



# Urban sustainability arena for sharing success strategies and solutions

UBC Sustainable Cities Commission,  
4.11.2025

UBC

UNION  
OF THE BALTIC  
CITIES

SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
COMMISSION

# Agenda

**17.30 – 17.45** Welcome

**17.45 – 18.55** MindMingling session  
on successful sustainability actions  
on climate, energy, water, mobility,  
resource-efficiency and biodiversity

**18.55 – 19.00** Further opportunities  
for UBC cities and closing remarks



# Union of the Baltic Cities Sustainable Cities Commission

- Secretariat located in Turku, Finland
- Supports development of **green, resilient and attractive** urban environments
- Coordinates the **UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030**, which identifies **climate change and local response to it as the main driver** in UBC sustainability activities

**30 years**

Commission in  
Turku since 1996

**12**

Advisory Board  
members

**12**

Project experts

[www.ubc-sustainable.net](http://www.ubc-sustainable.net)



ubcenvcom



UBC\_Sustainable





**POLICY POSITIONS**

**"Climate Change and Sustainable Development Until 2030"**

**I. Thirty years of striving towards a sustainable Baltic Sea Region**

The Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) has during its whole existence, for 30 years, been focusing on making the Baltic Sea Region more sustainable, attractive and more resilient to challenges in our environment ensuring a good quality of life for its inhabitants – now and for future generations. Environmental protection and sustainable development have been one of the UBC's key pillars since its foundation. In 1999, the Commission on Environment was established in Turku and has since then taken on the coordination of the network's environmental and sustainability activities. The first UBC Local Agenda 21 Action programme was adopted at the General Conference 1999 in Stockholm, followed by the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities (2004-2007), UBC Sustainable Development Action Programme – Agenda for Sustainable Baltic Cities (2010-2015) to the current UBC Sustainable Development Action programme – Steadyway towards Sustainable Baltic Cities (2016-2021), adopted at the General Conference 2015 in Gdynia, Poland. The main goal for the document is to give strategic direction to the realisation of our vision of the UBC, close to the future – creating a smart, safe and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. Currently the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission is coordinating the process of renewing the Sustainability Development Action Programme for the period 2022-2030.

**UBC TALKS**

**Climate and disaster  
risk preparedness**

# UBC Sustainable Cities Commission

## COOPERATION



## INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS



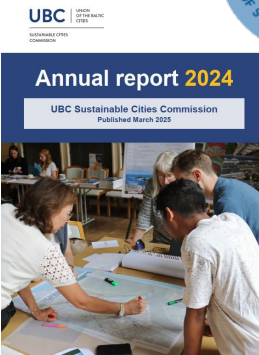
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## POLICY & ADVOCACY

## PROMOTING



## Sustainable Cities Bulletin



# UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030

- Building a more **inclusive, result-oriented, impact driven and dynamic city network** and a platform for close collaboration towards a sustainable, green, safe and resilient Baltic Sea Region.
- **Climate** at the core of all activities.
- Guiding document for the **whole UBC network** in the work for sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region.

