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UBC

UNION
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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

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CULTURE'S ROLE IN TIMES OF CRISES

AARHUS • ARENDAL • CĒSIS • DARŁOWO • ELBLĄG • ELVA • ESPOO • GARGŽDAI • GDAŃSK • GDYNIA • GOTLAND • GREIFSWALD • GULDBORGSUND • GÄVLE • HAAPSALU
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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN



Dear UBC Family, Friends, and Colleagues,

At the turn of this year's November and December, we were finally able to organize the first face-to-face meeting of UBC's Executive Board after the pandemic started. I cannot describe how wonderful it was to meet all the colleagues and friends again, not to mention the discussions we were able to have, on both professional and individual levels. What a feeling.

To me, the UBC has always been about connecting, of making decisions together, even through struggling times. Despite the 30 years' experience the UBC has, these past years have tested us as an organization, with first the global pandemic and then Russia's brutal war against Ukraine and its people. I feel very strongly that the decisions we made earlier this year in UBC's online General Conference regarding terminating the membership of the Russian cities makes us stronger as an organization. A family discusses, and then makes the decisions together.

The UBC's values of humanity as well as support to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people remains consistent. The City of Vilnyansk was accepted as an associated member city of the UBC in the online General Conference. In addition to the whole UBC organisation, many of the UBC member cities have continued, since the beginning of Russia's attack, to deliver assistance in both monetary and other forms to Ukraine.

At the turning of the year, most of us look both backwards as well as reflect in the upcoming year: what will it bring for us, the world, Europe, UBC, our families, nearest and dearest, colleagues. I am confident we will prevail and advance in our goals, by being able to trust in each other, helping each other, and trusting in the work we do for our cities and the whole Baltic Sea Region.

The UBC is thankful to all of you – our member cities and partners – for your work and solidarity, and ready to face the challenges of the New Year 2023. Whatever the year may bring, we are facing it together.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas with your loved ones and a Happy New Year,

Mantas Jurgutis
President of UBC

I. CULTURE'S ROLE IN TIMES OF CRISES

Culture's Role in Times of Crises	4-5
Co-creation of culture	6
Gdańsk Gdańsk – City of Literature	7
Education for Gdynia	8
Empowering new cultural initiatives	9
Operation Peace Flower	10
Ukrainian food masterclass and a networking evening	11
Culture's role in Palanga city during times of crisis	12

II. UBC NEWS & FACES

UBC's Executive Board met in Aarhus	13
Finalisation of CREST and policy recommendations for cities	14-15
Co-designing the PITCH model for local integration strategies	16
Planning Cities Commission took part in CREST	17
Safe Cities Commission starts three new projects	18
Smart and Prospering Cities Commission: Action Plan	19
Sustainable Cities Commission supports EU Mission cities	20
Youthful Cities Commission ready for the new year	21

III. CITY NEWS

The Darius and Girėnas Stadium was officially opened	22
Pomorskie cycling mobility	23
Turku's climate work raised interest in the UN COP27	24

6

CO-CREATION OF CULTURE

9

EMPOWERING NEW CULTURAL INITIATIVES

11

UKRAINIAN FOOD MASTERCLASS

13

UBC'S EXECUTIVE BOARD MET IN AARHUS

16

CO-DESIGNING THE PITCH MODEL FOR LOCAL INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

21

YOUTHFUL CITIES COMMISSION READY FOR THE NEW YEAR

24

POMORSKIE CYCLING MOBILITY

CULTURAL CITIES: CULTURE'S ROLE IN TIMES OF CRISES

by Kotryna Lingienė | Kotryna.s@gmail.com



In colloquial terms, a crisis is a period in time when confusion and uncertainty prevail. Although it is too rarely remembered when the darkness falls, the anticipation for a better future is an inevitable part of the formula. Culture, including the arts and other achievements of a man as a thinking being, is the main ingredient of hope. Moreover, like a chameleon, or perhaps like a perpetual motion machine that never gives up, it keeps adapting and playing several roles at once.

“A city without people is just buildings, people without culture are just creatures”. **Jovaras Kelpšas**, one of Lithuania's most successful slam poets, used this witty phrase, which gained even more emotional weight a month later, to signify the start of the marathon of art and culture in January 2022. A convener, a supporter and a teacher – these are the functions of culture we witnessed in 2022, the year of Kaunas as the European Capital of Culture.

An Inspiring Convener

Put together long before the major shocks of recent times, the programme of Kaunas 2022 adapted to both the pandemic and the war. Born out of nowhere during the quarantine, with minimal resources, the globally awarded Culture to the Courtyards project proved so successful that it was bound to continue even after the restrictions on events were lifted. Rumors work, and when some Kaunas and Kaunas district residents were delighted to see artists perform

ming pirouettes, catchy songs and opera arias right under their windows, everyone else was eager to see it. And everyone got it – in 2022, Culture to the Courtyards has become a gift for the inhabitants of even the remotest parts of the city.

There were more gifts – ConTempo, the festival that opened up the world of contemporary performing arts to Lithuanians, took place not only in prestigious venues but also in tiny squares or the riversides. It proved well that even half an hour of exposure to a powerful work of art can be more effective than a random dietary supplement pill.

A Tool-Providing Supporter

The outbreak of Russia's intense war in Ukraine in February was a turning point for many. People in all fields had to adapt, including those in culture and the arts. The International Day of Happiness, celebrated worldwide on 20 March, would have gone rather macabre this year. Instead of exaggerated joy, the programme organizers cleverly accumulated the available resources and invited the war refugees in Kaunas and all those who are indifferent to the tragedy of Ukraine to the opening of the cultural center CultureUkraine on 17 March.

The iconic modernist building of the post office, no longer needed for its direct function, has nevertheless continued its liaison mission. Ukrainians found here a space to meet



"A
city without
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creatures."

and hang out, to engage in various artistic practices, to get to know each other and to continue fuelling the fire of hope. The post office was also the venue for one of the most influential exhibitions held in Kaunas this year, the contemporary art triennial UKRAINE! UNMUTED - the works of the younger generation of Ukrainian artists speak about the ongoing tragedy in a very sensitive, at the same time conceptual and expressive way.

Of course, many other cultural spaces in the city were also painted blue and yellow this year. Kaunas libraries offer books in Ukrainian, museums present lightning-fast yet in-depth exhibitions and meetings, theaters hold premieres and tours of troupes from Kyiv, Kharkiv and other cities, and concert halls are filled with Ukrainian songs. The anti-war poster campaign Colours for Ukraine raised thousands of Euros leaving no one indifferent, even institutions seemingly far away from art. The campaign's symbolic messages to the world's biggest terrorist are also seen in the windows of the court and public prosecutor's office.

An Experienced Teacher

Through metaphors, similes and other tools, culture reminds us of the most painful phases of human history and

presents them in such a way that we can understand what we must do in order to prevent their repetition. It sounds like an insurmountable task, but creativity, as we have seen time and again in Kaunas this year, is far more powerful than pure facts and figures. That is why Kaunas 2022's Memory Office programme has proved even more necessary than predicted.

