

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES

November 2015 – October 2017

Introduction

Since the XIII General Conference in Gdynia, 27–30 October 2015, the UBC has been working to complete the tasks and achieve the goals set by the UBC Strategic Framework 2016–2021.

Among the tasks there was an effective functioning of the organization's structures by strengthening the capacity of Union's organs, improving expertise in key policy areas (e.g. youth unemployment, migration); optimising the role of the secretariat. Another task was to improve UBC communication, visibility and outreach by the renewal of the logo, bulletin and website.

The UBC has been working to raise its public profile and visibility in the region and in Europe. As a response to the European refugees crisis, the UBC together with the city of Rostock organized the Conference "Impact of the European Refugees Crisis in the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region" in Rostock, on 14-16 March 2016. The conference discussed the role of municipalities, focused on best practices and analysed the needs, challenges and the chances faced by the cities. The conference gathered together around 70 civil servants from the region. The conference resolution was distributed to the cities, BSR and European institutions, organisations, and governments.

UBC works strenuously to implement the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

The Union took an active part in the EUSBSR Forums in Stockholm, 8–9 November 2016, where it co-organized two seminars: "Cities and regions: Drivers or bystanders in Baltic Sea cooperation?" and "Nothing about us without us – Sustainable and green future and prosperity, growth and jobs from a youth perspective"; and in Berlin, 13–14 June 2017, where altogether four seminars and back-to-back meetings before and during the Forum were co-organized by UBC.

The EUSBSR Horizontal Action Capacity and its coordinators - UBC, Swedish Institute and Baltic Sea NGO Network, together with the states of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, organized the Participation Day on 13 June 2017, back-to-back with the forum in Berlin. The event's aim, which gathered around 70 participants, was to enhance role of local actors and bottom-up approaches in the shaping of policy processes and practical implementation of Baltic Sea cooperation.

The UBC, through its Commissions, is also involved in the EUSBSR implementation. Chair of Cultural Cities Commission is a participant in the project: Culturability BSR – Culture for Sustainable Development which is also the EUSBSR flagship. Sustainable Cities Commission has been a lead partner EUSBSR flagship project IWAMA. Another project – iWater also gained the flagship status. It develops guidelines and tools for Integrated Storm Water Management.

Youth Employment and Well-Being has been also at the top of the UBC agenda. Established at the UBC General Conference in Mariehamn, 1–4 October in 2013, the Task Force worked out and published the report called 'Good, The Bad and The Next Practices', sent out to all kind of stakeholders, including respective ministries, EU institutions, international organisations. Also, the TF on Youth Employment and Well-Being has started a cooperation with the EUSBSR Flagship School to Work (S2W). The Flagship aims to strengthen transnational cooperation between stakeholders in the BSR in the field of education and works in order to prevent early school leaving and to develop new support methods for vulnerable groups of students/youth, specifically NEETs and newly arrived refugees.

Leadership for Climate-smart Baltic Cities is important in UBC work. CDP, the global climate change disclosure non-profit organization, and the UBC have agreed on a two-year memorandum of understanding to involve more cities in the development and reporting of target-oriented climate actions.

Examples of policy issues handled by UBC:

- **UBC Strategic Framework 2016-2021, implementation of the Strategy**

UBC Strategy 2016-2021 was adopted at the UBC General Conference in Gdynia 29 October 2016.

The new Strategy framework defines why UBC is needed and why it should work regionally, how to continue renewal process, etc. Effective, proactive, representative UBC is needed to promote cooperation and exchange of experiences in different ways; defend and promote the interests of the cities, especially small and medium size ones; promote cities as drivers for smart and sustainable growth.

Among the tasks there was an effective functioning of the organization's structures, by strengthening the capacity of Union's organs, improving expertise in key policy areas (e.g. youth unemployment, migration); optimising the role of the secretariat. Another task was to improve UBC communication, visibility and outreach by the renewal of the logo, bulletin and website (see below).

At the 74th UBC Executive Board meeting in Rostock held on 16 March 2016, the Board decided to authorize the Presidium to create a Task Force to discuss implementation plan of the Strategy. Presidium created the Task Force to be chaired by the Strategy Coordinator. The cities nominated to the Task Force: Kaunas, Kristiansand, Lahti, Växjö.

The recommendations of the TF, presented at the 77th Executive Board meeting in Stockholm, 10 November 2016, were to speed up the implementation of the Conclusions and Proposals of the UBC Task Force on development (25.2.2013) and UBC Communications and Marketing Strategy. Among the most important issues listed by the TF was how to justify the cities involvement in the international cooperation and UBC. The Union needs to demonstrate, through practical examples, that cooperation brings added value to participating cities. Conference on refugees in Rostock and forum on the role of leadership in Växjö are good examples of such activities.

