

Press release 17 October 2017

Call for leadership in the Baltic Sea Region

XIV Union of the Baltic Cities General Conference Växjö, Sweden, 24–27 October 2017

Nearly 300 high-level politicians, city officials, other experts and youth are participating in the XIV Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) General Conference, held in Växjö, Sweden, on 24–27 October 2017. The theme of the General Conference is "Leadership for the Future – Cities as Leaders for Global Sustainable Development". The conference holds also the 25th Anniversary session of the UBC, founded in Gdańsk in 1991. The statutory General Assembly of the UBC will take place during the conference on 26 October 2017.

In the face of the fundamental challenges that Europe has to encounter today, such as the rise of populism and nationalism, the UBC General Conference will emphasize the Baltic Sea Region cities' attachment to the European values of freedom, democracy, tripartite separation of powers, equality, tolerance, and diversity. The UBC General Conference will also feature a strong involvement of over 60 youth representatives from the Baltic Sea Region.

– The XIV UBC General Conference in Växjö is about leadership and cities pioneering in various fields of life, such as promoting digital start-up ecosystems, preventing youth marginalization and fighting climate change. However, as cities and regions our responsibility extends further, to engage in building Europe of tomorrow that is based on trust and democratic values where the voice of ordinary citizens is taken into account. We need international cooperation and exchange more than ever. UBC as the leading city network in Northern Europe is the natural platform for this. Our working style seeks practical solutions, not only beautiful words, states President of the UBC **Per Bødker Andersen**.

The plenary sessions will be streamed live at www.bit.ly/ubc-youtube. Streaming times are Wednesday 25 October at 13.30–15.00 and 15.30–17.30, and Thursday 26 October at 09.00–10.30, 11.00–13.00 and 16.00–17.15. The plenary sessions will also be available as videos.

Top-level speakers across the Baltic Sea Region

The General Conference hosts top-level speakers across the Baltic Sea Region, such as **Karl-Heinz Lambertz**, President of the Committee of the Regions, **Lena Ek**, Senior Advisor in Sustainable Seas Foundation and Former Minister of Environment in Sweden, **Peter Schenk**, Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy in European Commission, **Krista Kampus**, Senior Adviser/Head of the Baltic 2030 Unit at the Council of the Baltic Sea States, **Anne Stenros**, Design Director in the City of Helsinki, **Alessandro Cenderello**, Managing Partner for EU Institutions at Ernst & Young, **Shirin Reuvers**, Cities Manager at CDP, **Pärtel-Peeter Pere**, CEO and partner at Future Place Leadership, and **Edgar Nazarenus** and **Vincent Weseloh** from Capufaktur.

As speakers and panellists, esteemed Mayors and other representatives from UBC member cities will take part in the discussions on leadership and the future of the Baltic Sea Region. Keynote speakers include **Per Schöldberg**, Deputy Mayor of Växjö Municipality, **Piotr Grzelak**, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk, **Jørgen Kristiansen**, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand, **Gunars Ansins**, Deputy Mayor of Liepaja, **Jaana Simula**, Cultural Chief in the City of Pori, **Wolfgang Röttgers**, Councillor in the City of Kiel, **Rasa Šnapštienė**, Deputy Mayor of Kaunas, **Carina Svensson**, Chair of Environmental Board in Malmö, **Jyrki Myllyvirta**, Mayor of Lahti, **Mantas Jurgutis**, Member of Kaunas City Council, and **Oliver Rosen- gren**, Deputy Mayor of Växjö Municipality.

Växjö – “The Greenest City in Europe” and winner of the European Green Leaf Award 2018

Växjö, the host city of the XIV UBC General Conference, is an exciting combination of idyllic small town, university town and centre of entertainment – a strong regional centre in the middle of the south of Sweden. Businesses, the arenas, the university, environmental work and above all the city’s energy and ambitious spirit are all growing fast.

– Växjö is honored to host the XIV UBC General Conference. Mayors and local leaders are part of the solution for an open and sustainable Baltic Sea Region, and we as leaders must use our local power for a positive development of the entire region. Our mission goes beyond our city borders, emphasizes Lord Mayor of Växjö **Bo Frank**.

Växjö has a growth rate comparable to Sweden’s major cities and a renowned environmental policy.

– Sustainability is high on the agenda in Växjö and we have a long tradition on working with other actors in our Municipality and the world to develop our city. Ten years ago, our achievements gave us the reputation of being ‘The Greenest City in Europe’ and a few months ago, this reputation was even further strengthened when we were awarded the ‘European Green Leaf Award’ for 2018.

UBC Youth Conference emphasizes young people’s role in decision-making

Parallel to the XIV UBC General Conference, UBC Youthful Cities Commission organises a Youth Conference with over 60 participants. The Youth Conference is partly funded by EU Erasmus+ program and brings together young people from 13 cities in the Baltic Sea Region.

Purpose of the Youth Conference is to work on common issues such as participation, migration and leadership. Furthermore, the Youth Conference will interact with the UBC General Conference, as the youth participants will take part in many of the sessions in the General Conference – to possibly place a youth perspective on the agenda. In addition, the purpose of the Youth Conference is to bring young people from around the region together to network and to share ideas and experiences.

During a briefing session on Wednesday 25 October, the youth are presented with tasks, issues or problems from UBC Commissions. Young people will then have 24 hours to come up with comments, views or solutions to them. These will be presented on the morning of Thursday 26 October in the plenary session “Listening to the Voices of Tomorrow”.

More information:

- UBC Secretariat: info@ubc.net / www.ubc.net
- XIV UBC General Conference website: www.vaxjo.se/ubc

Follow UBC in social media:

- Twitter: www.twitter.com/UBC_BSR
- Facebook: www.facebook.com/UnionoftheBalticCities/
- LinkedIn: [Union of the Baltic Cities \(UBC\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Union-of-the-Baltic-Cities-(UBC))
- YouTube, live streaming and videos of the conference: www.bit.ly/ubc-youtube

Media contacts: Irene Pendolin, Communications Manager, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), irene.pendolin@ubc.net / +358 40 848 6242. **Accreditation to the conference:** Sohie Kim-Hagdahl, Communications Officer, Municipality of Växjö: sohie.kim-hagdahl@vaxjo.se

Founded in 1991 in Gdańsk, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with around 100 member cities from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden. UBC mobilizes the shared potential of its member cities to advance and deliver sustainable, smart and safe urban solutions and quality of life and promotes cities as drivers for smart, sustainable, green and resource-efficient growth. www.ubc.net