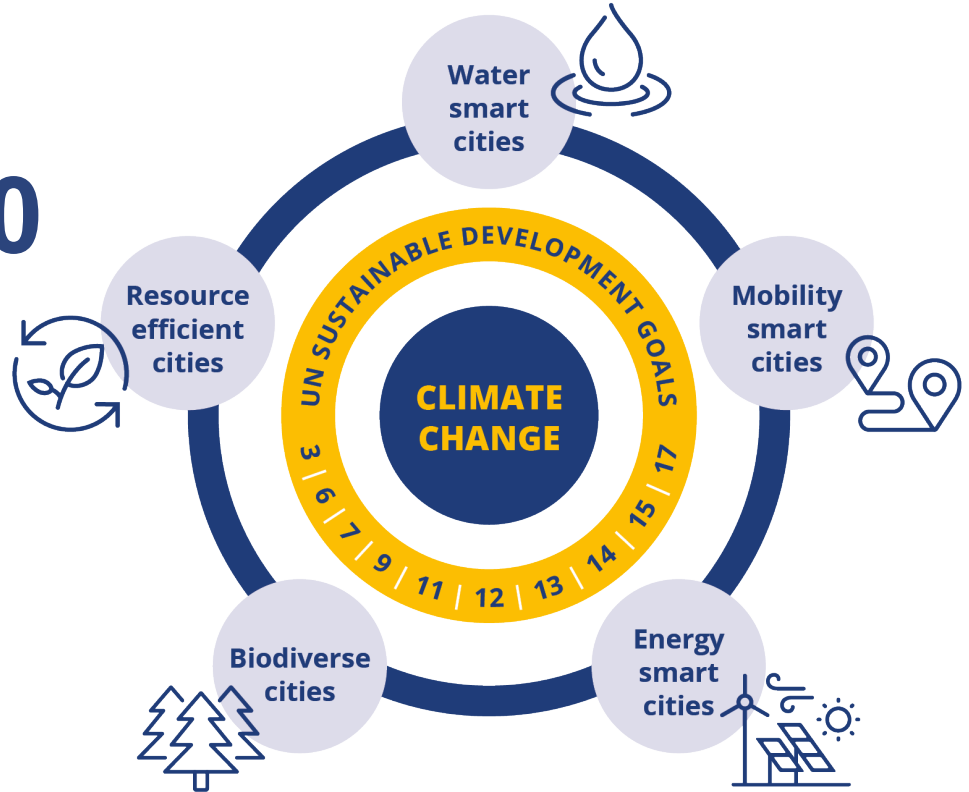
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CITIES

2022–2030



# Topics identified for the vision 2030

- Water-smart cities
- Mobility-smart cities
- Energy-smart cities
- Biodiverse cities
- Resource-efficient cities



UBC SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2030

# Climate smart cities

**Climate change** and our local and regional response to it, is the main driver in UBC activities on urban sustainability, striving to decrease impact and increase the quality of life of present and future citizens.

- Cities are key actors in **implementing climate actions**, **raising awareness among stakeholders** and **influencing national-level policies**
- UBC cities are **forerunners in sustainable solutions**, still more ambitious climate goals and concrete actions are needed



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Climate smart cities

**Climate-4-CAST** project embeds climate action into everyday urban governance and budgeting processes

- **Climate Action Decision Support (CADs) Tool** helps cities to plan climate-smart public budgets and model action scenarios with climate neutrality measures
- UBC SCC organizes **Climate Budget Training for local authorities**, including two **Climate Budget Summits**



# Climate Budget Training Course

will equip you with a holistic approach to the complex topic of climate budgeting – join us to learn and share experiences!

**Made for local administrations in the BSR:**

- **decision-makers**
- **sustainability & climate experts**
- **financial staff**

**Runs until Oct 2026, covering**

- **introductory webinar on 2 Dec 2026**
- **three online modules in Jan-May 2026**
- **Climate Budget Summit 2026 concluding the course**

**FULL SCHEDULE & REGISTRATION**



[ubc-sustainable.net/news/climate-budget-training](https://ubc-sustainable.net/news/climate-budget-training)

## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Climate smart cities

ClimaResponse project focuses on **reducing climate and disaster risks**, improving cities' **response to extreme weather events**, and **regional climate resilience** through targeted strategies, training and cooperation.

- **Digital Planning Platform**, a structured knowledge-sharing online resource for local governments and step-by-step adaptation planning
- Individual piloted **climate adaptation solutions**



### UBC TALKS

## Climate and disaster risk preparedness

[Watch 90 min  
recording](#)



**Øyvind Lyngen Laderud, International Coordinator,  
Kristiansand, Norway**

# Climate-smart cities

## UBC SCC Survey highlights:

1. Climate action requires many activities and investments, but **the City cannot do everything**
2. Biggest challenges: **individual energy consumption, private transport usage, water management** and **city planning** issues
3. Need to improve the warning system for **extreme weather conditions**
4. Need to **prevent coastal erosion**
5. Building **infrastructure against flooding** from the lake to the city.





# Energy-smart cities

**Energy efficiency should be increased in all fronts** – production and consumption for individuals, public and private sectors, by city's own operations as well as on the community and district levels.

- Cities become **forerunners in piloting, adopting, promoting, and exchanging new solutions.**
- Cities **prepare sustainable energy and climate action plans (SECAPs)** for more integrated approach for planning energy solutions and reaching carbon neutrality targets.



