

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES

October 2007 – September 2009

Introduction

Since the IX General Conference in Pärnu, Estonia in 2007, the Union of the Baltic Cities has been actively working to fulfil the goals and aims presented in the Action Plan 2008-2009. The UBC further consolidated its network, launched new projects and political initiatives, organized a number of conferences, seminars and events.

One of the main strategic aims of the UBC in the reported period was to be present in the European debates and consultation processes on the policies and programmes that affect the region and local authorities in particular. The Union significantly contributed e.g. to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Moreover, the Union voiced its opinion on global problems, like the climate change. The UBC's objective was to attract Brussels' attention to the fact that the local authorities play a key role when dealing with the effects of climate change. Taking actively part in the EU consultation processes, the Union emphasized the local perspective also in other European policies, e.g. concerning the maritime and energy issues. Also, UBC kept promoting the influence and involvement of citizens, especially young persons and gender equality.

The Union developed existing contacts with other Baltic and European organizations and institutions i.e. European Parliament, European Commission, Committee of the Regions, Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States, Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Helsinki Commission, Baltic 21, VASAB 2010, Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities, Forum of Adriatic and Ionian Cities and others. The cooperation with BSSSC, B7, CPMR BSC, BDF and Euroregion Baltic resulted in joint statement on the EU Strategy for the BSR.

Examples of policy issues handled by UBC

- European Maritime Policy

In the first half of 2007, UBC took position on the EU maritime policy and passed its comments on Green Paper on European Maritime Policy to the European Commission. UBC had also participated in a number of international conferences of the European maritime policy.

The European Commission published, on the basis of wide consultation, on 10 October 2007, a paper entitled "An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union", also known as the "Blue Book" and a working document discussing the Blue Book in greater detail, in the form of an Action Plan for the period of 2007-2009. The European Heads of State and Government, in their conclusions of the European Council on 14 December 2007, welcomed the Commissions' proposals, thus giving the birth of a new integrated European Maritime Policy.

In order to follow development in the field of maritime policy and to formulate proposals for the UBC and member cities in this respect, the UBC Board decided to establish the Task Force with Turku as a chair, open to all member cities.

The new European Maritime Policy is in many ways very significant for the UBC and its members. The integrated approach to the issues linked to the Baltic Sea is a must to ensure that the values of sustainable development and need for economic prosperity can be balanced.

Members have a keen interest to follow the development of an integrated approach to the issues of governance: local and regional, national and European. UBC and its cities should be active in the forthcoming process to formulate national integrated maritime policies, and to ensure that main non-EU partners in our region, especially the Russian Federation and Norway, are part of the process.

Another important dimension is to raise public awareness of the maritime sector and of the need for integrated maritime policy. Among new initiatives is the proposal to observe annually a European Maritime Day on 20 May.

- **Climate Change - Resolution on Climate Change and comments on the EC Green Paper 'Adaptation to climate change in Europe - options for EU action'**

A UBC Resolution on Climate Change was accepted at the IX UBC General Conference in Pärnu 2007. The resolution recognized the importance of cities and local authorities as key players in the Baltic Sea Region in planning and implementing relevant actions to reduce harm and unwished effects of climate change. The resolution stressed that it is possible to combine increased welfare for our citizens and economic progress for our local companies with better energy efficiency and reduced emissions. UBC encouraged its member cities to take all necessary steps to reduce their harmful contribution to the climate change and to make plans for adaptation to effects that are already foreseen in the cities. UBC will promote strategies, development projects, partnerships and educational activities to minimize the negative effects of the climate change (floods, storms, infrastructure and water supply problems) and to ensure as friendly and safe environment as it is possible.

In 2007 the European Commission adopted an initial policy paper on climate change "Adapting to climate change in Europe - Options for EU action". The document emphasized the dual challenge to be faced - necessity of substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and the need to adapt to the changing climate conditions.

Together with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, UBC responded to the EC Green Paper generally acclaiming the initiative. The Union, however, believed that the local authorities are at the forefront when dealing with the consequences of climate change, therefore, it appealed for the local perspective in the EU approach. The UBC urged the Commission to recognize the importance of local and regional authorities and existing regional groupings in developing and delivering climate change adaptation measures, and to recognize the need to provide them with the powers to enable them to develop adaptation strategies. The UBC also proposed that EU should support the local authorities and regions in how they can inform, educate and support their citizens.

As regards the EC proposals, the Union agreed that a swift transition to a low-carbon economy needs to be the top priority on the political agenda. The UBC suggested including the energy production and distribution grids in rural and sub-urban areas in the action plan. Taking the fragile marine environment of the Baltic Sea into account, the UBC called for more firm actions to reduce the pollutants from waste water treatment plants.

Being aware of the complexity of the process, UBC agreed with the Commission's opinion that a "one-size-fits-all" is a non-appropriate approach. The EU should recognize the external dimension and build alliances with partners around the world.

- **EU Baltic Sea Strategy**

In December 2007, the European Council asked the European Commission to develop an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The aim of the Strategy would be to coordinate the efforts of various actors in the Region (Member States, regions, financing institutions, the EU, pan-Baltic organizations, non-governmental bodies, etc.) so that by working together they would promote a more balanced development of the Region. The Commission decided to focus the Strategy on four thematic areas to make the Baltic Sea region: an environmentally sustainable place; a prosperous place; an attractive place; a safe and secure place.

The DG for Regional Policy were consulting stakeholders, inviting member states, regional and local authorities, non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental bodies and the private sector in the Baltic Sea Region to provide their ideas. On 10 June 2009 the Communication of the European Commission concerning the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was launched accompanied by the Action Plan containing a list of flagship projects.

At the 52nd meeting in Kuressaare, the UBC Executive Board decided that UBC should prepare the position paper on the new Baltic Sea Strategy. The UBC Executive Board discussed and adopted its first position paper concerning the development of EU Baltic Sea Strategy at its meeting in Växjö in October 2008. At the same meeting the Board decided to request UBC Commissions to fulfil the position paper by sectoral inputs.

The main focus for the UBC was the governance in the region. The members of the UBC play a key role in the governance of the region and the future shall further enhance their role. Cities are the closest political actors representing the interests of the citizens. This gives them a special role in the future strategy.

The starting point of the UBC strategy was the proximity of cities both to the citizens and to markets. The UBC paid also attention to the need to see a close link between the Baltic Sea Strategy and the Maritime Strategy of the EU.

