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# BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

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## BALTIC SEA CITIES SUPPORTING UKRAINE

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# BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN



Dear UBC Friends,

It's been more than a year since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This unprovoked, brutal aggression has already claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and soldiers killed as a result of the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects, including shelling from heavy artillery, multiple launch rocket systems, missiles, cluster bombs and air strikes. The war crimes of Russian aggressors include rapes, tortures and murders of the residents. The symbols of these crimes are inter alia Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, where some of the victims were buried in mass graves. More than 7.5 million people have fled Ukraine and nearly 7 million Ukrainians are internally displaced.

UBC is an organization that has always supported the values of democracy, peace, freedom, respect for the law, equality, cooperation and friendship between neighbours. We cannot remain indifferent. 15.000 EUR was donated from UBC to Lviv for the help for internal refugees. Also, emergency fundraising call towards the restoration of the maternity hospital in Vilnyansk has been aired by UBC in the early December 2022. As a result 10.000 EUR was transferred that time.

Many UBC members are helping Ukrainian cities by sending e.g. buses, money, medicines, food, water and sewage equipment, building machines and many other supplies.

This edition of the Bulletin includes the reports and pictures from Vilnyansk and Hostomel that say more than thousand words. It also features the UBC cities involvement in support to Ukraine.

We will all have a chance to discuss the future of our region and Europe in person in Palanga, Lithuania, at the XVII UBC General Conference to be held on 24-26 October 2023. The conference will bring up the question of rebuilding Ukraine, refugees' integration and the role the UBC in the process of Ukraine accession to EU. Also, renewable energy, decarbonisation, youth involvement and digital transformation will be on the conference agenda. The General Assembly will be held on 26 October 2023 and will include elections, reports etc.

Welcome to Palanga!

With Baltic Sea greetings,

Mantas Jurgutis  
President of UBC



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WEEK OF SCANDINAVIAN CULTURE IN KAUNAS

# HOPE FOR VILNYANSK

by Alexei Stoyanovsky | bioexpert@ukr.net



**Vilnyansk has been the first city in Ukraine to join the UBC during the spring 2022. It is a small municipality of the country's South, that has found itself on the way of the Russian forces, attempting to advance from the annexed Crimea.**

Under these circumstances the city leadership has applied for UBC membership. A step to reaffirm the community's devotion to defend their part of Ukraine and to strengthen ties with the European family of free nations "as this is where we belong", as said by Vilnyansk Mayor **Natalya Musienko** in March 2022, when the Kremlin horde troops had been some 25 miles away from the city.

The UBC has closely looked at the situation in the Ukraine's South and decided for a quick response when the news arrived that Vilnyansk has suffered a late night horrible missile attack that landed directly in their maternity hospital. Emergency fundraising call towards the hospital restoration has been aired by UBC in the early December 2022 and got the name **Vilnyansk Christmas Project**.

Vilnyansk municipality hospital serves the needs of both urban and rural community in the northern part of Zaporizhya region that remains in the close vicinity to the frontline. The Russian Army initial attempt to go further inside the country has failed through the spring 2022. Even though local residents have been subjected to constant attacks, both from short and long range missiles and artillery, the invaders' hope to break the spirit of Ukrainian citizens and force them to surrender turned out futile. Unfortunately, Moscow sought revenge and has come up with new ways to improve their genocide performance by adjusting their S-300 short

range air defense missile system to attack ground targets. One of those projectiles has brought death and devastation to Vilnyansk municipality hospital after midnight on 23 November 2022.

## **Innocent victims' suffering**

The weapon weighting about 1,5 tones, speeds up to about 3000 km/h ( 2000 m/h) when goes down from its initial ballistic trajectory upon approaching the target. The disastrous strike had hit the very center of the hospital facility right where the two floor building of maternity house has been standing. As the city was aware of possible attacks, only the limited number of personnel stayed over night and the same applied to the patients. They kept only those who had to be under constant hospital care. November night strike has taken away the life of a tiny baby borned just two days earlier in the war torn town. Later in the morning the rescue team had unearthed the doctor from the debris. The man had been injured and lost functions in his arm, but was found alive, which given the circumstances can be considered a true miracle.

For the next three days the whole community arrived to help the hospital, clean up as much debris as possible and most importantly provide some insulation to cover exposed parts of the roof, walls and the numerous holes from broken windows and doors. It has been vitally important to reduce the damage and to bring the hospital back to operation. The facility provides essential health services to the community, consisting of remained local residents and many refugees, who fled from the occupied areas in the previous months. The strike has arrived in cold season as part of the Mos-





cow's energy genocide plan. As a result women underwent unprecedented challenges. Since maternity house was needed as comprehensive health service provider, it has been decided to open fundraising to restore it as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the hospital began working to fulfill the plan to free some of the space at the children's department to relocate maternity hospital services there, as the former is used only in urgent cases.

Yet as more diligent damage survey has been carried out in the weeks following the strike – wider picture of the overall destruction of the whole hospital showed up. This includes i.a. severe damages to the roof structure of the other survived building where family medical care and non-surgery health services were provided. That project call will be announced additionally.

### Christmas gift

This was the time when the UBC has joined the fundraising efforts by Christmas project donation. On 22 December the decision of supporting Vilnyansk hospital with a gift of 10,000 euros was announced. The donation arrived prior to the New Year and contributed to completion the initial restoration phase of the project. As the hospital manager, Mr Oleg, recalls now, the good news from the UBC arrived while he had been burdened by the thoughts of where they can get another 8,000 euros that was still missing.

The missile strike had destroyed much of the maternity

house equipment which had to be replaced to restore its operation. The UBC donation has been used to purchase the full equipment set for hysteroscopy – a vital procedure for girls and ladies both for their health inspection and medical treatment.

These services has been restored since March 2023. Mrs Olena – the doctor who has been doing the hysteroscopy before the attack, attended pre-operational training to upgrade her skills with the new equipment. During our recent visit in late April, she showed us the fully equipped office where she operates. Every time we visit the city, the hospital manager updates us on the challenges that they have already been able to find solution for. He also shares his strategy for the next urgent steps needed to secure 24/7 operation of the institution.

While many male residents are fighting to counter Kremlin's attack and to eliminate the threat for the rest of Europe, the city itself is doing its best to survive amid war difficulties and struggles.







# INITIATIVES FROM

## AARHUS

by Elisabeth Mygind Reinholdt | [rem@aarhus.dk](mailto:rem@aarhus.dk)

**In Aarhus, the second largest city of Denmark, we have done our best to help the Ukrainians since the outbreak of the war. The city has initiated several initiatives to help both children, young people and parents who come to Aarhus from Ukraine - as well as initiatives to help the people in Ukraine.**

Almost 40,000 Ukrainian refugees have now applied for a residence permit in Denmark. There are currently 1,578 Ukrainian refugees residing in Aarhus, primarily women and children. Temporary places of residence have been established for the refugees. In the long term, it is expected that the city will receive housing assignments for 2300 refugees.

330 Ukrainian refugees have now found employment (43% of job-ready refugees). The city of Aarhus has established the Ukraine House in Aarhus and there are many volunteers who help with the reception and integration of the Ukrainian refugees. Furthermore, Aarhus has set up 24 reception classes for Ukrainian children and young people at eight primary schools and begun to let individual students follow the teaching in a general Danish class.

### **Donation to health care and public transport**

In the beginning of 2023, Aarhus sent the first truck with health aids to Ukraine in cooperation with the Association of Honorary Consults in Aarhus. The aids have been taken out of circulation in Aarhus e.g. due to cosmetic damage and age, but it can make a difference to the hospitals in

in Lviv, Ukraine e.g., nursing beds, wheelchairs, walkers, and crutches. From February to April, a further three trucks were sent. The transport is financed by private donations, and the aid is sent to Lviv, as Aarhus has a friendship agreement with Lviv.

In March 2023 five used city buses were sent from Aarhus to Lviv for public transport use, and within the next months Aarhus will be donating a further 15 buses to the city government in Lviv.

### **Aarhus will help with reconstruction**

A delegation of mayors from Copenhagen, Aarhus and Odense visited Ukraine in April and declared their readiness to assist in the reconstruction of the war-torn country with funding from the Danish Ukraine Fund. Established by the Danish Government, the fund of approx. 7 billion DDK in 2023, which will target Ukraine's needs and wishes for a concerted Danish effort with a focus on military, civil and commercial support. The civilian part will target acute, humanitarian efforts as well as long-term reconstruction, and a significant part of the aid is expected to help the city of Mykalaiv.



# GDAŃSK FOR UKRAINIAN WATERWORKS

by Agnieszka Kowalkiewicz | [a.kowalkiewicz@gdanskiewody.pl](mailto:a.kowalkiewicz@gdanskiewody.pl)

**Almost from the beginning of Russia's invasion against Ukraine, Gdańsk has been involved in expert assistance for the water and sewage industry affected by the hostilities.**

The water supply system is a critical infrastructure that is very often targeted by Russia in order to create a humanitarian crisis. In such circumstances, the work is often carried out by endangering one's life. Also, dramatic decisions need to be taken far too often. One example is the situation in Nikolaev, which was cut off from water supply and sewage collection in July 2022. In order for the town to function, highly salinated and mineralised water from the Ingul River was pumped into the water supply system. And although it could be used for sanitation and firefighting, the salt severely corroded the water pipes, which residents were no longer able to use. The Ukrainian water and sewage industry is in need of very specific assistance. So far, Gdańsk has donated various types of specialised equipment to Nikolaev, including a vehicle for unblocking the water supply network (a septic tanker).

## Personalized support

In order to be effective, assistance must be tailored to the needs. We are in day-to-day contact with the Ukrvodokanal Ekologia Association of Ukrainian Waterworks, which brings together waterworks and other similar enterprises in Ukraine. Its representative, Yuri Zherlitsyn, keeps us updated with all the important information so that we can organise support to meet the most urgent needs. This includes, for example, technical equipment, cars necessary for the continuous operation of the infrastructure, and the

means to maintain the continuity of water supply, sewage disposal and electricity supply" – states **Ryszard Gajewski**, President of the Gdańskie Wody.

## Gdańsk helps Ukraine

In the first few months of Russia's increased aggression against Ukraine, thanks to the generosity of Gdańsk citizens, we were able to send as many as 29 transports of humanitarian aid, with a value of more than PLN 6 million.

"As a local government, we knew that system-wide support was needed to allow Ukrainian cities to return to normality as soon as possible. That is why the city of Gdańsk sent 10 inflatable tents, 40 power generators, 4 city buses, 1 septic tanker and 1 police car to local authorities in Ukraine. We are in continuous contact with Rivne, Bucza, and Borodzianka. We also do not forget about our partner city, Mariupol. Our support activities will not cease and the collaboration with the local authorities will hopefully continue for years to come" – states **Piotr Grzelak**, first Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk.





# READY TO HELP EVERYONE



by Jakub Ubych | [j.ubych@gdynia.pl](mailto:j.ubych@gdynia.pl)

**Although the barbaric Russian invasion of the independent Ukraine brought tragedy to millions, it unleashed endless amounts of empathy and support from around the world. Many of those fleeing from artillery fire sought and found refuge in Poland.**

It was Gdynia that was the last stop for trains coming from the Polish-Ukrainian border. It was on the Gdynia station that people got off these trains - often exhausted, frightened and with no idea what to do next. The welcome provided by the people of Gdynia, however, made many stay longer. In the first few months, more than 2,000 Ukrainians enrolled in Gdynia's schools and declared their intention to stay longer.

## **What help looked like**

Gdynia local government, in line with the declaration of the Gdynia Mayor, Wojciech Szczurek, realised from the start that the crisis in Ukraine and the challenges it posed would not be a sprint, but a marathon. Already in the first days of the war, accommodation was prepared in several locations, including neighbourhood centres (Harbours).

A well-functioning support system must be based on stable procedures. Hence, in addition to providing accommodation, a 24-hour hotline, 24-hour information point at Gdynia Główna station, and a task group directing refugees to indicated accommodation points were established. At the beginning, local catering companies offered invaluable

help, supplying the information point with hot meals. First support packages containing hygiene products, baby food and other necessities were also distributed there.

## **Volunteers involved**

Another key element of the system was good management of local transportation. The station was full of volunteers, medical services and buses, ready to take newcomers to check-in points. As a result, people who got off the train could lie down and rest in less than an hour. Many of them, including mothers with children, had only one small bag. They were lonely, lost and scared. It was crucial then, to involve local Ukrainian community in help activities, so that those arriving at the station could hear the language they knew. This built trust.

All this could work thanks to the open-heartedness of the people of Gdynia and hundreds of volunteers - people who came asking how they could help. Tons of goods were collected and transported to a dozen of accommodation points. Gdynia's local government has also been determined to support the process of social integration and self-reliance of newcomers. Their potential was and is being used constantly.





# GULDBORGSUND

## TWINNING COOPERATION

by Frede Danborg | [fd@guldborgsund.dk](mailto:fd@guldborgsund.dk)

**Since December 2020 Guldborgsund Municipality has been a partner in a twinning cooperation with 9 Ukrainian municipalities located in three South-Western regions Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpattia and Chernivtsi.**

The twinning has developed very differently from the original plans, first because of the COVID19-pandemic and then because of the terrible and unjust Russian war on Ukraine. Originally, a flow of travels to Ukraine was planned for conducting workshop, while training courses, study tours and internships were scheduled in Denmark. Instead, the cooperation had to be limited to online meetings, workshops and even study tours.