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Energy-smart cities

**EnTRA platform** unites **energy transition project results**: guidance for experts and citizens, simulation and decision-support tools, solution toolboxes

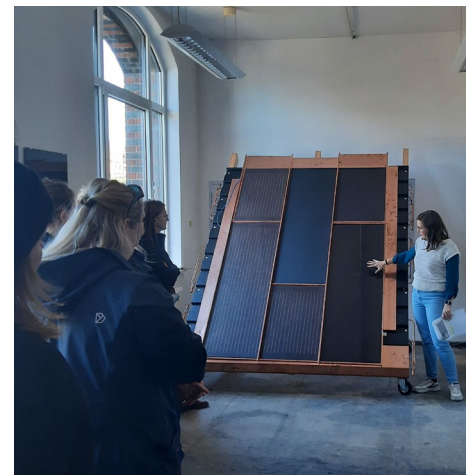
- will create **Resource Hub** & establish **Knowledge Community**
- develops **Institutional Ambassadors Program** and **Policy Memorandum** for energy transition innovations

**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region



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PROJECT PLATFORMS  
**EnTRA**



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Energy-smart cities

## UBC SCC survey highlights:

1. Improving **energy efficiency**, through smart systems, renovation, and more energy-saving lifestyle
2. Investing in **renewable energy sources** and climate-smart, sustainable and **cost-efficient energy supply**
3. **District heating systems** and their decarbonization
4. Engaging the **right stakeholders**, especially in industry
5. Overcoming challenges with **national rules and legislation**, unstable **national funds** for energy efficiency activities, as well as limited **city budget** and **staff capacity**





# Water-smart cities

Joint efforts are needed in **addressing pollution by nutrients and emerging hazardous substances** from wastewater, industrial and stormwater streams.

- Cities commit to **reducing pollution and restoring water quality** in the Baltic Sea
- Cities adopt **integrated approaches to stormwater management**
- Cities increase application of **nature-based solutions**
- Cities apply the **reduce, reuse, recycle principle**



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Water-smart cities

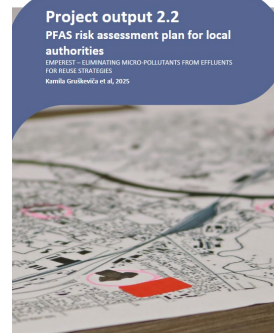
**EMPEREST project aims at eliminating “forever chemicals” from wastewater.**

The project develops regional recommendations for monitoring of PFAS, local PFAS risk assessment plans and advanced removal technologies.

- Offers **tailored tool** for local authorities enabling them **to identify and assess PFAS-related risks** and propose appropriate risk mitigation strategies.
- **Training materials and solutions** on Baltic Smart Water Hub

<https://www.balticwaterhub.net/>

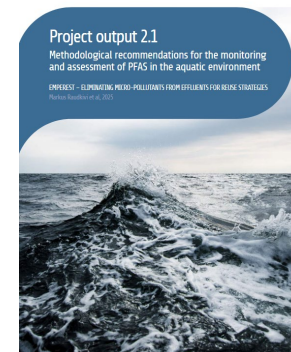
<https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/emperest/>



### Training package on PFAS and other organic micropollutants in wastewater effluent

PFAS, the so-called “forever chemicals”, are currently one of the most pressing environmental challenges in the Baltic Sea region as identified in the latest holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS 3). To address this challenge posed by the per- and polyfluoroalkyl group of substances in the capacity development perspective, the EMPEREST project develops a comprehensive and versatile set of tools and recommendations to ensure a holistic approach to PFAS removal, including a training material for water experts.

Training package on PFAS and other organic micropollutants in wastewater effluent



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Water-smart cities

BlueActionBanos project offers funding and technical support for innovative solutions to restore our oceans, seas and waters.

Grant call expected to open in **January 2026**:

- **Community-led Pilot Actions Grants:** 200.000 – 2.000.000 EUR per grant – 1 call
- **Transition Agenda Grants:** 100.000 EUR per grant – 2 calls

**Eligible applicants:** regional & local authorities, NGO's, research & academia, locally based companies.

**Topics:** pollution reduction, ecosystem restoration and blue economy.

The call will be promoted in our communication channels so follow us!

**BLUE  
ACTION  
BANOS**

**EMPOWERING  
SUSTAINABLE  
TRANSITIONS FOR  
BALTIC & NORTH SEA  
BLUE COMMUNITIES**

by offering **funding**, **technical guidance**,  
**matchmaking** and **collaboration** to support  
communities in implementing impactful solutions  
to restore our oceans, seas and waters.

