

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES

8-9 December 1995 (Aarhus) - 12-13 September 1997 (Gdańsk)

Introduction

Since the 3rd General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities, held in Aarhus on 8-9 December 1995, the Union has grown up. The number of Union's members has reached the figure **77**.

The new members are:

Elva, Göteborg, Horsens, Karlstad, Kärddla, Keila, Kemi, Kolding, Lahti, Mariehamn, Malmö, Nacka, Narva, Nyborg, Nybro, Nyköping, Oxelösund, Pori, Tartu, Umeå, Uppsala, Vaasa, Växjö, Viljandi.

During mentioned period the Union has accepted new members, strengthened its own network and structure, launched a number of challenging projects and initiatives.

The Union developed existing and established new contacts with other Baltic and European organisations and institutions e.g. European Commission, Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States, Baltic Parliamentary Conference, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, Baltic Sea Commission on CPMR, Helsinki Commission, Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association, Baltic Sea Tourism Commission and others.

The Executives of the Union during the third 2-years period:

Mr Anders Engström, President (Kalmar)

Mr Michael Bouteiller, Vice-President (Lübeck)

Mr Jaak Tamm, Vice-President (Tallinn)

Mr Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General (Gdańsk)

The Executive Board of the Union during the third 2 years period:

Aarhus Denmark

Gdańsk Poland

Kaliningrad Russia

Kaunas Lithuania

Bergen Norway

Riga Latvia

Rostock Germany

Stockholm Sweden

Pärnu Estonia

Turku Finland

The Executive Board Meetings:

Five Executive Board Meetings took place during the reporting period between Aarhus and Gdańsk General Conferences:

14th Meeting - Kotka, 13 April 1996

15th Meeting - Pärnu, 21 September 1996

16th Meeting - Stockholm, 25 January 1997

17th Meeting - Bergen, 6-7 June 1997

18th Meeting - Gdańsk, 11 September 1997

The Executive Board played an important and stimulating role in the progress of UBC activities. The Board considered and approved a number of challenging projects and initiatives submitted by the working Commissions, the Project Manager, the President, the Secretariat and the Member Cities. The Union projects, activities, special events and other activities launched during the described period are outlined in this report.

UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk

The Union of the Baltic Cities Secretariat since UBC creation has been located in and financed by the City of Gdańsk. The Union has been highly satisfied with the work of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat provides a daily professional service to the Union and its Members.

All financial matters have been handled properly.

The Union would like to officially thank the City of Gdańsk and the Secretariat for their outstanding contributions to UBC over the past six years.

UBC working Commissions

The UBC working Commissions have been led by the following Cities:

The Commission: The Lead Cities:

the Commission on Communication Kalmar, Riga

the Commission on Culture Szczecin, Visby

the Commission on Environment Aarhus, Turku

the Commission on Social Affairs Rostock, Lübeck

the Commission on Sport Gdynia, Karlskrona

the Commission on Tourism Kalmar, Rēzekne

the Commission on Transportation Gdańsk, Kaliningrad

The Commissions oversee Union activities in each of the respective areas. Examples of projects, activities and events carried out by the Commissions within the reporting period are briefly described below.

I. Commission on Communication

The Commission is chaired by Mr Lars Malmberg, Kalmar.

The Commission have made priority to three major goals:

- * to develop an Internet solution for the UBC members and to connect this net to other interesting nets in the Baltic region
- * to set up an internal marketing team for the UBC called the Task Force
- * to establish a learning forum for the usage of Internet

The Commission decided not to go further with the Geographic Information System, GIS.

Internet

The Internet solution has first been set up as a dummy to show the cities the way it might look. In the future each city has to take responsibility for its own homepage and its updating. The internal system is on its way and the intention is to connect it to other systems.

Communication Task Force (TF)

The UBC Task Force for Public Relations and Communication was set up. The Task Force aim is briefly described on page 11 of this report.

Baltic Sea Alliance (BSA)

The BSA initiative was launched in October 1996. BSA is an Internet based platform for cooperation and communication between Baltic organisations. The core of BSA consists of three organisations i.e. UBC, BSSSC and BCCA. All other organisations are welcome to join Baltic Sea Alliance. The BSA is coordinated by Ms Sonja Hilavuo, Tampere. Currently the BSA homepage is under construction.