Dozens of artworks and events initiated by this programme, both public and academic, spoke about the Holocaust (as well as other genocides), deportations and other traumatic experiences that are passed on from generation to generation and continue to linger in the subconscious. When traditional methods do not work, when we cannot find ways to communicate, it is the universal and powerful language of art that steps in. It may seem complicated, unpleasant and painful, but it is necessary to remember the crimes of the past witnessing those of today - because if they are still happening, then we, as humanity, still have a lot to learn.

As I write these lines, the biggest year in the cultural history of Kaunas is coming to an end. We will see in the future whether the lessons of a turbulent period have been learnt. The tools have been given to Kaunas and its people. All that remains is to use them.



CO-CREATION OF CULTURE

ACROSS NATIONALITIES, SECTORS, INSTITUTIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND CITIZENS

by Lisbeth.Iversen | Lisbeth.Iversen@arendal.kommune.no



Photo: Mona Hauglid

Arendal is a city in the south part of Norway. We are around 46.000 inhabitants, and we are expecting between 6.000 and 10.000 new inhabitants the next 10 to 15 years due to the establishment of Morrow battery factory, now under construction. At the same time we have an energy crisis, very high costs for living, in addition to an increasing amount of refugees. Up to 85 % of these are coming from Ukraine.

Our key message in order to create inclusive and thriving cities is to invest in relational welfare and co-creation of broad knowledge through art, music and cultural activities to give everyone a possibility to give and share, and have a role in the local society. This way we achieve mutual understanding and engagement. We support a "care for each other culture", and not only a focus on infrastructure. In order to get through crisis, we need to have long term collaboration based on participation and a broad resource perspective.

This year we are celebrating 10 years of collaboration through our network With a Heart For Arendal, WHFA, where the public sector, institutions and organisations, business and culture actors and research are working together to strengthen local democracy, and invite and support the local communities to be the engines of cultural processes.

We work together for good living conditions and public health, but our "medicine" is culture. Through street-festivals, Thanks-giving dinners, handicraft and art-workshops, international food festivals and re-design and green markets, we have encouraged individuals and local communities, both newcomers and well established citizens, to create our everyday life and future together. One important example is the Munkehaugen Cultural Center, where we also have established

an Urban Community House and "peoples workshop", <https://www.facebook.com/deturbanegrendehus/>

Munkehaugen was given to a cultural and citizen based initiative for 1 NOK 14 September, by a decision from the local council. Instead of selling the old and wonderful building from 1875, The cultural movement is organised as an ideal company, and the house is open to all citizens. WHFA, individual artists, cultural institutions in dance, music and theater, voluntary organisations and the user driven cultural day-center for mental health are working together.

Monday 19 December the newly established Ukraine organisation, and the actors at Munkehaugen, will host a big Christmas party. Even more important, are the weekly activities of getting together, sewing, stitching, drawing and painting, or co-creating democratic and cultural events.

In January, 240 new refugees will be welcomed in Arendal. Together with Impact Hub Agder, the municipality, the business sector and WHFA, we have co-created Welcome Hub Agder, <https://www.welcomehub.no/>. Here we welcome newcomers, but we also invite them to co-create international cultural events with us, based on their culture and resources, to make Arendal an even better place to stay for all of us.

The municipality has built "Kulturkammeret", The Chamber of Culture, with the School of Culture for children and youth, and rooms and activities open to organisations and citizens, where we co-create cultural projects and events. We build cultural bridges together to open hearts and minds, and create moments of magic, in difficult times!

With love from Arendal

GDAŃSK – CITY OF LITERATURE

by Marta Formella | www.gdansk.pl



Photo: Dominik Paszliński/www.gdansk.pl

"Firmin" is one of a few small but atmospheric bookstores in Gdańsk.

The Gdańsk Reading Development Program, the modernization of library branches, four automated bookstores are just some of the activities that develop reading among the inhabitants of the city. Also, Gdańsk has been invited to apply to the UNESCO Cities of Literature network.

Increasing the cultural activity of residents and participation in culture, e.g. through programs promoting reading has already been defined in the Development Strategy of the City of Gdańsk "Gdańsk 2030" and in operational goals for 2023. Hence the city has been involved in numerous activities supporting artists, libraries, organizers of cultural events, intimate bookstores, and above all, readers and their access to literature.

– Promoting reading in our city is one of the most important cultural tasks of Gdańsk. Reading develops sensitivity, but also builds a more engaged, better educated society. As a consequence, the ability to commune with literature improves the quality of many areas of life, says **Barbara Frydrych**, director of the Mayor's Office for Culture. – That is why we were so pleased with the invitation to apply to the UNESCO Creative Cities network in the field of literature. Supporting literature in Gdańsk is already happening, and now it has a chance to be embedded in an international network.

The development of the creative sector related to belonging to the network may affect the tourist attractiveness of Gdańsk. The organizers of the Creative Cities Network program also emphasize the pro-development potential of the

title for many sectors of the economy. For the residents of Gdańsk, it is an opportunity to identify with the city's literariness, as well as to participate in entertaining and educational literary events addressed to various audiences, including marginalized groups.

Launched in May this year, the Gdańsk City of Literature program is a cultural commitment of Gdańsk, which results from the conviction of the city authorities that book culture, as well as people creating and using literature, need and deserve systemic support.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network program was established in 2004 to support the cooperation of cities that recognize creativity and the development of cultural industries as a strategic factor for sustainable development.

The aim of the program is to increase public awareness of the importance of culture and its potential in various areas of social life, including the economy, to foster the emergence of innovative centers of creativity, cultural goods and services, and to increase access to and participation in culture. By joining the Network, cities reaffirm their commitment to developing partnerships, promoting creativity, sharing best practices and strengthening citizens' participation in cultural life.

GDYNIA: CULTURE AND ITS ROLE DURING THE CRISIS OF WAR

by Agnieszka Hajde | a.hajder@gdynia.pl



In the era of the growing crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, Culture and Art are instruments for building an aid infrastructure for those in need.

In Gdynia, cultural institutions undertook many activities for Ukraine.

City Public Library in Gdynia

The library's collection includes many books in Ukrainian and the inventory is constantly growing. Free library cards -institution is equipped with Cyrillic keyboards. Periodic Polish language courses are held.

"A library for everyone. Equal. Diverse. Important." The Gdynia Library joined the "FRSI" project and "Save The Children International" foundation, whose task is to support refugees from Ukraine in the first year of their stay in Poland.

SPYNKA playgroups for facilitating meetings of mothers and children from Ukraine with animation attendant.

Creative workshops – holiday handicraft classes for children, stimulating creativity and imagination.

Free tickets for children's film screenings in Ukrainian.

Meeting at the Library with Natalia Sukhonis, a certified guide around Kiev.

How to support children in regaining their balance.

What is common between samurai and Ukraine? Charity film meeting with Arkady Saulski.

