



58TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Trelleborg, Sweden, 4-5 June 2010

Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

- **The European Summit of Local Governments, Barcelona, 22-24 February 2010 (Maciej Lisicki, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk)**

On 22 - 24 February, the governments of 260 cities, most of them European, have been discussing the role of local authorities at European and local level, and the measures necessary for adoption in the current context. The basic question was that of how local governments should act to achieve more cohesive cities and therefore a more cohesive Europe.

During the opening event, Spain's Third Vice President and Minister of Territorial Policy, Manuel Chaves, expressed Spain's support for local governments figuring more prominently in the decisions of the EU, especially now with the objective of overcoming the financial crisis, creating employment and maintaining the European social model.

The President of the Generalitat de Catalunya (the autonomous regional government), José Montilla, meanwhile, called for regional and local governments to take part in defining specific issues, such as the "new financial perspectives" of the EU and the process of building Europe in general.

The Regional Minister of the Economy and Finance, Antoni Castells, called in his speech for cities' financial influence and their powers to reflect their political and representative importance, and said he supported strengthening the European Political Union to make the EU an influential player on the world stage, and for progress to be made towards a Europe that speaks "with one voice" in the world.

The European Summit of Local Governments has approved the "Barcelona Agenda", a set of policies to improve coordination between local authorities and to encourage them to participate in building Europe that are combined in the objective of setting up a chamber of local governments within the Committee of the Regions of the EU in order to strengthen communication between EU institutions and local authorities.

The Agenda calls the local governments to promote social, economic and regional cohesion by providing good quality public services that will improve people's lives, and also demands greater cooperation between all levels of government, local, regional and national, both at European level and within the member states.

The local government summit meeting ended with a series of "decentralized sessions" in nine Catalan cities, including Sabadell and Terrassa (in the province of Barcelona) and Tarragona.



- **84th Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, Brussels, 14-15 April 2010 (Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President)**

At its plenary session on 14-15 April, the Committee of the Regions adopted a report on the Baltic Sea Strategy prepared by Pauliina Haijanen. In her view, the regional and local level should be given a key position when identifying and selecting coordinating bodies at the level of priority areas and lead partners for flagship projects.

On the Wednesday session, Michel Platini, President of UEFA, had a speech presenting an idea that football shares Europe's values of integration, solidarity and social inclusion, and can play a significant role in helping the EU to promote them, especially at the local level where clubs are part of their local communities.

The EU accession process of Croatia, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was high on the CoR agenda on Thursday. After hearing from Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, the CoR adopted its opinion on enlargement strategy and the main challenges for the candidate countries tabled by rapporteur Georgios Papastergiou, Prefect of Pieria (EL/EPP). The debate among CoR members focused in particular on the progress made by Turkey and the relations between Turkey and Greece.

The CoR opinion stresses that candidate countries have to continue to strengthen the quality of local and regional administration and governance as the readiness of countries for EU membership will also depend on their local and regional administrative capacity.

Following a plenary debate with Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Regional Policy, local and regional politicians adopted an outlook opinion on the future of EU cohesion policy after 2013 drafted by Michael Schneider (DE/EPP). The opinion urges EU partners and national governments to retain an ambitious cohesion policy as a "core element" of the European integration model.

The CoR believes that cohesion policy must evolve with the aim of continuing in the future to narrow development gaps sustainably, strengthen sustainable growth and employment in European regions, support social inclusion and competitiveness in all the Member States and regions, safeguard subsidiarity and ensure financial sustainability. Thanks to the system of multi-level governance, Europe is able to pursue common objectives while at the same time leaving due scope for establishing specific regional and local priorities.

The CoR was of the opinion that the current principles of cohesion policy with respect to the system of multilevel governance, multiannual programme planning, partnership, focusing of effort, indicator-based programme management and assessment, have been successful. Therefore, it rejects any shortening of the timeframe of the seven-year programme.

- **Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional Cities Network, Constitution Act, Santiago de Compostela, 23 April 2010 (Ingrid Tilts, Kuressaare)**

On 23 April 2010, the Constitution Act on establishing the Conference of European Cross-Border and Interregional Cities Network (CECICN) was signed in the city of Santiago de Compostela, Spain.



CECICN was established by six organisations: Iberian Network of Cross-border Entities (RIET), Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities, MedCities, Mission Operationelle Transfrontaliere, Union of the Baltic Cities, Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (C.A.A.C.).

The main aim of the established Conference is to get prepared for the period 2014+ in the EU and to provide cities, border-regions and interregional territories

- with a stronger voice and higher visibility in the context of the cohesion policies at an European scale;
- to stimulate cross-border and interregional cooperation;
- to foster the consolidation process of the EU.