The cooperation was established in the context of the Ukrainian nationwide decentralisation process and municipal reform with the adoption of legislation in 2020. Denmark has been among EU partners to support the implementation of the decentralisation reform in Ukraine since 2016 with funding to the EU programme U-LEAD (Ukraine Local Empowerment, Accountability and Development with Europe Programme). Based on the experiences in the U-LEAD programme the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested Guldborgsund Municipality taking the role in a municipal cooperation funded by the Ministry.

### Three twinning components:

- Cooperation with citizens for local governance and democracy.
- Cooperation with the business for local business development.
- Cooperation with other municipalities for larger public services.

The twinning started with two online study tours for local politicians. Firstly, a 2-days study tour from Ukraine to Guldborgsund and then a 2-days study tour visiting the nine Ukrainian municipalities. Small videos were showing various themes and stories from each of the municipalities. We also had live presentations from each municipality and the videos generated a lot of discussions.

After the successful study tours, we were encouraged to continue our cooperation with online workshop on the technical topics of the twinning. We have successfully completed workshops about municipal communication mindsets, participatory approaches in physical and strategic planning, municipal cooperation with local associations and village groups and latest about the business-friendly municipality.

Due to the war in Ukraine, it was decided in summer 2022 to donate a truck load of 6 tons food aid to nine twinning municipalities. A local Danish-Ukrainian Association and a local association in Western Ukraine assisted the logistic and the food distribution.

Now, we are expecting the first Ukrainian delegations in May, and a delegation with political representation in June.

This twinning cooperation is just one small contribution to the strengthening of good governance and local development in Ukraine.



# JĒKABPILS SUPPORT

by Kaspars Selis | [kaspars.selis@jekabpils.lv](mailto:kaspars.selis@jekabpils.lv)

**In response to unexpected and tragic aggression Ukraine has suffered, Jēkabpils undertook various initiatives aimed at supporting people in need on-site and providing shipment of material help to Ukrainian recipients.**

Since the beginning of full scale invasion in Ukraine, more than 770 Ukraine civilians, including nearly 250 children have found refuge in Jēkabpils county. Only half of them decided to stay. Municipality provides temporary housing for over 60 Ukrainians in various locations across the county (with total capacity prepared for 130 refugees).

Jēkabpils County Municipality has provided financial aid of EUR 15 000 to each of its twin cities in Ukraine – Myrhorod, Zhydachiv and Vyzhnytsia.

## Civil involvement

NGO “Vidusdaugavas NVO centrs” has created a support point for Ukrainians in the city, gathering donations, sorting them, transporting and providing to refugees. Donations include clothing, footwear, household goods, appliances, furniture, food, hygiene items, etc. With help of their member Edgars Līcis, NGO also gathers donations and organizes their transportation to Ukraine.

By the suggestion of Jēkabpils county social service, NGO provides social mentor to refugees. On Saturdays NGO organizes informal studies of Latvian language (casual speech). Currently, Sergei, a volunteer from Ukraine, who has been running an institution similar to the social service in Ukraine for a long time, organizes senior yoga classes in NGO facilities. Local Ukrainian society “Javir” also co-operates with “Vidusdaugavas NVO centrs” in various types of events designed for Ukrainian refugees.

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# KARLSKRONA'S INITIATIVES

by Pia Holgersson | [pia.holgersson@karlskrona.se](mailto:pia.holgersson@karlskrona.se)

**In January this year, ten representatives from Chortkiv City Territorial Community in Ukraine visited Karlskrona to start the dialogue on a twinning agreement. The formal decision was made on 30 March 2023.**

The twinning agreement will promote development and encourage cooperation between municipalities and residents in both countries. The next step is to meet in the beginning of May and sign the cooperation program for the twin towns.

## Summer camp

We were asked early on by Chortkiv if we could organize a summer camp for their war-affected children. We took this seriously and can proudly invite children and leaders already this summer. The camp will take place on 9-16 August 2023 on Säljö in the Karlskrona archipelago. We can welcome 42 children aged 7-14 and 6-8 adults. As a complement to accompanying personnel from Ukraine, there will be Ukrainian citizens on site. Swedish staff will be also available around the clock.

In addition to the activities at Säljö (swimming, canoeing, "Master of Masters", water sports, barbecue evenings, raft safari, disco, football, adventure course, archipelago tour), we will make excursions to Boda Borg, the children's farm and the Naval Museum. A city tour to see and learn about Karlskrona is also an important feature. During that day we will also eat at a restaurant in the city. Excursions and admissions are mainly sponsored by local entrepreneurs.

We hope it will be a memorable week for both children and adults. We are also planning for our resident Ukrainian children to participate in the camp.

## Welcome to the paradise Säljö

On August 9 - 16, 2023, we welcome you who are 7-14 years old and live in Chortkiv to a wonderful summer camp in Sweden. Karlskrona and Chortkiv are twin towns and youth exchange is something twin towns do. The camp will be held on Säljö, one of the beautiful islands in the Karlskrona archipelago.

**WHAT DO WE DO?**  
There is so much to do at summer camp that it is hard to say exactly what will happen. But one thing we know, and that is that it is only the imagination that sets our limits!  
We can be out paddling for a day, sleep in a tent or under the open sky, play football, have barbecue evenings and a disco. We might take an archipelago tour by motorboat, go to the beach, or go on an adventure course. We will also make some excursions in the local area and then, for example, visit Boda Borg, Barnens gård (The children's farm) and the Naval Museum. A city tour to see and learn about Karlskrona will also be included in the program.  
In addition to this, we of course have a lot of free time to spend outside on the lawn, in the dining room, in the barracks, on the trampoline or somewhere else in the beautiful surroundings. We have fun all the time!

**HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?**  
We can accommodate a maximum of 42 children aged 7-14 together with 6-8 adults. Accommodation for the children takes place in three houses with four rooms in each. An adult also lives in each house. Other adults live in a separate house with four twin rooms.

**COMPETITIONS**

**BATHING**

**DISCOVERY**

**WATER PLAY**

**August 9-16 2023**



# FROM HEART TO HEART

## RIGA'S STORY OF SUPPORT



by Linda Ozola | linda.ozola@riga.lv

**Riga's Support Centre for Ukrainian Civilians was launched on 7 March 2022. Without prior knowledge how to organise acceptance of refugees on a mass scale, local authorities came up with an initiative to use a one-stop-shop principle and organise a centre where municipality, state and Latvian NGOs support was gathered at one place. Considering the size of Riga, workload of all public institutions on daily basis, the stress levels of people seeking refuge in an unknown city, this turned out to be a very good decision.**

The Riga Support Centre is a place where Ukrainian civilians can get answers to almost all the questions that may arise – get registered in the municipality, receive a Latvian ID number and apply for a residence permit, receive primary support with accommodation and vouchers for food, fill in the forms for all the social benefits that Latvian nationals are entitled to, submit the necessary documents to get a kindergarten or school for their children (currently 2300 Ukrainian children study in Riga), get assigned a family doctor and receive a consultation at the National Employment Agency, meet a psychologist or NGOs volunteers providing support to newcomers. Recently, also the International Organisation for Migration joined in with their services.

### **Tangible effects of refugees' support**

By mid-April there were 21 500 Ukrainians registered at the Riga Support Centre, and about 18 000 of them still live in Riga. The Centre still welcomes about 700 persons daily – around 30 newly registered and the rest of people are coming back to receive different services. At the municipality

we constantly monitor the situation at the centre and are ready to adapt the support to help our Ukrainian civilians integrate in the society efficiently. Job is an essential part of life, but it's not always easy for a refugee to get one, thus, the city launched job fairs at the Support Centre to help employers meet their potential employees. There have been 19 job fairs so far, offering close to 4000 vacancies. Each fair is visited by app. 200 people, and around 1000 Ukrainians have found jobs, also in municipal companies and educational institutions. It's important that this is a safe environment for everybody involved.

### **Material help to Ukraine**

Besides the support for refugees in Latvia, Riga has presented 21 public transport buses to the city of Kyiv, all of them filled with 100 tons of humanitarian support provided by Rigaens. Riga found it crucial to contribute to the purchase of generators and heaters for Ukraine and renewal of water supply system in Mykolaiv. Our employees and institutions keep collecting wax to produce candles for Ukrainian soldiers, and the City Hall has opened its doors to welcome a Ukrainian community centre called "Heart of Riga" – a place for a nice Ukrainian meal, social integration, culture and friendship.

All of this has been and is possible only thanks to the dedication of the people working in the municipality of Riga, the 900 volunteers who helped to keep the Support Centre running the first 6 months and our common belief that together we will win.





# KIEL'S INVOLVEMENT

by Wolfgang Schmidt | [wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de](mailto:wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de)

**Already shortly after the beginning of the Russian invasion, Kiel's City Council condemned Russia for violation of international law, commemorated the victims of the war and all people affected by the conflict and declared its solidarity with Ukraine.**

In a council resolution, the administration was also instructed to hold exploratory talks for the purpose of establishing a solidarity partnership with an Ukrainian city. Since this decision, Kiel has been in close contact with a number of cities as well as the Ukrainian Ambassador and consulates.

Like in many cities, the wish to support people in Ukraine was enormous among Kiel's citizens as well as many institutions and companies. Various initiatives in Kiel and its region resulted in organizing aid transports to Ukraine and providing help to refugees on-site to feel more welcomed. The city supported these initiatives by providing logistic support. Together with the local news publisher "Kieler Nachrichten" and multiple further actors, local authorities initiated a fundraising campaign to equip Ukrainian children with school bags in an effort to ease the transition as those children get to learn their new educational environment. Within only three days, Kiel's citizens exceeded the expectations by far.

## **Sister cities' cooperation in practice**

As a city administration it was also very important to exchange experiences with other German and international cities, for example with our sister city of Gdynia. In March

2022, Gdynia and Kiel had an exchange how to support the former in caring for the refugees. The Department of International Relations and Sustainability started a specific fundraising campaign among the city's administrative staff. The money was used to buy urgently needed daily necessities such as hygiene articles, baby food and medical items. The Municipal Hospital donated medical supplies. In March 2022, Kiel's President of the City Council visited Gdynia to hand over all the relief goods and discuss further needs.

## **Extraordinary administrative measures**

Since the start of the invasion Kiel has welcomed many refugees from Ukraine. To facilitate the registration process in the first months, Kiel established a "Welcome Center" in the city centre as an one stop shop for all bureaucratic requirements as well as an opportunity to receive information about Kiel. For example, people could inform themselves about the education and health system or get in contact with private initiatives. Because of the high number of refugees in the first months, employees from various departments offered their support in order to register and accommodate the refugees. In addition, employees and volunteers with Ukrainian or Russian language skills assisted with interpreting.



# MIELNO'S PERSPECTIVE

by Mirosława Diwyk-Koza | [m.diwyk@gmina.mielno.pl](mailto:m.diwyk@gmina.mielno.pl)

**Sacrifice, help, support - true brotherhood. The Mielno municipality shared its wealth by hosting over 800 war refugees from Ukraine. Half of them were children.**

"We were and still are part of the great uprising and wide humanitarian stream of aid. I have never doubted the good hearts of the inhabitants of my municipality, nor their selfless help. They always pass the exam in humanity with the best grade. Helping war refugees from Ukraine is long-term task and will require from all of us constant activity and empathy. Such a large number of guests from across the eastern border was a huge challenge for the local government and our services. This is the assignment for all of us for the benefit of another nation affected by the horror of war. We remembered about this especially when we opened the doors of our homes and hearts" – says **Olga Roszak-Pezala**, Mayor of Mielno

## Swift response to unexpected event

In our municipality there were and still are people from different parts of Ukraine. A lot of women came with babies and children in early school age. Shelter was provided by private individuals, in resorts, hotels, boarding house and accommodation facilities throughout the city. The crisis staff operating at the Mayor's office supported and controlled the entire process of allocating refugees. Several social activists constantly monitored the influx of people. A dedicated helpline was created, as well as a database of guests and donors.

## The measures of support

From the first days of the war local community was active-

ly involved in humanitarian support. The Cultural Center in Mielno conducted a series of painting and dancing workshops for children, as well as Polish language lessons for adults. One of the municipal entities created a special, temporary warehouse, from where the aid went to particular people and places - straight to the door. Local authorities also managed to organize job fairs, as Ukrainian women stated that they want to start working to be able to support themselves. The needs grew every day, because the number of war refugees at its peak reached 800 people, 400 of whom were minors. For a municipality with less than 5,000 permanent residents, it is a very big challenge – organisationally, financially and logistically. Refugees accounted for almost 20% of the total population of the local government, which highlights the scale of the phenomenon.

"In both city schools, 110 children from Ukraine were studying at the peak. They sat in their desks and studied together with Polish students. They were provided with lunches, and second breakfasts from donors, local entrepreneurs. – Ukrainian children and youth received great support from our teachers, Polish students and their parents" – says **Barbara Ożga**, headmaster of the Primary School in Mielno. "Polish parents provided basic learning materials to our new students. We were the first in the region to take in children usually with their mothers or grandmothers fleeing from the nightmare of war".