Gdynia Film Center

Opening with **Maria Kamenska**.

Cinema in Ukrainian: "Space Jam: a new legacy", "Petite Maman", "Minions"

A series of open-air screenings, educational workshops and other events in the field of movie knowledge.

Emigration Museum in Gdynia

An exhibition for children and families, to be discovered in Ukrainian and Russian.

Psychoeducational materials supporting teachers in the new situation.

Presentation of an installation by Yuriy Biley from Ukraine, entitled "Purpose of the stay". Meeting with the artist.

Permanent exhibition: Production of two audio guides for the core exhibition in Ukrainian and Russian.

HOW COMMUNITIES AND THE THIRD SECTOR CAN EMPOWER NEW CULTURAL INITIATIVES



CASE VILLA RANA AT THE HEART OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

by Mari Aholainen | mari.aholainen@jyvaskyla.fi

The birth of the Cultural Centre Villa Rana in the heart of the campus area of the University of Jyväskylä is a prime example of how the third sector and the independent field of arts have brought about a renewal of cultural processes in Jyväskylä, Finland.

The City of Jyväskylä, a number of cultural establishments, and other actors in the field of professional and amateur arts have deepened their cooperation via the Cultural Centre. The independent field of arts has organized itself as a force to reckon with alongside content production.

Cultural facilities bring people together and create new action models

Jyväskylä has been short of various cultural facilities for a long time, a problem that still has not been entirely solved. A few years ago, various communities and associations took the matters in their hands and joined forces to make a handsome but unoccupied old University building available for cultural use. The Villa Rana building was bought by a real estate investor who wanted it to be used in a way suitable for cultural history and leased it to the freshly-established Jyväskylän kulttuuritalon tukiyhdistys association.

The journey from the idea to opening doors was a long and strenuous one. Renovating the historical building, creating an action concept, planning and obtaining funds, and the COVID-19 that put everything back to square one made for a period that nobody wants to relive.

Cultural facilities generate interaction and make for visibility

Now, this building rich with tradition is a living part of the

cultural heritage of Jyväskylä. There are now an art house cinema, a children's music orchestra, a small professional theatre, and a major city festival where carving and gymnastics lessons once took place. The wide range of events on offer and the restaurant activities create an ideal setting for year-round action both indoors and outside.

The City of Jyväskylä provides support for separate associations that operate in the house. The Villa Rana case has contributed to interaction in many ways. The political decision-makers have activated themselves and paid ever-increasing attention to the importance of culture.

Culture as a source of wellbeing and income

The reform of Finnish social and health services will take place in the beginning of the year 2023. Service production will move to the freshly-created wellbeing services counties. With this reform, preventive wellbeing and culture as part of wellbeing work will take on a new kind of meaning.

The actors of the Villa Rana Cultural Centre have understood culture also as a source of earning and set out to develop various contents related to cultural wellbeing in their activities. All of them are professionals, and their work has indeed provided support for city residents' wellbeing and comfort already before the Cultural Centre and the aforementioned reform. The Centre has, however, raised the bar on the quality and content of what they do as well as on the impact of cooperation to a new level altogether.

www.villarana.fi/en/
www.jyvaskyla.fi/en

OPERATION PEACE FLOWER – HOPE FROM CULTURE AND NATURE

by Tomi Purovaara | tomi.purovaara@kotka.fi



Photo: City of Kotka

War destroys not only people and infrastructure, but also people's hope. War is associated with grueling and senseless concreteness, but also the abstraction associated with war can be confusing: how can I keep hope alive when innocent people are dying; how else can I express solidarity other than by sending money, weapons or supplies?

The City of Kotka wanted to bring a vision of human growth and hope in the midst of war. We wanted to implement it in a way that would be easy and understandable for people of all ages and backgrounds. That's why we connected culture, which is constantly changing, and nature, which is always reborn according to the seasons. The national flower of Ukraine, the sunflower, was selected as a tool for this thinking.

The idea for the operation came from Helsinki-based documentarist Rasoul Khorram, who has implemented peace flower-themed projects both in Finland and in his home country, Iranian Kurdistan. The idea is simple but multi-level: we sow a small flower seed together, care for and nurture it, see it grow into a flower. A flower meadow grows from flowers planted side by side at a suitable distance - while hope remains alive and grows in our hearts and lives.

So what did we do?

The operation started on 30.3.2022 from an celebration event at Kotka's Merikeskus Vellamo. Before that, we had organized workshops where sunflower seeds were dispensed into small paper bags; seeds received as a donation from a garden company. For the Operation Peace Flower celebration, we invited the townspeople to discuss peace, listen to music and speeches. At the venue there attended also the first Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Kotka.

The event ended with the Ukrainian national anthem. Those leaving the hall were given sunflower seeds in small paper bags as well as sowing and care instructions. During April,

seeds and instructions were also distributed in the city's libraries.

The city of Kotka invited organizations and cities from all over Finland to participate in Operation Peace Flower. The message also went to Kotka's ten sister cities in Europe.

Distributed seeds were sown throughout the spring in small jars in homes, schools, kindergartens and workplaces. With careful care, the seedlings grew, and in June it was time to plant the grown seedlings. A joint planting event was organized on a meadow owned by the city with speeches and music. Kotka residents of all ages came to the place, from families with children to the elderly.

In Kotka, Operation Rauhankukka ended with the Evening in Peace event on September 15, 2022. It was planned and organized together with the townspeople and the Ukrainians who came to Kotka. The atmosphere was festive and warm. The speakers were the chairman of the Ukrainian association, Rasoul Khorram, players of the Peace United football team and the Chairman of the City Council. Ukrainian musicians of all ages were responsible for the musical performances. Sunflower-shaped handicrafts made by the association of Ukrainians were distributed to those leaving the party.

We live in a time where crises seem to follow one another. Pandemics, war and global warming are so huge in scale that children and young people in particular have symptoms and may even lose their will to live. Small everyday things done together are the flowers of hope and peace that can sustain us in life and build a future between people and nations.

UKRAINIAN FOOD MASTERCLASS AND A WELCOME NETWORKING EVENING IN LIEPĀJA

by Zita Lazdāne and Natalja Vecvagare | natalja.vecvagare@liepaja.lv



To encourage the integration of Ukrainians who fled the horrors of war and are now living in Latvia, as well as to give the residents of Liepāja an opportunity to learn more about Ukrainian culinary traditions and build a closer friendship between local residents and Ukrainians, the Liepāja City Council in cooperation with Ukrainians living in Liepāja and Rīga organised a Ukrainian culinary masterclass, welcoming everyone to attend.

This activity was carried out within the framework of the European Capital of Culture 2027 programme, designed to bring together different minorities, and provide insights into the cultures of other countries through various innovative methods and events.

Both young and old – Ukrainians living in Liepāja and those coming from Rīga – worked side by side with Liepāja residents not only learning to cook various traditional Ukrainian dishes, but also getting to know each other better and spending a friendly Saturday evening together!