Meetings of the Commission.

The Commission met in Riga on 10-11 April 1997. The Commission decided to organise the seminar for city employees responsible for Internet to be held in Kalmar on 5-7 October 1997.

II. Commission on Culture

The Commission is chaired by Mr Sławomir Szafrąński, Szczecin.

Secretariat

The secretariat of the Commission on Culture is financed by the City of Szczecin.

Ms Magdalena Lewoc is responsible for the secretariat.

Working session

The second working session of the Commission was held in Visby on 3-5 May 1996. The theme of the session was "Freedom of Expression-Information-Libraries". The meeting was attended by 90 participants - librarians, culture managers and politicians from all Baltic countries. The session was opened by the Swedish Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Pierre Schori.

As a result of the meeting the UBC Library Network was established.

UBC Festivals

The 4th International UBC Art & Culture Festival named the "Art of Musica" was organised in Szczecin, on 22 June - 3 July 1996. The total festival budget was over 34000 ECU, covered mostly from Szczecin's municipal funds. The festival was coorganised by Szczecin's cultural organisations and the Baltic Music Network. Very good concerts were given by ensembles from all Baltic countries. The next festival will be held in Gdynia in October 1997 and will be devoted to chamber music.

The Magazine

The idea to create Baltic culture magazine "Mare Articum" was presented in Commission's Action Plan 1996-97. The first "Mare Articum" workshop was held in Szczecin on 14-15 November 1996. The seminar gathered over 20 participants: artists, critics, publishers and city representatives. Participants discussed the organisational and financial structure of the project and settled the contents and the profile of the magazine. On 12-14 March 1997 Szczecin hosted a meeting of the "Mare Articum" editorial board. The main purpose of this magazine is to initiate a joint discussion and promotion forum for the under-developed artistic movement in the Baltic region. The sample issue of the magazine will be published in September 1997 and will focus on the theme of national identity in the context of developing universal art language.

Calendar of Events

The UBC Calendar of Cultural Events was actualized by culture office in Visby and presented in June 1997 on the new UBC Internet Homepage www.ubc.net. The calendar will be updated twice a year.

Catalogue of Institutions

The UBC Catalogue of Cultural Institutions was first published in 1995 by the city of Visby. The catalogue includes contact addresses and descriptions of over 650 municipal culture offices, museums, libraries, art schools and other culture institutions. The catalogue is designed as a practical tool for culture managers looking for project partners or information exchange. The catalogue of cultural institutions is being updated and presented on UBC Internet homepage www.ubc.net.

III. Commission on Environment

The Commission is chaired by Mr Carl Nielsen, Aarhus and Mr Mikko Jokinen, Turku.

The main Commission's activities in mentioned period have been:

- * establishment of the Secretariat in Turku, Finland
- * Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin
- * Training programme: "Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource Development in Baltic Cities"
- * Baltic Municipal Environmental Auditing project

Secretariat

The prerequisites for the daily work of the Commission were greatly improved as the City of Turku, Finland allocated funds for establishing a secretariat for the Commission on Environment. Mr Esko Sorakunnas was employed as UBC's Environmental Coordinator and the secretariat was opened in Turku in April 1996. The City of Turku financed the establishment of the secretariat and its running costs.

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin

The Commission on Environment has started to publish an environmental bulletin that focuses on environmental problems relevant to the Baltic cities. It aims at increasing the flow of information between UBC member cities and also informing outside parties about UBC environmental activities. UBC Environmental Coordinator is responsible for the bulletin. The bulletin is distributed to UBC member cities as well as institutions, universities, etc. working with environmental issues.

The bulletin is available on the Internet at www.ubc.net/environment/begin.htm.