The crisis task force was reinforced by volunteers, translators, social workers, municipal units, schools, local NGO's. The reliable PCK Koszalin Rescue Group responsible for care and medical support also joined to help.



# HAMBURG WASSER

## KYIV-VODOKANAL COOPERATION

by Maximilian Stein & Claudia Wendland | HAMBURG WASSER



**For more than a year, the people of Ukraine have suffered from Russia's war of aggression. Ukraine's infrastructure has suffered significant damage, making it necessary to ensure its basic subsistence.**

Ukrainians are forced to stay in unheated shelters and in some cases have no access to running drinking water. These events are not only affecting Ukraine, but the entire world.

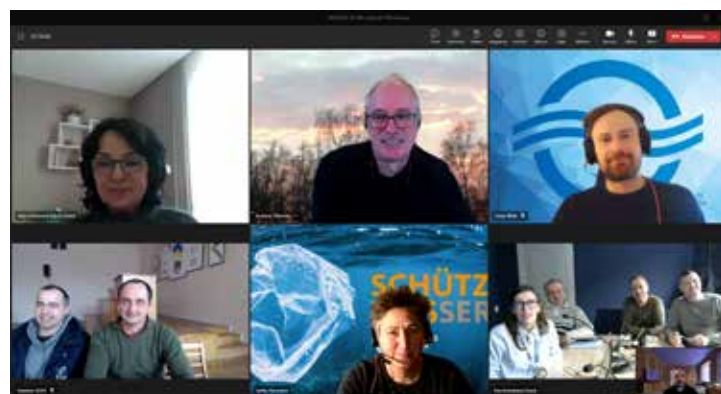
HAMBURG WASSER does not want to close its eyes, but to take responsibility and support its Ukrainian colleagues. For this purpose, a solidarity partnership was established in August 2022 with Kyiv-vodokanal in order to support the Ukrainian capital utility with advice and material supplies. In this way, HAMBURG WASSER is contributing to the Pact for Solidarity and the Future between the cities of Hamburg and Kyiv, which was concluded by the mayors of the two cities.

### Practical exchange of knowledge

Since August 2022, there has been a regular online exchange and the first face-to-face meeting took place at IFAT in June last year. The Ukrainian-German team of colleagues from Kyiv-vodokanal and HAMBURG WASSER has defined two work packages in which they will work together in partnership: The optimization of the main water treatment plant in Kiev, which is fed with water from the Desna River, as well as a professional knowledge exchange on key water and wastewater topics such as GIS, hydraulic modelling, water loss reduction and others. The overall project goal of the partnership is to establish a sound long-lasting cooperation in partnership between the two operators in the framework

of the Pact for Solidarity and Future between the cities of Hamburg and Kyiv.

In addition to the regular online exchange, concrete workshops were held, for example at the end of February on the implementation and optimization of GIS. In the future, it is planned to hold further workshops and to continue the online exchange in its intensity. Due to the acute security situation in Kiev, it will probably not be possible for the Hamburg colleagues to support the Ukrainian ones on site in 2023. To compensate for this, a job shadowing is planned in Hamburg, where face-to-face meetings can take place and HAMBURG WASSER's facilities can be visited together on site.







by Natalja Vecvagare | [natalja.vecvagare@liepaja.lv](mailto:natalja.vecvagare@liepaja.lv)

**On the very first day of the war, on 24 February 2022, the people of Liepāja welcomed into their families the first Ukrainians fleeing the bombed cities of northern and eastern Ukraine – Kharkiv, Sumi, Chernihiv, Kyiv.**

Even before the Ukrainian war, Liepāja has had a local Ukrainian community, which was about 3 percent of the local population. These families were the first to take in their relatives and acquaintances, but just as many Latvians were ready to shelter women and children — 90 percent of all the refugees.

More than 1500 Ukrainian refugees are currently registered in Liepāja. To provide accommodation for them, private households, hotel-type accommodation, as well as the municipality itself are stepping in.

As a port city, Liepāja also receives a considerable number of Ukrainian residents in transit, who continue their journey to Europe by ferry. During the first months of the war, a registration and first information support desk for Ukrainian civilians was also set up in Liepāja, where municipal staff, together with state authorities, assisted people with the paperwork.

### Means of support

A great example of cooperation between NGOs in such crises is the synergy between the Liepāja municipality and the regional charity association “Tabitas Sirds”. The municipality has made several donations to the association with the aim of providing emergency support to Ukrainian civilians, as well as equipping municipal apartments housing Ukrainians with small household appliances. “Tabitas sirds”

still is a major partner in providing support to Ukrainians in Liepāja. The Liepāja Regional Civil Protection Commission has included the association as an official partner in its work with Ukrainian refugees. With the support of local residents and businesses, the association is able to provide Ukrainian refugees with primary and non-primary assistance until all paperwork is completed and the social benefits are received, from daily products to furniture.

Also, the NGOs, the local government and the Armed Forces work together. The winter-long campaign held by the Liepāja Municipality and the association “Tavi draugi” was launched for making of trench candles. Both educational institutions, businesses, and individual families from Liepāja took part in the campaign, donating around half a tonne of paraffin and making several thousand candles.

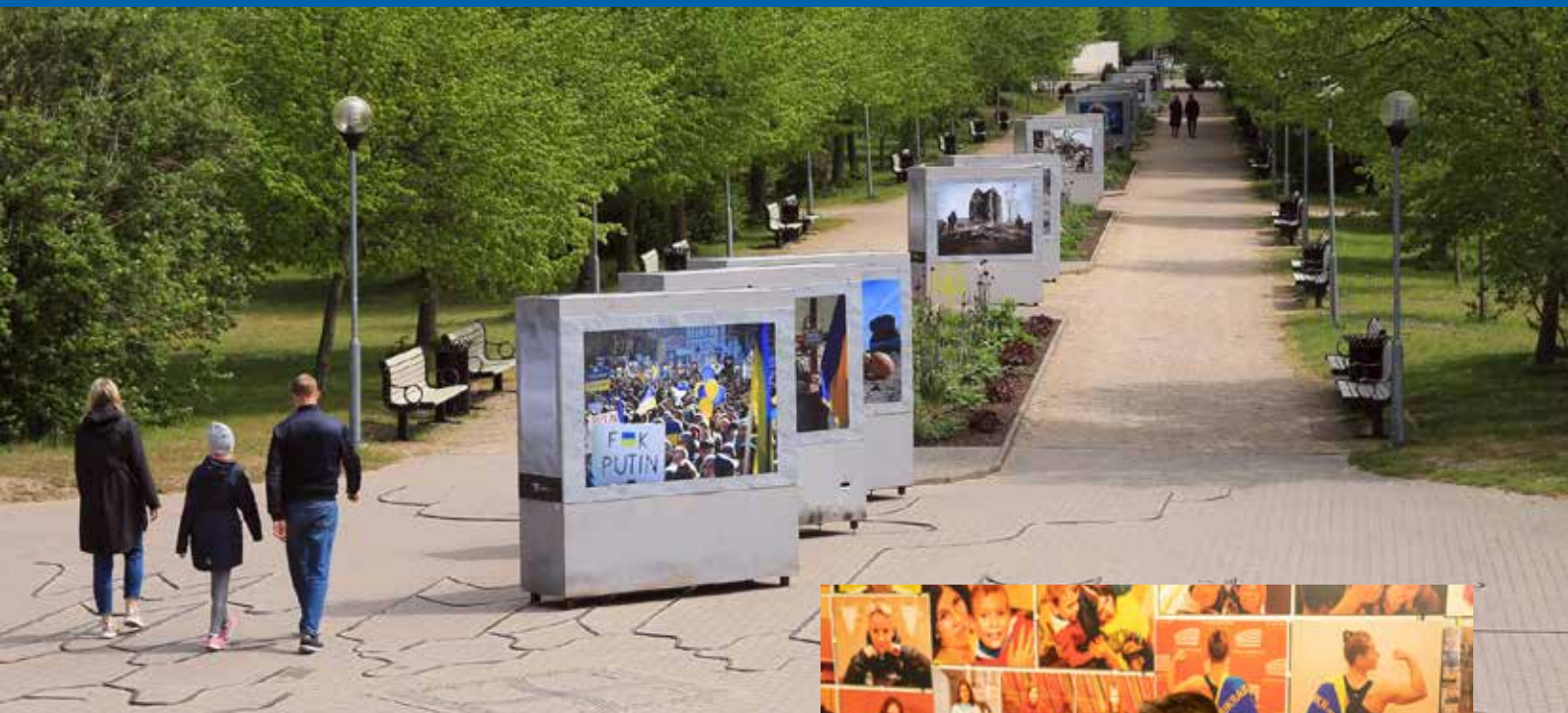
### Informative tasks

Liepāja Municipality holds regular meetings with Ukrainian citizens to inform them about the latest developments in the city, as well as about national updates. The topics are chosen by the Ukrainians themselves, because they address questions that are relevant to them during their stay in Latvia, such as the healthcare system and its accessibility for Ukrainian civilians, job opportunities, state support when starting a job, as well as benefits and pensions, Latvian national holidays, and educational opportunities.

To express support for Ukraine in the wake of the Russian invasion, to provide unbiased information and raise awareness about the fundamental nature of democracy and freedom, Liepāja has organised a series of events. The most prominent is the first 100 Days of War exhibition



# WAR IN UKRAINE LIEPĀJA'S STANDPOINT



“Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the Heroes!”, which featured 16 stands with large-format photographs from international European news agencies and relevant information about the war in Ukraine.

Another such event took place very recently, when a Russian occupant T-72B tank destroyed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces was on display in both cities.

The tank was destroyed by Ukrainian defenders in the Bucha region on 31 March 2022. Ukrainian forces managed to neutralise the tank by using a cumulative projectile that hit the tank's ammunition compartment, causing an explosion and a heavy fire. The destroyed tank is an exhibit of the National Museum of Military History of Ukraine, which has contracted the Latvian War Museum to display it.

Helping Ukrainians is not just a local effort in Liepāja, but also a material aid sent to Ukraine. One of the major shipments took place in February 2023, when 12 mobile generators donated by Liepāja went to Mykolaiv to provide light and heat to hospitals that had been badly damaged by Russian air strikes and where infrastructure had been severely damaged.

## Joint national effort

Since the outbreak of the war, Latvia has affirmed that it will provide its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, supplying additional military and humanitarian support to Ukraine as needed in its fight against Russian aggression as long as it takes. Latvia's state support to the Ukraine's defenders has reached 1.14% of Latvia's gross domestic product, or EUR 498 million, placing



our country at the forefront of Ukraine's supporters in relation to its gross domestic product.





# Vaasa

## STANDS UP FOR UKRAINE

by Eliina Salmela | [eliina.salmela@vaasa.fi](mailto:eliina.salmela@vaasa.fi)

**The people of Vaasa want to help Ukrainians in their time of need. The city has provided housing, school and care facilities, language training, as well as events and meeting places to help the Ukrainians of Vaasa to integrate in the city.**

Around 800 Ukrainians have fled the war to Vaasa, and around 2000 in the broader Vaasa region. The City of Vaasa showed its support for Ukraine and its citizens by lighting the City Hall and a bridge in Ukraine's blue and yellow colours and by donating 50,000 EUR to the Ukrainian state and its citizens through the Finnish Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. The city has also raised the Ukrainian flag on the central promenade. The gesture is intended as a way of showing support for a country that has been the victim of the war of aggression.

### Integration measures

Since last spring, free and open activities for Ukrainian families have been organised in the premises of the former Open Day Care. The aim is to provide young children and their parents with safe, shared activities in peer support groups. Activities are also offered to school age children during school holidays. The children started their schooling in Vaasa in preparatory education groups.

Alma Adult Education Centre has been closely involved with the integration of the young and adult Ukrainians by teaching them Finnish. The courses started quickly in spring 2022 and have kept going ever since. By now Alma has carried out already seven courses with altogether 90 participants. The participants are aged 15–65, and most of them are women.

In addition, Vaasa has offered each Ukrainian arriving at the reception centre a 30-day ticket for free travel on Vaasa's public transport system. Reception services also include the provision of temporary accommodation, essential social and health services, a reception allowance, interpretation and translation services, the organisation of assisted voluntary return as well as work and study activities.

The city also starts negotiations on a possible twinning agreement with the Ukrainian port city of Kherson.

### Support from organisations, companies, and residents

Various local associations and organisations have come out in droves to support the Ukrainians. The Kalyna Association, for example, has organised recreational activities, collections, and charity events, and has delivered supplies to the war-torn Ukraine. Kalyna also helps Ukrainians to integrate into the Finnish society. This spring, a meeting place for Ukrainians and Finns has been set up in the centre of Vaasa.

Individuals, companies, and organisations have also helped Ukrainians through fundraisings of the Finnish Red Cross and UNICEF. Vaasa's Red Cross has set up its own collection point where Ukrainians can pick up any items they need — from children's clothes to furniture. Companies have also shown their support by recruiting Ukrainians, providing the companies with skilled labour in return.

