

Mapping the needs of UBC MEMBER CITIES

Introduction: 37 cities answered the questionnaire providing us with solid data for the needs assessment on how the cities see UBC now and how they would like to see it in the future.

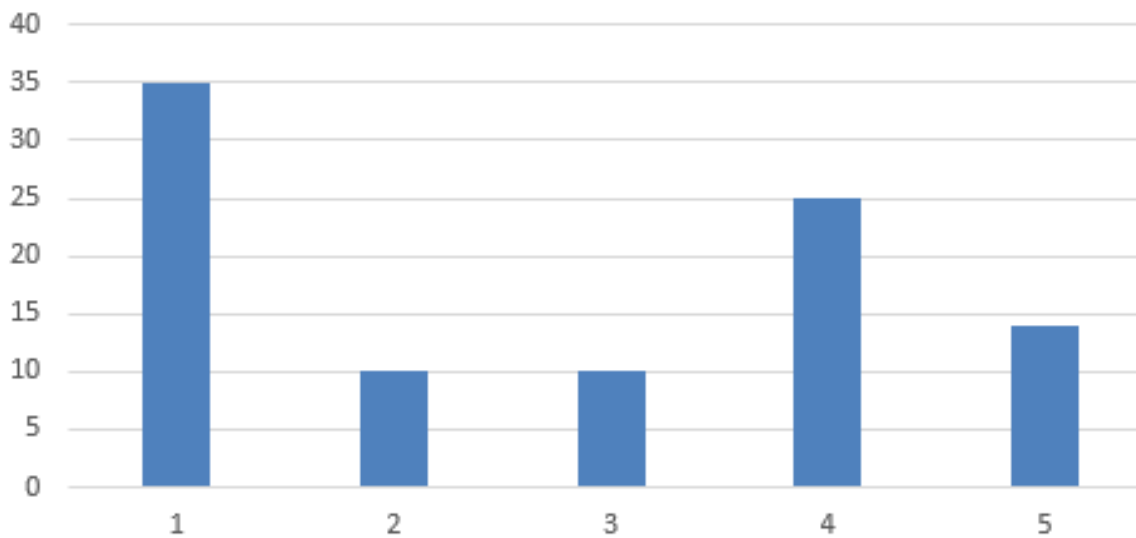
| 1. NAME OF THE MEMBER CITY: | 2. NUMBER OF CITIZENS: |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Kemi | 21000 |
| Trelleborg Municipality | 45000 |
| Liepāja | 69000 |
| Örebro municipality | 154 000 |
| Riga | 632 614 |
| Växjö | 92000 |
| Gmina Miejska Pruszcz Gdanski | 30 000 |
| Elva | 14627 |
| Kristiansand | 115.000 |
| Umeå | 129000 |
| Turku | 194000 |
| Darłowo | 13000 |
| Luleå | 78 000 |
| Mielno | 5000 |
| Gävle | 102.000 |
| Jēkabpils | 23336 |
| Kalmar | 68 000 |
| Kiel | 250.000 |
| Gargzdai | 16 000 |
| Kristiansand | 112000 |
| Arendal | 45000 |
| Guldborgsund Municipality | 61000 |
| Visby / Region Gotland | 59000 |
| Söderhamn | 25000 |
| Riga | 632614 |
| Malmö | 345 000 |
| Rakvere | 15000 |
| Elbląg | 120000 |
| Tartu | 95460 |
| Kotka | 52 200 |
| City of Vaasa | 67 500 |
| Gdynia | 246 309 |
| City of Porvoo | 50 000 |
| Koszalin | 107 000 |
| Jūrmala | 57000 |
| Saint-Petersburg | 7 500 000 |
| Kaunas | 300 000 |

Part I. "UBC NOW"

The first section focusses on how member cities see UBC now.

1. THE AIMS

What are the 3 the most important aims, according to your experience with UBC?