Another major challenge was to activate the members in the Commissions and to strengthen the cooperation between the UBC Executive Board and the Commissions. The TF recommended to provide a meeting platform

for the mayors to attract the political level attention to the UBC and its Commissions work. One day of the UBC General Conference in Växjö will provide such platform with attendance of the mayors as participants and speakers.

Also, the cooperation Board – Commissions – Secretariat should be intensified, including nomination of liaison persons Board-Commissions.

To streamline the UBC work, it was suggested creating a yearly time-table – “The UBC Clock” – starting from 1 January 2017 which is available on the UBC website.

At the meeting in Berlin on 15 June, the Board assigned the following members as Commissions’ liaisons, to be revised after elections at the General Conference in Växjö:

Cultural Cities – Kaunas
Gender Equality WG – to be discussed by the Presidium
Inclusive & Healthy Cities - Gdynia
Planning Cities - 1st Vice-President Marie-Louise Rönmark
Safe Cities - Liepāja
Smart & Prospering Cities - Kristiansand
Sustainable Cities – Vice-President Jarkko Virtanen or Lahti (to be discussed)
Youthful Cities - Växjö

The following activities have been taken up during the reported period to fulfil the Strategy tasks.

- **Open forum “Building smart cities in the Baltic Sea Region” at the General Conference in Gdynia, 28 October 2016**

Around 200 representatives of UBC member cities, Baltic and European governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations discussed the smart city development. The economic, environment, energy, safety, cultural, equality and other challenges the smart development faces nowadays were the themes of the discussion panels and workshops. The forum created an ideal space for exchanging experiences of the Baltic Cities and starting discussions leading to the implementation of new projects.

- **Conference “Impact of the European Refugees Crisis in the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region”, Rostock, 14-16 March 2016 and TF as a follow-up**

Upon the initiative of the city of Rostock and the UBC, the Conference “Impact of the European Refugees Crisis in the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region” was organized in Rostock, on 14-16 March 2016. The conference discussed the role of municipalities, focused on best practices and analysed the needs, challenges and the chances faced by the cities. The conference gathered together around 70 civil servants from the region. The prominent speakers, representing the European and regional organizations, e.g. the Committee of the Regions, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the German Government and the Parliament, as well as the UBC cities, presented their experiences, challenges and also best practices and solutions on how to use the potential that the refugees bring to the cities. Attitude of the host society and its involvement in the reception of refugees, education, labour and co-operation with NGOs seem to be the key elements for good integration.

The UBC adopted a resolution “Refugees - a challenge and a chance for the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region” during the conference. The resolution calls after solidarity between EU countries and states that the UBC cities take the massive immigration not only as a challenge but also as a chance for further development – all inhabitants contribute to the local well-being.

The UBC Executive Board, that held its meeting on 16 March in Rostock, authorised the Presidium to create a Task Force to discuss how UBC could follow the results of the conference on refugees in Rostock and promote exchange of know-how between the member cities in question.

Presidium created a Task Force led by the City of Rostock.

The Task Force met in Kaunas on 6 June 2016. The meeting was attended by representatives of the cities of Rostock, Naestved, Kaunas, Turku, Växjö and the Secretary General.

The proposals of the TF in Kaunas were as follows:

- to have some practical meetings, where cities could share knowledge. Cities are so full of work, but everybody needs this fresh input to see how the others solve the problems
- to have a space on the UBC website to discuss, debate, bring proposals and share ideas
- actions of the Task Force should be seen also by the political levels.

- **EUSBSR Forum**

At the 7th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Stockholm on 8–9 November 2016, the UBC co-organised two seminars:

- "Cities and regions: Drivers or bystanders in Baltic Sea cooperation?"
The Cities and Regions seminar, held on 9 November, focused on cities and regions as key players in the Baltic Sea Cooperation. The panel, consisting of representatives from UBC cities, BSSSC and Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council, agreed that the Baltic Sea Region shares the same problems but also solutions and that the wishful thinking and strategies should be transformed to concrete things that we can show e.g. for the youth.
Organisers: UBC and Land Brandenburg.
- "Nothing about us without us – Sustainable and green future and prosperity, growth and jobs from a youth perspective".
The seminar, organized on 8 November, focused on involving in the discussion young people and politicians from local and regional level and so including a bottom up perspective on the Baltic Sea Region Vision 2030.
Organisers: BSSSC, UBC, Euroregion Baltic.