The Europe-wide phenomena is people not identifying themselves as citizens of the EU and alienating from the power. The budget of the EU is created by people but they have a very little say to what the budget is allocated for. It is of high importance to develop social cohesion during the next period in order to facilitate the perception that the EU is us and ours. Europe without borders is a serious issue to work on during the coming period and therefore it is important to consider the needs of cities in the EU institutions. Cities and territories Europe-wide face different problems and challenges that have to be addressed and via cooperation networks it is possible and reasonable to support each other in different parts of Europe. Cooperation helps people of different regions to learn and understand the variety of problems and challenges and to understand the all of them are our problems and challenges, not only those of the cities and regions where they are directly faced. Cities have the power to bring up the concrete and actual needs and requests of people.

As 1/3 of the EU population live at the external border of the EU, Europe without borders also requires attention to be paid to external borders as the relations with the outside regions strongly influence the situation of peace. The issue of illegal immigration is acute in the Mediterranean region but it has an impact on the EU as a whole.

The newly established network provides an opportunity to reinforce the power of the Committee of Regions, to influence the future policies and strategies. Currently, cross-border regional development has in all countries a sectoral approach at national level and not a holistic one. Cities and border-regions have the best knowledge what is requested by the people living in border regions. Local governments are the nearest to citizens political and power institutions and it is important for people to realise that their voice is heard and carried further by local governments.

Practical issues:

- The Conference has one President and five Vice-Presidents (one from each organisation).
- The Secretary General is connected to the President and each President appoints the Secretary General (SG).
- Currently, the President will be located in Santiago de Compostelo (as agreed earlier) and also the SG is located in Santiago de Compostela.
- A meeting in Brussels will be prepared by the SG and it will take place as soon as possible. The preparation includes road-mapping the period 2014+.
- The signed Constitution Act will be forwarded to UBC as there is one signature missing.



- Minutes of the 23 April event will be prepared and disseminated to the participating organisations.
- Signing of the Constitution Act was a public event which was attended by the President of Galicia, Mr Alberto Nines Fejoo, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr Antonio Cosano Perez.

By Ingrid Tilts, Kuresaare

- **HELCOM Baltic Cities Summit, Moscow, 18 May 2010 (Maciej Lisicki, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk)**

HELCOM held the first ever Summit of the Baltic Sea Cities on 18 May 2010 in Moscow. Major cities, ports, shipping companies, water utilities, international financial institutions and NGOs from around the Baltic Sea were discussing and exchanging the examples of how local actors and stakeholders can contribute to the implementation of the strategic HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to drastically reduce pollution to the sea and restore its good ecological status by 2021.

The Baltic Sea Cities Summit, hosted by the Governor of Saint-Petersburg, Ms. Valentina Matvienko, was a part of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting held on 20 May 2010 also in Moscow.

Sharing experience and exploring funding possibilities to restore the good ecological status of the sea were the main themes of the Summit. It focused on measures at the sub-regional level to reduce excessive inputs of nitrogen and phosphorus from municipal and shipping sewage, causing eutrophication of the Baltic Sea – a phenomenon which leads to problems like increased algal blooms, murky waters, oxygen depletion and lifeless sea bottoms. Tackling eutrophication is considered to be an important for local actors since a better state of the coastal waters creates additional competitive advantages for them, e.g. for tourist attractiveness, improving business conditions and living environment.

The Baltic Cities Summit provided opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, learning from experiences in implementing actions at the sub-regional level to improve the state of the marine environment, and a possibility for positive profiling and promotion. Among the major issues examined at the Summit were the new investments, management practices and tools in advanced wastewater treatment, facilities for wastewaters from shipping and public awareness raising. Also, different funding possibilities were explored.

The programme included four panels: 'Sustainable Baltic Cities', 'Sharing experience in sewage treatment – from capital cities to municipalities', 'Safe environmental havens for "floating municipalities" – sewage from ships', 'Implementing municipal infrastructure projects in Baltic Sea Region'. They focused on reduction of pollution loads to the sea from municipalities, experience in municipal sewage treatment, environmental challenges for cleaner Baltic shipping and implementation of municipal infrastructure projects in the Baltic Sea.



- **6th European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, Dunkerque, 19-21 May 2010 (Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President)**

More than 1,500 participants at the 6th Sustainable Cities and Towns Conference Dunkerque 2010, Europe's largest local sustainability event, accepted two political declarations that aim to shape the role of local governments in years to come. The Conference called for more recognition of the local and regional authorities' role and the creation of smart, sustainable economies.

"These declarations contain the essential means to evolve developing European policies. They contain the vital elements of our ideas and work so we need to put all our energy behind them" said Michel Delebarre, President of the Metropolitan Council of Dunkerque, host of the event. In an ever changing economic, political and strategic background, 2010 is a landmark year for the recognition of local autonomy and territorial cohesion. The Lisbon Treaty enters into force, but there are still many uncertainties on how economic growth and sustainability will or can be managed. The Dunkerque 2010 Local Sustainability Declaration states that we must make the transition to a sustainable, green and inclusive economy, as current models are resource and energy intensive and cannot stand up to a changing economic climate.

