

**UBC GENERAL CONFERENCE AND OPEN FORUM GDYNIA**

**PLENARY SESSION 1**

**WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2015, 10.50-12.40**



**SPEAKING NOTE -MS PAULINA HAIJANEN- DRAFT  
(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY!)**

**1. Greeting speakers and audience:**

Fellow-speakers:

- Judit Törökné Rózsa, European Commission, DG REGIO, Head of Unit Competence Centre Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development,
- Michael Berz, European Commission, DG GROWT, Unit Key Enabling Technologies, Digital manufacturing and Interoperability,
- Jean Peyrony, Executive Director of Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks (CECICN)

**2. General remarks:**

It is an honour for the European Committee of the Regions and for me to participate in this high-level debate.



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I do believe that the activities undertaken by the Union of Baltic Cities greatly contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the whole Baltic Sea Region. The UBC General Conference is the excellent occasion to look back on the past and discuss the next steps in implementing the Baltic Sea Region strategy. This is for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region as much as for other macro-regional strategies.

It is worth remembering that the CoR has always been a supporter of the macro-regional initiative. Over the last few years, we have intensively discussed the Baltic Sea Region strategy in three CoR opinions. I am proud, that I was appointed the CoR rapporteur for those opinions.

### **3. Innovative governance**

The EU Baltic Sea strategy has offered a sound basis for testing to what extent a specific strategy for a wider geographical macro-region can actually strengthen EU competitiveness and underpin smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

From my perspective, the main challenge in the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy is how to apply innovative governance.

The former Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn, used to say that macro-regional-governance is a change of mind-set. This statement reflects very much the CoR perspective, demanding the full involvement of regions and municipalities in a real co-decision



process, especially in framing and implementing the macro-regional strategies.

The Baltic Sea Region strategy can already be regarded as a success story in this respect. Nevertheless, further progress could be made and the Commission and the Member States need to further support the development of innovative governance mechanisms. The involvement of regions and municipalities within the strategy is crucial due to their high level of expertise developed in the use of Structural Funds and the implementation of Cohesion Policy.

One of the so called "three noes" excludes setting up new bodies in the implementation of macro-regional strategies. However, the creation of platforms, networks or territorial clusters of regional and local authorities and Member States who bring in stakeholders proved to be beneficial from the CoR's point of view. Such approach simplify information flows on good practices, increase visibility and combat fragmented approaches in Member States and regions.

The CoR opinion on Added Value of Macro-Regional Strategies, I prepared and the Committee of the Regions adopted in November 2013 underlines the key role played by practical cooperative project.

The CoR requests to pay more attention to ways of generating new and innovative project activity that meets macro-regional strategic objectives. In the past, project cooperation was guided more by the rules for financial instruments, leaving very little room for innovation. This approach is not the best way to support the implementation of



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macro-regional strategies. In future, there needs to be flexibility both within and between individual financial instruments (e.g. ESIF and EFSI), as well as scope to improve the coordination of different financial instruments.

#### **4. EU Urban agenda**

The European Committee of the Regions attaches great importance to the development of an integrated EU Urban Agenda.

As you might know, in June 2015 the European Commission unveiled the results of the public consultation on the EU Urban Agenda. On the basis of the wishes expressed in the public consultation; the Commission is proposing the following approach:

1. Focusing on specific priorities able to deliver and show results, such as smart cities; in particular when it comes to the low-carbon economy, climate-resilient cities and social inclusion.
2. Applying better regulation tools effectively, with reinforced urban impact assessment and stronger stakeholder involvement.
3. Better coherence and coordination of EU policies relating to cities, such as the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities or the Urban Innovative Actions or the European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate ADAPT);
4. Improved urban intelligence, benchmarking and monitoring.

The CoR will draw up, at the request of the upcoming Dutch Presidency, an opinion on concrete steps for implementing the EU Urban Agenda: This opinion will be scheduled for adoption by our



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Plenary Session in April 2016, and which will provide further input to the discussions on this important issue.

The EU Urban agenda should be closely connected to the smart city concept and the use of ICT for better resource use and less emissions. It means smarter urban transport networks, upgraded water supply and waste disposal facilities, and more efficient ways to light and heat buildings. And it also encompasses a more interactive and responsive city administration, safer public spaces and meeting the needs of an ageing population. I strongly believe that the EU Strategy on the Baltic Sea Region does have also the potential to step forward also in urban agenda.

## **5. Closing remarks**

The Baltic Sea Region is capable of being one of the most dynamic, innovative and competitive growth regions not only in Europe but in the world. With urbanization and urban growth being an irreversible trend, the development of cities is of cardinal importance for our societies.

The CoR will continue to closely follow the implementation of the Baltic Sea Region strategy and EU Urban agenda. I hope the CoR will be a true partner for you in supporting the cooperation between the EU, all levels of governments and stakeholders.