

Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

- **97th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, Belgium 8-10 October 2012 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The 97th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions took place in Brussels, Belgium on 8-10 October 2012. UBC President Mr Per Bødker Andersen participated in the plenary session. For the first time leaders of all the main EU institutions opened together the Committee of the Region's 97th Plenary session.

During the first day of Plenary session the economic recovery, cohesion policy and the Europe 2020 strategy: the role of regions and cities issues were discussed. The speakers were Ms Danuta Hübner, Mr Johannes Hahn and Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso.

On the second day the approval of the minutes of the 96th plenary session, held on 18 and 19 July 2012 was made and after the statement of the President the Discussions and adaptation of opinions were held. The main matters were The new Multiannual Financial Framework post 2013, Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (2014 – 2020), Public procurement package, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), Developing a maritime strategy for the Atlantic Ocean area, Global Europe: A new approach to financing EU external action.

On the 10th October 2012 proposal for the Plenary Assembly to establish an ad hoc commission on the revision of the Rules of Procedure was presented. Also among other issues discussed were: revised EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region, an agenda for adequate, safe and sustainable pensions, review of the Directive on re-use of public sector information and open data, energy Roadmap 2050. At the Plenary session climate change issues were broadly presented. At the end of the meeting new members of the Bureau were chosen.

- **23rd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, The voice of cities and regions in Europe, Strasbourg, France 16-18 October 2012 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The 23rd Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, took place in Strasbourg, France on 16-18 October 2012. UBC President Mr Per Bødker Andersen participated in the Congress. Over 300 local and regional councillors from the 47 Council of Europe member countries attended the meeting, in order to discuss the challenges currently facing local democracy.

The agenda focused on electing President and Vice-Presidents of the Chamber as well as on discussing the matters of local democracy in “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, participations of foreigners in local political life and local elections in Serbia which took place on 6th May 2012. Summaries of the reports were submitted.

Priorities of the Congress 2013-2016 were set. They are aimed at enabling it to continue to adapt to change while strengthening its activities in its areas of expertise, working closer to the needs of local and regional authorities and their citizens and seeking to provide visible and lasting results in the field.

Also a resolution and recommendation on the situation of local and regional democracy in Azerbaijan were debated on 17 October, at the 23rd Congress Session. The report, presented by the co-rapporteurs Jos Wiene, The Netherlands and Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria, assesses the developments in grassroots democracy in Azerbaijan since the Congress's monitoring report of 2003.

At the 23rd Congress was also debated and adopted a resolution and a recommendation on "Second-tier local authorities - intermediate governance in Europe". Concerned that the current economic crisis is inciting some governments to re-organise their territorial architecture with hasty reforms that risk doing lasting damage to local and regional democracy, the Congress is determined to intensify its efforts to ensure that territorial reforms are carried out for the benefit of citizens and in full consultation with all levels of government.

- **Seminar on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, Brussels, Belgium, 12 November 2012 (Marie-Louise Rönnmark, The Vice-President of UBC)**

On 12 November 2012 the Informal Baltic Sea Group (iBSG) together with the European Commission and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) hosted a seminar in the premises of the Information Office Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. The seminar was on cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, focusing on the EU-Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) with the revised action plan and the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). As an introduction, the Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) issued its report on the cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (political state of the region report). After that, successful cooperation projects from the work of iBSG and NCM were presented. These contributions reflected the objectives of the EUSBSR, including not only environmental aspects, such as the preservation of the Baltic Sea, but also economic policy and growth-oriented goals, which are supposed to provide improved connectivity and higher economic growth and greater integration of Russia into Baltic cooperation. In addition, the speakers presented approaches to strengthen the relevance of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region; both in terms of their political, as well as the social dimension. In an afternoon panel discussion representatives of the NCM, the European Commission (DG MARE) and from the member states Poland and Sweden underlined the importance of cooperation for the Baltic Sea Region. This discussion also included the alignment of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region in terms of the next funding period (Europe 2020) for structural and cohesion policy. Marie-Louise Rönnmark, First Vice-President of UBC, participated in a panel debate how to reinforce the political relevance of the EUSBSR. She especially promoted UBC and the important role UBC commissions can play for achieving the EUSBSR

- **Congress of Metropolis Management in the XXI century, Gdańsk, Poland 26-27 November 2012 (Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General)**

More than a thousand people took part in 34 panels which all together lasted more than 60 hours during meetings. The Congress was organized to aim the development directions for upcoming years. Many ideas and conclusions were presented.