It is demanded to prioritize investments and to manage resources in a more efficient and greener way to enhance citizens quality of life. European cities and town must ensure that all citizens can fully take part in a low carbon lifestyle. By creating innovative, sustainable and inclusive communities we can make our cities and towns better places to live in.

Gino Van Begin, ICLEI's Regional Director for Europe said, "We can and must aspire to create a system of governance that integrates local and regional governments more actively, that gives these local and regional governments the chance to influence and be more coherently included in EU policies and resources."

"This is a key moment for the construction of what I call a European community of local governments for sustainable development," said Delebarre. "We want to be listened to and brought on board. We need to work more effectively together whatever the limitations," he continued when calling for integration between the many levels of governance.

By accepting the declaration participants made it clear that change can only be made with the support of national and international governments and institutions. The participants and organisers alike acknowledge the fact that the European Commission is going in the right direction regarding sustainable development, but that the European institutions need to move closer to citizens if funding programmes and legislation are to be effective.

A second declaration, The Dunkerque 2010 Call on Climate Action, insists that local governments send strong messages to national and international governments so the disappointment of COP15 and the Copenhagen Accord are not repeated. Reduction targets must be more ambitious if we are to come to a meaningful post 2012 climate agreement. This declaration also recognizes that if we are to reach a low carbon, climate resilient and green economy in Europe, local and regional governments must be a fully integrated party.



In the final plenary Michel Delebarre presented these declarations to the representatives of national governments and the European Commissioners for the Environment, Janez Potocnik, and Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn, on behalf of the participants of Dunkerque 2010. Reacting to the declarations Hahn said, "We need you our cities for a healthy wealthy Europe".

The representatives of the UBC Commissions on Environment and Transportation also took part and contributed to the conference sessions.

- **"Promote young entrepreneurs", kick-off meeting, Copenhagen, 20 May 2010 (Annely Veevo, Kärddla / Wolfgang Schmidt, Kiel)**

By Annely Veevo:

Around 40 people from Estonia, Latvia, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Germany and Belgium were participating. In the first part there were some presentations about policy for Baltic Sea Strategy. In the second part there were four workshops: entrepreneurship education and culture, trade and investment promotion, entrepreneurship in green businesses and labour mobility.

<http://bsr-entrepreneurship.eu/calendar>

I chose the workshop entitled: entrepreneurship education and culture. Three presentations were delivered: about young entrepreneurs, about female entrepreneurship and about entrepreneurship education. After the presentations the participants from our workshop were divided into three groups and every group made brainstorming about the topic. Moderator of our group said, that our task was to find a framework and later we would work on that topics.

The moderators made an overview about the work in workshops. Most of them presented projects that already had been running. Our group did not have any running projects.

No next dates or tasks were decided.

By Wolfgang Schmidt:

I have chosen the workshop on "Investment Promotion"

We had a very interesting and fruitful discussion, mainly on the EU Projects "Baltic Sea Identity" and "BaltMet Promo". The Commission on Business Cooperation is partner in both projects.

Baltic Sea Identity

Although most of the states of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) are EU-members, the region is characterised by national perspectives, a lack of common identity and a weakness in the field of collaboration and joint action. This is caused by historically difficult relations, individual misunderstandings and a lack of mutual understanding between the different individuals and actors in the BSR. These problems originate in history, the age of nationalism, two World Wars and the division by the Iron Curtain. Additionally, there is no common awareness of the region as an entity on an individual level: Citizens know little about their neighbours, the region's shared history and culture and the century-old exchange within the region. This hinders cooperation, working mobility and cohesion. Regional identity, the awareness of common strengths and a unifying core idea communicated by a regional brand can be a powerful competitive advantage for the BSR on the global market. It has the potential to create a climate for investments and a positive attitude towards products and services from the region as well as to attract skilled labour and tourists. Such a brand does not exist yet. The project will lay ground to build a regional identity based on a common vision



and create a regional brand. This aim is in line with the EU's Baltic Sea Region Strategy and Action Plan and will strengthen territorial cohesion and cooperation.

How will Baltic Sea Identity address the problem?

A twofold approach – On the one hand, BaltSealident addresses individuals and strengthens their understanding of the culture and history in the BSR. This understanding is a key for developing a greater capacity for transnational cooperation and increased working mobility. On the other hand, BaltSealident gives cities, regions and other organisations in the BSR assistance with developing the potential of common identity and strength in their regional development efforts.