The UBC position paper was submitted to DG Regio in November 2008. Also, the UBC Commissions, authorized by the UBC Board to draft their own comments on the Strategy, passed their input to the European Commission. The contributions highlighted first of all that there should be a strong emphasis on the horizontal approach.

In addition, the UBC and other Baltic organizations, namely BSSSC, B7, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Baltic Development Forum and Euroregion Baltic, prepared also the joint statement on the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region which was passed to the EU Commission. UBC, CPMR-BSC and Euroregion Baltic discussed this document at the working meeting organized on 28 October in Växjö.

- Urban Mobility - UBC contribution to the EC Green Paper on Urban Transport Mobility promoting the Sustainable Urban Transport Planning

Through the BUSTRIP project the UBC contributed to the European Commission Green Paper on Urban Transport recommending Sustainable Urban Transport Planning (SUTP) in cities across Europe which aims at improving the state of the urban environment, and reducing urban sprawl, traffic and pollution. The EC communication on the Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment confirmed the preparation of SUTPs as an important cornerstone in the de-coupling of economic growth and transport growth in cities.

The UBC BUSTRIP (Baltic Urban Sustainable Transport Implementation & Planning) project is one of the first European projects to test, further develop and implement the concept in concrete. The project was coordinated by the Commission on Environment and Commission on Transportation was one of the partners.

As a follow up the EC Directorate General for Energy and Transport invited UBC to participate in the consultations on the Action Plan, which will follow the green paper. The Commission on Environment sent a reply to the DG TREN with suggestions to the action plan. UBC reply submitted in March 2008 stated inter alia:

- UBC advises to prepare and promote a guide for comprehensive mobility plans for urban areas.
 - UBC sees the target of reduced need for transport as a crucial part of sustainable urban mobility development.
 - Concerning the Public Transport, UBC observes the need to raise the profile of public transport in Europe, but especially in the new member states.
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- It's necessary to promote the clean vehicles through setting standards and by showing a good example. One of the suggested by UBC actions is to act for local production of fuel especially from waste.
- UBC emphasizes the big role of information and awareness rising. There is a need for information of the impact on the environment and society of different mobility choices.

- **Gender equality**

The Union has been promoting the work for an equal distribution of power, resources and opportunities between women and men. The UBC and the Commission on Gender Equality have been aiming at better recognition of the gender equality problems among the UBC members, and supporting informational and educational activities

At the 53rd meeting of the Executive Board held on 29 October 2008 in Växjö, Mr Marie-Louise Rönmark, UBC Vice President, Umeå, submitted the proposal to include the gender perspective also into the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Commission on Gender Equality prepared its comments on the EU Strategy.

Equality of women and men constitutes a fundamental right for all, and is an essential value for every democracy. Gender equality means equal rights and responsibilities for women and men, girls and boys. In order to be achieved, this right needs not only to be legally recognized, but to be effectively applied to all aspects of life: political, economic, social and cultural. Still can the lack of gender equality can be found throughout the whole Baltic Sea region.

UBC Commission on Gender Equality stressed that the gender issues should be given priority and be integrated into all parts of the Baltic Sea strategy. Gender mainstreaming is the integration of the gender perspective into every stage of policy process-design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation-aiming at promoting equality between women and men. It means assessing how policies impact on the life position of both women and men - and taking responsibility to readdress them if necessary. This is a way to make gender equality a concrete reality in the lives of women and men. Gender equality is necessary to achieve a sustainable society. The Commission on Gender Equality especially highlighted three focus areas that are of great importance for the development of our region: combating prostitution and human trafficking, issues of the labour market as well as social planning, urban planning and planning work.

- **European Road Safety Charter**

UBC decided to join the European Road Safety Charter (ERSC) and signed the agreement in July 2009. More than 1200 institutions have signed this charter so far. ERSC is an undertaking of Directorate-General for Energy and Transport of the European Commission. The main goal of this Charter is halving the number of traffic fatalities by 2010. The Charter includes 10 general principles referring to road safety prevention measures and a concrete commitment which a signing organization is obliged to fulfil within the consecutive three years. The commitments could include for example road safety campaigns, publication of road safety information, provision of driving courses for employees, elaboration of a road safety plan or improvement of the infrastructure etc.

UBC as a new Charter signatory has declared within its commitment to perform activities aiming at popularization of the road safety rules among UBC member cities and to strive to raise awareness of all traffic participants. The presentations of the Charter will be included in the annual meetings and seminars of the Commission on Transportation. ComTrans will also publish leaflets promoting the Charter and will be awarding the best projects on road safety implemented by NGOs or other institutions of UBC member cities.

UBC Executives during this two-year period

Mr Per Bødker Andersen, President, Mayor of Kolding

Ms Marie-Louise Rönmark, First Vice-President, Mayor of Umeå
Mr Jarkko Virtanen, Vice-President, Deputy Mayor of Turku
Ms Urve Tiidus, Vice-President, Mayor of Kuressaare
Mr Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, Gdańsk

Executive Board during this two-year period

Næstved	Denmark
Kärdla	Estonia
Kemi	Finland
Rostock	Germany
Liepāja	Latvia
Panevėžys	Lithuania
Kristiansand	Norway
Gdańsk	Poland
St. Petersburg	Russia
Växjö	Sweden

Executive Board Meetings

Six Executive Board Meetings took place during the reporting period between Pärnu and Kristiansand General Conferences:

- 51st Executive Board meeting, Brussels, 7-8 February 2008
- 52nd Executive Board meeting, Kuressaare, 5 June 2008
- 53rd Executive Board meeting, Växjö, 29 October 2008
- 54th Executive Board meeting, Jyväskylä, 12-14 March 2009
- 55th Executive Board meeting, Międzyzdroje, 30 June - 1 July 2009
- 56th Executive Board meeting, Kristiansand, 23 September 2009

The Executive Board played meaningful role in the development of UBC activities. The Board considered and endorsed a number of actions, initiatives and projects submitted by the Presidium, Commissions and Member Cities. The projects, initiatives, activities, events and other actions carried out by UBC during the described period are outlined in this report.

Board of Audit during this two-year period

Ms Ewa Back, Sundsvall
Ms Marta Chelkowska, Gdańsk
Ms Silvia Löbner, Wismar

UBC Secretariat

The Union of the Baltic Cities Secretariat is located in the City of Gdańsk at the residence of the City Council. The Secretariat provides daily service to the UBC and its members. The Union has been satisfied with the work performed by the Secretariat. The financial matters have been handled properly as confirmed by the auditor. The Union would like to express its thanks to the City of Gdańsk for its contribution to the UBC over the past years.