At the 8th EUSBSR Annual Forum with the theme "Connectivity" in Berlin on 13–14 June 2017, the UBC co-organised altogether four seminars and back-to-back meetings before and during the Forum:

- Youth Conference 2017
The Baltic Sea Region Youth Conference "Nothing about us without us" was held in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Forum on 12–13 June, preparing and supporting the youth seminar during

EUSBSR Forum "Nothing about us without us – making it work!". The seminar and the Youth Conference were both organised together by UBC, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) and Euroregion Baltic (ERB).

The Youth Conference gathered almost 50 participants and focused on sharing good practices on youth involvement and empowerment at local and regional level in the BSR and on discussing different approaches to active youth involvement in all ten Baltic Sea countries. The programme included group work as well as presentations and discussions on good examples of youth participation from the BSR countries.

- Youth seminar "Nothing about us without us – making it work!"
The main topic was how to include young people in decision-making which raised energetic discussions on themes of democracy, political change and independence. In conclusion, young people should have genuine possibilities to affect their lives in their communities and be important partners in policy implementation – but young people themselves should also be active in participating in decision-making and working for a positive political and societal change.
- First Participation Day of the EUSBSR (see below)
- Smart water sector seminar
IWAMA as a EUSBSR flagship project together with Policy Area Nutri Coordinators organized a seminar "Smart water sector" that focused on capacity building and cross-border cooperation approaching them as contributing factors for the successful technology transfer in the water sector. The seminar consisted of expert presentations and a discussion round among the panelists. Various groups working in the water field joined the session: from European level organizations to national knowledge centres and specific water companies and associations. Invited speakers provided various perspectives on the importance of the capacity development in water sector.

- **Horizontal Action "Capacity"**

A key factor of success for the EUSBSR is the integrated and coordinated governance of the Baltic Sea region, between sectors of society as well as between regional and local authorities, business, academia, civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the respective countries.

Since summer 2016 the UBC was included as a co-coordinator of one of the EUSBSR horizontal actions - HA 'Capacity'. UBC coordinates it together with the Swedish Institute and the Baltic Sea NGO Network.

There are two tasks of this Horizontal Action. One of them is capacity building of people who work with the Strategy, helping them to acquire skills and knowledge how to work in the international cooperation. It's made through funding the leadership programmes, mostly through the Swedish Institute. Many UBC representatives have already participated in such programmes.

The second task is promotion of involvement in the Strategy. The HA wants to promote, assist and mobilize participation of cities and regions, business, universities and all non-governmental actors in the Baltic Sea

Strategy. The more society is involved – the better. It’s planned to have one workshop during the UBC General Conference in Växjö devoted to this issue.

- Participation Day

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Horizontal Action Capacity and its coordinators, together with the states of Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, organized the Participation Day on 13 June 2017, back-to-back with the EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin.

The event’s aim was to enhance role of local actors and bottom-up approaches in the shaping of policy processes and practical implementation of Baltic Sea cooperation.

With around 70 participants from municipalities, civil society organisations and businesses, the Participation Day in Berlin concentrated on sustainable tourism development, education, research, employability and integration of refugees, involvement and cooperation as well as communications and networking. Highlights were to have local actors presenting project ideas, receiving feedback from Policy Area Coordinators and meeting potential partners. In Berlin, three Policy Areas/Horizontal Actions were present: education, tourism and capacity building.

- Swedish Institute Baltic Sea Programme ‘Unboxing the Sandbox’

The Baltic Executive Programme “Unboxing the Sandbox” is a new leadership programme designed to help organisations unlock the full potential of transnational cooperation. The programme is initiated and funded by the Swedish Institute as part of its work with EUSBSR Horizontal Action Capacity. Development and recruitment has taken place together with the Norden Association, the CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and the Union of the Baltic Cities.

The programme targets the local and regional level in the BSR; in particular senior elected officials (politicians) and the head of administrations (administrators), representing the strategic level of “owners”, with the position to redesign existing governance structure that has endorsed the “sandboxing” of transnational cooperation. The “owners” – municipalities and regions – should have a better insight and overview of the projects, as this will give them a bigger influence on the projects and will contribute to the long lasting outcomes.

The programmes are explicitly non-technical in nature, seeking to empower officials and administrators to be more active in the world of projects that is often dominated by project specialists with their own discourse of project terms and acronyms. The problem addressed in this programme is that there are many projects, but only few long-lived results.