This pleasant gathering was made possible with the passionate support from the lovely ladies and gentlemen who came from the Rīga's "Borscht" restaurant – a delicious Uk-

rainian food place, established in summer and employing Ukrainian refugees.

The next day European Capital of Culture #Liepāja2027 team arranged the ladies and their families a wonderful day of exploring Liepāja and enjoying our city!

Stay up to date with the latest news about Liepāja as European Capital of Culture 2027 at www.liepaja2027.lv and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/liepaja2027.lv>

#Liepaja2027





CULTURE'S ROLE IN PALANGA CITY DURING TIMES OF CRISIS

by Indrė Žvikaitė | komunikacija@pkjc.lt

Palanga Cultural and Youth Center is an open space for cultural education, promoting community's self-expression of all age groups, nurturing ethnic culture, professional art. Over 200 events are organized each year – commemorations of public holidays, concerts, various summer celebrations, family events, performances, Christmas events, etc.

Covid-19 pandemic significantly changed the organization of these activities. The work in the cultural center is with the people and for people and the pandemic forced to look for new and creative ways to do same things differently. On the positive side it was very useful to step out of the comfort zone.

There was a lot of remote work, consistent communication with a team. Installation art in the city, video clips, creative cultural orienteering, yard of joy filled with concerts – few examples of community involvement during the most challenging pandemic year. Each event came with a huge responsibility – to be, or not to be. There are always two plans: plan A-full implementation of the live event and plan B which is prepared according to the situation and requirements of the current period. If there is a plan, the solution is also on the way.

Culture is a very broad concept. Culture always was, is and always will be our hope during turbulent times. As we know from history, cultural events were also held during the war, actors, singers, musicians travelled and performed on the battlefield, among the ruins. It is very important to be patient, strong-willed, help each other and find new things in these difficult times.

Despite the two-year pandemic, Palanga Cultural and Youth Center for its five years' work was awarded by the Ministry

of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania as the best cultural center of 2021. During those five years new team was formed with a strong and competent manager, new events, projects, initiatives with the community were born. Palanga is very lucky that city Municipality invests a lot and supports its culture.

During five years of creative work, Palanga Cultural and Youth Center earned the trust from Palanga City Municipality, which believed in sometimes "crazy" but necessary ideas. Community needs and wants rapidly changes and to be relevant for people, culture require to meet those needs.

There is also an amazing synergy between cultural center's management and the rest of the team of different age groups. When there is peace inside the organization, it is possible to achieve great things. Moreover, there is constant learning – attending seminars, learning from other good examples, always looking for creative solutions and quality content.



UBC NEWS & FACES



UBC's Executive Board met in Aarhus – face-to-face after three years online

by Irene Pendolin | irene.pendolin@ubc.net

The 89th UBC Executive Board meeting took place in Aarhus on 30 November–2 December– for the first time face-to-face after the pandemic has started.

The meeting was opened by UBC President **Mantas Jurgutis**, followed by a welcome speech and presentation from the Mayor of Aarhus **Jacob Bundsgaard**.

Topics of the meeting included, among others, proposal from Palanga to host XVII UBC General Conference in autumn 2023, discussion on UBC priorities for 2023 and potential themes for the XVII UBC General Conference in 2023, UBC's partnership in organizing the next EUSBSR Annual Forum in October 2023 in Riga, Latvia, budget for 2023, information from the Commissions on planned activities for 2023, and the situation in Ukraine.

The Executive Board meeting also included interesting study visits in the City of Aarhus – a warm thank you to the hosts!



Finalisation of the CREST project and policy recommendations for cities

by UBC Secretariat | info@ubc.net



CREST (Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments) project partners' final meeting, together with European conference was held in Brussels on 23-24 November 2022.

Evaluation of the project, its implementation and results - management, partnership, intellectual outcomes, promotion and dissemination, as well as a plan for the follow-up activities were the topics of the closing meeting on 23 November. The project delivered outputs:

- Mapping of existing participatory practices and models of re-purposing educational buildings and spaces
- A model for the repurposing of educational buildings and spaces for HE institution
- Manual for the implementation of the model
- Policy recommendation for the public authorities to support participatory processes in re-purposing of public buildings and civic spaces.

On 24 November the European conference within the project was organised by Out of the Box International (BE). The aim was to disseminate information about the project and its intellectual outputs. The other topics concerned New European Bauhaus concept and affordable Housing Initiative.

CREST for the Municipalities

On 7 November 2022 a Multiplier Event took place in Gdańsk as well as online. The project partners delivered information about the project. In the second part of the meeting the local speakers: **Piotr Lorens**, City Architect, City Hall of Gdańsk

and Gdańsk University of Technology, **Anna Fikus-Wójcik**, City of Gdańsk Development Office, **Anna Gołędzinowska**, City Councillor focused on the role of public authorities in designing and implementing participatory processes of re-purposing of public buildings and spaces and what are the needs of municipalities.

Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the UBC Planning Cities Commission, Gdynia made a presentation on how the results and experiences from the project can be transferred to the local level and be used to enhance the cooperation between local public authorities and higher education institutions. Mrs Szewczyk presented the cases from the UBC member cities: Umeå, Gotland, Riga and Karlskrona.

Recommendations for Municipalities

Municipalities fostering innovations!

Municipalities should develop and put in place proven policy mechanisms, innovative participatory tools and budgeting in order to streamline the process of repurposing buildings into community centers and in that way strengthen social, cultural and economic capital; The use of new technologies for citizens' engagement in urban planning, such as planning apps, participatory urban visualisation, augmented reality, participatory design fictions, but also urban mentoring could be considered.

This should be done in accordance with the experience (good practices) and compliant with the collaboration opportunities between municipalities on regional, national

national and international level in order to ensure sustainability and successful implementation.

Municipalities facilitate citizens' ideas!

When repurposing abandoned buildings, municipalities should continuously include / make available opportunities to all potential beneficiaries, such as HEIs and other educational institutions, civil sector organisations, business sector and final beneficiaries - the residents, through all stages of the process.

By involving a broader set of stakeholder groups in the design, planning and/or decision-making, the participatory process will help strengthen their ownership and support for the policy and this in turn will promote more effective implementation.

Municipalities offer spaces for education!

Municipalities should create and make widely available various support mechanisms (Open source databases, training programmes, work-based learning schemes, Community of practitioners' events, financial incentives etc.) for students of relevant studies to create joint initiatives.

It would allow students better understanding of urban planning problems and city development processes and better insights into municipal functions. On the other hand, Municipalities would gain more possibilities of recruitment of students for mutual benefits.

Municipalities learning from research and expertise!

Municipalities should take advantage of the most recent knowledge of urban policies, solutions and networks that universities provide; develop joint innovative projects and

offer diverse opportunities for future professors and other employees, in order to learn, design, develop and improve city services.

Municipalities promoting and branding cities!

Municipalities should include HEI, NGOs and business stakeholders in designing and running initiatives dedicated to branding of the city, by promoting e.g. ITC solutions, participatory models, innovative educational programmes in order to brand the city as an innovative destination and attract investments, nomads, new talents, etc.