All of Vaasa residents hope that the war will end soon. Even after its termination, we will continue to support Ukraine in its massive reconstruction effort.





# VALMIERA'S

## SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE

by | [info@valmierasnovads.lv](mailto:info@valmierasnovads.lv)

**From the first day of the war, the Ukrainian flag is flying outside the municipal building of Valmiera as a symbol of solidarity for the heroic Ukrainian people.**

During the first days of Russia's war with Ukraine, the municipality organised a centralised exchange of information between aid seekers and aid providers. At the beginning of the war, more than 500 people were identified for operational accommodation in Valmiera and the possibility of setting up accommodation for further 300 people was established. At this difficult moment, everyone wanted to provide assistance and support – more than 15 translators applied to volunteer in text translations. Companies came forward to help financially, practically and in terms of employment. Several hundred people with posters and Ukrainian and Latvian flags participated in support actions for the assaulted country and its people.

Together, more than 540 war refugees were admitted to the county of Valmiera, most of them were children, members of basketball, hockey teams with their moms and also individual families. The municipality provided them shelter, primary social assistance, health care, psychological support, educational opportunities for children, workplace for adults, access to culture, sports and recreational infrastructure. Basically everything to ensure a full and equivalent life conditions as in Ukraine. During the first months of the war, more than 160 children were registered in the education institutions of the municipality of Valmiera, but for now the number dropped to more than 90 children.

### Aid transports

The municipality of Valmiera region is one of the leaders in

providing assistance to Ukraine – a total of 10 cargoes were sent to war-affected areas with humanitarian and technical assistance donated by citizens and companies - warm clothes, food, hygiene products, pet food, chargers, batteries and lights, electric diesel generators, cars and buses, equipment for hospitals, a trench candles, radiators, household appliances etc.

### Financial assistance

The municipality also provided financial support to the Ukrainian people and war refugees - the Valmiera Development Agency opened a donation account in which businesses and residents were invited to donate money so that refugees from Ukraine could purchase things that could not be received in the form of donations. The local government donated 10,000 EUR to aid Ukrainian residents in the Odesa area.

### Bilateral cooperation

Valmiera has become a coordination centre for cooperation between Latvian and Ukrainian municipalities. With the support of the municipality of Valmiera, the Latvian Local Government Union and the Association of Small Cities of Ukraine organise online meetings with the heads of local governments of both countries to ensure comprehensive assistance to Ukraine and the development of twinning links. A memorandum of cooperation has been signed with Ukraine's Small Cities Association. In May, a branch of Ukraine's small-city association in Latvia was officially opened in Valmiera.



# PRUSZCZ GDAŃSKI

## HELPS UKRAINE

by Janina Wilkos-Gad | wilkos@pruszcz-gdanski.pl

**The day of Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine shook our country and disturbed peace in Polish cities, including Pruszcz Gdański. A few days after the war broke out, the residents of our city opened their homes and took in hundreds of mothers with children from Ukraine under their roofs.**

Nearly 2,500 refugees arrived in our city last year, including over 1000 children and young people under 18. More than half is still here.

Our city and the surrounding villages were already home to many Ukrainian citizens who had come here in search of employment before the war. With its outbreak, it became obvious that these residents would want to bring their families and friends here and we needed to be prepared. To meet the challenge a team of people to help organize and lead the action was set up on-site. Representatives from the social welfare, education, civil defense, administration, and IT sectors jointly launched many actions at that time.

### Local involvement

On 7 March 2022, we opened a city municipal consultation center for refugees. It served as an information point and was equipped with specially edited leaflets, instructions on matters related to material assistance, education etc. Local officials together with Ukrainian-speaking volunteers provided guidance and assistance. Due to its operation, we were able to find out about the most important needs and plans of our guests. At the center, we provided them with temporary resident cards, which were based on a cus-

tom-built electronic information exchange system. It also proved useful for the compilation of statistics, and the aggregation of the most important information about new residents' needs.

Since the first days when refugees found shelter in our city, all those who wanted to continue their education have found a place in our schools. Currently, there are 518 Ukrainian citizens studying in the schools in the city.

Parallel to the municipal service center for refugees, collection and distribution point run mainly by volunteers was launched. The scale of the aid donated by city's residents exceeded our greatest expectations. Throughout the year, over 200 volunteers and dozens of companies joined to help—some of them occasionally, and some regularly over a long period of time. Nevertheless, every act of solidarity mattered. From January 2023 onward the tasks of municipal consultation center and a depot point were taken by local institutions in the welfare area.

### Stronger together

It is also worth noting that we received tremendous support from our partner city of Hofheim am Taunus, which held regular fundraising events for Ukraine.

In April 2023, we established partnership negotiations with the city of Kupyansk from the Kharkiv region. Perhaps, this city will soon join the group of partner cities of Pruszcz Gdański.





# GOTLAND TO ZMIIVKA

by Sofia Hoas | [sofia.hoas@gotlandsmuseum.se](mailto:sofia.hoas@gotlandsmuseum.se)

**Region Gotland has been a twin city with Gammalsvenskby (Old Swedish village)/Zmiivka in southern Ukraine since 2001.**

Gammalsvenskby or Zmiivka in Ukrainian is located next to the Dnieper River, 80 kilometres north of Crimea. Swedish farmers from the island Hiiuma in present Estonia, founded the village in 1782. They were forcibly moved there by Russia's Empress Catherine the Great. They lived there for 150 years and kept their Swedish language and traditions. After hard times with the war, revolution and famine, the villagers were given permission to come home to Sweden in 1929. Most of them ended up on Gotland, but some returned to the village in Ukraine and met the Stalin terror.

## War atrocities

Early on 24 February 2022, the villagers of Zmiivka were awakened by the sound of bombings. The population of Ukraine suffered war again. The village was Russian-occupied territory for seven months. Homes of the residents were plundered and the mayor Mykola Kurivchak was captured and tortured.

The village was liberated by the Ukrainian army in November 2022 and has been in the front zone ever since. The village has no electricity and there is a lack of water and internet. It is constantly under attack, as the Russian army is located on the other side of the river. Several civilian villagers have been killed and in April the village school was destroyed.

## Multidimensional support

Since 2014 Region Gotland and Zmiivka have implemented a democracy project financed by ICLD (International Center for Local Democracy). This has created strong relations between both municipalities.

When the war broke out, Region Gotland in cooperation with the non-profit association Svenskbyborna kept in touch with Zmiivka and reported on the ravages of war. Many Swedes have gained an insight into how the war affects the villages and the Ukrainians.

The association Svenskbyborna helps the village with humanitarian aid since the 1991 and now those efforts have been intensified. In close cooperation with the villagers, several fundraising actions have been conducted.

After the liberation, the need for emergency relief work increased. There was a rush before the approaching winter. Region Gotland then stepped in and helped the association by employing an emergency aid coordinator, financed by the ICLD project.

In these difficult times, the developed and long-lasting relationships between the twin cities have been important for both Zmiivka and Gotland.

The work has been acknowledged in national and international media.



# UKRAINIAN REFUGEES' LIFE IN ELVA

by Eliise-Berta Tarto | [eliise-berta.tarto@elva.ee](mailto:eliise-berta.tarto@elva.ee)

**There are 220 Ukrainians living in Elva municipality right now, but a lot more received help during the last year. To address this issue two Ukrainian Refugee Coordinators were appointed. A great deal of charity work including voluntary campaigns has been organized.**

Our emphasis was on direct communication and assistance. We held several information sessions at places where the Ukrainians stayed. They got all instructions about residence in Estonia, especially on health care, education, social assistance. Such personal approach was highly appreciated.

Today, Ukrainian war refugees are generally used to life in Elva. They have their own homes, jobs and already have time and interest to take up some hobbies. Only now, a year later, the Ukrainians have reached the point where they can also afford some entertainment, such as going to restaurant or attending an event. But there are also those who, for the sake of principle, do not allow themselves for such treats. Remembering about compatriots' suffering does not allow them to do so.

## Integration actions

The Ukrainians in Elva feel good and settled down. They are going to create a so-called Ukrainian Club. Its purpose is to facilitate further exchange of information and knowledge. This will also give them the opportunity to communicate in their native language and to be in a homely cultural space. Their other goal is to give back to the community of Elva and introduce Ukrainian culture to the locals. To that end various workshops, concerts, exhibitions and presentation of Ukrainian cuisine are planned.

## Responding to the needs

Last spring, when the crisis situation broke out, the working days of our coordinators and social workers were long and the workload was heavy. We are grateful for their commitment.

The need for active support is gradually decreasing but the Ukrainians still need a contact person whom they can ask for help concerning administrative questions. Elva Municipality Government also plans to start psychological counseling to the refugees. Another burning issue we are constantly struggling with is finding Ukrainian speaking teachers to our schools.

War refugees still have many worries every day, mainly whether their loved ones in Ukraine are alive - both men on the war front and elderly who did not want to leave their homeland. We hope that the war will end as soon as possible and that those who still have somewhere to go can return to their homes.

We have gone to great lengths to ensure that every refugee felt safe and welcomed during this tough time. We hope we would get the same support as Estonia and Elva has offered to Ukraine if there is a need.





# UKRAINIANS IN JONAVA

by Aksana Zacharova | [aksana.zacharova@jonava.lt](mailto:aksana.zacharova@jonava.lt)

**Located on the banks of the river Neris, in the center of Lithuania, the city of Jonava was known as a multinational and multicultural city since its foundation in 1750. Nowadays, Jonava has become a new home for many people who were forced to migrate from different countries, including Ukraine.**

Since the very beginning of the war in Ukraine, Jonava has already accepted and provided assistance to over 700 refugees. Some of them settled in premises provided by the municipality, others found shelter in the houses of local residents.

All essential social services are provided free of charge to the refugees, including psychological consultations, day care for children, development of social skills, crisis intervention, mutual support groups, Lithuanian language courses for children and adults.

Half of all Ukrainians living in Jonava are children. They are accepted by all kindergartens and schools of the Jonava district municipality, as well as various clubs.

## **Yana's story**

Yana Vovk, a war refugee from Ukraine, arrived in Jonava with her child in March 2023. Her husband and elderly parents remained in Ukraine. Yana immediately turned to the Jonava Social Services Center (SSC) which, by the city Mayor's decision, became the main refugee assistance institution, providing a one-stop-shop service point.

The woman and her daughter received help provided by social workers and psychologists, and began to get used

to living in a new country. Despite the traumas, separation from loved ones and the necessity to adapt to new circumstances, Yana soon became a role model for other female refugees.

At first, she volunteered at the Jonava SSC, then got a job as a social worker's assistant and started working with children of war refugees. Currently, Yana is actively working in the Center - she organizes daytime engagements for Ukrainian children, participates in the activities of refugee women's mutual support groups, Lithuanian language courses and Ukrainian Sunday school.

As a talented journalist and writer, Yana has already organized a launch of her new book at the public library, and a local newspaper has hired her as a freelance journalist - now Ukrainian war refugees can read weekly articles in their native language.

## **Jonava's attitude**

Jonava not only provides all necessary services to Ukrainian war refugees, but also aims to integrate them into the life of the local community - joint intercultural acquaintance events and support actions are organized.

Last year, the Ministry of Social Security and Labor awarded the municipality of Jonava district the most important self-government award of the year - A Golden Symbol of local authority - for helping war refugees from Ukraine.





# KAUNAS

## HELPING HAND

by Public Relations Division | [rysiu.su.visuomene.skyrius@kaunas.lt](mailto:rysiu.su.visuomene.skyrius@kaunas.lt)

**Kaunas' aid and support to Ukraine goes in two directions: to help war refugees who came to Lithuania and to organize and transport humanitarian shipments to Ukrainian cities.**

12 thousand war refugees from Ukraine are registered in the city of Kaunas. We took care of some of them by accommodating them in the premises of the municipality.

Since the beginning of the war, we have sent 10 city buses and 10 ambulances to Ukraine. Colleagues of the municipality drove away themselves 5 former police cars, which we handed over directly to representatives of Kharkiv. Several trucks were sent to Kharkiv with humanitarian aid (about 120 pallets).

Not only the municipality took action, but also the people made a strong contribution. Kaunas joined effort with our partners from Sweden – the city of Växjö and together provided Kharkiv with humanitarian aid.

Kaunas had a title of European Capital of Culture in 2022. Therefore, we were very happy to be able to contribute to the tour of the Kharkiv National Opera and Ballet Theater in Lithuania, so that the stay of 262 artists and their children in our country could last longer and the tour would be full.

But all the abovementioned initiatives are only the first step. The next challenge would be to help with rebuilding the Ukraine and assuring it returns to normal life once victory over the aggressor is achieved.





# WELCOME TO KRISTIANSAND

by Camilla Klungland Ousdal | [camilla.klungland.ousdal@kristiansand.kommune.no](mailto:camilla.klungland.ousdal@kristiansand.kommune.no)

**When Ukraine was invaded by Russia in February 2022, Kristiansand was eager to support Ukrainian refugees, just like many other Norwegian municipalities.**

Kristiansand invited local NGOs to collaboration meetings to coordinate support for Ukrainian refugees. Over 40 NGOs attended the first meeting.

