



## **63<sup>rd</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

### **Brussels, 14 February 2012**

#### **Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.**

- **92<sup>nd</sup> Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, 10-12 October 2011, Brussels (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

According to the Committee of the Regions, setting indicators and objectives for monitoring resource efficiency is a step in the right direction, but the European Commission must ensure that this data is integrated into the monitoring of the wider Europe 2020 policy if it wants to ensure that future economic growth is truly sustainable. As with Europe 2020, the work of local and regional authorities in driving the resource efficiency agenda on the ground cannot be ignored, and expanding successful networks of sub-national authorities such as the Covenant of Mayors to include all resources should be a priority.

Flagship Initiative Under the Europe 2020 Strategy was adopted by the CoR Plenary.

The Committee has already been successful in helping to shape the European Commission's thinking on how resource efficiency can be encouraged and monitored within the wider policy initiative of boosting jobs and growth (the Europe 2020 strategy). For example, calls for concrete indicators and objectives in the CoR's draft opinion adopted in June have already found their way into the Resource Efficiency Roadmap the European Commission launched in September. However, there is still more that can be done, such as making sure that these indicators are not isolated but form part of the annual progress report on Europe 2020, and that the correct indicators are chosen to enable them to be gauged easily by authorities and public alike.

The idea of extending the Covenant of Mayors beyond energy issues to include the full range of resources is a key issue for the Committee, many of whose members are Covenant signatories. This fact was highlighted by an amendment in this direction tabled jointly by all four CoR political groups. But the CoR believes that while the energy focus of the Covenant is important, keeping global warming below 2°C also depends, amongst other things, on an efficient use of resources. In addition, the fact that nearly 3000 mayors, local authorities and regions have signed up to go beyond the European targets for cutting emissions is a clear sign that the real momentum in this area is at the sub-national level – a momentum that could also benefit resource efficiency.

In the CoR Resolution on the Durban climate change talks, local and regional authorities express their strong commitment to mitigate and adapt to climate change, stressing that sub-national authorities now need "equal recognition in the post-Kyoto Protocol agreement" and to be "empowered and equipped with resources and given access to funding" to help them continue to turn the rhetoric into practical advances on the ground.



- **13<sup>th</sup> Baltic Development Forum Summit and the European Commission's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Forum on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, 24-26 October 2011, Gdańsk (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC, Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General)**

More than 700 people participated in the Second Annual Forum organised jointly with the Baltic Development Forum's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit and in cooperation with the Polish EU Presidency, the Pomorskie Region and the City of Gdansk on 24-26 October 2011 in Gdansk (Poland). 14 parallel sessions on the various topics covered by the Strategy were offered, alongside an impressive networking and project village with exhibitions by some 40 Flagship Projects, key businesses and regional institutions.

In his opening address, Commissioner Johannes Hahn thanked the stakeholders for their impressive work on the Strategy, while also reminding participants of the continued importance of ensuring political support and adequate administrative engagement, as well as the alignment of policy and funding with the Strategy.

Director General Dirk Ahner presented the state of play concerning the setting of indicators and targets for the Strategy. This work will make it possible to clearly track the Strategy's contribution, and enable decision-makers to make informed policy choices. National Contact Points, Priority Area Coordinators and Horizontal Action Leaders are currently working actively on this topic.

Professor Ketels from the Harvard Business School presented the 2011 State of the Region Report, stressing that the EUSBSR had been a greater cooperation success than anticipated. Its emphasis on implementation was a key strength, but it still needed to be more imaginative and appeal more strongly to the business sector.

The UBC President, Per Bødker Andersen took part in the session 'Multi-level Governance'.

The Baltic Sea Region enjoys well-established structures of inter-governmental, interregional and cross-border cooperation. However, the regional and local levels operate very differently in the countries around the Baltic Sea. Constitutionally and also de facto, the regions have different statuses, different legal ramifications and different competences – making deeper cooperation among the levels more challenging. It is important that the traditional vertical multilevel governance model – EU institutions, governments, regions – is complemented with the horizontal dimension – private actors, governments, civil society. A new governance model taking all these elements into account will constitute an important instrument in furthering the implementation of the Strategy.

Mr Andersen emphasized the role of the local level.

The Third Annual Forum will take place in Denmark in June 2012, in close cooperation with the upcoming Danish EU presidency.

- **Baltic Sea Labour Network Final Conference, 15-16 November 2011, Hamburg (Wojciech Drozd, Chairman of the Commission on Health and Social Affairs)**



Baltic Sea Labour Network final conference held on 15-16 November 2011 in Hamburg has gathered a lot of participants from all BSR countries in the impressive venue.

1<sup>st</sup> Round Table of the Forum for Social Dialogue in the BSR was a closed session so I did not attend the creation of the permanent tripartite Baltic Sea Labour Forum.

Nevertheless talks with representatives of Polish, Russian, Lithuanian trade unions present in Hamburg shown deficiency in knowledge about BSLN and moderation rather than enthusiasm regarding the initiative.

Voices from the audience during plenary sessions revealed also differences between problems to be solved by authorities for example in Russia and Denmark, and the confines of social dialogue (like right to strike and illegal workers).

So however the idea is worthy it seems that it is still the beginning of the way.

According to list of participants many of them were rather taking part in accompanying event: Best Agers Fair.

For now BSLF doesn't seem to be a decision making body or opinion leader but in the future it may become a BSR or European tripartite commission in kind of functioning in Poland Socio-Economic Tripartite Commission and probably existing in other countries similar bodies.

In addition, concepts of "social dialogue" and "social partners" were used here only with reference to tripartite structure: government, employers and trade unions.

But subsidiarity means that a lot of challenges connected with labour market may be faced not by national but by local authorities. So the Union of the Baltic Cities as the body representing local authorities should be also respected as the social partner and at least monitor the Baltic Sea Labour Forum.

And last consideration, non-government organizations should also be regarded as social partner since sustainable development means not only economic but also social well-being. In everyday work local authorities co-operate with entrepreneurs and NGO's, and this partnership across sectors could be valuable contribution of UBC to this initiative.

*Wojciech Drozd, Chairman, UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs*

- **93<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, 14-15 December 2011, Brussels (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The European Commission's priorities for 2012, the crucial issue of the future EU budget and the vital sustainable development role of cities and regions are the highlights of the 93<sup>rd</sup> plenary session of the Committee of the Regions.



Key issues within the ongoing debate on the Euro crisis such as macroeconomic conditionality, Eurobonds and the financial transaction tax were addressed during the presentation of the CoR opinion on the Multiannual Financial Framework post-2013 proposed by the Commission last June.

European Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, responsible for inter-institutional relations presented the EU executive's work programme for 2012 to regional presidents and mayors from across the EU on Thursday 15 December. Under the motto "Delivering European renewal", the Commission has set out ambitious proposals to get the economy back on track. Committee of the Regions members scrutinized these plans from a local and regional perspective and issued their recommendations in the form of a resolution.

The second day's agenda rounded off by European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, who discussed next year's Rio+20 meeting following the adoption of the CoR's opinion on the sustainable development conference (rapporteur: Ilmar Reepalu, SE/PES). Many of the Committee's points have already been taken up in the official EU negotiating position for the Rio conference.

The Commissioner joined with CoR President Mercedes Bresso in the transfer of the European Green Capital award from the 2011 holder, the German city of Hamburg, to the 2012 laureate, Vitoria-Gasteiz, capital of the Basque region in Spain. The transfer ceremony included interventions from Holger Lange, State Secretary for Environment of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg and Javier Maroto Aranzábal, Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz.