

## **XIV UBC General Conference Växjö, Sweden**

### **Statutory General Conference of the UBC**

### **26 October 2017**

#### **Discussion**

Mikko Lohikoski, UBC Strategy Coordinator, reported on the UBC Strategy Framework 2016-2021.

One of tasks of the two-year work programme to the UBC Strategy Framework 2016-2021 was to ensure the UBC continues its positive renewal process and creates added value for its members in the future. That includes the development of communication and enhancement of the Commissions' work which are the heart of the UBC. Though they seem to function more effective than ever before, still much remains to be improved. One of the UBC achievements has been the involvement of the youth which is especially visible in Växjö. There have been also successes when it comes to the integration of refugees, gender equality or sustainable development.

Mr Lohikoski recommended meeting of the UBC member cities on the occasion of the Conference on integration in Rostock, to discuss how to coordinate the activities towards the EUSBSR.

More about the UBC Strategy in the [UBC Activity Report November 2015 - October 2017](#)

Hanna Maidell informed that before Christmas the evaluation of the international work in Helsinki will take place, including also the membership in the UBC.

She expressed her worries about the further participation of Helsinki in the UBC works, as there was a lot of scepticism in Helsinki about UBC. She has been trying to pass a positive message about the renewal process. However, in her opinion, the process is too slow. The world around is changing much faster. The renewal of the Commissions was fine, but at the same time there should be more young people involved. Only 1/3 believe in democracy among the young generation.

Ms Maidell pointed out that the Board should support the Commissions more stronger. It may happen that in the future we won't need any organisation, just actions.

Ms Maidell hoped nobody was against the UBC renewal, she asked those who are to step back, before it's too late.

Jyrki Myllyvirta, Mayor of Lahti, called for new working methods to make the UBC valuable for the cities and get them to be committed. UBC must be superior to other networks to keep its members. He concluded that good work was done, but much more was needed. In his opinion, it is excellent there is a reform work taking a new speed on the basis of the KPMG report. The new task force will formulate the new ways of work – it will renew the organisations, keeping a good atmosphere but making it more modern.

Petri Carlsson, Chairman of the City Council of Mariehamn, raised the issue of the UBC priorities. He suggested paying more attention to cities and local issues than to EU.

Per Schöldberg, Deputy Mayor of Växjö, promised to take initiative and discuss more intensively with the Swedish cities to make them more involved. He invited to the meeting before 14 March 2018.

Per Bødker Andersen, President, admitted that the more active we were within our countries, the more the cities would benefit from UBC.

He agreed that the UBC is a city-to-city network and the local matters are its key element. However, in his opinion, it would be unwise not to use the opportunities of cooperation with other parties, like BDF, BSSSR. We can do much more if we cooperate on common issues. For the cities, such cooperation is a chance to get new contacts and broaden their knowledge.

Vilnis Vitkovskis, Councillor of the City of Liepāja, underlined the fact that in every organisation it is important to express critics and provide feedback, it always improves the organisation.

He said that all is about decision makings, actions and responsibility. Sometimes it is difficult to say who is responsible for what. In his opinion we are all responsible for UBC.

For Mr Vitkovskis, the General Conference is a good re-start. We have a new Board and a new Presidium, we must work better. The best days for the UBC will come.

Also, he added that Latvia has the best gender balance between women and men in terms of employment in high positions.

President Andersen agreed, we all share the responsibilities and we all can take initiatives.

Niels-Peter Mohr, Chairman of the Planning Cities Commission, city of Aarhus, called for more cities involvement in the Commissions' work, as they are the core of UBC. Recently, the Commission had to cancel its meeting in Oskarshamn due to a low number of registered participants. More than 30 Commissions seminars have been organized in the last 25 years. The list of cities interested in hosting the meeting has always been long. Now, it is empty. As long as the cities remain passive, the cooperation will not bring any results.

Gunars Ansins, Deputy Mayor of Liepāja, paid an attention to the Secretariat and its capacity. In his opinion the UBC should make the Secretariat stronger to be able to work with the Commissions which are the engines of the UBC.

President Andersen reminded about the membership fees and limited resources.

In Mikko Lohikoski's opinion, the fees are not the only money in the world. We can get funding from other resources.

Tonu Karu, city of Keila, informed about Estonian administrative reform and asked for advices and time for implementation of the new budgets.

Pekko Komu, Chairman of Lahti City Council, emphasized the City of Lahti was not about the people working for the city of Lahti, but about the people living in Lahti. The UBC should have a direct impact on the inhabitants living in our cities.

Marta Chełkowska, a member of the Board of Audit, referred to the question of the Secretariat. The Commissions bring the biggest value to the UBC. She was of the opinion, that we can't expect such a

small office will offer much more due its limited capacity. If we want to assign more tasks, we have to change the formula.

Björn Grönholm, Head of the Sustainable Cities Commission Secretariat, admitted the General Conference was a good opportunity to look critically at the organisation and discuss it. When it comes to the resources, the SSC Secretariat has staff and money but it comes mainly from external resources. He reminded that the Commission was ready to help and support other Commissions and bodies to get external funding.

Hanna Maidell raised also a question of the UBC aims. She worried that there was no clear aim of the organisation defined in the strategic documents, except for networking. In her opinion, networking could be only a mean to achieve something, not an aim itself.

President Andersen pointed out that the Commissions are in fact a UBC policy-makers. He agreed network was a tool, a mean.