35 votes - (1) Promoting, developing and strengthening cooperation and exchange of experience among the cities in the Baltic Sea Region;

25 votes - (4) Striving to achieve sustainable development and optimal economic and social development in the Baltic Sea Region with full respect to European principles of local and regional self-governance and subsidiarity;

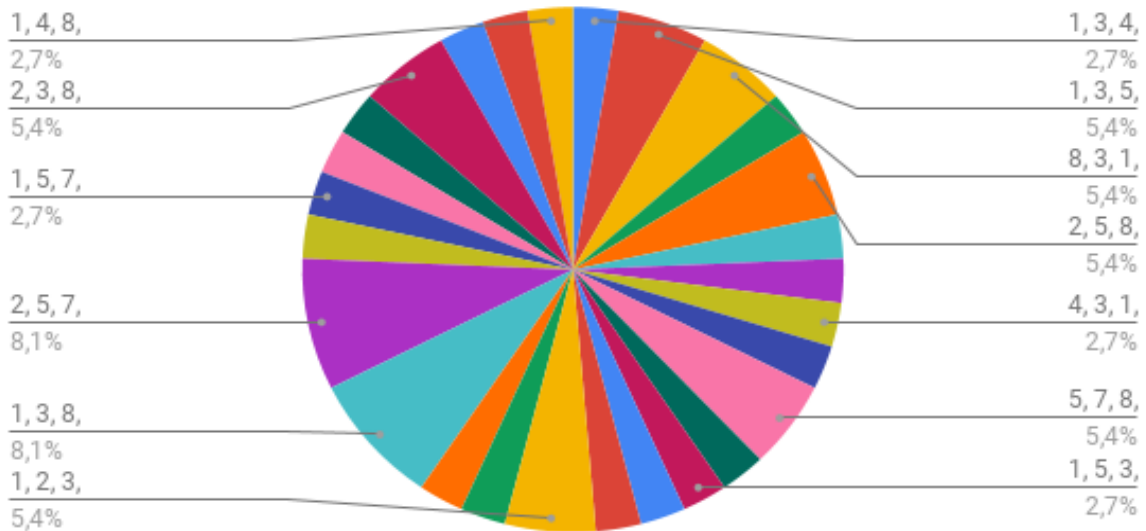
14 votes - (5) Contributing to joint Baltic identity, cohesion and common understanding in the region;

10 votes - (2) Advocating for common interests of local authorities in the region and

10 votes - (3) Acting on behalf of the cities and local authorities in common matters to-towards regional, national, European and international bodies – the last two being recognized as least important aims;

2. THE VALUES

Please choose 3 values and rate them from the most important one from your perspective.



- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Democratic | 5. Professional |
| 2. Proactive | 6. Reliable |
| 3. Member-driven | 7. Goal-oriented |
| 4. Friendly and welcoming | 8. Future-oriented |

As charted above, there is no unanimity or majority vote about the order of the values, but we can see that there are 5 values that stand out from others.