Upon request from the Norwegian government, the executive council of Kristiansand decided to settle 500 Ukrainian refugees in 2022 and 530 in 2023. These were refugees who had been granted a residence permit and therefore became the responsibility of the local municipality. The council also decided to donate 1,000,000 NOK for emergency aid in Ukraine.

In May 2022, the Prime Minister of Norway, Jonas Gahr Støre, visited the resource center. He was impressed by the efforts made by Kristiansand municipality on behalf of the refugees.

## Welcome pack

When Ukrainian asylum seekers started arriving in Kristiansand, the municipality quickly established a resource centre including various services. The refugees were allowed to live at private residences instead of the asylum centre. They received money from the municipality to cover the costs of living. Municipal employees supported the refugees in several ways, including helping them find schools or kindergartens for their children. The resource center hired Ukrainians as interpreters.

When the Ukrainian refugees were granted a residence permit, they would get a "starting kit" of various household items, including a stove, refrigerator, and furniture.

## Introduction programme

All Ukrainian refugees between the age of 18 to 65 were given the opportunity to attend the introduction program preparing them for work and education in Norway. Participants received a salary while attending this program. The municipality established a new class for Ukrainians with particular focus on job training skills. This class combined classroom training with practical work experience, which proved to be very successful in getting people into the workforce.

The municipality has also established places of residence for unaccompanied minors from Ukraine. This consists of three to four houses located next to each other, where each of the resident has his/her own bedroom, but share the rest of the house. Municipal employees are always present at these houses.

In February 2023, the Executive Council unanimously decided to sign memorandum of understanding to become a partner city with Mykolaiv in Ukraine. In May this year the Mayor of Mykolaiv will visit Kristiansand.



# HELP FROM JELGAVA



by Jelgava City Community Center | [leva.Zavinska@sc.jelgava.lv](mailto:leva.Zavinska@sc.jelgava.lv)

## **The Municipality of Jelgava provides support to Ivano-Frankivsk and its residents, as well as to all Ukrainian civilians who fled from Ukraine.**

The first support measures were already implemented on 28 February 2022, when the municipality provided financial assistance of 5,000 EUR to Ivano-Frankivsk for the purchase of necessary equipment and medical supplies.

As a response to the crisis, a management group was established in Jelgava in March 2022 to provide assistance and manage all activities addressed to refugees. Main issues covered by the municipality have been as follows:

- Accommodation,
- Catering,
- Healthcare,
- Education,
- Employment,
- Large number of female migrants,
- Creation of a single system at national level.

The continuous aid is provided by the municipality's institutions and bodies within their competences. It is also worth mentioning that a significant support was made to the participants and teachers of the Kharkiv Contemporary Dance Ensemble in organising the camp in Jelgava.

## **Involving the Ukrainian refugees**

Three coordinators were appointed to assist with the paperwork and to inform the arriving civilians about rules and conditions of residence in Jelgava.

To ensure a smooth communication with the refugees, a coordinator from the Ukrainian community has been recruited since 26 September 2022. This person's task is to make a first contact, recognize the needs and help in distribution of support to Ukrainian civilians living in Jelgava.

From 2 May 2023, a Project Coordinator for Ukrainians has started her duties and will be responsible not only for providing support, but also for managing the documents related to the provision of support.





**24 February 2022, since the Russian Federation launched widespread military aggression against Ukraine, there has been a steady flow of war refugees to Lithuania. According to the Department of Statistics, by 30 December 2022, 72,480 Ukrainians had settled in Lithuania, 148 - in Rokiškis District.**

War refugees were included in the social support system to reduce social exclusion. Ukrainians with a temporary residence permit in Lithuania for humanitarian reasons received all child allowances (including child's money, and in the case of fostered children, a foster care allowance), one-off settlement support, compensation for part of the rent, social allowances and other social benefits provided by general and special social services.

### **Multidimensional support**

124 Ukrainians in Rokiškis District received social benefits, 88 children received allowances, 26 children received support for purchasing school supplies, and 134 persons received targeted benefits (one-off payments due to their difficult material situation). In addition, 41 families in the district received compensation for hosting 142 foreigners granted temporary protection. Furthermore, the Obeliai Social Services Home and the Panemunėlis Multifunctional Multipurpose Centre provided temporary shelter to Ukrainians.

The Rokiškis Municipal Council made many decisions to support Ukraine and refugees suffering from war. As a result, fixed and short-term assets were handed over to Ukraine: an electric extension cord elements, generators, pressurised fire hoses, syringes, couplings, A-95 petrol, two cars of the Rokiškis District Municipal Fire Service, a VW Transporter, as well as basic stretcher chair, an essential stretcher transporter and a neonatal warming station.

Furthermore, Rokiškis District Municipality transported an electricity generator and 250 kg of skimmed milk flour to the war-torn country, given by AB "Rokiškio sūris".

### **Free access to services**

Budgetary institutions (owned by the Rokiškio District Municipality), namely Rokiškis swimming pool, Obeliai social services home, Rokiškis social support centre and informal children's education institutions of Rokiškis district municipality provided free services to Ukrainian war refugees holding a humanitarian temporary residence permit issued by the Migration Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as to the joint stock company "Rokiškio Komunalininkas" to provide free of charge the services of personal hygiene (sauna) and laundry.





# RAKVERE

## JOINT EFFORT IN AECEM

[www.elvl.ee](http://www.elvl.ee)

### **Rakvere takes part in a coordinated help to Ukraine in Estonia via the Association of Estonian Cities and Municipalities (AECEM).**

26 electricity generators purchased by the the AECEM with donations from municipalities were sent from Estonia. Last year, the Association collected voluntary donations from municipalities with the aim of supporting the Zhytomyr region of Ukraine with the essentials.

"Discussing the issue of Ukraine last year in the council of the AECEM, we jointly concluded that it was necessary to help. It was a voluntary decision of the members of the Association to donate according to their capabilities. In total, we collected nearly 250,000 EUR eventually spent on generators in the Zhytomyr region. It is now clear that the war may not end soon, and the Ukrainians will continue to need help. I am very grateful to all the Estonian municipalities that found the opportunity to come along with our idea and financially support our goal," commented the Chairman of the AECEM Board **Mihail Kõlvart**.

The generators have been sent from Estonia in several batches, the first one went to Ukraine in December 2022. The next batch should arrive in Ukraine in the end of May 2023.

The public procurement announced for the purchase was carried out by the Association of Estonian Cities and Towns. The tender was organized by Hangete Korraldamises MTÜ (Local Government Procurement Center).

The Union donated the purchased generators to the Estonian Red Cross, and the transport to Ukraine was also organized in cooperation.





# KLAIPĖDA ACTIONS

by Arūnas Baublys | [arunas.baublys@klaipeda.lt](mailto:arunas.baublys@klaipeda.lt)

## **In response to the growing flows of war refugees from Ukraine, Klaipėda adopted several resolutions to make the support and assistance run smoothly.**

On 1 March 2022, Klaipėda Passenger Transport Board passed a decision permitting persons who fled Ukraine due to the military actions of the Russian Federation use all Klaipėda passenger transport routes free of charge upon presentation of their identity document.

On 10 March 2022, Klaipėda City Municipality Council adopted Resolution on the admission of the refugees' children. Free meals, as well as free non-formal education were provided. Also, free of charge education of children in the budgetary sports training institutions in the Klaipėda was offered.

Another document grants free access to the cultural institutions, their events and educational activities. The possibility of providing rent-free housing was resolved.

### **Political support**

At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a specific person has been assigned to coordinate issues of the Klaipėda City Municipality's aid to Ukraine.

It is worth reminding that, based on the appeal of the Odessa Mayor's Office, documents were prepared that unequivocally expressed approval and support for the historic city centre of Odessa to be included in the UNESCO

World Heritage List. Moreover, a promenade in Melnragė was named after Odessa.

In gratitude for the multifaceted support from the city of Klaipėda, Odessa donated Klaipėda the Anchor-Heart monument.

### **Media tour**

Interest in Klaipėda in the context of the war in Ukraine remained high. Dr. Klaus Harer, one of the managers of the German Culture Forum for Central and Eastern Europe, that operates intensively in Potsdam, initiated a Baltic countries tour for the six leading media representatives (NDR, RBB, Zeit, TAZ, and Deutschlandfunk) held on 14–16 June 2022.

The aim of the tour was to find out about the political moods directly from the public and representatives of local municipalities, and clarify the issues concerning the temporary asylum of war refugees from Ukraine and their integration. Klaipėda was one of the most important destinations during the tour of those media representatives, and so their meeting with the Mayor of the Klaipėda city was organized.



# CREATIVE SOLUTIONS IN ROSTOCK



by Anika Leese | [anika.leese@rostock.de](mailto:anika.leese@rostock.de)

**Since the terrible war of aggression against Ukraine, the work of the city administration within the framework of overcoming the associated challenges has changed significantly.**

As one of the first cities in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, private aid organizations set out immediately and brought people from the borders of the contested areas to the Hanseatic and university city of Rostock. In our city, the “if” was never discussed, only the “how” so that in a very short time more than 2,600 Ukrainians were able to find their way into our city.

Many people seeking protection should find a real new home in Rostock, which represented a real challenge for a city with a vacancy rate of less than one percent. Creative solutions and many helping hands were necessary to accept the challenge and to provide accommodation as soon as possible.

In addition to the actual living space, it was a major task for the city to equip all the apartments and create a real home for the people seeking protection. The “Livingroom-Sponsorship” project has faced exactly this challenge and created a common path to accept and overcome the crisis situation hand in hand. In the small waterway in Rostock, this idea began to grow and under the coordination of the actors of the city administration, 20 apartments for over 100 people seeking protection, including many families and children, were lovingly furnished within a few days.

In contrast to standardized facilities, the Livingroom-Sponsorship has already been informed in advance which people are moving in and of what age, so that, when they move in, individually tailored furnishings are made available.

## Wide participation

All this happened hand in hand through the voluntary commitment of all living space sponsors, who came together from very different groups of private individuals from clubs, companies, political parties or even individual families.

All furnishings were collected through donations and furnished apartments were created. On the day they moved in, all the apartments were handed over to the people seeking protection by the sponsors - people exchanged ideas, the sponsors provided a lot of support in the context of integration options and some friendships that continue to this day were formed.

Elena, one of the drafted Ukrainians, called the moment of moving in “a real dream that came true” and could hardly believe her luck. It was the first moment when she was able to rest after many weeks on the run. The idea of housing sponsors was further expanded in Rostock by the Office for Social Affairs and Participation and implemented in particular by larger sports clubs such as the Seawolves or FC Hansa Rostock.

## Welcome to Palanga, Lithuania!

XVII UBC General Conference  
24-26 October 2023

**Welcome to the XVII UBC General Conference “Baltic Sea cities supporting Ukraine” that will be held on 24-26 October 2023 in Palanga, Lithuania.**

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.

The conference in Palanga will bring us together to discuss how to integrate the Ukrainian and other refugees from war-torn countries. We hope to come up with ideas on how to support Ukrainian cities and their eventual reconstruction. Finally, the role the UBC in the process of the future EU accession of Ukraine will be debated.

Also, renewable energy, decarbonization, youth involvement and digital transformation will be on the conference agenda.

The programme includes the presentations and speeches of **Mantas Jurgutis**, President of UBC, **Šarūnas Vaitkus**, Mayor of Palanga, **Grzegorz Poznański**, Director General, Council of the Baltic Sea States, **Virginijus Sinkevičius**, Commissioner, Environment, Oceans and Fisheries (video message), **Normunds Popenis**, Director-General, DG Regio, EC, **Mihhail Kõlvart**, Mayor of Tallinn, EURO CITIES Executive Committee member. Also, the representatives of Ukraine and the Ukrainian youth are expected.

At the plenary session presenting the cities' perspective the following speakers confirmed their participation: **Gunars Ansins**, Mayor of Liepāja, Member of the Committee of the Regions, **Katarzyna Gruszecka-Spychała**, Deputy Mayor of Gdynia, **Piotr Grzelak**, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk, **Meit Fohlin**, Mayor of Gotland, **Roko Kursar**, Deputy Mayor of Malmö, **Dr Stefan Fassbinder**, Lord Mayor of Greifswald.

The conference presentations and discussions, as well as workshops prepared by the UBC Commissions will hopefully provide us with some new ideas and solutions and inspire the UBC and its member cities to cooperate with a new impetus.

The General Assembly will be held on 26 October 2023. The agenda includes i.a. elections of the President, Vice-Presidents and the Executive Board in the next two-year period.

**More information and registration at:**  
<http://ubc.palanga.lt/> and [www.ubc.net](http://www.ubc.net)



# UBC at the EUSBSR Annual Forum



4 – 5 October  
2023

14<sup>th</sup> EUSBSR Annual Forum

**Safe & Sustainable  
Baltic Sea Region for  
Future Generations**

Climate Affairs,  
Green Energy  
& Youth

[eusbsr.eu/annualforum2023](https://eusbsr.eu/annualforum2023)



**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by  
the European Union

by Marko Paunovic | [marko.paunovic@ubc.net](mailto:marko.paunovic@ubc.net)

**Union of the Baltic Cities through its Antenna in Brussels will organise and moderate a workshop under the title “Youth Empowerment 2.0 in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - Trends and Policy Solutions” within the EUSBSR Annual Forum 2023 on 5 October 2023 in Riga, Latvia.**

The policy workshop aims to explore the opportunities and challenges faced by young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to identify policy and ICT solutions that can empower and enable them to shape a better future for themselves and for society as a whole.

