

XVIII UBC General Conference

Słupsk/Dolina Charlotty, Poland, 4-7 November 2025

Speech: Strengthening the Role of UBC Member Cities in Shaping EU Policy and Participating in EU-Funded Projects

Dear Baltic Sea Friends,

It is a true pleasure to welcome all of you to the Pomorskie Region. Pomorskie has always been open to people and new ideas. For generations, our region has connected rather than divided.

Our region is home to many people who have shaped modern Poland and Europe — including Donald Tusk, the current Prime Minister of Poland and former President of the European Council; former Presidents of Poland Lech Wałęsa and Lech Kaczyński; and Janusz Lewandowski, former European Commissioner for the Budget. This shows how deeply Pomorskie is connected with Europe and its future.

Today, we meet to discuss how our regions and cities can work together to face new challenges.

This discussion is especially important now, as it takes place during the debate on the new EU Cohesion Policy for 2028–2034.

It is crucial for cities and regions to speak with one strong voice — to express our needs and defend our role in building a stronger Europe. In Poland, the Convention of Marshals of the Republic of Poland has already adopted a position on the European Commission's proposals for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034.

Among the most important points are:

- maintaining the principle of decentralisation in the implementation of Cohesion Policy,
- allocating more funds to Cohesion Policy, managed by the regions.

- expressing concern about the growing role of national governments at the expense of local authorities,
- highlighting the special role of regions along the EU's eastern border,
- demanding clearer rules for project implementation,
- improving advance payment levels,
- and increasing technical assistance to at least 5%.

Strengthening the role of regions and cities is essential for representing our interests in the European Union and for ensuring the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region.

We all face common challenges — such as climate change, housing, water pollution, migration, tourism pressure, and the energy transition.

Cities are at the heart of the economy, education, and transport — their voices must be heard when EU policies and projects are designed.

Indeed, it is in cities that EU projects are implemented — in energy transition, climate protection, public transport, and waste management.

The UBC can therefore play a key role as a platform for cooperation and coordination.

It can help cities prepare joint applications for EU funding and strengthen their ability to run transnational projects.

Joint projects increase our chances of success in programmes such as Horizon Europe, LIFE, or Interreg.

By strengthening the UBC's role in EU projects, we can make the Baltic Sea Region even more integrated, innovative, and competitive.

We all see that the world around us is changing fast.

Predictability is turning into uncertainty, and global events affect our

regions more than ever before.

In such times, cooperation is not only valuable – it is essential. It gives us stability, strength, and hope.

For many years, the Union of the Baltic Cities has been a strong voice for our cities and regions.

It connects local governments, institutions, and citizens — helping us turn ideas into action.

Thanks to this cooperation, our region has become more united, innovative, and resilient.

Here in Pomorskie, we deeply share that vision.

We know that the Baltic Sea does not separate us — it connects us.

It connects our economies, our universities, and our people.

True cooperation starts with people.

When we listen, share, and trust each other.

We also know that security in our region means more than defence.

It means strong communities, reliable infrastructure, good education, and mutual understanding.

It means being ready to work together in times of crisis and to support each other when challenges arise.

Today's meeting is a great opportunity to strengthen our partnerships, to learn from one another, and to share our experiences — both the good and the difficult.

Dear friends,

Together, we can make the Baltic Sea Region a model of cooperation, peace, and sustainable development.

Together, we can make it a place where people feel safe, connected, and inspired.

And finally, please remember:

We must stand with Ukraine.

We must support Ukraine for as long as they need it.

Thank you.