UBC Commissions

In the reported period the UBC Commissions have been led by the following Cities:

Commission:**Lead Cities:**

Commission on Business Cooperation	Kaunas, Kiel, Kolding
Commission on Culture	Vaasa
Commission on Education	Kärdla, Norrtälje
Commission on Energy	Oskarshamn
Commission on Environment	Turku, Nacka
Commission on Gender Equality	Umeå
Commission on Health & Social Affairs	Kristiansand
Commission on Information Society	St.Petersburg, Tampere
Commission on Sport	Gdynia, Karlskrona
Commission on Tourism	Koszalin, Szczecin
Commission on Transportation	Gdynia
Commission on Urban Planning	Helsinki
Commission on Youth Issues	Kalmar, Tallinn
EU-coordinators Network	Rostock

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 concisely described below.

I. Commission on Business Cooperation

In 2008 the chairmanship of the Commission on Business Cooperation was taken over by Narva, Estonia. There were no meetings in 2008. In November 2008 the cities of Kiel and Kolding, jointly with the President of the UBC, the General Secretariat and the Commission Secretariat, launched an initiative to activate the Business Commission.

Following an application by the cities of Kiel (D), represented by Kiel Business Development Cooperation (KiWi), and Kolding (DK), represented by Business Kolding, on 13 March 2009 the Executive Board resolved as follows:

1. Kiel Business Development Corporation will take the chair of the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation in 2010.
2. Business Kolding will take the chair of the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation in 2011.

The Secretariat was located in Kaunas.

Activities

On 4 June 2009 in Kiel, the Commission's meeting was held which representatives of the following cities attended: Jyväskylä, Kaunas, Kiel, Kolding and Tampere. The representatives began by presenting their cities and their main current projects. The preliminary work programme was then discussed and expanded.

With the support of the UBC, and in combination with a meeting of the Business Committee, the Second Kiel International Strategy Meeting was held on 5 June 2009, the subject of which was "creative region." More than 50 international experts on business, science and politics discussed the future of their business location, their industry and commerce.

Besides this, the programme of work undertaken by the UBC Commission on Business Cooperation in 2010 and 2011 envisages making contact with regions and partners from outside the Baltic region. The aim is to provide UBC member cities with detailed information on attractive business regions and to establish targeted contacts with them. In this context the first step was to establish direct contact between the Commission on Business Cooperation and the French region of the Côte d'Azur.

With regard to collaboration in EU projects, the Commission has already stated it is ready to become a network partner in the planned EU "User-Driven Innovation" Project, to gain improved knowledge through active participation and to ensure that information is available to the UBC member cities.

II. Commission on Culture

The Commission on Culture elected a new board for the years 2008-2011 during the IX UBC General conference in Pärnu. The new board consists of the following members: Ms. Tarja Hautamäki (chairman, Vaasa, Finland), Ms. Agrita Ozola (vice-chairman, Tukums, Latvia), Ms. Olga Cherkasova (St. Petersburg, Russia), Mr. Kim Dawartz (Næstved, Denmark), Mr. Björn Freidar Holmvik (Bergen, Norway) and Ms. Charlotte Lundkvist (Umeå, Sweden).

The old and the new board had a joint meeting in Cēsis, Latvia, 29 November – 1 December 2007. The commission decided to be chaired by Vaasa and Turku, Finland, and Ms. Maarit Keto-Seppälä (Turku, Finland) was chosen for the secretary of the commission.

Activities

The new board had its first meeting in Rostock, Germany, 13 – 15 March 2008. One of the tasks of the meeting was to activate more German UBC cities in the work of the commission on culture.

The second board meeting of the year 2008 was held in Bergen 26 – 27 November. Ms. Magdalena Zakrzewska from Ars Baltica network participated also the meeting and some plans for joint meetings and changing information were made.

The city of Rēzekne, Latvia hosted the board meeting 16 – 18 April 2009. The city of Rēzekne gave a presentation on regional multifunctional centre and development possibilities of creative industries in eastern Latvia. Kristiansand, Norway hosted the board meeting on 23 September 2009.

The theme of the third **Cultural Prize 2008** was “New Footsteps of Youth Culture”, which was announced in January 2008. The last application date was 31 August 2008. The decision was announced during the Annual Working Session in Bergen, 27 – 29 November. The prize was awarded to Jyväskylä Live Music Association JELMU RY.

The theme of the **Cultural Prize 2009** was “Creative use of information”, which was announced in January 2009. The last application date was 31 August 2009. The awarding ceremony will take place during UBC GC in Kristiansand.

The Vaasa Choir Festival was organized 14 – 18 May 2008 in cooperation with the commission on culture. The theme of the festival was Baltic choir music.

CoC supported **FiSH 08 – Festival Im Stadhafen** on 18 – 20 April 2008 in Rostock by giving the festival the right to use the name of UBC Commission on Culture in this connection.

The Festival of the Baltic Cities was held for the third time in St. Petersburg on 20 – 22 June 2008 in cooperation with the Commission on Culture. The chairperson of the Commission on Culture was invited as a speaker to the opening round-table discussion “Culture as a Universal Language in the Dialogue of Baltic Countries”. The fourth Festival of the Baltic Cities was organized on 22 – 24 May 2009 in Daugavpils, Latvia.

The Catalogue of the Cultural Institutions is available at www.ubc.net. The database of the Catalogue of the Cultural Institutions has been transferred from the server of the municipality of Gotland to the server of the city of Turku.

The **12th Annual Working Session** was hosted by the city of Bergen on 28 – 29 November 2008. The theme of the session was Art for Children – practice and theory. The session gathered together 46 participants.

The Action Plan of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy contains a list of flagship projects. One of them is called **Promote the cultural heritage and the unique landscapes**. CoC has informed the UBC secretariat that CoC is interested in getting more information about the project and probably would like to join the project but not as a leader.

A presenting **leaflet** has been produced to make the Commission on Culture more well-known.

III. Commission on Education

The Commission was chaired by Kurt Pettersson, city of Norrtälje. The Secretariat was located in Kärddla, Estonia.

Activities

Conference "What kind of guidance need the youngsters?"

On 9 October 2007 Commission on Education had a conference "What kind of guidance need the youngsters?" in Kärddla. Around 100 participants were present at the conference, most of them youngsters. The conference was built up in 4 parts: policy, expectations of youngsters, expectations of enterprisers and expectations of universities.