21 votes - (1) Democratic

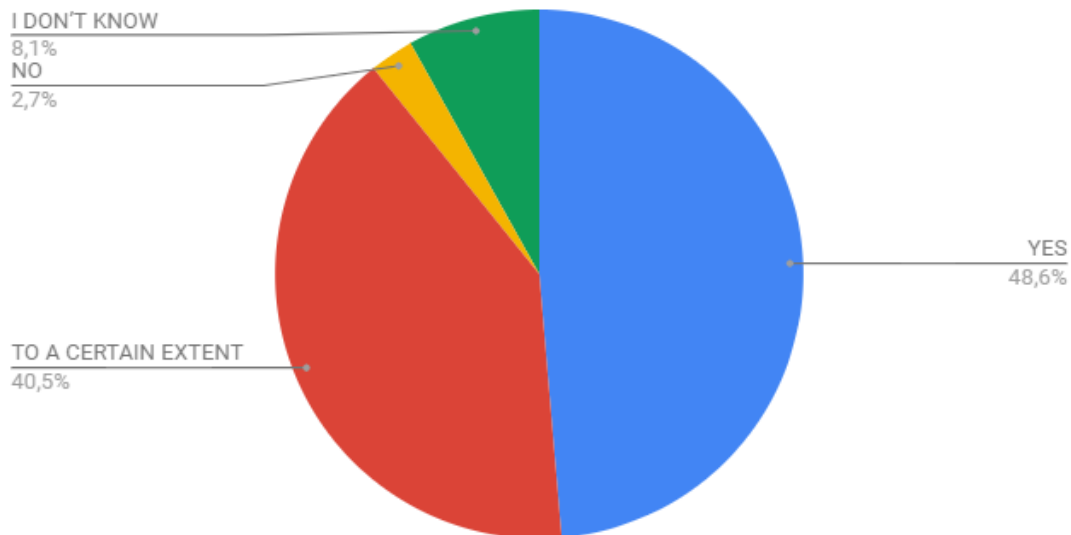
19 votes - (8) Future-oriented with

18 votes - (5) Professional & (3) Member-driven

13 votes - (2) Proactive

10 votes- (7) Goal-oriented

3. Do you think that these values are 100% in line with activities implemented by organisation?



Most of the respondents agreed that **values** are fully or to some extent represented in UBC activities;

- The positive developments of the organisation were achieved by **good networking** between Member Cities and joint events, as well as professionally organized activities with a good content;
- Amongst other strengths, it is the **member-driven** and democratic atmosphere, and future-oriented approaches;
- The design of common projects, goal orientation and **activities on EU programs are desirable** at a much higher level than up until now;
- Also, one of the areas mentioned **to be improved is the participation** and involvement from member cities. It is pointed out that the full potential of the organization is not yet utilized;

4. What does UBC do best?

UBC's strongest point is being a good **networking provider**. What UBC does the best is:

- Keeping the member cities active when **sharing** experience, expertise, good practices and information (newsletters, questionnaires, UBC website etc.) from which it derives learning and cooperation opportunities;
- Bringing cities and municipalities around the Baltic sea **together** and fostering projects between the members about joint important interests and creation of sustainable initiatives;

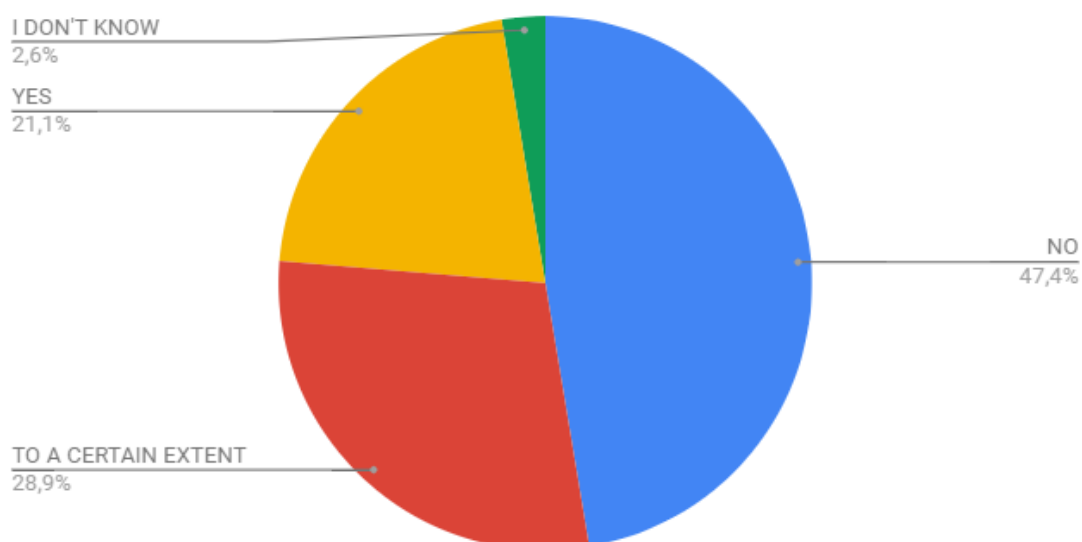
- Providing good and professional **communication**, organising meetings and being recognised as a reliable partner;
- Contributing to developing and fostering joint Baltic **identity**;
- A big **dissemination** capacity of project results, good ideas and methods among its member cities;

5. What can be improved?

Some recommendations:

- Some thematic **Workgroups** are very active, they share a lot of experience and they really work but at the same time there are other groups that are modest;
- To bring more **expertise** (ask world class experts-visionaries of their fields to make presentations and share their knowledge at UBC events/meetings/newsletters incl. General Conferences);
- Match-making and **project** development capacity (the capacity to initiate and give support to the member cities when it comes to project initiation, project development and support in project implementation);
- Coordinate **external funding** for Projects in line with Agenda 2030;
- Representation of UBC interests on the **EU level** with more direct involvement of the member cities and becoming more of a lobby organisation in the Baltic Sea towards European stakeholders;

6. Do you think that your City participates enough in the structures and activities of UBC?



Most believe that they could and **should be more involved** in structure and activities of UBC, so this is recognized as a point to work on and develop more. This gives the picture that some specific cities are more represented and active within UBC. The biggest reason for this problem is a matter of capacity.