Co-designing the PITCH model for local integration strategies

by Anna Dargiewicz | anna.dargiewicz@ubc.net



PITCH project partners met in Seville, Spain, on 4-6 October 2022, to co-design the first version of the model for local integration strategies. The model will function as a common ground for all partners, setting out the guiding principles and basic structure after which the local integration strategies can be built, pilot-tested and finalised.

The partners discussed the SWOT analyses results and lessons that should be learned when creating the strategies. They took part in the workshops on co-design, digital tools, and mainstreaming.

Using the creative and participatory method of open space technology, that facilitated brainstorming and peer-exchange, the partners designed the draft contents of the PITCH model. They brainstormed on how to ensure that the newly-proposed local integration strategies feature the following flagship approaches promoted by the PITCH project: gender-sensitive, personalized, participatory, multi-stakeholder.

Also, topics, methods, practical activities that could be proposed to improve integration of migrant women, were raised up. The activities of the PITCH model are developed in clusters corresponding to 3 types: upskilling, awareness/orientation, social activities. The participants of the meeting collected various ideas and proposals of actions under the selected clusters. This structure will make it possible to con-

nect the activities in a flexible way to meet the individual needs and interests identified during the profiling.

UBC cities good practices

The UBC member cities have a vast experience in integrating new inhabitants (both migrant and refugees) in the society. Most cities have been implementing the integration strategies or include this subject in other political documents. On the basis of their experiences, the UBC prepared recommendations, including ideas and good practices that can be adopted in different contexts. Mainstreaming, involvement of various stakeholders and tight cooperation between municipalities, civic society and migrants are crucial.

About PITCH project

PITCH is a 36-month project, aimed at establishing a common European ground to support the design and implementation of local integration strategies addressed to migrant women, based on a personalized, participatory, and multi-stakeholder approach. The project will do so by co-designing a model, translating it into 7 local strategies, and pilot-testing it with migrant women in Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania and Sweden. UBC is a partner in this project.



Funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union





Photos by Anna Rezulak (main photo) & Ilona Czerwińska (below)

UBC Planning Cities Commission took part in CREST

by Paulina Szewczyk | p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl

Union of the Baltic Sea Planning Cities Commission is a network of urban planners, architects, construction engineers and other specialists related to city planning. Members of the Commission meet during seminars and meetings both in-person and on-line, which are a platform for the exchange of views and experiences and an opportunity to interact with professionals from other cities and countries.

The Commission's work also gives possibility of collecting and disseminating good examples and practices.

As the UBC Planning Cities Commission supports the UBC and strengthen the UBC cooperation in the field of city planning, the chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities Commission, **Paulina Szewczyk**, Gdynia, took part in the **CREST** (Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments) **project Multiplier event**, which was held in Gdańsk 7th November as well as on-line.

Paulina Szewczyk made a presentation on how the results and experiences from the project can be transferred to the local level and be used to enhance the cooperation between local public authorities and higher education institutions. Cases from the UBC member cities: Umeå, Gotland, Riga and Karlskrona were presented.

Most of the presented examples have one thing in common - the space "in-between", which serves as a continuation of the public space within the buildings presented. Those in-between places connect the public space programmes with those offered inside the building. In this situation many programmes, also cultural, become a part of the city life and enhance the public space quality.

The possibility of experiencing the culture in the city encourages people to use public space. This also causes the social

and economical stabilization of the city, which is extremely important specially in the face of a crises.

One of many good examples of such a space is Gdynia Film Centre – an important cultural meeting place in the center of Gdynia, providing access to education, culture and entertainment related to the cinema. The inviting form of the roof spread over the pedestrian pathway and the red stairway to the small plaza and underground parking can make everyone can feel the spirit of the cinema and walk the "red carpet".

Architecture and urban planning should definitely respond to the need of moderating city cultural life in an inclusive way. Therefore, it is extremely important to share the examples from the UBC members as we have lots of them. You are cordially invited to send at any time information about your new projects and realisations to p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl. Planning Cities Commission will collect and disseminate them.



UBC Safe Cities Commission starts three new projects

by Kaspars Vārpiņš | kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv



Summer of 2022 was quite active with the development of projects. The work with the projects was successful – three new projects for the UBC Safe Cities Commission were approved – BYFORES, VOALA and PA SECURE KIDS. All three projects are based on volunteers work during various crisis.

Project BYFORES (Baltic Youth for Resilient Society) aims to enhance resilience to natural and man-made disasters by strengthening inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organisations in crisis management in the Baltic Sea Region with special focus on youth engagement. The project looks into the role that young people can play in managing and coping with disaster risks and reducing vulnerability through capacity building, education, and awareness raising. The project is funded by The CBSS Project Support Facility.

Project VOALA (Volunteers and Local Authorities – Baltic Sea Region Network) aims to enhance society's resilience to natural and man-made disasters by strengthening inclusive, cross-sectoral cooperation between authorities and volunteer organizations in crisis management in the Baltic Sea Region. The project is funded by Swedish Institute.

Project PA SECURE KIDS (Strengthening children's participation in civil protection and building resilient societies) aims to strengthen the sustainability and impact of child participation mechanisms in decision making processes at both national and local levels with a specific focus on decisions and action to build safe and secure societies, including their resilience and ability to prevent, prepare, respond, and

adapt to different types of hazards and emergencies. The project is funded by EC CERV programme.

Speaking of projects, there is still ongoing work on the Erasmus+ project NEEDS (Needs-based education and studies in societal security) which is coming closer to its final steps. There has been three Intensive Study programs for students in societal security field and now there is ongoing work on the online study course, online network of practitioners and students as well as development of the handbook.

Stay safe and secure!



UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission: Action Plan

by Wolfgang Schmidt & Christian Lausten Sørensen
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Since the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission has gained more experience and knowledge due to the event series in 2022 we would like to introduce you to the action plan 2023. We are pleased to announce that a presence event and a virtual event will take place next year.

The virtual event will take place in March and will address the question of how the potential of the Baltic Sea Region can be increased by considering more cooperation. The resilient city cooperates actively with people, municipalities and stakeholders to find regional solutions for global challenges and to shape the future of the joint Megaregion.

It is digital, green and has despite all disparities a common cultural background. We will discuss the potential of the Baltic Sea Region, Cooperation opportunities, funding options and common core topics like green transition, digitalization etc.

We will be happy to welcome you at the Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in September in Riga to deepen and develop the themes of the online event in March.

Additionally, we were able to establish a very successful cooperation with the Goethe Institute and could popularize the offer of the CCI contact desk. Led by the Goethe-Institut Tallinn, the CCI Contact Desk supports organisations and stakeholders seeking international contacts and cooperation opportunities. It offers advice and knowledge on how to implement international CCI activities, facilitates contacts to

the right CCI organisations, experts and stakeholders, and guides to the right tools, knowledge and know-how.