Annual Meeting of Commission on Education 2008

On 3 April 2008 Commission on Education had the Annual Meeting in Stockholm. The representatives from commissions on environment and energy informed about possible co-operation issues between the commissions. Youngsters from Kärddla spoke about small towns: "Small town citizens – educated or uneducated people?". Where are our roots? What kind of culture do we have? What are our possibilities? Kurt Pettersson, who has been the chairman from the start, was elected to continue as chairman for two years. The new vice-chairman for two years is Mare Aasma from Kärddla.

Meetings with other Commissions

Kairi Priit (Secretary, Kärddla) and Anders Olander (Norrtälje) represented Commission on Education on the Introduction Day Nordic Baltic Aalborg Commitments network on 6 February 2008 and UBC Commission on Environment meeting on 7 – 8 February 2008 in Tampere.

On 12 – 14 May 2008 Annely Veevo (Head of Commission Secretariat) represented Commission on Education in the Open Meeting of UBC Commission on Youth Issues in Tallinn.

Photoexhibition "My Friend in my City" was exhibited in Rostock, Germany from 17 January until 31 March 2008. The photos were also presented in Szczecin, Gdańsk, Malbork and Elbląg.

Partner in application to Baltic Sea Region in May 2008 – Baltic arenas. The project was not approved, but a new application "ILTRAS" was made in April 2009.

Erken Laboratory Research School 8 June – 4 July 2008 and 15 June – 10 July

The goal of the research schools were to offer students between the age of 17-19 years to attend a "scientific monastery" to increase cultural exchange between the young people in the region and at the same time increase the interest for higher education and natural sciences. All students conducted a project work of about 100 hours, finished with a written scientific report, a presentation and a poster.

Small Town Inhabitants - Educated or Uneducated People?"

First prize went to Karl Haljasmets (Tartu, Estonia), second prize to Elīna Ļitvinova (Saldus rajons, Latvia) and third prize to Maciej Mateusz Wencel (Gdynia, Poland).

Annual meeting of Commission on Education 3 April 2009: *Youth Nature Schools and Centers around the Baltic Sea*

The idea of a Network of Nature Schools and Centers was described by Annely Veevo, Head of Commission Secretariat. Possibilities for cooperation with other commissions and the Project of Lake Viktoria was presented by Guldbrand Skjönberg, Commission on Environment and Kaia Jäppinen talked about cooperation with Youth Commission.

Qualified Vocational Education

A seminar was held in Norrtälje on 21 – 22 April 2009 with participation of 20 persons from cities in Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Lithuania. The aim was to draw up a proposal/application to EU's Leonardo da Vinci-programme with alignment on a TOI-Transfer of Innovation- project on the main theme "Develop vocational skill considering the labour markets needs".

IV. Commission on Energy

The Commission was chaired by Stefan Windh, Oskarshamn. Secretariat of the Commission was located in Oskarshamn.

Commission meetings:

Kotka, 21 – 22 November 2007

The Board meeting in Kotka gathered 5 cities to discuss and to make plans for the future.

On 14 March 2008 the latest board meeting of the UBC Energy Commission was held. The meeting was a net-based meeting via Marratech. The UBC Energy Commission works actively with finding new ways to meet and to constantly try to reduce our carbon footprint. Having net-based board meetings is one of our ways. A virtual board meeting was held on 5 May. Yet again Marratech was used.

Tallinn, 30 – 31 October 2008

A joint meeting with the Commission on Environment was held.

Meetings of the Competence Board:

The Competence Board of the Energy Commission consists of Mr Gunnar Hovsenius and Mr Björn G Karlsson. The Competence Board has had two meetings since the last General conference. The first one was held on 29 August 2008, in Oskarshamn to discuss ideas and strategies for the commission. The second meeting was a brainstorming meeting on 27 May 2009.

Other commissions' meetings:

The Energy Commission participated in the Commission on Environments meeting in Tampere, 7-8 February 2008, focusing on "Visions of future of the Baltic Sea Region". The Energy Commission attended the meeting and made a speech at the Commission on Education annual meeting on 3 April. On 17-18 March 2009 the Commission attended the UBC Commission on Environment meeting in St. Petersburg.

Other meetings attended by the Energy Commission:

The Commission participated in numerous seminars, meetings and conferences organized by i.a. Baltic Development Forum, Energie-Cites, ICLEI, BSSSC.

Joint Energy and Climate Platform of BSR organisations

The Joint Energy and Climate Platform of Baltic Sea Region Organisations is a cooperation platform between Baltic Sea States Sub regional Co-operation (BSSSC); Baltic Development Forum (BDF);

Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS); Union of Baltic Cities (UBC) Energy Commission; Baltic Islands Network (B7); Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions Baltic Sea Commission (CPMR BSC) Energy Working Group; and Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). The work of the platform is a preparatory policy work prior to the upcoming UN Climate Conference. The UBC Energy Commission represents the UBC in the Joint Energy and Climate and is a coordinator of the JECPC cooperation in 2009.

Project approval

The LED application to the South Baltic Programme has been approved. The Energy Commission had an idea about testing LED-lights (Light Emitting Diodes) as a complement to traditional outdoor lighting. The UBC EC contacted the municipality of Kalmar, who offered to take lead. The Energy Commission will be responsible for information and dissemination. The project gathers 12 partners from Poland, Germany, Lithuania and Sweden, and researches what municipal outdoor environments are most suitable and most profitable to replace the traditional lighting with LED.

V. Commission on Environment

The Commission was co-chaired by Mikko Jokinen (Turku) and Guldbrand Skjönberg (Nacka). The Secretariat was located in Turku.

Activities

Implementation of the Agenda 21 Action Programme of UBC

The secretariat has been actively working as the Agenda 21 Secretariat for the implementation of the cross-sectoral Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities (approved in the General Conference in Klaipėda 2003). The programme has reached its volume goal up to over 16 MEUR including more than 25 projects. The programme assessment, the Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey 2004/2005, 2006/2007 has been completed and the last survey 2009 is in its final stage.

UBC Commission on Environment Actions

Mr Guldbrand Skjönberg is functioning as co-chairman of UBC Environment Commission for the last year as he has been retired in 2009. He has been functioning as co-chairman since 2000. The basic resources provided by the host city and the UBC combined with the successful project funding have enabled the secretariat to carry on a strong coordination role with a current staff number of 12 full-time professionals (Finnish-Swedish-Polish-Russian-German).