During 25 years of Interreg program there were over 25 thousand projects, but not so many long lasting impacts. When projects are working as satellites to their owners (they are in a sandbox, isolated from the main system), they are not part of the daily life of organizations, then the implementation is very difficult to carry out.

A result of this cooperation is that more than 15 UBC members enrolled in the pilot three module programme together with an equal number of representatives from regional bodies in the eight EU-member countries in the BSR. The first module took place in Warsaw (22–24 February 2016), the second in Riga (11–13 April 2016) and the final module took place in Tallinn (13–14 June 2016).

- **Youth Employment and Well-Being**

Established at the UBC General Conference in Mariehamn, 1–4 October in 2013, the Task Force has been continuing its work in the reported period.

After 6 meetings, 27 experts from 15 UBC member cities in 6 countries worked out the final report called ‘Good, The Bad and The Next Practices’. The report serves as a handbook for professionals and others interested in the topic. It presents concrete suggestions, raises questions to be solved in the future and is a valuable tool to combat youth unemployment and marginalization.

In February 2016 the report was sent out by secretariat to all kind of stakeholders, including respective ministries, EU institutions, international organisations. Publication received very positive responses and proposals of cooperation in this important field.

Also, the TF on Youth Employment and Well-Being has started a cooperation with the EUSBSR Flagship School to Work (S2W). The Flagship aims to strengthen transnational cooperation between stakeholders in the BSR in the field of education and works in order to prevent early school leaving and to develop new support methods for vulnerable groups of students/youth, specifically NEETs and newly arrived refugees.

The Flagship has created a common platform of understanding and learning, and dissemination of different successful methods to deal with the issues around drop outs and NEETs. Moreover, it arranges study visits and workshops, and supports cooperation and creation of the new joint projects. This means that Flagship goals are parallel to the goals set by the UBC Board meeting in Kaunas last year to the Task Force; co-operation within the UBC, joint projects, surveys, workshops and seminars. Cooperation can also support the work of the Task Force on Refugees and Youthful Cities Commission. Coordinator Inta Simanska introduced the flagship at the last Board meeting in Kristiansand.

- **Communications: UBC logo renewal, new UBC website, new BCB layout, newsletter, social media**

At the 73rd Executive Board meeting in Dolina Charlotty in June 2015 a decision on UBC “facelift” was made. Updating the UBC logo is a part of a larger communications renewal for the UBC taking place during 2015-2016. In September 2015 an email to member cities was sent with a request for comments on new UBC logo proposals designed by Finnish consulting company KMG.

At its meeting in Rostock on 16 March 2016, the Board approved a new UBC logo.

The new UBC website was launched on 3 June 2016. The website was designed by advertising agency KMG from Turku.

Among the novelties there are:

- Carousel slides - UBC’s top news and contents we wish to highlight

- “New at UBC” – changing newsfeed – news and events from the UBC and member cities
- “Lifts” – more static information, e.g. how to join the UBC and the work being done in the commissions
- “Footer” (at the bottom of all pages) – UBC’s contact information and links.

The Baltic Cities Bulletin has also been renewed according to the new visual look of the UBC and other applications, e.g. new general brochure, new PowerPoint templates and roll-ups were produced. Since Spring 2017 edition, the Bulletin has been published in a digital format.

The new UBC e-newsletter was launched on 3 March 2017. UBC is also present on Facebook, Twitter at the addresses: #UBC_BSR and #UnionoftheBalticCities and LinkedIn.

- **UBC and CDP**

At the 76th UBC Executive Board meeting in Kaunas in June 2016 a proposal to sign Memorandum of Understanding between UBC and CDP was presented.

Following the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016–2021, as adopted at the 13th General Conference, Leadership for Climate-smart Baltic Cities is a key focus for UBC’s work. The cities can take climate change aspects into consideration in their entire decision making, e.g., in urban planning, mobility planning, energy related actions (efficiency, production) and buildings. Many UBC cities indeed efficiently seek to take the leadership in becoming climate-smart, decreasing their greenhouse gas emissions and using renewable energy sources efficiently. CDP strives constantly to build new knowledge and is interested in the Climate Leadership examples of BSR cities. The reporting system of CDP will also benefit from having more BSR cities using it.

The proposed co-operation would – utilizing UBC’s network and CDP’s reporting system, database and knowledge – produce a state-of-the-art report on strategic Climate work and Leadership in Baltic Sea region cities. This would be prepared for by involving more BSR cities to report for CDP and then by utilizing the analytical tools of CDP registry for studying the strategic leadership and key actions of these cities.

The President signed the memorandum in Stockholm, 9-10 November 2016.