Furthermore, we are discussing the idea of a joint event with the Sustainable Cities Commission in the context of Urban Futures 2023. From 21 to 23 June 2023, the global community of urban designers will meet in Stuttgart. This German hub of power is the epicentre of the European mobility industry - but Stuttgart has much more to offer than this obvious characteristic.

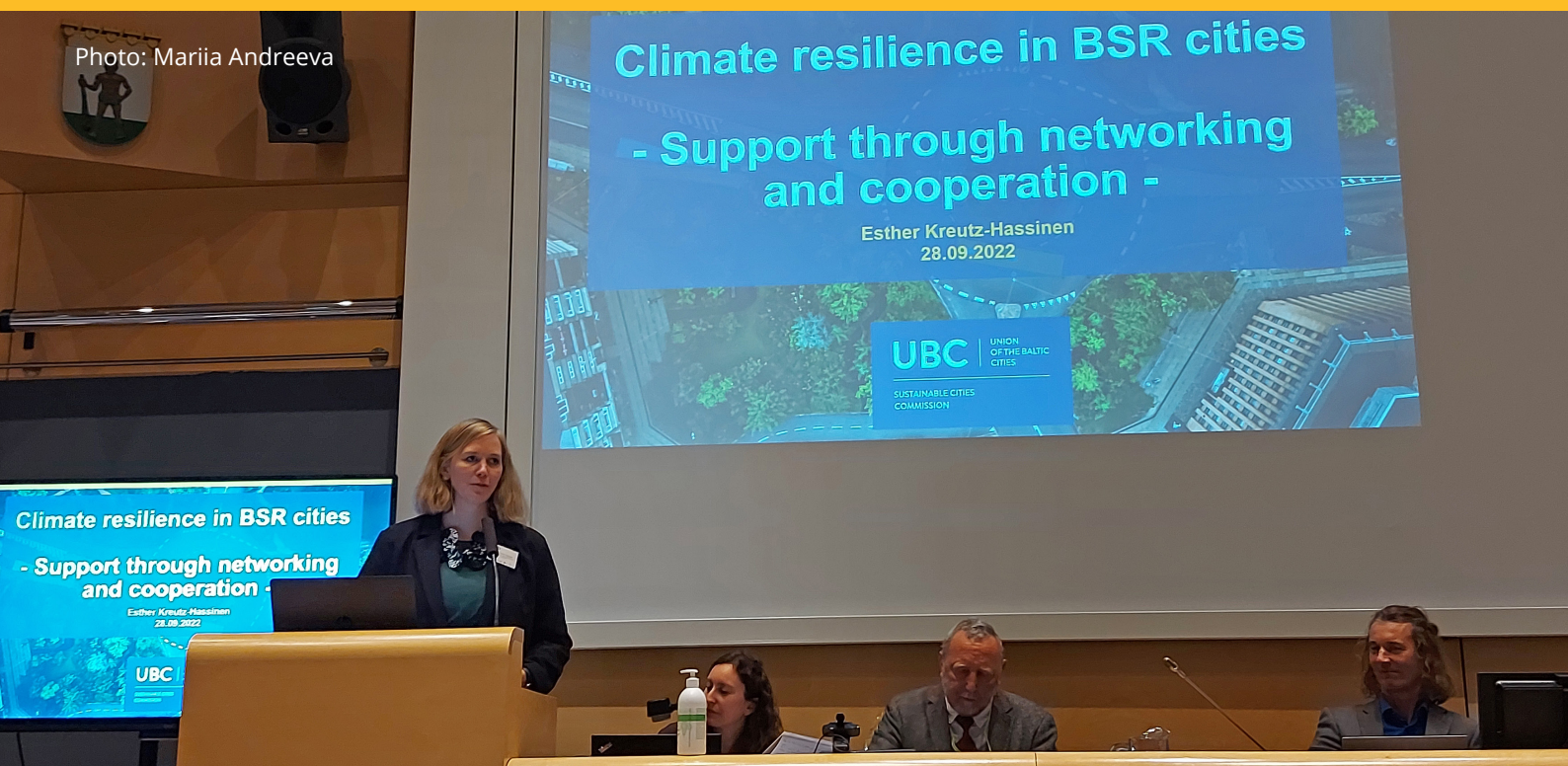
In fact, Stuttgart is one of the fastest changing cities in Europe. More than 3,000 of the most brilliant urban designers, leaders, entrepreneurs, sustainable city experts, media professionals and talents come together: to share experiences of change and talk about failures.



UBC Sustainable Cities Commission supports EU Mission cities

by Mariia Andreeva | mariia.andreeva@turku.fi

Photo: Mariia Andreeva



EU Missions are shaping Europe in new constellations for enabling innovations, new opportunities and cooperation, and they are the key platform for cities to look into by 2030. In the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, we follow the developments in three of them: Adaptation Mission, Ocean Mission and Cities Mission. The latter is particularly relevant, as 12 UBC member cities were selected among the 100 cities to become climate-neutral and smart by 2030.

The Cities Mission is a source of experimentation and innovation ecosystems: it involves 100 cities preparing to become climate-neutral and smart by 2030 and thus acting as innovation hubs for other European cities to follow this path. This Mission, launched in spring 2022, will help others in reaching the green transition by 2050. Excited about this progress, we in the Sustainable Cities Commission closely follow the Cities Mission's development and aim to support our member cities involved in it.

During the 13th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region on 28–29 September 2022, UBC SCC Head of Secretariat **Esther Kreutz-Hassinen** joined the panel at the climate session focusing on the Adaptation and Cities Missions. Esther brought to participants the insights into the UBC work and shared different tools that can be used to support cities on the climate-neutrality journey.

Later in October, we inaugurated the first Cities Mission discussion in the format of the UBC TALKS webinar. The UBC TALKS about EU Mission: climate-neutral and smart cities by 2030 explored how UBC members selected for the Mission prepare to act on it, and where to find support for cities striving to decarbonise their operations.

This webinar, presenting plans and ambitions of the UBC members Gävle, Tartu, Umeå, and Liepāja, was opened by the Mission Manager **Patrick Child**, Deputy Director-General for DG Environment in the European Commission. In his speech, DDG Child emphasized the importance of devoting

necessary resources to the Mission, engaging stakeholders into this process, and giving necessary attention to the national networks.

"I believe that the Union of the Baltic Cities is a very natural and positive vector for us to develop these conversations in support of our collective ambitions," emphasized DDG Patrick Child.

As the Cities Mission unravels, our Commission will continue supporting UBC members acting on the climate-neutrality goal by 2030 by providing a platform for exchange and spreading the information about the existing opportunities for cities.

Photo: Minna Kivistö





Renewed Youthful Cities Commission ready for the new year

by Dmitrijs Zverevs | Dmitrijs.Zverevs@riga.lv

In November Youthful Cities Commission met for its second meeting this year, which was held online, to finalise Commission's transformation process and to agree on the action plan for 2023.