The basic activities of the Commission on Environment have during the reporting period included several excellent thematic seminar/workshop-type meetings with. These were during the reporting period organised in Tampere Finland, in March 2008 and in Tallinn in October 2009 and in St Petersburg. In these commission meetings a broad participation taken place both in terms of participants (appr. 60 – 80 per Commission meeting including several other UBC Commissions) and also in the activity level as the main focus in the last Commission meetings has been on the drafting on a new UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2010 – 2015.

The commission has continued the Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award scheme and has developed further UBC's good practice work. The prize winning award 2009 will be published at the UBC General Conference in Kristiansand, September 2007. The website has been totally updated and contact databases maintained. The newly opened UBC Good Practice Database is working to better serve and collect information, data, good practises etc. from projects, meetings and UBC member cities. More than 350 Good Practice cases are already listed in the database (www.ubcwheel.eu).

Baltic Cities Environmental Bulletin has been developed and thematic editions on Practical Tools and Methods for cities 2/2007, Vision for the Future 1/2008, Innovative Sustainable Thinking 2/2008 and Active Stakeholder Involvement 1/2009 have been published.]

European Union Policy co-operation on environment and sustainable development

The commission has represented the UBC at the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region (Baltic 21), Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) and European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign and at European expert and working groups such as in EMAS revision.

The main focus during the last two year period has been on the development and communication process of the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

During the reporting period the European Sustainable Cities and towns Campaign is continuing in planning and arranging large scale Urban Sustainability Conferences.

Main Projects of the UBC Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat

- Managing Urban Europe -25 (MUE-25), Developing cities' environmental managements systems to address the whole functional urban area. Partners: EnvCom, ICLEI, UNEP etc (altogether 24 partners, inc. 15 cities), 2005-08. 2.9 MEUR - DG Environment, Finnish Ministry of Environment + other funders.
- SUSTAINMENT (Integrated solutions for the sustainability management in the Baltic Cities), Partners: EnvCom, Baltic University programme, 12 partner cities in the Baltic Sea Region, 2006-2007. 1.4 MEUR – BSR INTERREG III B Neighbourhood programme, TACIS, Finnish Ministry of Environment
- LVRLAC – UBC co-operation, facilitating sustainable development in the Lake Victoria Region through Local Authority Action. Phase I and II, and a new phase III started, - Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency.
- MATRUSCHKA – Integrated Management System for Russian Cities. Partners: EnvCom, 8 partner cities and Åbo Akademi University, 2007–2009. Funded by BSR INTERREG IIIB Neighbourhood Programme TACIS on 0,7 MEUR.
- We choose life – Youth Against HIV/AIDS – UBC EnvCom partner in the project coordinated by WHO Healthy Cities Network. 4 Russian cities involved and several expert organizations. TACIS funding 40000 €
- SUITS – Sustainable Indicators and Target Setting. Nordic Council of Ministers. UBC and Association of Municipalities in Nordic and Baltic Countries as partners. 64000 € budget
- CHAMP – Combating Climate Change. LIFE+ funded project including Finland, Germany, Hungary and Italy. 2009 – 2011. Total 2.1 MEUR
- NEW BRIDGES – Strengthening Quality of Life trough improved Management of Urban Rural Interaction. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighbourhood programme. 12 partners and 13 Associated partners. 2009 – 2011. 2,8 MEUR
- BaltCICA – Climate Change: Impact, Costs and Adaptation in the Baltic Sea Region. UBC EnvCom partner in the project. BSR INTERREG IV B Neighbourhood programme. 2009 – 2011. 120000 €.

VI. Commission on Gender Equality

The Commission on Gender Equality was led by the city of Umeå, Sweden.

Activities

One of the main aims of the Commission on Gender Equality during the reported period was to create a board and working groups. As a result, the structuring and composition of the commission has been part of the commission's activities. A board will be elected in September 2009.

The Commission have also developed contacts with other commissions, such as the Commission on Health and Social Affairs. Gender equality is promoted by developing cooperative structures for networking and the exchange of experiences and practical knowledge. The Commission have researched experiences of gender equality work in the member cities.

The main focus of the commission's work has been to produce a report. The report offers a framework that provides the basis for the development of gender equal societies. The report shows the conditions for social change to happen, and can be used as a way for cities to adapt to, and support, the objectives of gender equality. The report also presents examples of good practices of gender equality work from some of the member cities, and by using examples from different countries it allows for flexibility and creativity in fulfilling the objectives of gender equality. The report will be presented at the X UBC GC in Kristiansand September 2009.

The commission has prepared a questionnaire that is to be distributed and collected in connection with the X UBC GC in Kristiansand September 2009. The result will be used in monitoring and evaluation of the development of gender equality in the UBC.

The Commission on Gender Equality have expressed opinions and statements on the Baltic Sea Strategy, the UBC Strategy and the UBC Social Charter.

VII. Commission on Health and Social Affairs

Commission on Health and Social Affairs was led by the city of Kristiansand.

The core group has consisted of Kristiansand, Gdynia, Karlskrona and Tartu. In addition, efforts have been made to involve former active members of the commission. The decision to work intensively in a core group, was taken on the basis of past experiences. It has been very difficult to commit members to activities in the commission.

Activities

The core group had a strategy meeting in Växjö in October 2008. Two representatives from Karlskrona, the representatives from Gdynia, Tartu and Kristiansand were present. The chairman of the Commission on Youth Issues was also invited to promote collaboration across commissions. At this meeting, the parties committed themselves to take responsibility for different topics relevant to one of our four workshops during the General Conference in Kristiansand in September 2009.

The participants agreed that the commission should focus its activities around the preparation for this. All agreed that there would not be capacity left for anything beyond this. This is why there has been no systematic work with other aspects of the Action Plan 2008-2009 after this agreement.

In autumn of 2008 and spring of 2009 the commission has been represented at commission meetings of the Commission on Gender Equality and the Commission on Youth Issues. This has been related to the planning of the conference and the development of common themes and issues. The cooperation with the other commissions has been fruitful. Areas for future collaboration have also been discussed, as it is believed that networking across the commissions is very important for developing the position of the health and social field in the UBC.

As agreed in Växjö, a meeting was called in Kristiansand in early March 2009. A preliminary program for workshop 4 was to be completed. Just before this meeting, Karlskrona informed that they chose to withdraw their involvement in the commission, due to many other major challenges in the community. At the same time the commissions co-chair Gdynia, announced that they were forced to resign from the position because of heavy workloads and the difficult economic situation. It was not possible to conduct the meeting as planned.

From the critical point in March/April, when it became clear that also the core group was not able to function as a working unit of the commission, it was necessary to seek a stronger cooperation with other commissions to ensure completion of the workshop IV.