A lack of human resources is the biggest **challenge** but so is a lack of financial resources.

There are a lot of incoming propositions to join projects outside UBC and the target institutions are often out of human resources or not interested to deal with participation in UBC projects and programs but it is recognised that cities would benefit of being more involved.

7. What are the most valuable contributions coming from Member Cities?

The most valuable contribution from the member cities are:

- **Expertise** and knowledge;
- Ability and willingness to **act** on the identified trends in the frame of UBC (joint activities, projects);
- Discussion around common challenges and creating modern **solutions** and ideas for cooperation;

8. What is the motivation of your city to be part of UBC?

- To receive new knowledge form other cities, but also to share valuable experience. A large number of **regional events** that can inspire and develop municipal technical staff by sharing experience and knowledge and also creating new contacts is recognized as the biggest motivator.
- **Support** to municipal departments for developing their activities and competences;
- The opportunity to **work together** on different projects and focus on common challenges;
- Being a part of the network to implement the **Baltic Sea Strategy**, contribute to joint Baltic identity, cohesion and common understanding in the region;
- International collaboration and increasing the number of externally financed development **projects**;
- Improving the **quality of life** of local citizens and taking part in the decision-making process, thus being heard on the Baltic region level.

9. What does your city expect from UBC?

Most of the members want to maintain UBC's good work, upscale it and make the organization ready to adapt new practises;

- Being more proactive in **involving member cities** in their decision making;
- To be a **platform** to exchange experiences, to act as facilitator for knowledge and networking exchange and provide professional support in enabling collaborative structures and funding;
- To take initiatives to **cross boarder** cooperation and new projects;
- Assisting member cities in making their strengths (achievements) to be seen and **visible** in the BS region, in Europe and in the world;
- **Advocating** for common interests of local authorities in the region and acting on behalf of the cities and local authorities in common matters towards regional, national, European and international bodies;
- More clear strategic focus and a stronger position and role in Europe and within **EU policy making**;

10. What kind of assistance would Member Cities, Commissions, Working Groups, Task Forces expect from the Secretariat?

- To use more of **digital solution platforms** and a new approach to the joint events and boosting the interest to take part in them;
- To ensure good administration and **facilitate communication** between stakeholders;
- For the Secretariat to **act as a project expert**, to share information on project calls and lend their expertise on project development and searching for partners not only in the UBC network;
- To provide **analysis and counselling** with their expertise of strategic document from i.e. the European commission;
- **To lobby outside of UBC** about the processes and activities done, that would strengthen the image of UBC, make it more visible in the region and help in making the network more transparent and reliable;
- To execute/facilitate and follow up the action and **working plan** of decisions taken by the executive board;

11. Do Commissions, Working Groups, Task Forces consider UBC Strategy when making their plans? (Question to commission leaders)

In the group of respondents there were only 6 commission leaders and their answers were the following:

- Resolution of problems reported by members;
- Yes;
- Yes;
- Generally, yes, but to me the overall strategy is unclear;
- To a certain extent, however it remains geographically local;
- Commissions, Working Groups, Task Forces follow the main UBC documents, including strategy 2016-2021;

12. What goals would Commissions, Working Groups, Task Forces like to achieve? (Question to commission leaders)

In the group of respondents there were only 6 commission leaders and their answers were the following:

- Resolution of problems reported by members;
- Implementation of plans and goals;
- Active members and contribution;
- More precise work with the European institutions etc;
- I can't comment;
- Initiating network-based cooperation; Stimulating professionalism; Promoting strategic partnerships; Carrying out research;