Training programme: "Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource Development in Baltic Cities"

During 1996 UBC carried out a training programme with financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers. This was the first concrete input from UBC as a lead party in implementing HELCOM's Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP). UBC's training program consisted of the following events:

- * Seminar on Physical Planning and the Environment, Klaipėda, 17-19 February
- * Seminar on Recycling as an Element of Solid Waste Management, Riga, 7-8 March
- * Course on Recycling as an Element of Solid Waste Management, Gdańsk, 28-31 August
- * Course on Physical Planning and the Environment, Liepāja, 24-27 October

Altogether 214 environmental specialists and decision-makers from UBC's member cities participated in these four events.

Municipal Environmental Auditing -project

This MEA-project was launched on 1 March 1996 with financial support from EU's Life-fund, the World Bank and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. It is implemented jointly by the cities of Turku and Helsinki in Finland and Tallinn in Estonia. The aim is to develop a model for conducting environmental audits in Baltic cities.

The first phase of the project, the auditing of Tallinn was completed in February 1997 and the following publications have been written:

- * Manual for Municipal Environmental Auditing (MEA) in Baltic Cities
- * MEA Workbook
- * Conclusions and Recommendations of the MEA Project in Tallinn
- * The Initial Environmental Review of the City of Tallinn
- * MEA Pilot Project in Tallinn

UBC cities will be trained and encouraged to adopt the model and use it to audit their own city's environmental performance. This will be achieved by organising the national MEA seminars during September - October 1997.

Other activities

Baltic 21

Baltic 21, the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region, is an initiative taken by the region's Prime Ministers at their meeting in Visby in May 1996. UBC has been accepted as a full member to the Baltic 21 steering group (Senior Officials Group, SOG). Mr Peter Gavelin from Sundsvall has represented UBC in the SOG meetings.

Environmental Goals for Ships and Ports

During spring 1997 UBC Commission on Environment was involved in project planning and preparing the application to the EU's Interreg II A programme. The application was approved in April 1997 and the project started in August 1997. The project aims at unifying the environmental policies of the participating harbours. The project covers the area between

Turku-Mariehamn-Stockholm. The total budget for the project is 63000\$ of which 50% comes from Interreg II A programme for the Archipelago Area and 50 % from the participating cities. The first working session was held in Mariehamn on 26 August 1997. The project is estimated to last until April 1998.

Meetings of the Commission

The Commission on Environment has had the following working meetings:

Kaunas, 13 - 15 September 1996 (25 participants from 11 cities)

Tallinn, 18 - 19 April 1997 (31 participants from 15 cities)

IV. Commission on Social Affairs

The Commission is chaired by Mr Ulrich Baeurmeister, Rostock.

Secretariat

The secretariat of the Commission on Social Affairs financed by the city of Rostock.

Ms Petra Hamann and Ms Karin Wohlgemuth are responsible for the secretariat.

Projects

Different projects have been designed and applied for funding to EU Programmes. Some projects have been rejected and some accepted.

The EU PACTE Project "Baltic Cities"

The project was launched in May 1996. Participating cities are: Helsinki, Storstroem, Kalmar, Lübeck and Rostock. The main aim of the project is the exchange of experience in transnational employment development between the Baltic Cities. The project budget is 131900 ECU, local contribution 34565 ECU. The projects includes: seminars in each city, workshop, conference, exhibition, brochure. The project ends in September 97.

Conference on "Labour Market and Social Policy" in the Baltic Sea region

The conference took place in March 1997 and was a part of the above mentioned project. All UBC member cities got invitations to participate at this conference. 120 participants from 9 Baltic countries and approximately 35 cities participated.

"Growing Europe - Groovy Europe"

This event, organised in May 1996 in Rostock, gave the young musicians from Baltic Cities the possibility to give public concerts on board of the vessel "Stubnitz". The event was organised jointly with the Baltic Music Network.

ECOS-Ouverture project "Baltic City Tourism"

The project application has been prepared in July. The project aims were developed directly from the results of the BALTIC TREFF workshop. The Baltic Events Calendar "What happens in the Baltic?" shall be distributed around the Baltic Sea region. The Commission expects to obtain EU grants in order to perform this project from the beginning of 1998.

Baltic Bicycle Ride for Charity

The bicycle ride went around the Baltic Sea, through Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Finland, Sweden and Germany. A group of Rostock citizens started on 16 June 1997 taking with them goods dedicated to three orphanages in Stegna / Poland, in Kaliningrad / Russia and Riga / Latvia. The goods which came from Rostock inhabitants, were successfully delivered and gratefully accepted.