The invitations were sent to the cities in February 2017. During the spring-summer 2017, cities have been reporting their findings to CDP and UBC. The final report will be launched at the UBC General Conference in Växjö, Sweden, in October 2017.

UBC Executives during two-year period

Per Bødker Andersen, Kolding, President

Marie-Louise Rönmark, Umeå, First Vice-President

Jarkko Virtanen, Turku, Vice-President

Ando Kiviberg, Viljandi, Vice-President

Paweł Żaboklicki, Gdańsk, Secretary General

Executive Board during two-year period

Næstved, Denmark
Elva, Estonia
Lahti, Finland
Rostock, Germany
Liepāja, Latvia
Kaunas, Lithuania
Kristiansand, Norway
Gdynia, Poland
St. Petersburg, Russia
Växjö, Sweden
Gdańsk, Poland - observer

Executive Board Meetings

Six Executive Board meetings took place during the reporting period between Gdynia and Växjö General Conferences:

75th Executive Board meeting, Rostock, 16 March 2016
76th Executive Board meeting, Kaunas, 6-8 June 2016
77th Executive Board meeting, Stockholm, 10 November 2016
78th Executive Board meeting, Kristiansand, 15-17 February 2017
79th Executive Board meeting, Berlin, 15 June 2017
80th Executive Board meeting, Växjö, 24 October 2017

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 two-year period

Marta Chełkowska, Director of Tourism Department, Pomorskie Voivodship
Jukka Vilen, City Director, Kemi
Roger Kaliff, Chairman of the City Council, Kalmar

UBC Secretariat

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.

UBC Commissions

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

Commission:	Lead City(ies):
Cultural Cities	Pori
Gdynia (until October 2016)	Trelleborg (until March 2017), Karlstad
Planning Cities	Aarhus
Safe Cities	Liepāja
Smart and Prospering Cities	Kiel
Sustainable Cities	Turku
Youthful Cities	Gävle, Kolding

Examples of projects, activities and events carried out by the Commissions within the reporting period are concisely described below.

Cultural Cities Commission

The Commission has been chaired by Jaana Simula, Pori. Radosław Krajewicz, Chojnice, has been a vice chair.

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

Cultures of Sustainability in Baltic Cities – Commissions’ collaboration 15-17 June 2016, Słupsk and Ustka

As a part strengthening collaboration between the commissions, Cultural Cities Commission was a partner in making joint commission seminar “Cultures of Sustainability in Baltic Cities” in Słupsk and Ustka with the UBC Safe Cities Commission and Sustainable Cities Commission. The main aim was to discuss and find key principles on how to produce safe and sustainable events from small-scale local events to big international events in the Baltic Sea Region cities. A toolkit is in making: “Guidebook for smart and sustainable event management”.

Connections between culture, education and new technologies, 25-27 September 2016, Turku

A joint commission meeting with the UBC Youthful Cities theme was “New Cultures of Education”. The seminar was focusing on different connections between culture, education and new technologies.

24th BSSSC meeting, 15 September 2016, Hämeenlinna

UBC Cultural Cities Commission chairperson was invited to give presentation on best practices in the UBC cities concerning social inclusion with culture in the EUSBSR Policy Area Culture hosted discussion “Culture – Driving force for regional integration and social inclusion”.

7th EUSBSR Forum, Stockholm, 8-9 November 2016

Chairperson took part in the work shop “How do the cultural and creative sectors encourage cooperation, innovation and inclusion in a culturally diverse BSR?” on the 8 November arranged by the Nordic Council of Ministers Latvia Office with a talk “Why would or should BSR cities/regions be interested in using/developing Minecraft/cultural planning”.

Culturability II - Cultural Planning Days, 1-3 March 2017, Pori

The Culturability II – Cultural Planning Days was arranged together with UBC Cultural Cities Commission, City of Pori, University Consortium of Pori, University of Turku / Cultural Production and Landscape Studies and Danish Culture Institute in Latvia. The purpose was to familiarize the participants with cultural mapping in practice.

Kaunas Culture and Kaunas 2020 in making, 26-27 September 2017, Kaunas

Seminar by Kaunas City and Cultural Cities Commission. Topics and visits: Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022” program and preparation, architectural tour in the centre of Kaunas “Modernism Architecture”, presentation of Kaunas event “Bienale” (<http://bienale.lt/2017/en/>) and presentation of the community cultural project in in Silainiai city part.