The City of Gdańsk as the capital of Pomeranian Voivodeship and the metropolis has a potential to use not only the a seaport but also the airport and transport router. Humain capital is needed to develop the the region. On this field there should be a cooperation and integretion between universities, business and companies.

The final conclusions were as followed: the health is one of the most important resources in the City of Gdańsk. The quality of education has an impact in those areas of Gdańsk were are less pupils. The open school integrates not only the teachers but also children and their parents. There was also a dispute if Gdańsk is an important city from an economy and science point of view. Moreover other issues like aging was discussed. The main conclusion was that it is important to deal with discrimination against elder members of our society. Speakers in the given speeches focused also on sport. A support must be performed in water and group sports. These activities will attract more and more fans.

Many other problems and issues were presented during all 34 panels. The most important message is that the cooperation and agreement on different fields will help to develop not only the City of Gdansk, but also the Region. By making reasonable decisions and plans for the future the integration on deferent levels will give positive results in the quality of life and work for all inhabitants.

- **98th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, Belgium 29-30 November 2012 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The 98th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions took place in Brussels, Belgium on 29-30 November 2012. UBC President Mr Per Bødker Andersen participated in the plenary session. The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, addressed the Committee of the Regions' (CoR) plenary session to present the European Commission's Work Programme and priorities for 2013.

CoR members debated about the opinion on the Common Strategic Framework for cohesion policy after 2014 drafted by Marek Woźniak (Marshal of the Wielkopolska Region, PL/EPP). MEP Lambert van Nistelrooij, co-rapporteur on the same issue for the European Parliament, also took part in the debate. Other relevant topics related to the future cohesion policy were also discussed based on the opinions on the European Community led local development and on the proposed European Code of Conduct on Partnership. Also the controversial issue of the protection of workers temporarily posted abroad were among the main topics of debate.

Environmental issues had also heavily feature during the plenary discussions with four opinions up for adoption. Nilgun Canver (UK/PES) presented her opinion on the proposed 7th Environment Action Programme, which defines objectives for environmental policy and looks to improve implementation in Europe, thus supporting the Europe2020 objectives. On the

second day Urve Erikson (EE/EA), Member of Tudulinna Municipality Council, also presented her opinion on "Priority substances in the field of water policy", following which Corrie McChord (UK/PES), Member of Stirling Council, presented for discussion his opinion on "The implementation of the Soil Thematic Strategy" for debate. The EU Strategy towards a sustainable bioeconomy (rapporteur: Rogier van der Sande (NL/ALDE) was also put to vote.

- **99th Plenary session of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, Belgium 31 January-1 February 2013 (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The main topics of the CoR's plenary was "The smart and timely deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union and the full support of the Youth Guarantee scheme. Marek Woźniak Marshal of the Wielkopolska region, presented for adoption a resolution on the cohesion legislative package.

On 31 January the presidents of the political groups of the European Parliament and of the CoR met to discuss on the EU budget 2014-2020. Lucinda Creighton, TD, Ireland's Minister for European Affairs, presented Irish presidency's main objectives. On 1 February, Joaquín Almunia, Vice-president of the European Commission responsible for competition, issued a speech on the modernisation of EU State aid rules and, in particular, the revision of current regional state aid guidelines. Jean-Paul Denanot (FR/PES), President of the Limousin region also presented some proposals on the reform of regional state aid guidelines for 2014-2020.

Also other topic and issues such as promotion of the EU citizenship and the exercise of the European electoral rights, CoR's proposal on the creation of European-level legal status for European political parties and their affiliated foundations were presented. This European-level legal status could strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU.

During the 99th Plenary session opinions on "Blue Growth", "Marine Knowledge 2020" and "Renewable Energy: A major player in the European market" were given for adoption.