Scan for more  
information



or

[in linkedin.com/company/blueactionbanos](https://www.linkedin.com/company/blueactionbanos)



**Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik, Deputy Director, Department for Ecology and Energy, Gdansk, Poland**

Photo: Judy Vos / Unsplash

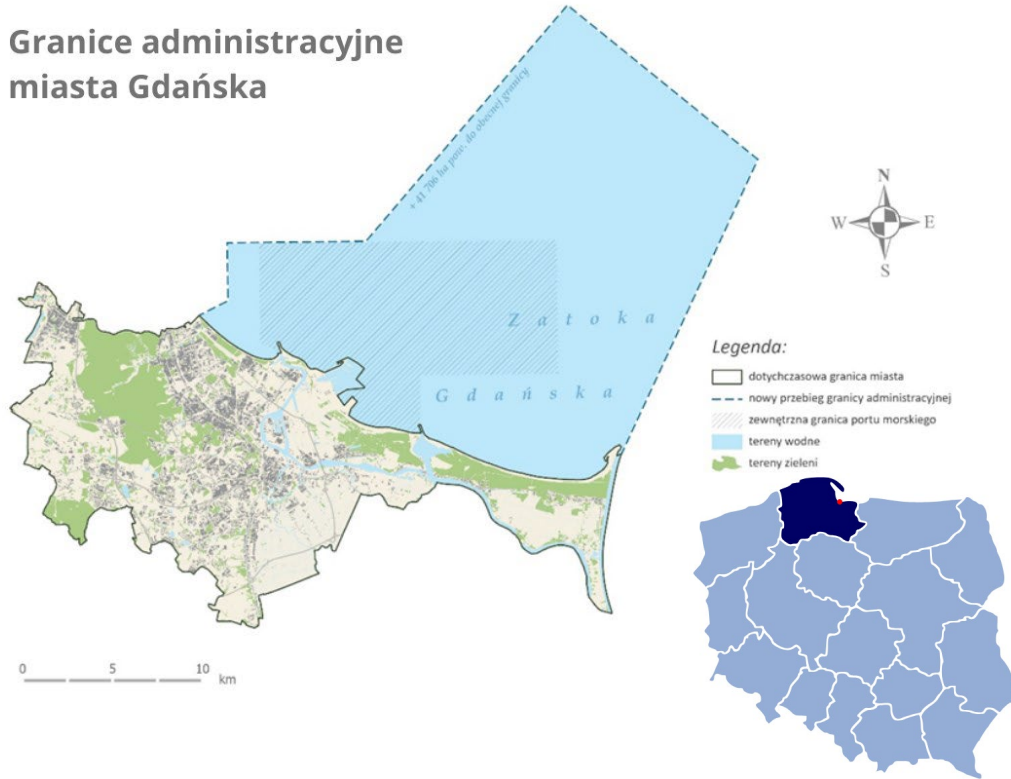
# Gdańsk – the Green City

UBC General Conference 2025

Fot. Paweł Pietak

# Quick facts about Gdansk

## Granice administracyjne miasta Gdańska

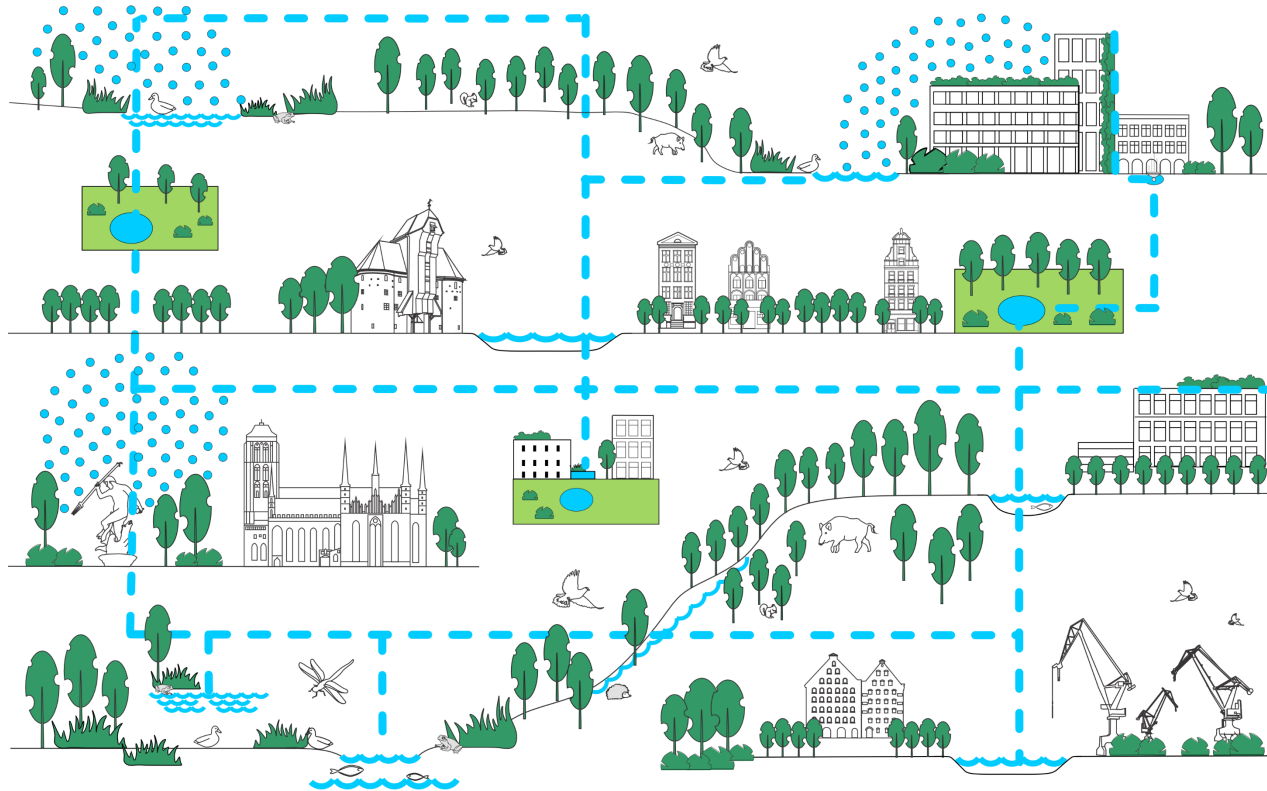


- Population – 489,160 (6th in terms of population)
- Area - including the area under sea waters 683 km<sup>2</sup>
- Land area – 258 km<sup>2</sup>
- Green areas – 6,464 ha
- Legally protected areas – 7,936 ha
- Park facilities – 26 with an area of 243 ha
- Retention – 56 reservoirs, 759,000 m<sup>3</sup>
- Length of rivers, streams, ditches – approx. 308 km (including the length of drainage ditches – 168 km).

[illegible]