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

Culturability II

Culturability Phase 2 is organized as a set of meetings and workshops in 2016 and 2017 with cultural and non-cultural stakeholders, including policy-makers, academia and entrepreneurs from culture and creative sectors. Meeting materials: <http://culturability.lv/workshops-and-meetings/>

EUSBSR PA Culture

On 9 November 2016 PA Culture Steering Group meeting was held in Stockholm. Chairperson reported on behalf of UBC Cultural Cities Commission.

On 12 June 2017 PA Culture Strategic Project Development Workshop was held in Berlin. Chairperson presented BSR Culturability project.

On 13 June, at the PA Culture Steering Group meeting, Chairperson reported on the behalf of UBC Cultural Cities Commission.

Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission

In 2015 Gdynia chaired the Commission together with Trelleborg. In 2016 Trelleborg took over the chairmanship with Gdynia as a vice chair. In 2017, Karlstad is chairman together with Gdynia. From the start Gdynia has taken full responsibility for all financial matters and accounting.

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

Commission meeting in Gdynia - Poland, 27 October 2015, in the frame of UBC General Conference

The draft reports on Open Social Spaces were discussed and technical issues of commission activity were overworked.

Commission meeting in Karlstad - Sweden, 8-11 March 2016

The days in Karlstad were filled with study visits and presentations of a few different open social spaces in Karlstad municipality.

Commission meeting in Trelleborg/Malmö - Sweden, 18-22 May 2016

At the meeting in Trelleborg the work on the concept of Open Spaces was continued.

Annual Commission meeting in Espoo - Finland, 26-28 October 2016

The meeting in Espoo also continued with the theme Open Spaces.

Workshops in Trelleborg - Sweden, 22-24 March 2017

This meeting was a creative workshop providing the opportunity to try the concept of service design. Also the uncut version of the film produced by the city of Trelleborg regarding the refugee influx in Trelleborg in the autumn of 2015 was presented.

Participation in UBC Conference Preparation Meeting in Rostock - Germany, 21-22 September 2017

The preparation meeting addressed on migration issues in Europe to be subject of UBC conference at 12-14 March 2018 in Rostock.

- **Communication**

There is an ongoing work on updating and completing the Commission's plan of communication. The plan will be finished during this autumn.

- **Other activities**

With financial support from UBC, the city of Trelleborg has produced a film regarding the refugee influx in Trelleborg in the autumn of 2015. The film is based on interviews with people involved in the urgent work of helping refugees arriving to the city of Trelleborg.

Planning Cities Commission

Steering Group

The members are Mara Liepa-Zemesa from Riga, Marek Karzyński – in 2016 replaced by Paulina Szewczyk from Gdynia, Tomas Strömberg from Umeå and Niels-Peter Mohr from Aarhus (Chairman).

Secretary: City of Aarhus, Denmark

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

Seminar in Gdansk, Poland, 18-21 October 2015 (seminar no. 31)

"Developing sea coast – local and city-wide perspective"

Ca. 50 participants inclusive of locals;

Seminar in Söderhamn, Sweden, 22-25 May 2016

"New Times – New Dynamics "

Ca. 35 participants inclusive of locals;

Seminar in Klaipeda, Lithuania, 16–19 October 2016

"Rediscovering water in the city: public realm strategies on the waterfront"

Participants: ca. 45 inclusive locals;

JOINT JOHANN & UBC Workshop in Rostock, Germany, 14-17 May 2017

"From a growing to a great city"

Ca. 75 participant inclusive of locals

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

The above-mentioned seminar in Rostock was a joint seminar with the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission and the BSR JOHANN project.

Safe Cities Commission

Safe Cities Commission Chairman has been Kaspars Vārpiņš (Liepāja Municipal Police) and the Vice Chairman - Torbjörn Lindström (Southwest Finland Emergency Services). UBC Safe Cities Commission secretariat is located in Liepāja Municipal Police.

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

Joint Commission between UBC Sustainable Cities, Safe Cities and Cultural Cities Commissions, 15-17 June 2016, Słupsk and Ustka

The aim of the meeting was to discuss and find key principles on how to produce sustainable events from small-scale local events to big international events in the Baltic Sea Region cities. **Outcomes:** Various project initiatives for support to create Sustainable and safe public events. Collaboration in developing “Sustainable event management Guidebook”.

Safe Cities Commission meeting, 11-13 January 2017, Kaunas

During three days safety specialists from different fields – municipal police, fire and rescue services, civil protection and other municipal institutions – discussed various issues. Meeting was followed by planning of project initiative about data collection principles for civil protection prevention activities. **Outcomes:** Topic for next meeting – Civil protection, initiative to work about data collection principles of civil protection prevention activities, workshop results for data collection principles. Presentation of animation movies about safety at home.