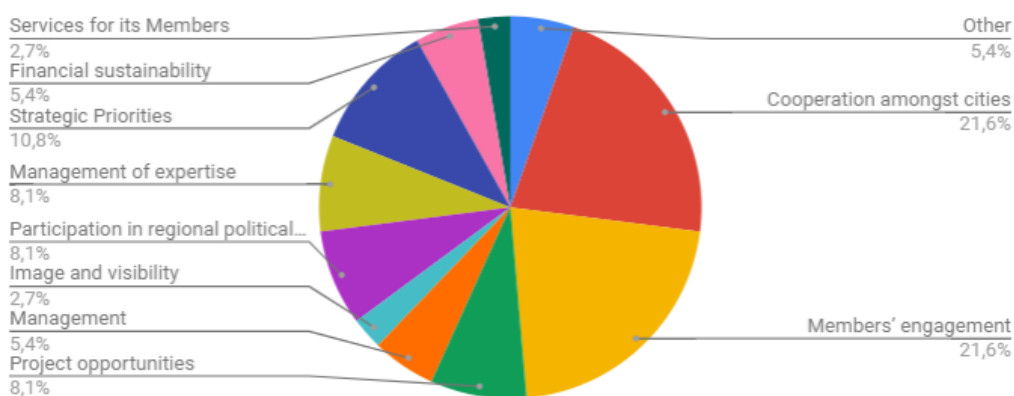
Part II. "UBC IN THE FUTURE"

1. What are the main external trends UBC should address in the future?

The main external trends UBC should address are:

- IT and digitalisation, cybersecurity;
- Emergency and crisis response capacities (be prepared for changes);
- Health issues (all aspects);
- Climate change and threats to environmental sustainability (how to ensure sustainable future/Green Deal) SDG 2030;
- The future of the Baltic Sea and industries related to the Baltic Sea, ecological, economic and social problems;
- Challenges to democracy;
- European values, EU Innovation and Regional Strategies;
- Migrations;
- Social cohesion, (youth) unemployment, ageing of population, citizens engagement;
- Rural development, preventing urbanization;

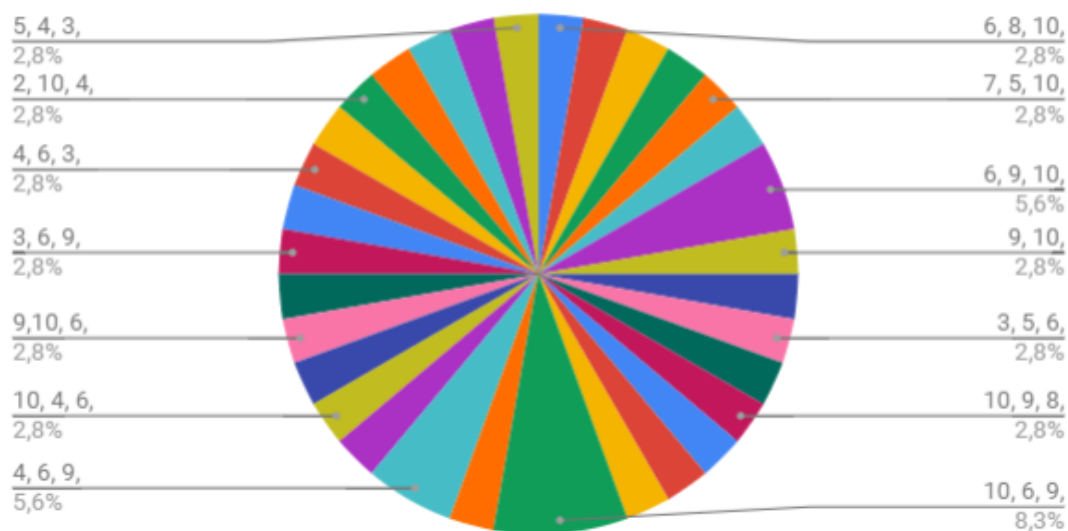
2. What are the main internal challenges that should be addressed within UBC?