This has been the main priority leading up to the General Conference in September. It follows from this that the commission in this situation has not been able to make a decision regarding the revision of the Action Plan 2008-2009.

VIII. Commission on Information Society

The Commission on Information Society was led by the city of St. Petersburg and coordinated by Esa Kokkonen, Baltic Institute of Finland, Tampere.

Activities

Project Challenge of eCitizen

An Interreg IIIC project “Challenge of eCitizen: Promoting eGovernment Actions in European Cities”, prepared and coordinated by the Baltic Institute of Finland in the framework of the IS COM, was launched in January 2005. Several UBC member cities participated in the project, as well as the cities of Sheffield, Bologna and Trento. This three-year project was designed to support innovative on-going local eGovernment actions and strategies.

The project ended in December 2007, and the final seminar was held in Vaasa on 22 November 2007. eCitizen was selected as one of four Interreg IIIC projects presented as a good Interreg IIIC project example in the Interreg IVC programme’s kickoff conference in Lisbon in September 2007. The eCitizen project was also featured as one of the model projects in the final Interreg IIIC programme publication published at the end of 2007.

Preparation of eCitizen follow-up projects was started already during the final stages of eCitizen. IS COM has provided the overall framework for preparation processes.

Final seminar of the IS COM project Challenge of eCitizen in Vaasa on 22 November 2007

The seminar offered a possibility to discuss the results achieved in the project in four thematic areas: eManagement, eService, eParticipation and awareness raising. The seminar provided an excellent chance to discuss the questions still facing eGovernment development with project partners and other eGovernment experts. The seminar gathered 50 participants.

Preparation of the project “eCitizen II - Towards Citizen-centred eGovernment in European Cities and Regions”

Already during the final year of the Challenge of eCitizen project, all the partner cities expressed their strong interest and commitment to continue the successful cooperation. Preparation of the follow-up project eCitizen II was launched by the lead partner, the Baltic Institute of Finland and IS COM in the first preparation seminar in Brussels on 11 December 2007.

The first eCitizen II preparation/IS COM seminar in Brussels on 11 December 2007

The objectives and activities of the follow-up project were the topics discussed in the first preparatory seminar of eCitizen II in Brussels on 11 December 2007. Seminar was co-organized by IS COM and the eCitizen project. Potential financing programmes were introduced, as well as the eParticipation initiative of the EU Commission. The seminar gathered some 20 participants from the UBC member cities, as well as from other European cities.

The second eCitizen II preparation/IS COM seminar in Helsinki on 7 – 8 May 2008

The main goal of the seminar was to discuss the objectives and activities of the new project and to strengthen the partnership of eCitizen II. Some 35 participants from as many as 15 European countries took part in the seminar. Various UBC member cities participated in the seminar. The seminar was co-organised by the Baltic Institute of Finland and IS COM.

The third eCitizen II preparation/IS COM seminar in Brussels on 10 December 2008

The eventual eCitizen II project partners gathered in the final joint preparation seminar in Brussels on 10 December 2008. The project work plan, budget and application procedures were main topics of the seminar. 19 representatives of the 11 project partner organizations attended the seminar.

eCitizen II application for the second call of Interreg IVC programme, 30 January 2009

The application for the second application round of the EU's Interreg IVC financing programme was submitted by the lead partner, the Baltic Institute of Finland, on 30 January 2009. The financing decision is expected in early November 2009.

Preparation of Envisage project

Partners of Challenge of eCitizen have also initiated other cooperation ideas based on the established network and IS COM. One example of such initiatives was a project proposal Envisage – European Visualisation of Arguments that was prepared for the eParticipation call of the European Commission in August 2008 as joint effort of City of Sheffield, City of Tampere, City of Tartu and the Baltic Institute of Finland.

IX. Commission on Sport

The Commission was co-chaired by Beata Łęgowska (Gdynia) and Camilla Brunsberg (Karlskrona). The Secretariat was located in Gdynia.

Activities

UBC Commission on Sport Social Campaign “Always Active”

With the ageing process of European society progressing and consequently physical fitness and functional capacity of Europeans naturally decreasing, the UBC Commission on Sport launched the Social Campaign entitled “Always Active”. The objective of the campaign was to prevent physical mobility restrictions originating from advanced age as well as to counteract consequent social exclusion. Within the “Always Active” Social Campaign, the UBC Commission on Sport realised the following activities:

2007 Commission on Sport Grant Session “Always Active”

In 2007 the UBC Commission on Sport allocated grants of the total amount of 5 000 EUR. “Always Active” grants were awarded for those projects which encouraged elderly people to keep physically active and increased their functional capacity as well as promoted sport as a way of preventing various illnesses. As usual the Commission's grants were addressed exclusively to UBC member cities.

2008 UBC Commission on Sport Grant Session: “Sport for All Generations”

In 2008 the UBC Commission on Sport continued to promote sport as a health-enhancing factor which simultaneously counteracts social exclusion and isolation. Within the 2008 grant session the Commission on Sport allocated grants of the total amount of 3 000 EUR for projects which integrated all the generations in their attempts to keep physically and mentally active as well as fit.

International Conference “Always Active”

The Commission organised an international conference “Always Active” which was addressed mainly to people involved in work with elderly people and institutions/organisations established to encourage these people to keep (physically and mentally) active.

Held in Gdynia (Poland) on 4 – 5 June 2009, the conference was organised in cooperation with the City of Gdynia and Senior Activity Centre in Gdynia. It gathered speakers from six European countries who presented best practices from their cities as well as innovative projects concerning active lifestyle among elderly people.

UBC Commission on Sport Website

The UBC Commission on Sport regularly updates its website so that it contains topical information about the Commission, its actions and undertakings.

X. Commission on Tourism

The Commission on Tourism was chaired by Mr Ryszard Zdrojewski, Koszalin. Ms Ewa Kurjata, Szczecin, was Co-chairperson of the Commission.

Activities

Publishing of the second edition of catalogue: “Baltic Sea Region – perfect tourism zone”.

6000 copies of the catalogue were printed out in 2008 (second edition). The contents, graphics design and editing were taken care of by the Secretariat of Commission on Tourism. Most of the member cities of UBC are covered by the catalogue, as well as their most interesting places for tourists, including the surrounding areas.

The UBC Commission on Tourism Annual Meeting, 26 – 29 September 2007 in Pärnu, Estonia

The meeting was devoted to the debate on the Commission’s work during the last year, as well as to present the actions planned for the next year.