## Strategy 2030 plus – increasing the retention volume u to 1 milliln m3

# Diagram illustrating the concept of blue-green infrastructure in the city

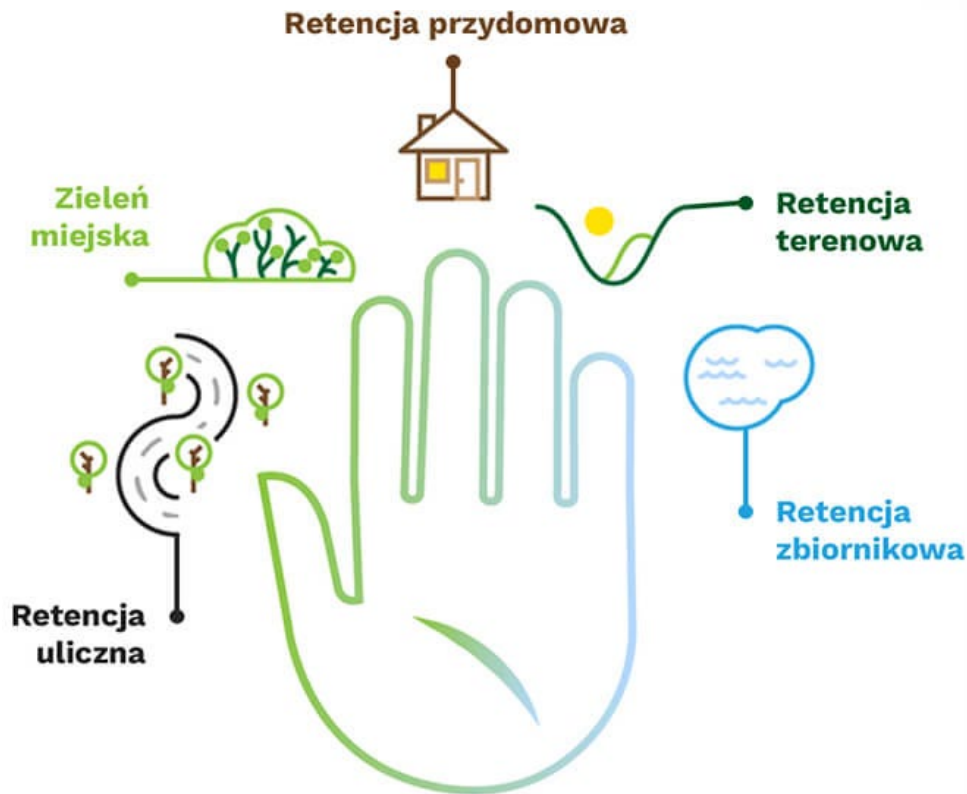


# Three stages of rainwater management



# STAGE I and II - 5 main types of retention in Gdańsk

- home retention
- land retention
- reservoir retention
- street retention
- urban greenery



# Small water retention system

- Rain gardens
- Grass basins
- Retention basins
- Green or retention roofs
- Other small water retention facilities



98 green retention facilities with a retention capacity of 31,700 m<sup>3</sup> (including rain gardens and grass basins).



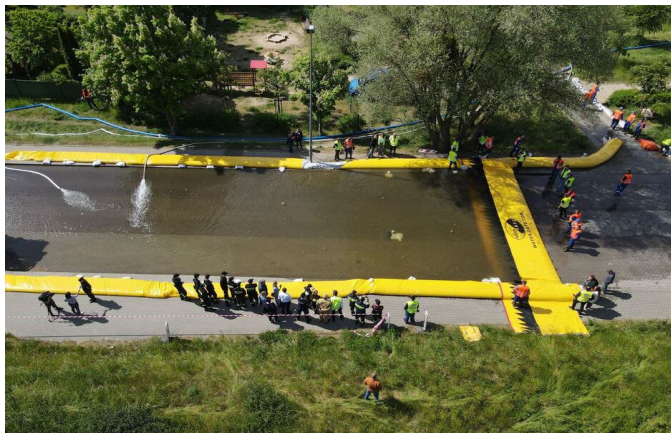
# Stage III

- 2001 and 2016:



## Crisis management - actions taken by services in crisis situations:

- Securing buildings against water ingress
- Draining water from flooded areas
- Clearing grates and drains
- Securing retention reservoirs
- Checking pumping stations



# Flood mitigation measures

Development of flood protection and drainage of the city.

- ongoing regulation of streams and canals,
- construction of a new rain drainage system,
- modernization and maintenance of retention reservoirs,
- modernization of rain collectors,
- maintenance and preservation of the bank reinforcements of channels, flood embankments and ditches.

The basis of Gdańsk's flood protection system in 2024 was a network of 56 municipal flood control and retention reservoirs, arranged in a cascade along streams and main storm water drainage collectors, creating a system unrivalled in other Polish cities.

# Water monitoring systems

- Hydrological monitoring consists of:
  - 24 rain gauges,
  - 2 meteo stations
  - 80 stations for measuring water levels in reservoirs and watercourses
  - 4 stations for measuring the quality of rainwater
  - 4 stations for measuring the quality of surface water.
- Monitoring of surface water quality, including calculation of the pollutant load discharged from the Gdańsk municipality into the Gdańsk Bay, was carried out at 50 measuring points (34 points on watercourses, 9 points on water reservoirs and 7 points on lakes).
- Groundwater monitoring in the Gdańsk area. The chemical condition of the water is monitored in 133 wells at municipal water intakes and in 264 observation wells (piezometers) located within the designated intake protection zones and in the area of the Gdańsk-Wschód sewage treatment plant.



Źródło: [www.ehydrolog.pl](http://www.ehydrolog.pl)

# EMPEREST - Eliminating Micro-Pollutants from Effluents for REuse STrategies

Revitalisation period: 01.01.2023 - 31.12.2025

Total project budget: 5,432,044.00 EUR; GIWK Budget in the project: 644,722.00 EUR

Amount of funding from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme – 80%

Partners:

A consortium of 14 partners from Poland, Finland, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania and Latvia.