Facilitating Regional Development through awareness building on common Baltic Sea Regional Identity and historical and cultural barriers – A science-based Intercultural Baltic Sea History Book comprehensively explains relevant historical and cultural differences and characteristics in history, culture and societies within the BSR. Together with the Intercultural Baltic Sea History Book, an Intercultural Baltic Sea Region Management Guide helps deal with the problems and uncertainties in today's regional intercultural cooperation. With the help of case studies and concrete examples it gives advice in problematic situations in the field of transnational cooperation. Both History Book and Management Guide strengthen the mutual understanding in the BSR and leads to improved transnational cooperation and working mobility. To guarantee the quality of these Information and Learning Tools, existing tools, guides & handbooks in regional cooperation are identified and analysed in advance and the best practises and lessons learned are taken into account.

Enabling Individuals for Transnational Cooperation & Mobility in the BSR – In parallel, Intercultural Training Courses are developed and conducted. They give participants a deeper understanding of differences and commonalities of BSR identity, qualify them to live and work in the BSR's intercultural environment, facilitate working mobility and strengthen the development of a regional identity as a whole by addressing multipliers. Target groups are youth, professionals working on a transnational level and further multipliers in the region, e.g. teachers. The Intercultural Baltic Sea

History Book and Intercultural Baltic Sea Region Management Guide will serve as teaching material within the Intercultural Training Courses.

Capitalizing Baltic Sea Identity for Regional Development: Opportunities for Cities, Regions and further organisations to benefit from a Common BSR Identity in fields of common strengths – On the basis of an analysis of existing initiatives and branding activities in the BSR, the impact of regional identity on regional development is examined to highlight common strengths and potential in the BSR in past and present. A Branding and Identity Dialogue with relevant actors and experts accompanies this process. Based on the results, a model for a Baltic Sea Region Brand has been developed and tested as a pilot in BSR Cities and Regions. This pilot exemplifies opportunities and recommendations for the application of a Baltic Sea Brand and gives insights to the further development of common BSR identity and a Baltic Sea Brand. The results are available for organisations and actors in the region via a Baltic Sea Identity and Branding Internet Platform and Handbook.



BalMet Promo

BalMet Promo pilots joint marketing of the Baltic Sea Region in 2010-2012 with a budget of 2,8 MEUR, co-financed by the EU Baltic Sea Region Programme. The project is coordinated by the City of Helsinki. The project aligns horizontal activities of the EU Strategy for the BSR related to the identity building and marketing of the region.

BalMet Promo promotes the entire Baltic Sea Region globally and strengthens the BSR identity both at home and abroad by:

- jointly designing and selling BSR services and products for tourists, talents and
- investors
- mapping branding initiatives and encouraging policy dialogue on BSR branding
- testing a method on how to do collaborative place promotion for a macroregion and
- transferring the working method during the next project phase to other target markets and subject matters.

By joining together both public and private actors, the project brings forth Region's strengths as a tourist, talent and investment destination. The development of concrete pilot products will be founded on solid research of the relevant markets. The Commission will actively follow this initiative, because it is a pragmatic way to implement the BSR Strategy.

- **EcoRegion Conference, Region Zealand, Naestved, 1-3 June 2010 (Soeren Revsbaek, Councillor, Naestved)**

EcoRegion is flagship project is within Priority no 8 dealing with economic question and sustainability and part of the Baltic 21 strategy 2010-2015.

Purpose of EcoRegion: To strengthen bilateral relations and contributing to implementing in various strategies, e.g. good practices in political recommendations for action.

EcoRegion primarily works with 4 areas:

Work package 4: So far 141 good practices have been presented, a little short of the target of 200. A database will open that gives access to all recommendations. This database will continue after the project ends.

Work package 5: EcoRegion works with e.g. development plans and strategy for sustainable tourism, strategy for energy efficient buildings (Tallinn), climate clever city centres (Växjö), implementing strategy for sustainable business (Zealand).

Work package 6: Background papers on rural areas and urban development, sustainable education and innovation.

Challenges at the moment are presented as especially:

Interlinking between sectors and regions.

Determine needs at regional level and in the 10 models regions.

Accompany implementation of specific sustainability measures.



New members of EcoRegion were presented:

Kaunas

Cycling project and development of cycling infrastructure. Cycling is becoming more and more popular and the objective of the project is to create cycling routes, a unified information system, and limit traffic in the central part of the city.

Leith (Finland)

Wants to make a sustainable city plan. Ongoing work to develop old dump-sites. Aims to create a common strategy for all the activity and need an overall understanding of general planning and set targets for environmental strategies.

German town:

Works to set up an emergency plan in case of storm damage to forest. The objective is to make clear how to deal with the storms as climate change will increase the risk of storms and damage to forests. This includes handling of the timber, sales and transportation and how to reproduce the forest.

Next conferences in EcoRegion: Tallinn 28 – 30 September 2010.

Naestved, d. 2.6.10.

Soren Revsbaek, Member of the UBC Executive Board