Safe Cities Commission meeting, 7-9 June 2017, Tallinn

The Commission met in Tallinn, to have their second meeting of the year and elect Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Theme of this meeting was – crisis management in emergency situation. **Outcomes:** Re-election of UBC Safe Cities Commission Chairman and Vice Chairman. Exchanged experience in Crisis management in emergency situations.

- **Projects**

Project CASCADE – Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation and Development has been submitted, there are no results yet. The project addresses climate change risk management at the local authority level in the Baltic Sea Region. It will contribute to the objective “build up resilience and prevention towards emergencies and threats at the local level” of Policy Area Secure within the EU Strategy for the BSR, and it will apply the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Financing: European Commission, Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Prevention And Preparedness Projects In Civil Protection And Marine Pollution.

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

Regular participation at CBSS and EUSBSR PA Secure meetings.

UBC Safe Cities Commission has received a full membership to The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Policy Area Secure (PA Secure) Steering Group.

- **Other activities**

UBC Safe Cities Commission has produced three short animation movies about safety at home.

<http://files.inbox.lv/ticket/folder/5bcbd29cfa4981964a3d551da54475f43f153117>.

UBC Safe Cities Commission has been represented in various meetings and shared the UBC Cities experience regarding safety (i.e. , VASAB Conference "Achieving Good Living Environment: territory matters. What's beyond 2030 for macro-regions?", Warsaw, 7 June 2016, Sustainable City Development 2016, Malmo, 30 November-2 December 2016, Soft Security and Migration conference, Helsinki, 30-31 May 2017, Smart Metropolia conference: Openness and safety, Gdańsk, 23-24 November 2017.

Smart and Prospering Cities Commission

The Commission has been chaired by Wolfgang Schmidt (Kiel, Germany), Lukas Wedemeyer (Kristiansand, Norway) has been a Vice Chair. The commission's secretariat is run by Wolfgang Schmidt and fully financed by the City of Kiel.

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

Copenhagen, 25-27 May 2016

The seminar was directed at administration experts, entrepreneurs and scientists.

Hamburg, 20-22 September 2016

The UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission seminar on Attractive Cities attracted more than 50 participants from nearly all countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

Rostock, 14-17 May 2017

The workshop was a joint approach to guide a growing Baltic city into a great Baltic city. UBC Commissions on Planning and Smart and Prospering Cities and INTERREG Project Network JOHANN had invited to Rostock.

- **Projects**

Creative Ports

Creative Ports aims at establishing the institutionalized macro-regional space for non-technological innovation in the entire BSR, facilitated by increased business sophistication of the CCI actors and their interactions with the policy-making level. The change achieved by the project will benefit the Region by increasing number of highly needed innovations making the Region more competitive. The application process continues.

Exchanges for All

Exchanges for All will research on learning-outcome from participating in an internal, art based youth-exchange. Make models for implementing low-cost, but still high-quality, youth-exchanges and export such youth-exchanges to the schools as learning-tool for 8th grade students (age 13-15).

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

- Baltic Development Forum
- Goethe Institut
- Swedish Institut
- STRING
- INTA International Urban Development Association

Sustainable Cities Commission

The Commission secretariat is located in Turku, Finland. Head of Commission Secretariat Björn Grönholm . The Commission co-chairs: Dace Liepnice, Liepaja, Latvia, Per-Arne Nilsson, Malmö, Sweden and Risto Veivo, Turku.

- **Main meetings/seminars/conferences**

15-17 June 2016 SCC participated in a joint Meeting of 3 UBC Commissions of Sustainability in Baltic Cities in Słupsk and Ustka, Poland. The meeting focused on Sustainable Safe Cultural Events.

28-30 September 2016 the CIVITAS FORUM Conference 2016 was organized in Gdynia, Poland, with the theme "Shaping the mobility of tomorrow". The event gathered CIVITAS stakeholders from around Europe.

12-16 October 2016 SCC meeting in Jelgava, Latvia gathered 34 participants. The meeting focused on the integration of Natura 2000 sites with urban planning and sustainable development, as well as on integrated storm water management.

30 November-2 December 2016 - Co-arrangement of the first Sustainable City Malmö Conference focusing on the UN Sustainability Goals and the agenda for the BSR.

14-15 February 2017 IWAMA Capacity Development Workshop in Boltenhagen, Germany was held.

6-7 March 2017 Co-arrangement of the first Baltic Sea Future Congress - Innovation, vision and leadership for a sustainable Baltic Sea region in Stockholm.