Leader – Union of Baltic Cities in Turku, Finland.



## Project objectives

Assessment of the presence of so-called persistent organic pollutants in wastewater discharged into the environment and the possibility of their removal in municipal wastewater treatment plants.

The project aims to provide the best available scientific knowledge and technology to support EU efforts to reduce emissions of hazardous substances such as persistent organic pollutants, including perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).

## Gdańsk's task

In 2024, the construction of a pilot container installation for testing the removal of micropollutants from water and sewage was completed. Pilot tests were carried out on the removal of micropollutants at the Gdańsk-Wschód sewage treatment plant. The results confirmed the high efficiency of micro-pollutant removal in the ozonation and adsorption process at a level of 87–100%, with the exception of poly- and perfluoroalkyl compounds, for which a 100% reduction required the use of an additional ion exchange process. The results of the pilot tests will be used to develop technical guidelines for full-scale systems for the removal of micropollutants from wastewater.





Thank you for your attention ☺

++ N E C T E M E R E N E C T I M I D E ++

# Water-smart cities

## UBC SCC Survey highlights:

1. Pollution from **nutrients and hazardous substances**
2. Increasing challenges from **heavy rainfall, urban and coastal flooding**, needs for efficient floods protection measures and stormwater collection systems
3. High costs of **small retention solutions**
4. Limited adoption of **nature-based solutions**, often higher upfront costs
5. Growing need for efficient **water use and reuse** based on circular economy principles



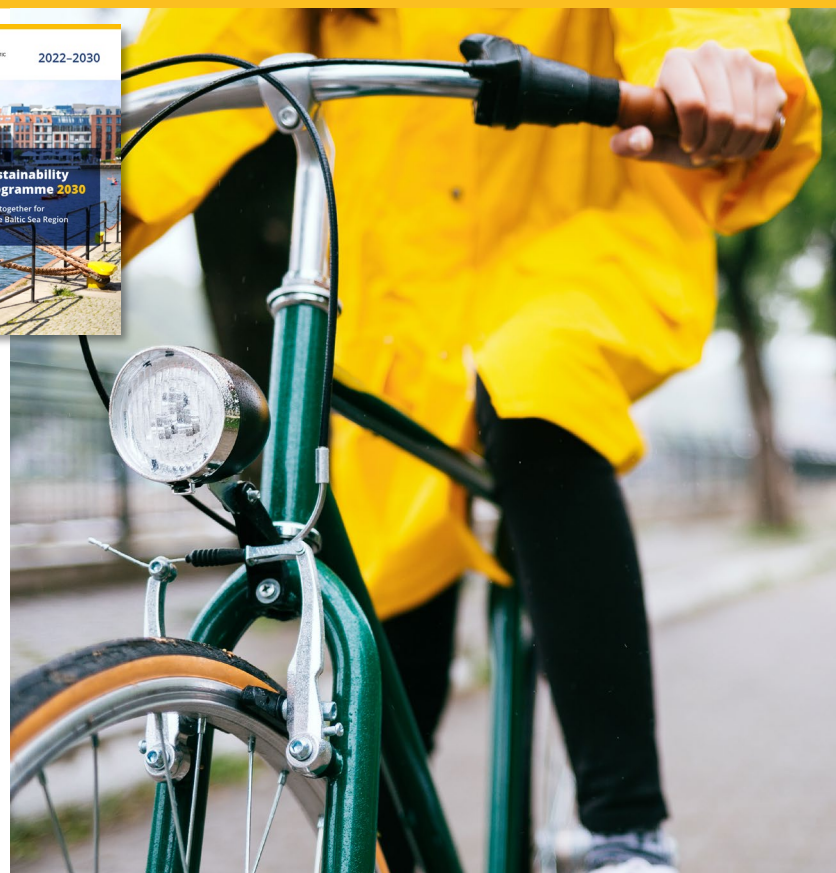


UBC SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2030

# Mobility-smart cities

Transitions towards a sustainable and resilient mobility and transport system are needed in UBC cities.

