



64TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Rakvere, Estonia, 24 May 2012

Latest conferences attended by UBC representatives.

- **94th Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, 15-16 February 2012, Brussels (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

Europe is currently in crisis, both a financial crisis and a crisis of confidence towards its institutions, which makes it more important than ever to make multilevel governance a reality in the Member States. Ensuring that cities and regions are more involved in framing, implementing and evaluating EU policies with a territorial impact will lay the necessary foundations for the success of those policies. This is the message of Committee of the Regions plenary session in Brussels, with the unanimous adoption of the opinion presented by Luc Van den Brande (BE/EPP), president of the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency.

In its 2009 White Paper on Multilevel Governance, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) undertook to promote a culture of multilevel governance in Europe in order to strengthen the Community method based on partnership, dialogue, joint implementation and participation of elected representatives at all levels of the European process. The follow-up opinion adopted today reports on progress made in EU policies with a territorial dimension, such as the single market, the environment, energy, agriculture and fisheries, enlargement policies, development and neighborhood policy. It also recommends new measures to consolidate the exercise of this method of governance.

To give form and substance to the CoR's political project, its members advocate the drawing up of a European Union Charter for Multilevel Governance, which should lead to more participation of local and regional authorities in the exercise of European democracy. By the same token, they ask the Commission to consider adapting EU administrative law in order to establish more participatory procedures in accordance with the key values and principles of this future Charter.

UBC President Per Bødker Andersen was a rapporteur on legislative package on victims' rights.

Among other topics on the Agenda of the plenary session there were:

- New European agenda for integration
- The future of the European capital of culture
- Revision of the European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) Regulation
- Award of the "European Entrepreneurial Region" prize for 2013
- Child poverty
- Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy
- The environmental noise directive: the way forward
- Modernisation of higher education
- Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change



- **V European Summit of Regions and Cities "The European urban fabric in the 21st century", Copenhagen, 22-23 March 2012 (Andres Jaadla, Vice President of UBC, Mayor of Rakvere, Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General, Mikko Lohikoski, Strategy Coordinator)**

Under the title "The European urban fabric in the 21st century", the Fifth European Summit of Regions and cities was organised by the CoR in partnership with the City of Copenhagen and the Capital Region of Denmark. The Summit brought together over 300 mayors and presidents of regions from the 27 EU Member States with leading architects, urban planners and researchers in urban development with a view to ensuring that sustainable urban development features more prominently on the European and world agendas.

Some of the main topics were:

- The challenges and good practices of global European cities
- The city in its environment: Synergies between cities, towns, villages, regions and rural areas

There were four workshops held during the conference, with the themes:

- What is the impact of the European Union on urban development?
- How can we involve citizens in regional and local projects?
- How can we develop innovative funding for tomorrow's green urban economy?
- Urban development as a major environmental challenge: what kind of sustainable mix of urban, rural and natural spaces should we be aiming for?

In the presence of the European Parliament President and the Danish Prime Minister, Mayors and Presidents of regions from all EU Member States today adopted the "Copenhagen Declaration" committing to making cities greener, more socially inclusive and more economically competitive. This Declaration expresses the political will of European cities and regions to make sustainable urban development a key focus at the Rio+20 Earth Summit to take place on 20-22 June later this year. Cities and regions also called upon the European Union to share its best practices, such as the Covenant of Mayors and the European Green Capitals, at a global level.

- **Conference "The Baltic Sea region - from planning to common action", St. Petersburg, 21 March 2012 (Mikko Lohikoski, Strategy Coordinator)**

This meeting was organised 21 March 2012 in St. Petersburg by the Association for economic interaction of the subjects of the North-West region of the Russian Federation (Association North-West). It gathered some 100 high level participants not only from St. Petersburg and its surrounding, but also from Russian ministries and other countries, including Germany, Finland, Sweden etc. The meeting was very interesting and promising, as it indicated that there is growing interest in Russia to participate in regional cooperation around the BSR. The adoption of a Russian strategy for social and economic development of the North-West Federal district until 2020 can be a natural partner strategy for the European Union BSR Strategy and speed up cooperation. My presentation dealt with the UBC and the Turku-process.



As a summary, it is definitely very recommendable to continue active cooperation with the North-West Association and all Russian stakeholders.

- **Baltic Metropolises meeting, Helsinki, 11-13 April 2012 (Mikko Lohikoski, Strategy Coordinator)**

As part of our joint discussions about closer cooperation with BaltMet, UBC was invited to attend as observer the BaltMet Mayor's meeting in Helsinki and the celebrations linked to the 200th anniversary of Helsinki becoming the capital of Finland after the Russian Czar moved the capital from Turku to Helsinki. The meeting lasted for some 1,5 hours and dealt with a resolution issued afterwards on BSR cooperation. It is worth noting that the UBC was consulted during the drafting of the resolution, and this is also mentioned in the text. I also spoke in the meeting, stressing importance of cooperation.

As further steps, BaltMet representatives should be invited to the UBC Board meeting to present their activities and to agree on future cooperation.

Mikko Lohikoski

- **95th Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions, 3-4 May 2012, Brussels (Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC)**

The main topic at this Session was the General Regulation on the funds covered by the common strategic framework.

In order to make structural funds the engine for sustainable growth and jobs, European regions and cities request a place-based approach to the thematic concentration of resources, a stronger flexibility in the definition of the funds allocation and clear rules for the involvement of regions and cities in defining operational programmes and partnership contracts.

By adopting four opinions on the regulations related to the Structural funds - the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, the members of the Committee of the Regions made clear their position on the way forward for a successful cohesion policy for the period 2014-2020.

For example, in order to simplify the procedures applying to structural funds, the CoR proposes to rationalise controls and audits, reduce managing authorities' reporting duties and delete the provisions introducing new accreditation bodies.

As for territorial cooperation, the opinion amends the Commission's proposal in relation to funds allocation criteria. Instead of a Member States based approach, funds should be distributed on a



Europe-wide basis, taking into account territorial and thematic criteria, so to avoid the "absurd" logic of "juste retour".

Among other topics at the Session there were:

- Revising the TEN-T Legislative Framework
- The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for the period 2014-2020
- European Union programme for Social Change and Innovation
- The Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2011-12
- Family reunification
- Review of EU air quality and emissions policy
- Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy
- Active ageing: Innovation - Smart Health - Better Lives
- Energy efficiency in cities and regions – A focus on the differences between rural districts and cities
- Erasmus for all
- Trans-European telecommunication networks