The workshop will explore 4 topics connected to empowerment of young people:

- Digital Transformation, with focus on the impact of digital technologies on youth empowerment;
- Entrepreneurship and Employment, exploring how to encourage entrepreneurship and employment among young people in the region;
- Education and Training, discussing educational and training opportunities available for the youth in the region.
- Encouraging Active Citizenship, focusing on how cities in the BSR are engaging young people in decision-making processes;

The Annual Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is a major event that brings together policymakers, stakeholders, and experts from across the Baltic Sea Region.

The EUSBSR is a macro-regional strategy of the European Union that aims to promote cooperation and integration among the countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Annual Forum provides a platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas on key issues facing the Baltic Sea Region, such as innovation, sustainable development, and social inclusion. The event includes a range of activities, including policy workshops, seminars, plenary sessions, and networking opportunities.

More information: <https://www.eusbsr.eu/annual-forum>





## Dealing with the unexpected: librarians shared experiences of overcoming crisis

by Inga Zinkevičiūtė | [inga.zinkeviciute@kaunas.mvb.lt](mailto:inga.zinkeviciute@kaunas.mvb.lt)

In Klaipėda, Lithuania, on May 4-5, the international conference “New Library Experience in the Context of Environmental Changes” was organised by the Association of Lithuanian Municipal Public Libraries, with UBC as a partner.

Speakers from Lithuania, Finland, Poland, Ukraine, and Latvia discussed the experiences of European libraries in adapting to a changing environment, facing emerging challenges, and coping with crises that have shaken the world in recent years.

The importance of libraries and their ability to adapt to societal needs during times of crisis was emphasized by **Rimantas Mikaitis**, Deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania, **Edita Urbonavičienė**, Chairperson of the Lithuanian Regional Public Libraries, and **Danguolė Abazoriuvienė**, President of the Association of Lithuanian Municipal Public Libraries.

**Juha Manninen**, Director of the Finnish Library Association, stated that libraries in Finland are the most advanced ones and serve the largest number of visitors among public sector institutions in the country. Visitor surveys conducted in recent years have shown that libraries play an invaluable role in improving the mental health of residents, and the opportunity to borrow books and spend time in the library significantly contributes to the well-being of society. The Covid-19 crisis has had a strong impact on library services and the accessibility of books, with the most negative effects felt by vulnerable groups. Despite libraries adapting to new circumstances and offering new flexible services, additional efforts are still needed to restore them to pre-pandemic levels.

**Dr. Ernesta Molotkienė**, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Art Research, and Communication at Klaipėda University, emphasized the empowering role of libraries during times of war, where people can find shelter, access to information, engage in community activities, and affirm their identity.

This was affirmed by representatives of Ukrainian libraries. **Anastasia Litašova**, Head of the Information Technology and Electronic Resources Department, shared how public libraries perform a new social role and provide essential services to the war-affected society: they gather volunteers, prepare food for soldiers and hospitals, ensure the occupation of displaced children, share information, organize first aid courses, send books to refugees abroad, and more.

**Katerina Kosinska**, Deputy Director of the Scientific Library at Dragomanov State Pedagogical University, reminded that Russian aggression not only destroys Ukraine's infrastructure but also its culture – according to UNESCO and the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1271 cultural objects and 479 libraries have been destroyed in recent years. All that is needed now is victory, said the women, unable to hold back the tears.

A philosopher, poet, and Associate Professor of the Education Academy at Vytautas Magnus University, **Dr. Liutauras Degėsys** noticed that reading directly influences societal values – “a book can help individuals connect with their inner reality, and by knowing oneself, it becomes easier to understand others”.





## Full STEAM ahead

by Salla Sissonen | Project Coordinator

**Baltic Cities take sustainability education by storm. Since 2018 the City of Turku has developed an ecosystem of educational cooperation within the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM). It encompasses all the educational levels from early childhood education and care to the University as well as different companies and other organizations both locally and nationally.**

In recent years, thousands of students as well as hundreds of teachers in Turku have taken part in making learning both efficient and fun while acquiring the required skillsets to combat the biggest problems of the future.

The latest STEAM step Turku has taken is to start enhanced cooperation between the cities of Tallinn in Estonia and Jelgava in Latvia as well as the universities of Tartu in Estonia, Turku in Finland, and Kaunas in Lithuania. The purpose of the Erasmus+ funded project Green STEAM ecosystems is to promote ex-celence in STEAM and sustainability education via shared knowledge between different organizations across the Baltic Sea.

### Project goals

Universities and education providers are working together to ensure a theoretical framework for sustainable STEAM education as well as to develop new training programs for both pre- and in-service teachers. This way, we hope to inspire the future scientists, engineers of green technology and other world leaders that are finding their way around our classrooms today.

All project participants have their own focal points. In Turku, Green STEAM focuses on expanding the pool of skilled STEAM educators working in primary education (grades 1-6, students aged 7-12). A STEAM tutor has begun working in the schools, helping in-service teachers develop lessons with a stronger emphasis on sustainability and STEAM education.

This approach is envisioned to help ground the new transdisciplinary methods to the everyday work of the teachers and thus, bring both a more immediate and long-lasting effect in their pedagogical toolbox. E.g. in Pääskyvuori school – a primary school of approximately 300 students in the suburbs of Turku - students found animate and inanimate things we need to protect in the school yard, studied them with microscopes, enlarged the microscope images in scale and drew an immense fresco on the school wall.

And every day, as the students pass the fresco on their way to lunch, it is there to remind them of the immense significance of the almost imperceptible microscopic world depending on us to preserve it.



## Learning Cities Commission meeting in Gdańsk

by Matti Mäkelä | [matti.makela@turku.fi](mailto:matti.makela@turku.fi)

**Learning Cities Commission held its' second live meeting and study visit in Gdansk on 17th and 18th of April with 22 participants from six countries and nine different cities around the Baltic Sea Region.**

Commission's stay was divided in two parts: Commission meeting (first day) and study visit (second day). Meeting agenda included, for instance, webinars, ongoing projects, UBC General Conference, decision about the next meetings and the planning of the UBC Education Conference in Fall 2023.

During the academic year 2022-23 Commission has already arranged three webinars: STEAM in Kindergarten, Best Practices to Fight School Segregation and Circular economy. These webinars attracted altogether 65 participants. Commission decided to arrange three more webinars before the end of the year 2023. Draft titles for the webinars are as follows: STEAM activities in different countries, Monitoring mental health and well-being, and Exchanges for all.

### Further activity of the Commission

Green STEAM is an Erasmus+ project which will last until September 2025. Project has four main themes: STEAM practice, teacher skills, local ecosystems and sustainable future. Project partners are Cities of Turku, Tallinn and Jelgava and the universities of Turku, Tartu and Kaunas.

During the UBC General Conference in October LCC will organize two workshops: STEAM education tackling global

challenges and How the early school leaving was tackled.

Next LCC meeting and study visit was decided to be held in Tartu in March 2024. Before that Commission members will meet during the General Conference and in online meetings.

Commission decided that the UBC Education Conference will be held in Turku on 19th and 20th of September. Topics of the conference include, for example, inclusive education, new learning environments, lifelong learning, segregation and STEAM. Registration for the Conference will open in early June.

Second day of the LCC gathering gave Commission members an opportunity to learn of the Polish education system and the best practices of the Gdansk school system. Study visit attractions were Communications School Complex, Complex of Maritime Schools and XIV Secondary School.







# Planning Cities Commission Energetic, energy on-line meeting

by Paulina Szewczyk | [p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl](mailto:p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl)

**On 15 December 2022, the UBC Planning Cities Commission held the Energetic, Energy On-line Meeting, attended by over 30 participants from UBC member cities.**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has significant consequences for the Baltic Sea region. It results in new spatial challenges in different sectors, especially in ENERGY. Energy changes, both in terms of production and saving, affect life in the cities around the Baltic Sea.

After a welcome by **Paulina Szewczyk**, UBC Planning Cities Commission Chairperson, City of Gdynia City Planning Office Deputy Director, the address was given by **Wojciech Folejewski**, Chairman of the Board/CEO, OPEC District Heating Enterprise Ltd, Gdynia. He presented possibilities of increasing energy efficiency of heating in the Baltic Sea region. He focused on Poland, whose major challenge is the process of decarbonization, and Denmark, where green energy has been a top priority for decades.

The next speaker was **Niels-Peter Mohr Nielsen**, former Head of Strategic Planning, City of Aarhus and former Chairman of UBC Planning Cities Commission, a self-employed Danish urban planner who lives and works in Rostock. In his presentation, he outlined the current situation in Denmark in terms of energy production and district heating, described the impact the situation in Ukraine had in this regard and how future cities and landscapes will look like in result.

**Minna Heiniö**, Central Lighting Project Manager, City of Turku, talked about Light installation in times of reducing the energy consumption and presented the City Light Show in Turku. An estimate of the event's electricity consumption showed that if each visitor switched off a 10-watt lamp at home for one hour, it would be enough to compensate

for this energy consumption. But the main purpose of the event was to rebuild social relations after the pandemic shutdown and to revitalise the city, which benefits culture, tourism and business.

The participants attended a short workshop held by 4cf The Future Literacy Company. During the workshop, the main goals, threats and opportunities for the energy systems of the BSR cities were considered in the light of the world situation.

In conclusion, Paulina Szewczyk summarised the workshop, thanked the participants for their active participation and invited them to cooperate again, this time in person, and take part in the Joint UBC Planning & Sustainable Cities Commissions meeting Revitalizing Urban Space Connected to the Sea to be held 13-15 September 2023 in Turku, Finland.

We warmly invite you – and your expertise in urban planning, climate change, transport, water management and related sustainable urban development to join us on the transformation journey!





An aerial photograph of a city, likely Turku, Finland. A river flows through the city, with a large church featuring a prominent spire in the foreground. The city is densely built with various residential and commercial buildings, interspersed with green spaces and trees. The sky is clear and blue.

# Sustainable Cities Commission ongoing and new activities

by Mariia Andreeva | [mariia.andreeva@turku.fi](mailto:mariia.andreeva@turku.fi)

**Springtime in the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission is full of activities, including events, project implementation and continuous engagement into the ongoing policy dialogue. New projects support local actions in UBC cities**

In UBC SCC Secretariat, 1 January 2023 marked the start of two transnational projects, which will run until 2025. The EMPEREST project (Eliminating Micro-Pollutants from Effluents for Reuse Strategies) is led by our Secretariat, it will test advanced treatment technology that helps water utilities and companies better remove organic micropollutants such as PFAS from wastewater.

The project supports local authorities, service providers, and policy-makers by strengthening the sustainable water management cycle. EMPEREST is implemented in cooperation with HELCOM and expert partners from UBC members: Turku, Riga, Tartu, Gdansk, Tallinn, and Kaunas. 1st Vice-President of UBC Elina Rantanen, who opened the EMPEREST project kick-off in Turku in early February, congratulated the consortium and highlighted the importance of the project topic for the UBC sustainability vision.

In another project – BALTIPLAST (Baltic Approaches to Handling Plastic Pollution under a Circular Economy Context), UBC SCC coordinates transfer activities. The project focuses on the prevention and reduction of plastic waste with an emphasis on reducing single-use plastics, making improvements to packaging, and introducing new collection and treatment systems at the municipal level. BALTIPLAST partners include UBC cities Helsinki, Tallinn, Kaunas and Valmiera.

## **Annual report highlights achievements in 2022**

In April, we have published the UBC SCC Annual report 2022 (available on our website). It introduces our activities, events, regional policy dialogues, and projects that we have launched and participated in to support our member cities with knowledge and practices on sustainability topics. The report of the UBC-CDP cooperation 2022 is also incorporated into the Annual report.

## **Autumn plans: revitalising urban space and moving towards climate neutrality**

We are actively planning our Joint Commission meeting – this time organised together with the UBC Planning Cities Commission in Turku on 13-15 September 2023. This meeting will focus on revitalising urban space connected to the sea, and particularly explore Turku waterfront areas.

Another large event for the whole UBC family is the XVII General Conference in Palanga. There, our Commission will organise a session about the EU Cities Mission and reaching climate neutrality, and how the inspiration from 12 UBC members from this Mission can support other cities – also Ukrainian cities in the restoration process.

Let's meet in the autumn!





# Thematic clusters of Youthful Cities Commission

by Dmitrijs Zverevs | [dmitrijs.zverevs@riga.lv](mailto:dmitrijs.zverevs@riga.lv)

Last year members of the Youthful Cities Commission agreed to launch 3 thematic clusters to ensure continuity of the Commission's work and improve opportunities for experience exchange and mutual learning between practitioners in the youth field in the region.

## Organizing the cooperation

All three clusters ("Youth Participation", "Youth Spaces" and "International Youth work") met online for the first time this March and agreed upon their key focuses and mode of operations. Participants of the kick-off meetings agreed that each cluster will meet online every two or three months and each of the meetings will highlight a good practice example from one of the UBC member cities.