As already established, the part that requires more engagement and where the UBC potential lies is **Member's engagement** and participation in regional political processes, and there is also **Cooperation amongst cities** and bringing more project opportunities to the UBC members. Furthermore, there is a need

for more strong and clear focus on **strategic priorities**. Management of expertise could be an important input to work commission capacity.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Management | 6 Members' engagement |
| 2 Financial sustainability | 7 Services for its Members |
| 3 Image and visibility | 8 Management of expertise |
| 4 Strategic Priorities | 9 Project opportunities |
| 5 Participation in regional political processes | 10 Cooperation amongst cities |



When asked to choose three and rate them from the most important one, the respondents generally agreed on the choice of priorities but not on which was the most important one. Looking at the chart we can say that **Cooperation amongst cities** is voted the most times as the most important one, followed by **Members' engagement** and **Project opportunities**.

3. How do you see the future role of UBC?

The UBC future recognised role is being the main centre connecting the cities, thus enabling collaboration and funding. A platform that provides expertise and bridging knowledge for mutual development through projects and attracts more outside speakers, professionals, motivators, etc. to become a common voice and

stronger political actor for cities, enabling practical changes connected to EU goals and programmes and becoming more proactive and important voice on the EU political level.

Moreover, it is seen as being more of a leader in trying to find different ways to solve Member Cities' shared issues, problems or challenges and impact the economic and tourist development of the region.

4. How would you like UBC to be perceived externally in the future?

As a strong and **stable force** with respected and reliable expertise bringing motivated cities around the Baltic Sea together, thus serving well for its members.

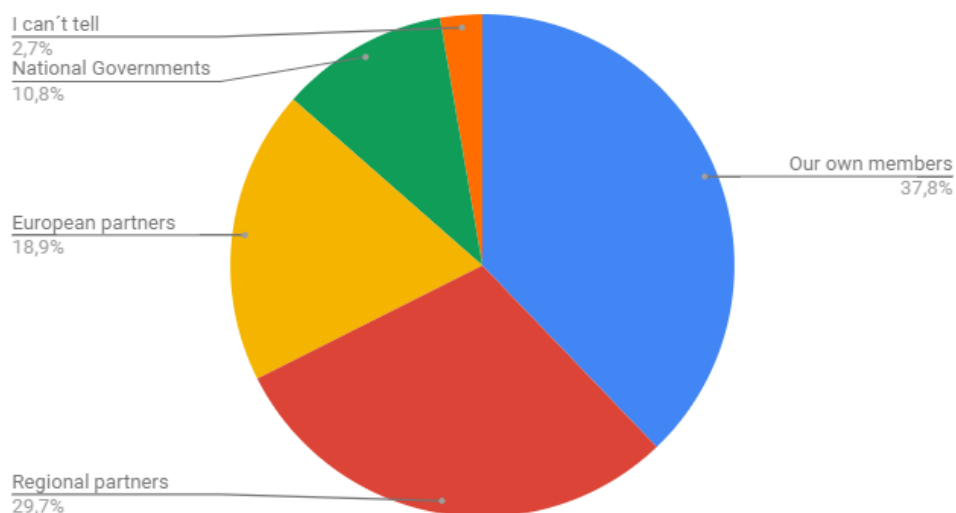
As a **network** successfully increasing the level of knowledge and expertise that brings out new ideas, international cooperation and projects.

To combine regional actors and work towards Agenda 2030 and to be **strong regional "player"** and reliable body for European consultations.

To be a role model of **quality of cooperation** to others in connecting different cities, their values and challenges and to be known and represented in Europe and worldwide more.

The UBC can, as a representative regional organization and in cooperation with other partners, promote the interests of its members and the region, to ensure that their voice is heard and their interests are respected in **European decision-making**.

5. What should be the main target groups of UBC?



We can see that members want to maintain the focus of UBC's work on the **regional partners** and its **members**. Also, potential partners across Europe are recognized as important.

6. What can UBC improve within its scope of work?

- Putting effort and focus into fulfilling the **needs of the member cities** and on their involvement more in all the activities and planning;
- To contribute and invest more into working groups so that their level would be even and improve the capacity of the work commissions;
- Developing more transparency and sharing of information, building common **identity and vision**;
- More focus on **project development** and co-financing possibilities;
- Doing more promotion and building the UBC as a **brand**;
- Becoming more **EU oriented** and doing more lobbying in Brussels.

The survey has been conducted in assistance of:



Gdansk, 16th April 2020.