V. Commission on Sport

The Commission on Sport is chaired by Mr Zdzisław Urla, Gdynia.

Secretariat

The secretariat of the Commission on Sport is financed by the city of Gdynia.

Mr Przemysław Bartnicki is responsible for the secretariat.

Meetings

During the reporting period the Commission had its meetings in:

- * Karlskrona, on 29 February - 1 March 1996
- * Cetniewo near Gdynia, on 21-22 March 1996

Activities

In 1996 and 1997 several sport events took place under the flag of UBC Commission on Sport. The major events were the following:

- * Grand Prix Regatta in windsurfing in Łeba
- * Christmas Football Games in Karlskrona in 1996
- * Twin Cities Sporting Competition, 1996 and 1997 in Gdynia.

Currently 20 UBC member cities participate in the work of the Commission of Sport.

VI. Commission on Tourism

The Commission on Tourism is chaired by Mr Leif Nilsson, Kalmar.

Meetings

The internal meeting of the Commission on Tourism was held in Riga in April 1997.

The Commission had also meetings with the Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC) from Norrköping. BTC supports plans for tourism education under the umbrella of the Commission on Tourism initiative called Baltic Tourism Academy. The Commission also participated in the BTC Fair in Copenhagen in autumn 1996.

Projects

During the reporting period the Commission has worked with three EU projects:

- * EU-LIFE project concerning Curonian Spit and Vistula Spit in Kaliningrad region.
- * Baltic Point project in cooperation with the Commission on Social Affairs.
- * Training courses within Baltic Tourism Academy.

VII. Commission on Transportation

The Commission is chaired by Prof. Maciej T. Krzyżanowski, Gdańsk.

From the beginning of 1996 the Commission has continued to implement the recommendations of the UBC Conference on Actual Problems of the Baltic Sea-Land Transportation Systems, Gdańsk, April 1995, as regards the Trans European Motorway North-South (TEM), Via-Baltica and Via-Hanseatica.

Conferences

The question concerning the Transit Chains in the BSR has been discussed at the international conference organised by the members of the Commission in Helsinki, 5-7 June 1996. The Chairman of the Commission submitted a document on "Development of land transport systems linking a hinterland with the Baltic ports".

The development of closer links between the different modes of transport was discussed at the conference organised by the European Commission and the City of Helsinki on 10 September 1996. The Commission introduced the document on "Short Sea Shipping and Land Transportation Systems in the Baltic Region".

During the meeting of the Presidium of the Commission held on 26 February 1997 in Gdańsk, two working groups were established:

- * group on short sea shipping
- * group on public transport reorganisation

The problem of coastal and short sea shipping has been also discussed at the International Liner Shipping Conference in Hamburg, 12- 13 April 1997, in which the Commission has actively participated.

Examples of other UBC activities and projects

Task Force for Public Relations and Communication

Task Force is a functional group of contact persons from UBC member cities who have the will and the skill to promote practical and project-level cooperation between the cities. The Task Force members are typically city officials responsible for international relations and/or public relations in their cities, as the aim of the TF is essentially to develop communication about international projects, partnerships, events and other developments regarding cities and the region. In the first Task Force meeting more than 50 participants from 29 member cities met in Tampere, Finland on May 31 - June 1, 1996 to discuss communication flow and public relations within and about the Union of the Baltic Cities. The Task Force is chaired by Ms Sonja Hilavuo, Tampere.

UBC Women's Network

The aim of UBC Women's Network is to involve women from member cities in UBC activities and projects and to solve women's problems such as unemployment, discrimination etc. The Network is chaired by Ms Hjördis Höglund, Sundsvall. Within the reporting period the Women's Network organised two seminars on women's issues - in May 1996 in Karlskrona and in May 1997 in Kalmar.