Firstly, the thematic clusters were set up in the Commission. So far there are 3 of them – "Youth participation", "Youth spaces" and "International youth work (mobility projects)". Clusters are expected to operate in a self-managed way, mostly online, and focus on experience exchange between the cities and development of new cooperation projects.

During previous meetings of the Commission, cities have emphasized the necessity to create more space for direct involvement of their youth workers and young people into Commission's work. The clusters provide perfect framework for that, and we encourage also those UBC cities who haven't been part of the Commission previously because of administrative capacity to give a thought to joining a cluster.

The dates for the first meeting of the clusters have been set already (and registration will open shortly):

- Youth participation – 1st March, 14:00 CET;
- Youth spaces – 2nd March, 14:00 CET;
- International youth work – 8th March, 14:00 CET.

Secondly, to introduce the work of the Commission to all interested parties, on 18th January (14:00 CET) there will be an online informative event about the Commission and activities planned in 2023. If you are curious to learn more about upcoming events in the region and opportunities available for your city, your youth workers or your young people, please do join us (information about registration and agenda, as always, will be published on the web page of the UBC).

Thirdly, we are happy to introduce the new vice-chair of the Commission – the city of Klaipeda who proudly holds the title European Youth Capital 2021 and has a lot to offer to

other UBC cities when it comes to innovation, youth participation and inclusion.

2023 will be a vivid and dynamic year in terms of youth policy and youth participation in the Baltic Sea Region, and we encourage other UBC cities to join us on this journey.





A MOMENT AWAITED FOR DECADES: THE DARIUS AND GIRĖNAS STADIUM WAS OFFICIALLY OPENED

Ever since the restoration of independence, Kaunas and Lithuania have not seen this yet – on October 16th a crowd of thousands of people filled the stands of the newly rebuilt Darius and Girėnas Stadium. Those gathered at the opening event and those at television screen had the chance to see a tough football match and a brightly coloured concert by famous artists.

Opening in packed stands

When the festive weekend at the Darius and Girėnas stadium started, the most curious visitors took part in the special tours and were among the first to see the preparations for the main event of the grand opening.

On October 16, the day of the football match and the festive concert, an unprecedented crowd flocked to the historic facility. Having bought all the tickets, Kaunas residents and guests filled the stadium's tribune almost to its full capacity, which increased from approximately 9 to 15 thousand seats after the renovation.

Before the referee's whistle, announcing the start of the Lithuanian Football Federation (LFF) final cup match, Kaunas Mayor **Visvaldas Matijošaitis** greeted the people gathered. "Without infrastructure, it is naive to expect progress, so I believe that the renovated stadium will help Kaunas teams and Lithuanian national teams to achieve the highest results. We do not forget the kids of Kaunas either – in the last five years, more than three dozen sports fields have been

renovated in the city, and the surfaces have been replaced. The Darius and Girėnas stadium is dedicated not only to football but also to other sports and large entertainment events. We want this space to be alive and to make the people of Kaunas happy." – said Mayor V. Matijošaitis.

The symbolic introduction to the opening ceremony was crowned by a sacred moment – Metropolitan Kęstutis Kėvalas, the archbishop of Kaunas, consecrated the only object of this scale in Lithuania that was rebuilt from the ground up.

A dramatic football battle

In the first part of the opening, the packed Darius and Girėnas Stadium witnessed a persistent and emotional duel between the finalists of the LFF Cup Vilnius "Žalgiris" and Kaunas district "Hegelmann" clubs. The victory was celebrated only after added extra time with a score of 2:1 and the football players of the capital's team raised the trophy.

Video of the football match:

<https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000237672>

A colourful festive concert

Immediately after the final game of the LFF Cup, the final part was waiting for those gathered at the stadium – the performance of well-known artists. The duet of Saulius Prusaitis and Iglė gave the introduction to the musical performance during the break of the match, and afterwards – DJ Jovani continued the action on stage with spectacular elements of stunts, sound and light effects.

Marijonas Mikutavičius, Justinas Jarutis, Jessica Shy with **Nombeko Auguste**, "The Roop", **Leon Somov**, a guest from Ukraine – Jamala, **Vidas Bareikis** and more greeted the multi-thousand audience with their hits.

The performances were accompanied by a parade of vintage cars and bikers as well as festive fireworks.

Video of the festive concert:

<https://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/irasas/2000237681>

by Gailė Partikaitė | gaile.partikaite@kaunas.lt



POMORSKIE CYCLING MOBILITY

Cycling tourism and mobility is an area that has seen a remarkable increase in popularity in recent years. The strong need to spend free time actively, as part of a healthy lifestyle and keeping fit, contributes to a rise in the number of cyclists who practice tourism on two wheels combined with sightseeing or use a bicycle in daily transport. Bearing in mind the current trends, the Pomorskie Voivodeship is implementing several activities supporting this area.

A significant project is the Pomorskie Cycling Routes, where a business, promotional and investment cooperation system is built. The project involves the construction of two international bicycle routes, the EuroVelo 9/Vistula Cycling Route (Wiślana Trasa Rowerowa) and the EuroVelo 10/13 (Baltic Sea Cycle Route / Iron Curtain Route). The project's scope includes the construction or modernization of bicycle routes, communication routes over a length of 600 km, preparation of 80 additional and dedicated rest areas for cyclists, as well as many promotional activities. The end of the project is planned for 2023, but documentation for the second stage covering the EU programming period 2021-2027 is already being prepared.

The idea behind the project is to become part of the European network of long-distance bicycle EuroVelo routes, especially around the Baltic Sea region. The construction of high-quality bicycle infrastructure dedicated to tourism and communication is one of the priorities to create a tourist product of national importance and support zero-emission transport.

Parallel to implement investments in the region, activities are carried out in the area of international cooperation based on the promotion of routes and cultural heritage, the creation of tourist offers and their commercialization. The Pomorskie Voivodeship as a substantive partner, implemented the Interreg South Baltic Programme project "Bi-

king South Baltic!" (Euro Velo Route No. 10), while in other Interreg SBP projects. Further international projects are in preparation - "Iron Curtain - Innovative ICT Cycling" (EV13) implemented as part of the transnational Programme Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027 and "Baltic Biking UPGRADE" (development of the EV 10) as part of Interreg South Baltic Programme 2021-2027.

The Pomorskie Voivodeship undertakes local and international activities in the field of tourism development and bicycle mobility on a systemic basis and it's open for international cooperation. The emerging good-quality routes of international importance provide access to the region's natural and cultural potential and build its solid brand year-round.

by Marta Chelkowska | M.Chelkowska@pomorskie.eu





PLENTY OF GOODS DONATED TO KHARKIV AID EFFORT IN TURKU

A campaign arranged by the City of Turku between December 7–10 to help residents of Turku's twin city Kharkiv brought in large amounts of electric and heating equipment. A lorry load of 29 EUR-pallets of goods, with a volume of 76 m³ and weighing about 8 tons has departed to the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. Donors ranging from private individuals to groups of friends, as well as organisations and companies wanted to provide concrete help to the Ukrainians as Christmas approaches. A total of 122 donors participated.

