

XIV UBC General Conference

24-27 October 2017 in Växjö

Leadership for the future

Cities as leaders for global sustainable development



XIV UBC General Conference, Växjö, Sweden, 24-27 October 2017

Appeal on Tackling Rising Populism and Euroscepticism

Our heritage

Among the goals and objectives settled by the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) founding conference in Gdańsk in 1991 was the emphasis of the specific geographical and political role of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) for stimulating the integration of European countries and creation of the united democratic Europe.

In the face of the fundamental challenges that Europe encounters today, such as the rise of populism and nationalism, member cities of the Union of the Baltic Cities gathered at the 25th Anniversary General Conference in Växjö emphasize the Baltic Sea Region cities' attachment to the European values of freedom, democracy, equality, openness, tolerance, solidarity and diversity. We strongly support the process of building a European unity, based on these values, instead of building new borders and nationalistic prejudices.

We live in challenging times, which require that cities stand up and show leadership. Union of the Baltic Cities is the natural forum to seek effective solutions to common challenges, such as climate, jobs, growth, promoting democracy, integration and security.

Threats of democratic shape

Growing populism, radicalisation and nationalism are phenomena which until recently were totally unknown to us, living in stable, safe, and thoroughly democratic Europe.

There are threats hanging over Europe of that democratic shape, the shape which has always been an unquestionable value and lay at the foundation of the European Union.

This democratic shape must be based on the tripartite separation of powers, strong local government, independent media and culture. Fundamental value of our system should be respect for all of the people, regardless of their belief, colour of the skin or sexual orientation. For those who are in need we should show our solidarity.

Showing solidarity

We cannot be indifferent to what happens around us, even if the events take place in the remotest pockets of this world. This becomes more evident, if we consider that in our times of globalisation we are bound to experience the same events, and that they will affect us rather sooner than later.

We are aware that creation of a policy dedicated to the issues of immigrants and refugees is an obligation and prerogative of every European nation at state level. However, we are also aware that no one can release the local authorities from the obligation of following simple moral rules. As we see it, the rules include the principle, that whatever we do, should be based on respect for human rights.

The punchline

We are sharing the crossroads, both in and outside Europe. It is now that we are making vital choices which will have long lasting consequences. The question is: which road do we take; shall we opt for the winding path of values, or rather speed dangerously head first onto the motorway of populism.

Democracy is not given to us once and for good. It is not obvious. It is the value we must fight for day after day; and education should be our prime weapon.

Let us not allow radicalism to become our daily bread. It is thanks to our effort and the determination of the residents of our cities that radicalism, populism, and intolerance can and must remain what they truly are: a margin of our societies and degeneracy.

We appeal to all our Member cities, their Mayors and all our partners and friends: Let us stand up and show leadership in this hour of uncertainty! Together, we can make the difference!

Appeal endorsed by the XIV General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities attended by some 300 representatives of cities, youth, institutions and organisations.

Växjö, 25 October 2017