Development of thematic cross-border projects will be a logical next step for the clusters, as those involved find their common ground and shared interests.

## Admission policy

Even though the meetings were mostly attended by those who have already been involved in the work of the Commission, clusters will remain open for all interested practitioners from the UBC cities to join at any time. We are particularly looking forward to involvement of youth workers who are directly working with young people at grass-roots level in order to encourage needs-driven learning and cooperation. Clusters are meant to be agile in terms of their structure and operations, so their agenda will adapt according to number and profile of involved practitioners.

## Initiative goals

The Commission hopes that clusters will improve our ability to respond to ad hoc needs and requests of the member cities, so that we are more instrumental to them in provision of high-quality youth work. However, clusters will not replace Commission's in-person meetings.

As next meetings of the clusters are scheduled for the end of May and early June, agenda of the meetings will be shared shortly. Please follow "UBC Youthful Cities Commission" page on Facebook to learn more about upcoming events of the clusters.





# Safe Cities Commission project activities

by Kaspars Vārpiņš | [kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv](mailto:kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv)

**Safe Cities Commission is a partner in several projects with external funding.**

## **VOALA**

National round tables to discuss the role, mission and coordination of volunteers in BSR countries regarding civil protection is being held. This year UBC Safe Cities Commission will organize an international round table with the same topic. In June will be held international conference in Hamburg. By the end of the project an analysis of existing practices and development of recommendation will be created to prepare and develop larger scale EU application.

## **BYFORES**

An international workshop for youth volunteers' organizations, trainers of volunteers and authorities was held in Helsinki where best practices by both volunteer organizations and authorities were presented mainly focusing on floods, Ukrainian war etc. In addition, both the obstacles and challenges of cooperation and involvement of volunteer organizations in civil protection authorities work were discussed and how to eliminate or minimize them. During 2023 few activities will be held, i.e. International conference of volunteers and authorities will be organized in Hamburg, 19-20 June. The joint international scenario-based exercise for youth will be organized in Finland in autumn to contribute to the appeal of volunteering with a special focus on youth and participation in Disaster Risk Reduction. And by the end of the project the recommendations will be developed to better direct volunteer-authority cooperation in the near future in the Baltic Sea Region.

## **PA SECURE KIDS**

Project began in March 2023 and is still in the early stage and till now we had the kick-off meeting. First tasks are for other project partners. During the year of 2023 mapping process will be held to understand the children participation in the Disaster Risk Reduction and the work on the development of Child participation mechanism and practical tool in Disaster Risk Activities will begin. By the end of 2023 we will start to develop strategic guidance for the implementation of inclusive crisis communication with children.

## **NEEDS**

Project NEEDS will end in August 2023. This year online study course for societal security practitioners and students was concluded and now is being tested. After testing the online study course will be available for everyone without any cost. In addition, online community / network for the practitioners and students of societal security is being created and all the UBC Safe Cities Commission participants will be involved. The results to date were presented during the Commission's meeting in Hamburg (December 2022) that was held together with the EUSBSR PA Secure Steering group members. After the cooperation and small joint work, recommendations were developed by both parties and will be taken into account and included for the general policy recommendations of the project.



# Urban freight logistics DECARBOMILE project

by Igor Jojkic | [igor.jojkic@gmail.com](mailto:igor.jojkic@gmail.com)



**DECARBOMILE project aims to develop interoperable and multimodal vehicles for last mile delivery in urban contexts. It gathers 31 partners from 10 different countries. Multimodal and electric vehicles present a strong potential for greening transportation in cities, especially in terms of optimised delivery service, improved air quality and reduced congestion.**

Therefore, DECARBOMILE works on logistics vehicles optimisation, especially regarding cargo-bikes and testing their combinations with transportation modes alternative to the road and conventional trucks (river, rail). These different modes and vehicles will be further tested in the four living labs and four satellites to evaluate and eventually demonstrate their effective optimisation in real conditions and their adaptability to different logistics flows, terrains, external actors, scope of action, etc.

The aim is to develop improved delivery methods, tools and methodologies, and implement and test them across Europe to lower carbonization of last mile logistics activities. Delivery methods such as (micro) urban consolidation centers, the use of cargo bikes or waterways and electric barges for transport will be integrated with a collaborative urban consolidation logistics framework including ICT and IoT tools.

The UBC team has taken part in the regulation benchmarking regarding urban distribution of goods in the cities. A regulation benchmark also analyses the current legal framework related to urban distribution of goods, looking specifically at e.g., low emission zones, congestion charge zones, delivery tax, usage of cargo bikes, etc. We have been

focused not only to project participating cities but also UBC Member Cities and other European reference cities in order to collect different practices related to this topic.

The first submitted project deliverable was the “Baseline situation for urban freight logistics in the living labs”. This document provides a detailed diagnosis on the baseline situation of the project cities (with details on their urban logistics situation and potential use cases) and lessons learnt from relevant projects across Europe, looking more specifically at the five pillars of the project: collaboration, business models and value-added services, urban integration and space management, regulation, digital infrastructure.

Stakeholders’ participation in the definition of the technologies, innovations and solutions, is key to their proper adoption by in each layer of the local urban fabric. The next phase in the project implementation thus aims to implement participatory mechanisms to properly engage the relevant actors of the specific local areas through agile co-creation methodologies and activities. UBC will support the process through the call for expression and interest in its network to identify interested Member Cities and their relevant local actors including business associations, neighbourhood associations, logistics operators, etc.





# FUTURE

## Empowering Young People

by Igor Jojkic | [igor.jojkic@gmail.com](mailto:igor.jojkic@gmail.com)

**The YUPAD project aims to enable young people to understand, practice, and influence participatory budgets across European cities. The project will develop the capacity building of educators and local authorities to implement participatory budgeting and increase civic participation among the youth.**

Participatory budgeting has an educative component which can help young people 'learn democracy by doing' and to become more active citizens, sharing ideas, designing, planning, deliberating and prioritizing ideas for the benefit of the community. These initiatives allow young people early in their life to understand the values and processes regarding participatory city planning as well as the project cycle itself: from identifying key stakeholders to estimating costs, the costs that are associated with the implementation of a project.

So far, the project team has prepared the YUPAD Cookbook - a set of participatory budget "recipes", based on the existing needs analysis of the target groups. The need analysis was synthesised into 10 videos, 2-3 minutes long each. These video could be found on the following link. Best practice examples were showed on the YUPAD Fair - organized in Brussels.

In the meantime, the project team has created YUPAD Calculator - a tailored platform that gathers input from young people on policy priorities, expected outcomes, and their preferences for concrete projects in a city. Training Curricula for Educators and Policy Makers based on the good practices showcased in the previous phase is developed and will be piloted by the project partners. The curricula will serve to develop a set of capacity-building activities adapted to the

needs of the target groups (youth, educators, local authorities, and community of practice as a whole).

The UBC team has been in charge to develop the YUPAD Bees, the next step in creation of the system that provides the methodology for development of concrete projects or initiatives suggested within the YUPAD Calculator. Currently young people and their educators have a step-by-step approach on how to develop and present a proposal to policy makers, other young people and relevant stakeholders in the community.

The UBC is also in charge for communication and dissemination aspect of the project. Our focus if is to establish and run the visibility and communication infrastructure of the project, so that all activities are widely communicated with the highest possible visibility in the partners' countries and beyond - across the EU. Regarding the dissemination aspect, the project is embedded in a strong partnership of organisations with wide networks and "circuits of influence", that can guarantee a wide system of contacts for a successful dissemination of project news, events and results. Nowadays, the project team is finalizing the policy brief that addresses current issues and challenges regarding further engagement of young people in policy making process. Therefore, a set of practical recommendations for local, national, and European authorities for further enhancing youth participatory mechanisms are drafted.



Funded by  
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## PITCH Local integration strategies tested on the spot

by UBC Secretariat | [info@ubc.net](mailto:info@ubc.net)

**PITCH model for local integration strategies has been finalized. At the moment the project partners are testing the local integration strategies by delivering an activity programme tailored to the personal needs and interests of migrant women.**

In the first phase the main activities included: context research, SWOT analysis, development of research tools, and elaboration of the Model. Also, the neighbourhood map was created that visualises important services that can support the accessibility and knowledge of migrant women about local entities they can visit so as to facilitate their personal process of employment, education, civil rights awareness and social interaction.

UBC contributed with recommendations made on the basis of the UBC member cities experiences. The good practices from the cities: Aarhus, Guldborgsund, Kolding, Espoo, Kemi, Turku, Kristiansand and Gdańsk were shared.

Several outcomes were delivered at this stage of the project. One of them was a document "Local Integration Strategy Guidelines", based on the information collected through the context analysis. The aim of the document is to offer a common ground for all partners, setting out the guiding principles and basic structure.

The other outcome was the Model, presenting structure in 5 phases:

- I. Participants' profiling,
- II. Development of activities organized in cluster,
- III. Design and implementation of personalized roadmaps to integration,



Meeting of immigrant women from Romania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Multigenerational Center MORJE Koper, Slovenia

- IV. Evaluation,
- V. Sustainability and mainstreaming.

The Model is adjusted into 7 local integration strategies for migrant women, with the support of local advisory committees.

In the next phase pilot-testing of local integration strategies featuring personalised integration roadmaps for migrant women will take place.

So called "Cosy Corners", meetings with 30 selected women in 10 groups, will be held and they will focus on "getting to know" activities, profiling women and development of personalised integration plans. Finally, the Personalized Roadmaps to Integration will be implemented at approximately 32 training / learning session during a 6-month period.

The next Transnational Project Meeting is held on 23–24 May 2023 in Malmö.



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# The Baltic Sea Cup in Rostock

by Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission

**Rostock had the honour to host the 21st edition of the Baltic Sea Cup, an annual athletic event for youngsters aged between 8 up to 13 years.**

This year the sport event took place on 13 May and included competitions in running, ball-throwing, long and high jump. The young athletes from UBC member cities, sports clubs or schools fought for the desired medals in the Baltic Sea Cup.

Once more all participants had the possibility to network, experience another culture and have a lot of fun during the competitions and the additional program in Rostock. The goal was to generate an international Baltic network of athletic sports clubs and young sportspeople that can learn a lot from one another. Athletes and teams from abroad were supported with the organisation of accommodation and partial payments.

The event was co-organised by UBC's Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission.

More information: [www.ostseepokal-rostock.de](http://www.ostseepokal-rostock.de)





# CITY NEWS



## UKRAINIAN MUNICIPALITIES OPEN TO COOPERATION

The Ukrainian towns and cities are ready to develop building on city-to-city collaborations, including twinning relationships, as well as boosting new partnerships. This may become a central pillar in the effective reconstruction of cities.

In the beginning of April 2023, the UBC national coordinator for Ukraine has visited Hostomel city of the Kyiv neighborhood as part of a networking effort to meet with the city's new military leadership joined by a team of local volunteers called "My vdoma" ("We are (back) home"). Possibilities for international collaboration through UBC membership were among the key topics raised.

The group of local activists became pro-active to assist in restoring life in their home town after Kyiv neighborhood have been liberated in the end of March of 2022 after a month of occupation.

The needs of the municipalities are huge, the towns were severely damaged. All parties discussed the current challenges in the process of restoring life in town and

expressed their confidence that joint efforts of Ukraine and all of its' partners will put an end to Kremlin's invasion. Therefore, we all should be looking forward to see the region and the whole Ukraine moving on firmly in accordance with the democratic values and sustainable development principles. The new city management and the local society are determined to give no more room to corruption and therefore would be glad to join likeminded network of transparent European communities. Ukrainian municipalities are open to cooperate with the UBC and its members. For instance, Vilnyansk, which is the first Ukraine's associated member in UBC, is looking for a partner city focused on safe environment to establish city-to-city collaboration, while Hostomel would welcome the partnership with a city that also runs an airport or the one that is a satellite city.

by Alexei Stoyanovsky | [bioexpert@ukr.net](mailto:bioexpert@ukr.net)





# SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN REFUGEE CRISIS - SOCIAL SERVICES IN GDYNIA

From the first days of war in Ukraine, Gdynia undertook extensive measures carried out until today, in a form modified over time.

In 2022 in Gdynia, 22 collective accommodation points were created, where in total over 4,100 Ukrainian refugees found shelter. They were supported by social workers of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre (MOPS) forming 21 welcome teams, whose main task was to initially identify the situation of individuals and families, gather information about their needs and plans and organise the necessary support.

Aware of how destructive prolonged stay in this type of shelter is for the psyche, the city authorities made it an absolute priority to support refugees in becoming independent in their new place of stay. This included assistance in gaining financial independence (finding a job), obtaining benefits, counselling and assistance in finding accommodation, as well as financial support (allowances provided for rent of accommodation from funds donated by UNICEF). These ac-

tivities allowed for complete closure of collective accommodation points within six months. Extensive support enabled Ukrainian citizens to become independent, but relief activities were ongoing.

By the end of 2022, 500 Ukrainian families had been provided with financial assistance (benefits, school scholarships) and social work, and in the first quarter of 2023, 191 families were receiving such support.

