansand.

#### **5. Commission on Transportation, sent by Andrzej Bień**

UBC Commission on Transportation supports the opinion of Kristiansand concerning the restructuring of the commissions - it should not be conducted as top-down process but rather be driven by the commissions themselves.

As regards our proposal on consolidation of the Commissions we opt for the solution proposed by Mr Per Bodker Andersen - where the Commission on Transportation would be consolidated with the Commissions on Urban Planning and Local Safety.

#### **6. Commission on Gender Equality, sent by Jennie Brandén**

The UBC Gender Commission finds it important that the restructuring of the commissions should be a bottom-up oriented process that involves the commission members and welcome the possibility to give our opinion on this matter.

Our proposal is that the Gender Commission should not be merged with other commissions but rather work horizontally with the other commissions. As the European Institutions, the UBC Gender Commission promotes gender equality through the principle of gender mainstreaming, which means integrating a gender perspective into all areas and at all levels of decision-making.

With that said, we find it crucial that the Gender Commission continues to have the status and full strength of a UBC commission. The Gender Commission can work as an important network and a possible project partner in the work of implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.