- Cities implement **Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans** (SUMPs) as strategic tool to address active and sustainable mobility
- Cities advance the **de-carbonization of public transport** and provide comprehensive support for **e-mobility initiatives**
- Cities promote **inclusive and accessible mobility solutions** for all user groups



3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



13 CLIMATE  
ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



UBC SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2030

# Mobility-smart cities

**SUMPs for BSR project** helps smaller cities adopt Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning to encourage shift towards active mobility and reduction of traffic emissions at the same time.

- **Five online training modules** on SUMP including webinars, workshops and peer-to-peer learning
- **SUMP clinic** offering tailored support to 10 selected small and medium-sized cities (Apply by 30.1.2026)
- Easy and open access to all **learning materials**

More information & registration:

<https://bsr-sump.eu/training/>



**Interreg**  
Baltic Sea Region

 Co-funded by  
the European Union

 SMART GREEN MOBILITY  
**SUMPs for BSR**

# Mobility-smart cities

## UBC SCC Survey highlights:

1. Need to create attractive **alternatives to private car** transport
2. Shortage of **finances** due to national and regional priorities
3. Biggest challenges related to **CO2 emission reduction**
4. How to **change the mindset** and way of living for the society
5. **Improve urban planning** to deliver multifunctional public spaces that provide basic services close to where people live





UBC SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PROGRAMME 2030

# Resource-efficient cities

Natural resources need to be used more efficiently by **moving from a linear economy model towards a circular economy.**

- Cities set an example of sustainable consumption by strategically applying **sustainable public procurement.**
- Cities develop and implement **holistic strategies or roadmaps for the circular economy.**



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Resource-efficient cities

**BALTIPLAST** project aims at prevention and reduction of plastic waste in the Baltic Sea Region.

The project focuses on single use plastic reduction, improvements in plastic packaging and innovative collection & treatment systems in municipalities.

- Explore the **Educational kit for local authorities**  
Online platform with tools, best city practices, factsheets, training videos, and a quiz
- Join the **BALTIPLAST final conference in Turku on 10-11 December 2025**  
Expert knowledge, panel discussions, extensive networking, study visits



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Resource-efficient cities

## UBC SCC survey highlights:

1. Challenges in cooperation between **city and rural area**.
2. Circular solutions initially require **higher investments** than a linear approach.
3. Municipal **budget is limited**: “quick” and cheaper solutions preferred over long-term circular principles.
4. Lack of **data and monitoring**.
5. Difficulty in creating **indicators** for the implementation of the circular economy roadmap.





# Biodiverse cities

Protecting and restoring biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems in urban areas is essential for strengthening cities' resilience.

- Cities need to actively enhance urban biodiversity through **planning and management** actions
- Cities need to ensure **strong political commitment, adequate resources and funding** for biodiversity initiatives
- Cities aim to prioritise strategic communication to **raise awareness and build public & political support**



## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Biodiverse cities

**Urban Biodiversity Parks project** develops biodiversity parks as places where biodiversity can be actively increased within an urban environment.

- The focus is on protecting and increasing **local plants and species**.
- An **attractive outdoor and recreational area** for residents, where they can **learn about nature**.

Piloting will produce a **replicable model** for other cities to replicate.

[www.urban-initiative.eu/ia-cities/turku/about-projects](http://www.urban-initiative.eu/ia-cities/turku/about-projects)



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## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Biodiverse cities

## SKANSSI BIODIVERSITY PARK

- Europe's first biodiversity park in the Skanssi neighborhood – 20 ha
- The park is located next to a new residential area (Skanssi)
- 21 different nature management zones
- The aim is to be a **flagship destination in Europe** for nurturing and increasing biodiversity

### UBC TALKS

Urban Biodiversity Parks  
as a method for tively  
increasing biodiversity

Watch 90 min  
recording





**Per-Arne Nilsson, Senior Environmental strategist, Malmö, Sweden**

## CURRENT ACTIVITIES

# Biodiverse cities

## UBC SCC Survey highlights:

1. Many cities **don't have a biodiversity-related strategy** (it's integrated into other strategies e.g. climate plan)
2. In coming years cities want to focus on **finding more space for nature**, biodiversity and nature-based solutions
3. City administrations **work in silos**
4. Lack of information on **monetary values** of ecosystem services
5. **Not a priority from political viewpoint** – nature areas and biodiversity are not seen to create economical growth





# Thank you!

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