The goods include 86 electric generators, 157 heaters and 19 water pumps, kitchen implements, and some other items such as electric blankets and flashlights. Donations included both new and used generators and heaters. There was also winter clothing and toys collected by the Ukrainians of Finland organization.

"I warmly thank all the people, companies, and associations who took part in the collection. Your desire to help has been touching and for its part we hope that it will bring at least a slightly warmer Christmas to Turku's twin city Kharkiv, where the situation with electricity and heat is very critical", says Turku Mayor **Minna Arve**.

Transportation from Turku to Kharkiv is carried out in cooperation with the Ukrainians of Finland organization. Students of service logistics at the Turku Vocational Institute played a big role in the aid campaign. For four days they received, packed, and weighed the donated goods for transport.

"Thanks to the students and teachers at the Turku Vocational Institute the logistics of the collection proceeded efficiently and professionally from beginning to end", says

Mika Akkanen, Manager of International Affairs at the City of Turku.

"It is wonderful that we and the students had the opportunity to take part in this important project. The students used the opportunity to apply what they had learned in practical work, but above all we were able to take part in taking concrete action to help the Ukrainians", says **Marko Männikkö**, teacher of logistics at the Turku Vocational Institute.

There will be more information on the City of Turku website on the arrival of the aid in Kharkiv www.turku.fi/en/ukraine.

Large number of individuals, groups of friends and families participated in the collection drive

In addition to companies and organisations, the Kharkiv collection drive received a lot of donations from ordinary people, groups of friends and families. Everyone was motivated by a desire to provide concrete aid to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people.

Karl Nurro donated a new generator to the collection drive together with his co-workers and friends.

"The war has such a major impact on civilians and they really need a lot of help right now with the temperatures dropping. It feels great to be able to help in some concrete way," Nurro says.

Turku Vocational Institute logistics teacher **Jani Forsström** and student **Saku Sironen** received the generator brought in by Nurro.

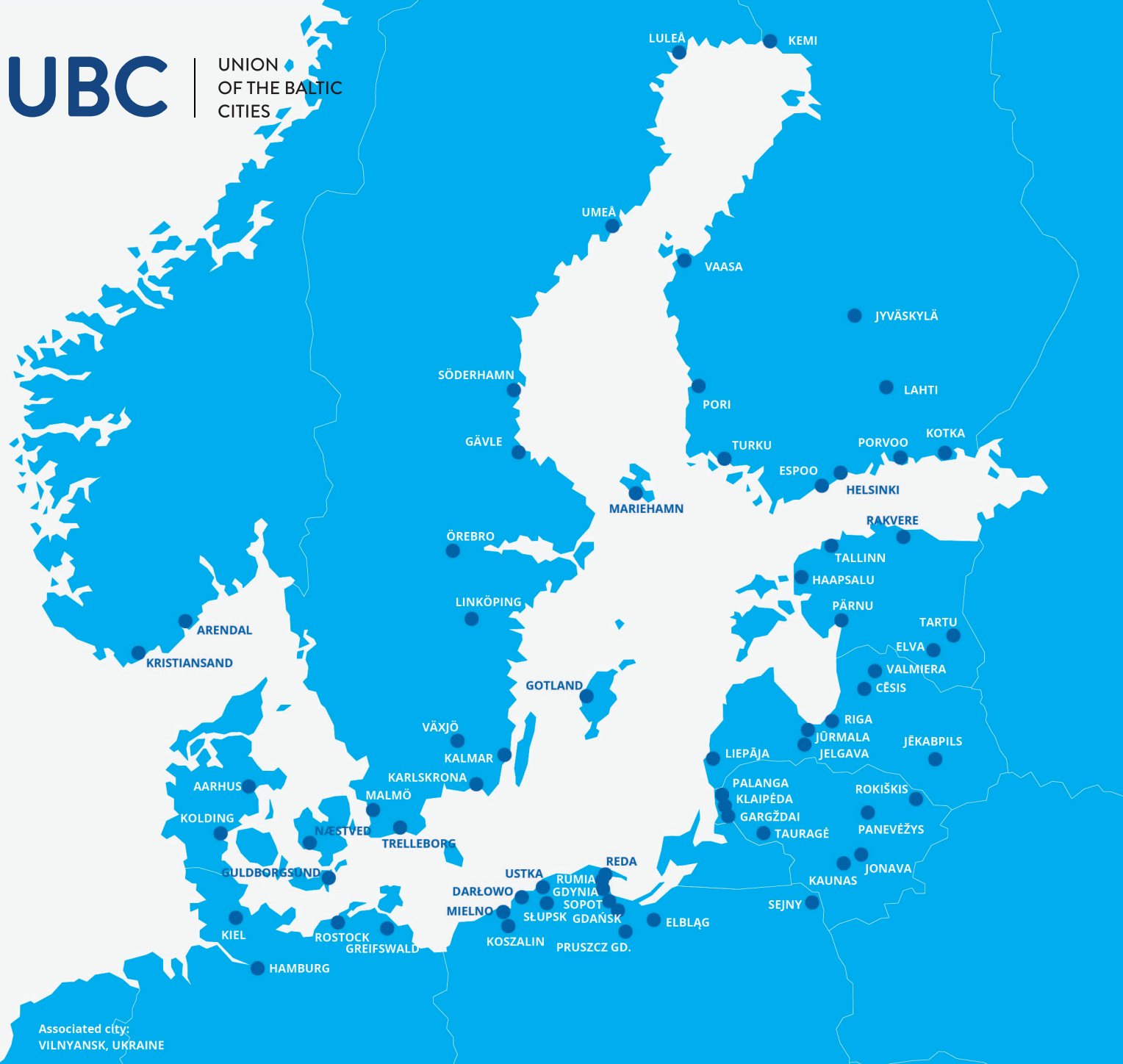
"This is a major opportunity for us to do the right work for such an important and good thing. When the power grids are down there in Kharkiv and people are left without any heat, every bit of help is needed," explains Sironen.

Another service logistics student, **Severi Puronen** received a generator brought in by **Asko Laakso**.

"The desire to help is part of this, and they really need it there in Ukraine," says Laakso.

Read the whole story at: www.turku.fi/en/ukraine

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UBC – working together to foster sustainable, smart and safe cities

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with the members from nine Baltic Sea countries. Founded in 1991 in Gdańsk, UBC is a voluntary, proactive network mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities for a safe, smart and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. The UBC cooperates with numerous Baltic and European organisations.

The UBC's practical work is carried out through active cooperation of the member cities in eight thematic Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Learning Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities. The Commissions coordinate and execute specific projects, activities and events.

In addition to the Commissions, significant work is carried out in UBC Working Group on Gender Equality and UBC Communications Network.

Any coastal city or any other city interested in the development of the Baltic Sea Region may become a member of the UBC – please contact the UBC Secretariat.

www.ubc.net

UBC

UNION
OF THE BALTIC
CITIES

Season's Greetings

From UBC Secretariat