The role of MOPS was also to secure food and access to daily essentials. 31,242 meals and 26,100 food packages were delivered to the collective accommodation points. These were prepared by the "Together" Social Cooperative (Spółdzielnia Socjalna "Razem") and the Tri-City Food Bank, which runs social shops, where 69,015 packages (approx. 4,200 in the first quarter of this year) were given to people in refugee crisis living in Gdynia. In 2022, packages with in kind support were distributed to 12,901 persons by the "Gaudium Vitae" Association, on behalf of MOPS (approx. 2,100 in the first quarter of 2023).

Social workers also monitor the situation of Ukrainian children. Those deprived of the parents' care were appointed temporary guardians, and long-term beneficiaries of social shop support. Counselling was provided to 123 Ukrainians who arrived after the outbreak of war, and to over 90 persons in the first quarter of 2023. Additionally, children were provided with access to sociotherapeutic activities and psychological assistance conducted in Ukrainian.

by Alicja Choinka | a.choinka@mopsgdynia.pl





# FOSTERING INTEGRATION IN TARTU

Tartu is a nice green city with just under 100 thousand inhabitants. The number of foreigners in Tartu has steadily increased, and now it reached 10%. Tartu can also be called a university city, because there are a lot of students (about 20% of the residents). The University of Tartu is an important reason why foreigners come to the city, and for the same reason there are constantly new (international) residents in this area who need support and advice when starting their life in a new location. For this reason, the city, the University and the Estonian University of Life Sciences decided to create a one-stop-shop style counselling centre for foreigners.

Tartu Welcome Centre was founded in Tartu in 2019 by these institutions to support adaptation and counselling to create a better integration experience. In 2020, our first full calendar year, we had more than 1,100 consultations, year later we had more than 2,200 consultations. In 2022 we consulted on almost 3,500 occasions, half of which were about Ukrainian war refugees.

Tartu Welcome Centre participates in the Nordic-Baltic 2021-2023 project FOR-IN, which aims at fostering refu-

gee and immigrant integration at the local level by creating country-specific intersectional cooperation models and regional networks of practitioners in the Nordic-Baltic Region. The Nordic countries have been working on adaptation for decades, but Estonia has been doing it for considerably less time. Therefore, getting to know the experiences of the Nordic countries in accepting refugees and helping them integrate into the country of arrival is very important.

During the project FOR-IN, two study visits (one to Denmark and Sweden and another to Finland) took place, which were attended by integration experts from Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian civic associations, local governments, and state authorities. It's always good and exciting to see sectoral practices that have worked for a long time, so that we can later select activities that could and should be applied in our region as well. Within the framework of the same project, a conference is coming up, which will take place on 24 October 2023 in Tallinn, so save a date in your calendar.

by Janika Hango | [janika@tartuwelcomecentre.ee](mailto:janika@tartuwelcomecentre.ee)

The FOR-IN project is prepared and launched in collaboration between the Nordic Council of Ministers, UNHCR, Ministry of Culture of Estonia, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia and many other partners.

Read more: <https://www.norden.ee/en/for-in-en>



# UPCOMING EVENTS IN RIGA

## **XXVII Nationwide Latvian Song and XVII Dance Festival 30 June–9 July 2023**

I would like to highlight our Latvian Song and Dance Festival that will mark its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023. The Song and Dance Festival is the uppermost cultural masterpiece of our people that has stood the test of time.

From the first festival in 1873 with 1,000 singers, it has grown to a mighty movement: around 40,000 participants are preparing to take part this year. More than 1,600 groups in Latvia and more than 100 elsewhere are preparing for the event.

To ensure that choir singers and dancers, musicians, decorative folk-art creators, folklore groups and amateur theatre participants can take part in the Festival, there are five years of systematic work in the lead-up: rehearsals, preparation of repertoire, competitions, exhibitions, seminars and concerts. And, every five years, they all flow from Latvia's regions and small towns to Riga, becoming Latvia's most powerful folk movement.

The Song and Dance Festival tradition has played a significant role in creating Latvia's national identity and maintaining the idea of an independent nation through difficult periods of history. In 2003, the Song and Dance Festival was included on the UNESCO List of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.



## **World Athletics Road Running Championships Riga'23 30 September–1 October 2023**

'Riga – World Capital of Running' is a slogan in preparation to host the World Athletics Road Running Championships Riga'23 at the end of summer. It will take place in a new format for the first time and will include both the 5km and half marathon world championships, gathering world-class elite athletes and running enthusiasts like me from around the world. Riga won its bid to host the World Athletics Road Running Championships over 12 other cities worldwide.

The Championships will not only crown the world's half-marathon, five-kilometre and road mile champions, provide an opportunity for every running fan to be able to run alongside the world's elite runners, but also to enjoy our scenic architecture through a specially designed route for runners. It is still 5 months to go, so I encourage you to register and join for a dedicated World Champ's training course.

### **More information:**

<https://worldathletics.org/competitions/world-athletics-road-running-championships/riga23>

by Linda Ozola | [linda.ozola@riga.lv](mailto:linda.ozola@riga.lv)







## WEEK OF SCANDINAVIAN CULTURE IN KAUNAS

Scandinavian Days from 24th to 30th of April offered unique exhibitions, discussions, informative tours, and a step challenge. The Finnish and Kaunas Big Band also performed together as part of the festivities.

### One of the oldest friendships

"Kaunas is full of Scandinavian spices and the last week of April was dedicated to discovering and getting to know them. This year's programme was rich in activities – exhibitions, book presentations, lectures, and special walking routes. Get a closer feel of what Scandinavia is all about and see your own city with different eyes," said Kaunas Deputy Mayor **Mantas Jurgutis**. He stated that Kaunas had been maintaining close relations with partner cities from the north for a long time, with the Scandinavian countries being one of its oldest partners after the country regained independence.

### A trip around Scandinavia

One of the key events during the Nordic Week was the "Around Scandinavia" step challenge, which was organised together with the #walk15 team. The challenge involved walking more than 4.2 million steps. Those interested could

join by downloading the #walk15 app on their smartphones and entering the name of the challenge. It also featured a special route called "Scandinavians in Kaunas," which could be explored through free guided tours with the guide, **Linas Daubaras**.

### Good experiences

Throughout the week, there were plenty of valuable discussions to take part in. On 25 April a meeting with the Swedish Ambassador to Lithuania, **Inger Buxton**, was held at the Vytautas Magnus University Centre for Science and Studies. She delivered a presentation, discussing Sweden's path towards NATO membership and how it would contribute to strengthening security in the Nordic and Baltic region.

On 26 April, students of Scandinavian Culture and Language at the Faculty of Humanities of VMU held a scientific conference for those interested in the Scandinavian region.

Also on the same day, a Distance Education Forum called "Transforming Mathematics Education in the Context of International Educational Experiences" was held, featuring international speakers who shared their best practices.

Finally, the Scandinavian Week closed with a concert by the Kaunas Big Band, featuring Finnish and Lithuanian compositions, at the Romuva Cinema Centre.

by Public Relations Department



# ROKIŠKIS MUNICIPALITY PLANS TO HELP UKRAINIANS WHO STAY IN TOWN

In March 2023, the Rokiškis District Municipal Administration applied to the project “Reception and Early Integration of Refugees from Ukraine” to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund administered in Lithuania by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

On 5 April 2023, the project application was evaluated, and the Mayor of Rokiškis signed the contract. The received funding will be used to carry out early integration activities for refugees from Ukraine staying in the municipality. The project will be realized with the selected partners and aims to contribute to the early integration of refugees.

The project is basically focused on well-being problems caused by stress experienced during the conflict and

followed migration. It will also address other physical and psychological matters. Art and other therapies aimed at helping to cope with stress factors, managing the stress response, strengthening emotional health for adults and children in separate groups will be offered.

Furthermore, Lithuanian language courses and various training are planned. Ukrainians can choose from wide variety of topics, such as: Lithuanian culture and history, Lithuanian legal, social security, healthcare and education systems, entrepreneurship training, and local tax law.

by Giedrė Kublickienė | [komunikacija@rokiskis.lt](mailto:komunikacija@rokiskis.lt)







# SUSTAINABLE EVERYDAY LIFE IN GÄVLE FOR A GOOD LIFE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE PLANET!

Gävle municipality aims to be a climate-neutral municipality by 2030. To get there, everyone needs to be involved and contribute!

That's why Gävle municipality implements the campaign Sustainable everyday life, which aims to help and support citizens in their journey towards a good life within the limits of the planet.

The campaign covers five focus areas: The car, the steak, the home, the shop and the wallet.

Over the course of a year, roughly 30 selected households will meet and get to know other participants with the same desire to live more sustainably. The participants will meet

regularly and have the chance to participate in a variety of exciting activities, study visits, lectures and other things that can motivate them to a more sustainable everyday life.

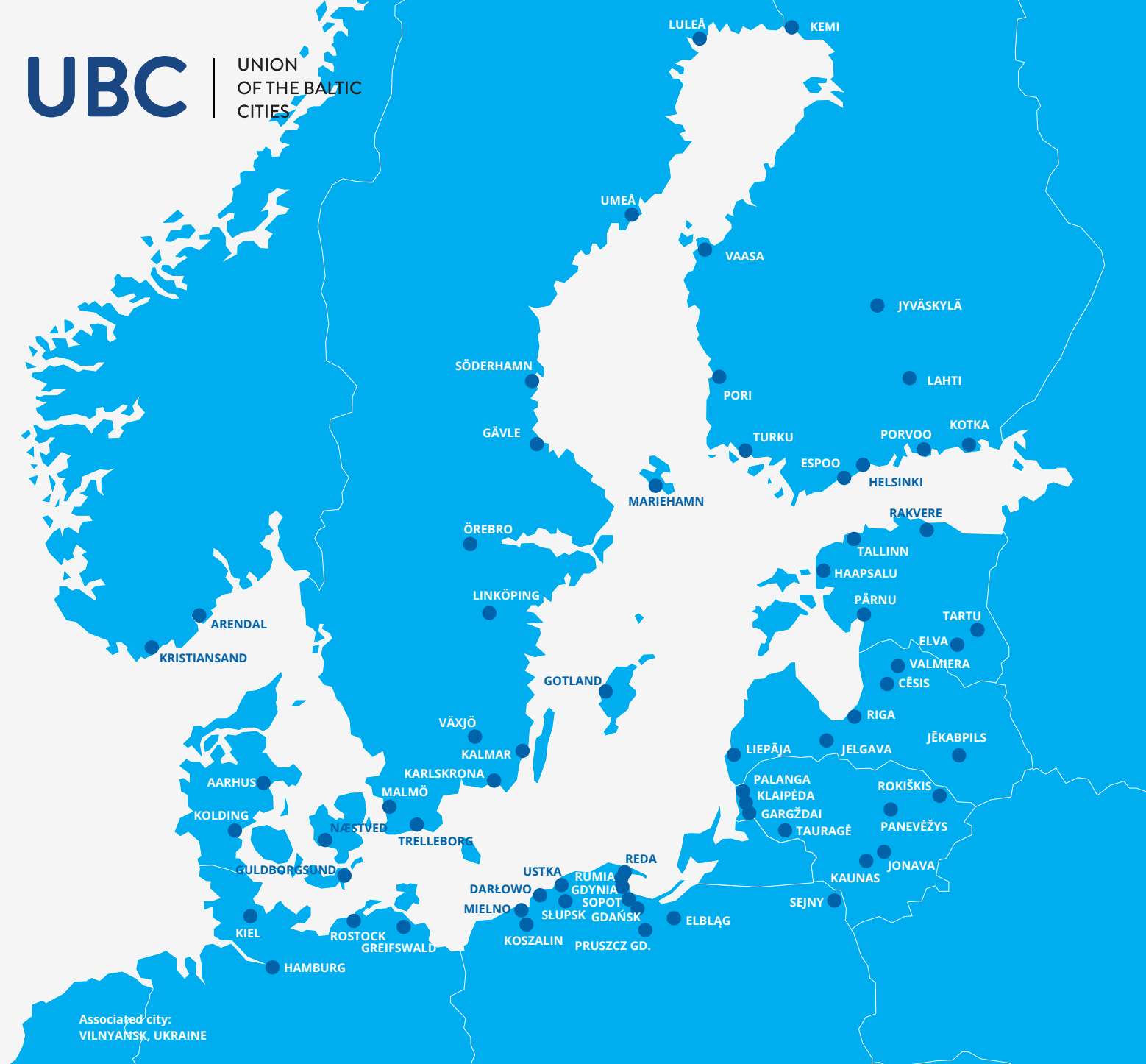
For example:

- Try bus journeys for a longer period,
- Free home visits by energy and climate advisors,
- Borrow a box bike for 10 days,
- Sustainable cooking,
- Competitions and challenges with great prizes.

The campaign runs between May 2023 and April 2024 and is part of the Viable cities initiative.

by Bodil Dyrebrant | [bodil.dyrebrant@gavle.se](mailto:bodil.dyrebrant@gavle.se)





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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.

**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](http://www.ubc.net)





UBC

UNION  
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# XVII UBC General Conference Palanga, Lithuania 24-26 October 2023

Register at: <http://ubc.palanga.lt>