The UBC Commission on Tourism Working Meeting, 3 – 5 April 2008 in Gdańsk, Poland

The meeting was divided into two key parts: „Challenges & opportunities of tourism in BSR” and „Towards sustainable tourism in BSR”. Also, the CoT internal matters were touched upon (discussions, voting, etc.) The meeting was attended by 27 participants, including representatives from 16 Member Cities, as well as invited guests from governments, international organizations and universities. Participants of the meeting decided to continue the “BSR – Perfect Tourism Zone” project and to take part in 2 projects: the AGORA 2.0 and Regiobike.

The UBC Commission on Tourism Annual Meeting, 9 – 10 October 2008 in Szczecin, Poland

The meeting was attended by 19 participants representing 9 member cities of the UBC from Poland, Germany, Latvia, and Sweden. The main focus of the meeting’s first part was “Cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in the field of tourism”. The second part was devoted to the “EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region”. The main core of this issue was presented by Mrs Betina Meliss of University of Greifswald (Germany), AGORA Project Manager.

The UBC Commission on Tourism Working Meeting, 16 – 18 April 2009 in Liepāja, Latvia

The main theme was: "How to make the Baltic Sea Region more accessible and attractive". Liepāja welcomed participants from: Kaunas, Cēsis, Riga, Jēkabpils, Palanga, Tukums, Pärnu, Gragždai, Koszalin and Szczecin. The CoT cities were invited to join the Task Force to prepare the UBC Member City Marketing Guideline.

The second session, chaired by Ms. Ewa Kurjata, mainly concerned internal matters of the Commission. Mr. Zdrojewski also presented the overall budget of the Commission and the action plan for 2009.

The UBC Commission on Tourism competition on the best tourist destination, idea or project developed by the UBC member cities in 2009.

CoT announced the tourist field competition for the Baltic cities in 2009. The objective was to identify and to promote the best tourist product, destination, event, idea or project developed by the Baltic cities, as well as to promote the Baltic Sea Region as a tourist destination.

"Collection of Good Practices on Sustainable Tourism", within the frame of the project EcoRegion (Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013) led by Greifswald University.

The EcoRegion project has the ambition to identify practices that might be relevant for potential users of the EcoRegion good practice database. At the end, it will be the user to decide on the relevance of the practice and on whether it actually is a "good" practice or not.

XI. Commission on Transportation

The Commission was chaired by Zygmunt Zmuda-Trzebiatowski, city of Gdynia. The Secretariat was located in Gdynia.

Activities

Grant sessions

In November 2007 the Commission on Transportation organised a competition entitled "Road Safety Contest" in which three equal prizes of 1,000 euro were awarded. The aim of the competition was to raise children's awareness of road safety issues, to improve knowledge of road signs as well as to improve the ability to foresee dangers on the road and assess difficult situations. Primary schools from the Baltic Sea region participated in the contest. The competition task consisted in presenting the most interesting, complex and original project on road safety education for children aged 7-12.

In October 2008 the Commission on Transportation organised a "Bike to school" grant competition. The objectives of this grant session were to promote bicycle as a means of transport and encourage children to cycle to school, teach safe cycling, reduce traffic congestion and speed in the school area as well as reduce parking problems around schools.

Primary schools from the Baltic Sea region participated in the contest. The competition task included presenting the most complex and original project that encouraged children to cycle to school.

In May 2009 the UBC Commission on Transportation announced the Car-Free Day Grant Competition. The world Car-Free Day is held annually on 22nd September. The aim of this competition was to raise awareness of the local communities about transport issues, to encourage as many inhabitants as possible to use alternative modes of transport and to promote sustainable urban mobility.

European Road Safety Charter

The Commission on Transportation has sent an application form of the UBC to join the European Road Safety Charter. UBC has been accepted as the signatory of the charter. The main goal of this Charter is halving the number of traffic fatalities by 2010. The Charter includes 10 general principles referring to road safety prevention measures and a concrete commitment which a signing organisation is obliged to fulfil within the consecutive three years.

Website

The Commission's website is constantly updated. It contains all relevant information concerning transport issues. The website serves as a source of information which includes links to international organisations dealing with transport. The website provides its visitors with automatically updated EU transport news from EurActiv portal.

Projects

The Commission on Transportation has supported institutions preparing transport-related projects by signing the letters of support: 1) ABC project – aiming to increase the role of bicycles in the transport modal split, 2) CARMA – aiming to develop concepts for raising the image of cycling. The Commission has also cooperated in organisation of the preparatory workshop (PRIMULA project).

XII. Commission on Urban Planning

The Commission on Urban Planning was chaired by Ms Sirpa Kallio, city of Helsinki.

Meetings

The Kotka Seminar, 3 – 6 October 2007

The seminar theme was City Identity and the theme was approached from different points of view by lectures by researchers from the Helsinki University of Technology. The lectures were about city identity building and branding and about cities inhabitants' experiences of good urban life.

The seminar workshops had two themes, one about developing the original Kotka Port to the Harbour of Culture, and another about developing a suburban area Karhula and its neighbouring commercial area Jumalniemi. The annual meeting of the CUP focused on future activities of the Commission.

The Aarhus seminar, 23 – 26 April 2008

The seminar theme in Aarhus was Future City Life. The theme was connected to the current overall theme of the CUP, namely "Sustainable and Attractive Cities" and an ongoing discussion of the development of ideals and visions for sustainable and attractive cities as an overall theme, with a special focus on how to create good living environments.

The Turku seminar, 24 – 27 October 2008

The Turku seminar combined urban planning and culture under the theme "Cultural Planning – Urban DNA". The Turku seminar was the 10th Anniversary seminar of the Commission on Urban Planning. The seminar workshops consisted of getting to know the city with excursions and of analysing the different features of our host town.

The Gdańsk seminar, 2 – 4 April 2009

The Gdańsk seminar theme "Baltic Towers – Contribution to the City and the Community" is a burning question around the Baltic Sea Region, as many cities are trying to find their identity and at the same time find ways to accommodate future growth and avoid further urban sprawl. In this seminar the Commission tried a new method of approaching the theme by sending a questionnaire to the members of the UBC network, and although the number of answers was limited, the answers were interesting.

The Linköping seminar, 9 – 12 September 2009

The Linköping seminar was already the 20th seminar of the Commission on Urban Planning. The seminar theme was Sustainable Urban Growth, a subject that is of great importance to all urban planners everywhere. The seminar programme included examples of sustainable urban planning in practice, namely Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm and Viikki in Helsinki.