Baltic Cities Bulletin

The UBC newsletter has been renewed and now is called the Baltic Cities Bulletin. The aim is to transform UBC newsletter into a type of news magazine, which can in a better way respond to the needs and interests of the Union. The major focus of the Baltic Cities Bulletin is still directed to information about the work of the Union and the actions of the member cities. Besides, more emphasis is placed on covering some specific fields of general interest which are presented as main themes for each issue. New editorial board led by the Secretary General is responsible for the bulletin. The bulletin is printed in 3500 copies and sent out to over 200 Baltic cities as well as a number of organisations and institutions. The bulletin is available on the Internet at www.ubc.net.

UBC Member Cities and the European Union (UBCEU)

The purpose of the UBCEU-project is to prepare the cities in the Baltic Sea Region for the EU expansion in the region. The strategic situation of cities will change considerably in the next few years, both in cities from present EU member states and the applicant states. The EU gives access to funding for development projects, but it also affects city actions and strategic position in fundamental way. The project will continue until the EU accession process is finished, and will increasingly grow in scope and actions during the next few years. The project steering group consists of ten cities (Copenhagen, Kalmar, Tampere, Tallinn, Liepāja, Panevėžys, Kaliningrad, Szczecin, Rostock and Kristiansand) with Szczecin and Copenhagen as leading cities. The cities from applicant countries have taken the obligation to disseminate the project experiences to all member cities in their countries. Until now, two seminars have been carried out and a conference, open for all cities, is planned to take place in November 1997 in Tallinn. Also, a promotion visit to Brussels will be carried out in early October in order to get more support from the EU for this project.

Public Transportation in eastern cities

The project involves five largest cities in Lithuania and four cities in Sweden. It started already in 1995 with grant from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), and has got additional grant from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA). The purpose of the project is to build long-lasting contacts between the Public Transport authorities in the Swedish and Lithuanian cities, and to support the change of public transport organisation to sustainable and efficient system. The project has carried out a number of study-visits and seminars, and more are planned. The Swedish government allocated 38,5 million SEK for upgrading public transport in cities in Lithuania and in Latvia. The Union is discussing with the Swedish government the spending of these resources within the UBC project. If the talks are successful, this will be the largest UBC project so far in terms of money.

Coastal Zone Project

Ten cities in the south-east corner of the Baltic Sea, from Palanga in Lithuania to Łeba in Poland have at several meetings discussed the need to carry out a project on sustainable development of this unique region. UBC will make a proposal to Jantar Euroregion to implement the project with the Union's assistance.

Adults Education

The project concerning adults education in Kaliningrad was initiated by the UBC together with the residential college for adults - the Öland Folk-highschool. The purpose of the project is to popularise the Scandinavian model of Folk-highschools for people education. The activities up till now included five courses held on Öland directed to English teachers from Kaliningrad University and to cultural workers. The school similar to Scandinavian study model called "All Together" was established in Kaliningrad and around 20 courses have been given. On the 1st of October 1997 the Kaliningrad Folk-highschool will be inaugurated. It will concentrate on education of English, Swedish and Media.

UBC projects submitted to the Baltic Small Projects Facility in 1997

A number of projects have been prepared by the UBC Project Manger and submitted to the BSPF. The applications are at present under processing.

The UBC Young Politicians Project. The purpose of this project is to create a network of young, active politicians in the cities. The project involves series of meetings and seminars, which will lead to a declaration on local democracy, taken in consensus. A call to the UBC Board Member Cities to nominate participants to the project has been distributed.

UBCEU. An application for a continuation of the above mentioned project has been submitted. In order to reach the aims of the project more efforts must be undertaken to obtain larger funding than available in the BSPF.

Accident Management. The project aims at creating an efficient service dealing with road accidents, for projected Via-Baltica Motorway. Pärnu and Norrköping are the project leading cities.

UBC Library Network- "Freedom of Expression". The cities of Copenhagen, Helsinki, Visby, Haapsalu, Riga and Vilnius started a project with the purpose of creating a library network in the Baltic region. The project is directed to meet the competition from the commercial sector

regarding young adults. This means that libraries must improve their service in order to meet this challenge.

Four Cities - Business Partenariats. The cities of Kalmar and Kristianstad will, in co-operation with the cities of Panevezys and Siauliai, arrange meeting places for SME in order to facilitate better business connections between northern Lithuania and south-east Sweden.