



UMEÅ
KOMMUN

To/

UBC

Gender equality work in the Union of the Baltic cities ***Suggestions to the executive board meeting in Kemi, Finland, February 2015.***

- 1) Working group**
- 2) Commission (The gendered city)**

Introduction

In the preface of the report “Women and men in the union of the Baltic cities 2013” the President and vice president of the UBC clearly states that gender equality is a fundamental link to build safe, democratic and prosperous cities, and an essential part of sustainable development. On the homepage of the UBC it is clearly stated that the Union of the Baltic Cities is a voluntary, proactive network mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities for democratic, economic, social, cultural and environmentally sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region. Gender equality is horizontal; it cuts through every other issue and is, ultimately, about democracy and human rights. In order to be current and to play an actual role in the development of the Baltic Sea region, and to attract cooperation between the cities there has to be a serious commitment to issues on democracy, human rights and gender equality.

Regardless of how the work is organized, the important issue to discuss and make a decision on is the goal of the work and the role of the working group or commission. There also needs to be an understanding that gender equality is a knowledge area, just as any other. It is not a matter of opinion or common sense.

The proposal of the task force (September 2014) suggests that: *The Board could consider appointing a special rapporteur on Gender issues/equality issues who has a mandate to discuss with Commissions and Member Cities, other interested organizations about issues related to gender and equality. He/she reports directly to the Executive Board.*

If the board wants an internal focus (horizontal goals for the already existing commissions) and follow up on the work of the commissions, a special rapporteur (funded by the secretariat) could be the preferred solution. However, to have a special rapporteur on gender equality will mean little for the work on gender equality and issues on gender mainstreaming. The gender equality commission has the knowledge on working with gender equality and the understanding of the keys that it holds to sustainable and prosperous cities. To exclude gender

equality from all the actual work shows a lack of knowledge and we will have a situation where it is every commission's decision if they work with gender equality.

If the wishes of the executive board is to have a working group or commission that can play a role in creating a more gender equal society through raising awareness, collaboration between cities and other key actors in the region (eg. EIGE, CEMR, NGOs etc). a clear focus on the external work should be defined.

1) Working group

A smaller group with a connection to the board strengthen the mandate and might increase the work with gender equality within the cities involved. The working group should have the full support of the executive board and report twice a year. The working group serves as experts and suggest themes that all cities (commissions) must take in consideration (activity and goal) This will be followed up by the executive board every year (in order to insure that this is implemented it should be connected to the budget)

The working group will together increase knowledge on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, violence in close relationships, prostitution and trafficking in all the commissions. A suggestion for the board to consider is to give the working group an assignment to get all cities within the UBC-network to sign the European charter on gender equality on a local and regional level (CEMR) To get all cities to become signatories would be a great success and oblige cities to work with gender equality. In order to succeed with this the working group would need support from the executive board, to work together with cities and also with other key actors in the region, such as the CEMR-office. This would be a great contribution from the UBC to the overall work with gender equality in Europe.

A suggestion is that the general conference in Gdynia 2015 will decide that all member cities should sign the CEMR- declaration.

2) Commission (The gendered city)

The UBC is a network for local level and if the presence of an "over – head" such as the board, the important step of cities controlling the focus and content of the work might be lost. As an independent commission the work with The genderd city can play a role, for example as a referral organization for issues on gender equality on a European level.

The commission has taken in on them to highlight the conditions on life for especially women and children around the Baltic Sea. Without the gender commission this will be lost in the work of the UBC. The commission works as does today with a focus on raising awareness, working together in the cities that we visit and create knowledge for the rest of the commissions to take in consideration (eg women and men in the UBC) The Gender Commission is an important network and a possible project partner in the work of implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. In order to be proactive and mobilize cities in working with gender equality the network needs to offer a way of opening doors to other organisations in Europe and internationally, such as EIGE (European institute

of gender equality) and CEMR (The Council of European Municipalities and Regions) This is better achieved as an independant commission.

If the gender equality commission is to continue as a commission the executive board should take it on themselves to encourage people to take part and to engage in the work for gender equality and to insure that there is a bigger understanding for these issues.

Proposal:

As chair of the gender equality commission the city of Umeå suggests that the UBC executive boards decides that the gender equality work within the UBC is to be organized according to suggestion number two, as a commission named the gendered city. The city of Umeå is willing to organize the work of the gendered city commission.

2015-02-19

UBC vice president

Marie-Louise Rönnmark

Chair of the gender equality commission

Charlotte Lundqvist

Coordinator of the gender equality commission

Linda Gustafsson