Other CUP Projects in 2007-2009

Visual Cities was a project run by Mr Lars-Goran Boström from Umeå, Sweden. The project aimed to find new methods of presenting urban plans to the public by using 3D-visualizing computer programmes and the internet. There were approx. 10 partner cities in the project. The Visual Cities Project enabled urban planners around the Baltic Sea Region - and possibly even further - to present their ideas in an easy-to-understand way and wake conversation with city inhabitants.

The Steering Committee of the Commission on Urban Planning worked hard during winter 2007 -2008 for applying financing for the Visual Cities and the Sustainable and Attractive Cities projects. The application for URBACT was written, but due to rules about leading partners and participating cities of the URBACT programme, the URBACT application failed. Also, in spring 2008 the Commission on Urban Planning formed a project application to the INTERREG BSR combining the Visual Cities and the Sustainable and Attractive Cities working packages. Unfortunately also this application failed.

Changes in the CUP Steering Committee

Some changes in the CUP Steering Committee were announced in the Aarhus seminar in April 2008. Gvido Princis from Riga, Jonas Jakaitis from Vilnius and Gunilla Kronvall from Malmö resigned from the membership of the Steering Committee due to getting ahead on their careers. Instead, Mrs Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga joined the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee of the Commission on Urban Planning has altogether 5 members: Mrs Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Mr Marek Karzyński from Gdynia, Mr Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus, Mr Lars-Göran Boström from Umea and Mrs Sirpa Kallio from Helsinki as the chairman of the Commission.

XIII. Commission on Youth Issues

From 1 January 2008, city of Kalmar has handed over the chair of the Commission on Youth Issues to the city of Tallinn. The new chair person for the Commission is Kaia Jäppinen who is the deputy mayor of Tallinn. The vice chair of the Commission is held by Birgitta Elfström who is the deputy mayor of Kalmar. The secretariat and administration of the Commission are still located in the city of Kalmar. Since city of Tallinn took over the chair of the Commission, the youth representatives within the Commission have also changed. The youth representatives are members of the Commission for two years then the city elects new youth representatives.

Commission meetings during the period October 2007 – September 2009.

Commission meeting in Tallinn, 12 – 14 May 2008

30 people from 12 different cities attended the open Commission meeting in Tallinn, Estonia. The focus of the meeting was the future of the Commission and how the Commission could become a better platform for future development of new projects. During the meeting all participants got the opportunity to present their local youth policies and youth work.

Commission meeting in Kristiansand, 15 – 17 September 2008

The Commission held its second meeting in the city of Kristiansand and it was a closed meeting for the core group of the Commission. The main focus was on the upcoming youth conference in September 2009.

Common commission meeting in Kalmar with Commission on Gender Equality and Commission on Health and Social Affairs, 23 – 24 April 2009

The purpose of the meeting was to give information about the activities within the different commissions and also to talk about possibilities of cooperation in the future. During the meeting around 10 people from 5 different countries took part.

Commission meeting in Riga, 14 – 15 April 2009

There were 30 people from 12 different cities participating. The first day of the meeting had two different parts, during first part each city got the opportunity to present their youth information and counselling work connected to EVS (European Voluntary Service) and the second part was an open idea market and partner search.

Activities done in cooperation with EU project “Different History – Common Future”

The common EU project that was initiated within the Commission has now reached its final year. During the first 2 years of the project we have carried out tolerance trips, NGO meetings and EVS seminars. During the first part of the project we have also organized one big youth conference with around 120 participants. The conference was done in cooperation with the UBC general conference.

European Voluntary Service (EVS) promotion seminar in Tallinn, 14 – 15 May 2008.

In connection with the open Commission meeting in Tallinn there was also an EVS seminar organized within the EU project “Different History Common Future”. The focus of the seminar was on benefits for local organizations that are hosting volunteers.

Tolerance trip into the Danish-German border region, 8 – 12 October 2008

On 8-12 October the Commission on Youth Issues in cooperation with the EU project “Different History – Common Future” carried out cultural diversity and tolerance trip with local minority groups.

NGO seminar in Kolding, 29 October – 1 November 2008

During the meeting there were two different themes discussed - “outdoor activity for youth” and “how to work with prevention of sexual diseases” among young people. There were 16 NGO's and organizations participating and sharing ideas and working methods.

NGO tolerance trip, 22 – 25 April 2009

The target group for the 3rd tolerance trip was NGO's working with integration and minority questions on local level. During the trip 26 people from different organizations took part.

European voluntary service (EVS) volunteer at the secretariat in Kalmar

In June 2008 the Commission on Youth Issues secretariat in Kalmar sent in a new application for hosting a new EVS-volunteer (financed by the EU European Voluntary Service programme).

Information spreading

Commission on Youth Issues has renewed its web-page during summer 2009, look at www.ubc-youth.org and is issuing newsletter twice a year starting from 2009.

Agenda 21 Action Program

The UBC statute and strategy define sustainable development, with full respect to European principles of local and regional self-governance and subsidiarity, as one of strategic objectives of the UBC. For

the implementation of this objective, the General Conference in Klaipėda 2003, adopted the UBC Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004-2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities. The programme activities target five thematic focus areas: Good governance and sustainable urban management; Sustainable use of energy and resources; Good living environment and nature protection; Sustainable economy and transport; Social integration and health. The programme is coordinated by the Commission on Environment. More information about the programme is included in the EnvCom biannual report.

New UBC website

The UBC secretariat, together with the City of Gdańsk, had been working on the new website for UBC. The new website was officially launched in April 2009. The new website is modern and based on the CMS technology which is more interactive and easier to use. UBC website provides useful information on UBC structure, aims, activities and documents. Major links that can be found on the website: organization, member cities, commissions, events calendar, documentation centre, publications, funding sources, statements, twin cities, photo & art gallery, Baltic & European organisations and other. The Secretariat also provides member cities with electronic news ‘e-News’ on the ongoing UBC projects, meetings and activities as well as on EU related matters.

Baltic Cities Bulletin

The Baltic Cities Bulletin published by the UBC Secretariat provides information about the work of the Union and news from the member cities. Moreover an emphasis is put on covering some specific fields of general interest which are presented as main themes of each issue. The bulletin is printed ca. 6000 copies and sent out to over 200 Baltic cities as well as to the number of Baltic and European organisations and institutions including the EU. The bulletin is available on the internet at <http://www.ubc.net/publications>

In the last period the following issues have been published: “Culture as a driving force for municipal development”, “Cities’ Response to the Climate Change”, “Cities towards the New European Maritime Policy”, “Cities’ role in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region”.
