



## COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUALITY

### ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2011 – SEPTEMBER 2013

#### **Activities**

Since the XI General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities, held in Liepaja in Latvia in October 2011, the Commission on Gender Equality has continued its work to promote and enhance Gender Equality work around the Baltic Sea. Gender equality is promoted by developing cooperative structures for networking and the exchange of experiences and practical knowledge.

The Commission has researched experiences of gender equality work in the member cities. The Commission has throughout this period worked with networks within the area of gender equality and been active in meetings and conferences.

#### Updated report

The Commission has also during 2012 and 2013 worked with writing an updated gender equality report “Women and men in the UBC 2013” that is based on the previous report in 2009. The new report is to be presented and distributed at the XI General Conference in Mariehamn and then to all cities in the UBC, other organizations working with gender equality and stakeholders of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy. The report aims to work as a tool for other commissions in their work with gender equality and as a knowledge base for cities around the Baltic sea as it offers a framework that provides the basis for the development of gender equal societies. The report shows the conditions for social change to happen, and can be used as a way for cities to adapt to, and support, the objectives of gender equality. The updated report includes the method of gender budgeting as well as new examples of good practices of gender equality work from some of the member cities. By presenting different methods and using examples from different countries it allows for flexibility and creativity in fulfilling the objectives of gender equality.

#### Joint project proposal

The Commission has together with the “BSR – Local Platform on Social Development”, a project run by the municipality of Umeå that aims to strengthen local level participation in the EU BSR strategy, during 2012 and 2013 drafted a project proposal that has been sent in to the EUSBSR Seed Money Facility Secretariat to be reviewed. This is also a long term work that aims at strengthening the work within the UBC GC and aiming at a joint project for the next EU programme period 2014-2020. The Commission has also been in contact with the coordinator for priority area Health within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to introduce the Gender Equality Commission as an important network and platform and discuss project ideas.

#### Meetings in 2012

During 2012 the two annual meetings of the Gender Equality Commission were held in Helsinki, Finland and in Brussels, Belgium. During the meeting in Helsinki a seminar on gender responsive budgeting and gender budgeting was held at Helsinki city hall where several interested politicians from the Gender Equality committee from the city of Helsinki took part as well as representatives from Finland’s ministry of social affairs and health. Gender budgeting is an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It

means a gender-based assessment of budgets and incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process. The key objective of gender responsive budgeting is to increase gender equality. We also visited the National ministry of social affairs and health to talk about the work of the Gender equality commission. To arrange seminars in the cities where we meet has worked as an important tool for change as it contributes to raise awareness locally on the issue of gender equality as well as to initiatives on cooperation, sharing of best practice and the exchange of experiences.

During the other meeting in Brussels the Commission discussed possible connections with the EU strategy of the Baltic Sea Region. The meeting was partly held together with the "BSR Local Platform on Social Development project". One focus of the meeting was to discuss future joint projects. To promote projects within the UBC-area is an important tool and the meeting in Brussels demonstrated that the Gender Commission can play a role in strengthening the social aspects of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region for the coming program period. In Brussels the Commission also visited the European Women's Lobby which is the largest umbrella organization of women's associations in the EU.

In June of 2012 the Gender Equality Commission also took part in the Health and social affairs commissions meeting in Vaasa, Finland to present the work of the Commission and to increase cooperation between the commissions and other member cities. A number of cities were interested in the work of the Gender equality commission and also the cooperation with the BSR Local platform project to try to increase the impact of the work of the Gender equality commission, among other things, towards the Baltic sea strategy and to promote new projects within the region for the next program period. In October of 2012 the Gender equality commission took part in the Executive board meeting in Koszalin, Poland to present current and future work of the Gender equality commission.

### Meetings in 2013

The two annual meetings of the Gender Equality commission in 2013 were the joint meeting with the Urban Planning Commission in Umeå and the XII General Conference in Mariehamn, Åland.

The joint Gender and Urban Planning Commission meeting was the first joint seminar between the two commissions and it was very successful. Participants came from various fields of work such as architects, city planners, landscape architects, infrastructure planners, researcher and academics, gender equality officers, analysts and more from 18 cities and seven countries around the Baltic City, guaranteeing many and broad perspectives on the issue of gender and urban planning.

Linda Gustafsson, gender equality officer from Umeå municipality, and PhD Linda Sandberg and Professor Chris Hudson from Umeå University, gave an introduction to gender equality and examples of involving gender issues in planning. The participants were divided in six groups with mixed competencies working with two different cases. They had been given an alter-ego for adding extra dimensions and an everyday perspective to the analyses. Each participant represented a fictive person: young, elderly, woman, man and so on with information of specific living conditions and prerequisites. One workshop area was the city center and the task was to answer the question of "how we can make the city center more attractive by focusing on gender equality and a children's perspective?" The Urban Planning Commission found it very fruitful involving gender equality in the planning processes and vice versa.

## **ACTION PLAN 2014-2015**

The overall goal of the Commission is to create action for gender equality by promoting and supporting work on gender equality around the Baltic Sea and in the UBC with a specific focus on:

- Gender budgeting
- Labour market issues
- Social planning, urban planning and planning work
- Combating prostitution, trafficking and domestic violence

### **The goals of the Commission on Gender Equality for this period are the following:**

- To disseminate knowledge about issues of gender equality. The commission will further the awareness-raising within the field of gender equality and the strategy of gender mainstreaming.

The commission will disseminate knowledge about the work which is being done in the UBC area by spreading examples of good practices. The main tool for this work is the updated report on gender equality that will be presented at the XII general congress in Mariehamn and then distributed to all UBC member cities.

- The Commission aims to continue to develop a process focusing on gender budgeting and social investments by running a joint project with connection to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.
- The Commission has the ambition to strengthen the work with other international and European organizations working with gender equality to further the work. For example, cooperation will continue with the Winnet network and their work to initiate a BSR flagship project on gender, innovation, entrepreneurship and IT.
- To spread campaign material, such as the updated report, and find ways to inspire the cities to promote gender equality as an important parameter for a city's growth and the well-being of its inhabitants.
- The Commission will continue to collect examples of good practices. Experience-based knowledge accumulated through exchanges within the UBC-network can inspire member cities to move forward and apply knowledge in practice.
- Promoting municipalities to apply the examples of good practices to move forward in the work for gender equality and to promote mutual exchange of experiences of good practices within the UBC.
- Strengthening the cooperation with other commissions. Developing further cooperation with the Commission on Health and Social affairs and the Commission on Culture as Umeå in 2014 will be the European capital of culture. The goal for this period is also to take part in at least one other Commission meeting and present the issues of gender equality and gender mainstreaming within their specific field.

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