16-18 May 2017 SCC meeting in Jyväskylä, Finland focusing on circular economy in cities. There was a web streaming of the meeting organised by the commission.

13-14 June 2017 SCC participated in the 8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin. SCC organized seminar titled: "Smart Water Sector" in the framework of IWAMA project and contributed to other workshops.

15 June 2017 - 2nd Baltic Urban Lab Workshop took place in Norrköping, Sweden. The topic of the workshop was "Brownfield regeneration site planning improved with 3D visualization and interactive public participation tools".

27-29 September 2017 – CIVITAS Forum 2017 held in Torres Vedras, Portugal. SCC took part in the forum as one of the project partners.

- **Projects**

CIVITAS DYN@MO – 2012-2016

Financing: 7th Framework Programme – CIVITAS Initiative; budget: 13 117 112€. Project partners: 6 project partners from Finland, Germany, Poland, Croatia, Spain.

IWAMA – 2016-2019

Financing: Baltic Sea Region Interreg Programme 2014-2020; budget: 4 600 000€. Project partners: 17 project partners from Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Finland.

iWater – 2015-2018

Financing: Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020; budget: 2 350 000€. Project partners: 9 project partners from Finland, Sweden, Latvia.

CIVITAS Eccentric – 2016-2020

Financing: 7th Framework Programme - CIVITAS Initiative; budget: 19 307 741€. Project partners: 28 Project partners from Finland, Sweden, Germany, Bulgaria and Spain.

SUMPs UP – 2016-2020

Financing: 7th Framework Programme - CIVITAS Initiative; budget: 3 742 998€. Project partners: 15 project partners from Germany, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, France, Italy, Spain, Hungary, United Kingdom, Greece.

Baltic Urban Lab – 2015-2018

Financing: Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020; budget: 2 200 000€. Project partners: 7 project partners from Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia.

Carpe Essence – 2014-2017

Financing: Erasmus+ KA2 – Cooperation and Innovation for Good Practices; budget: 467 569€
Project partners: 8 project partners from the Netherlands, Spain, Finland, The UK, Germany.

Skanssi – Open Innovation Platforms – 2015-2018

Financing: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, the Finnish Government and the City of Turku; budget: 1 282 434€ . Project partners: 8 project partners including UBC cities.

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

UBC SCC participates in the work within is the EU Strategy of the Baltic Sea Region. The Commission has received EUSBSR flagship status for two projects: iWater and IWAMA.

Cooperation of the UBC – CDP is based on the memorandum of understanding signed by the UBC Executive board in November 2016. CDP is the world’s leading organization on voluntary climate reporting. SCC aimed to increase the number of BSR cities using systematic reporting of their climate change related actions from 6 to 25 member cities in 2017 and in 2018 to 50 member cities. In 2017 20 UBC member cities reported to the climate reporting .

SCC has an observatory status and contributes to the matters dealt by HELCOM. SCC has also cooperation with VASAB. In the framework of the CBSS – Baltic2030 Action Plan, SCC is a member of the expert group on sustainable development.

- **Communications**

SCC plans to facilitate meetings and conferences with real time web broadcast. Part of the physical internal meetings is sought to be held online instead. During 2015-2017 SCC continued to publish its online Bulletin. Sustainability Bulletin is published on the UBC SCC website and includes updates from the Commission and the secretariat, projects and events. SCC runs database of good practises in the BSR. SCC is responsible for the content producing and visual layout of the joint report with CDP to be published in the General Conference in Växjö.

Youthful Cities Commission

Gävle Municipality is the chair of the Youthful Cities Commission. Lena Hernandez Modin is in charge of the work, in close cooperation with Susanne Rutström - Gävle Culture School, Karl Nässén – Gävle Youth Liaison and the Gävle Municipality International Office. The vice chair is the city of Kolding (Carsten Adamsen).

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

The meetings included:

Commission meeting, 12-15 April 2016, Turku

The theme of the meeting was “Youth Leisure Time”. The cities had the opportunity to present how they work with youth leisure time.

UBC Cultural Cities Commission and Youthful Cities Commission seminar: New Cultures of Education, 25-27 September 2016, Turku

The seminar focused on different connections between culture, education and new technologies. The Youthful Cities Commission was represented by the former chair of the commission Turku, Hasan Habib.

Commission meeting, 11-14 October 2016, Elva

The theme of the meeting was “Life online”, a current and important topic for all of us in our everyday life, in school, work and private. The outcome of the meeting was a plan for our participation in the 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, a plan for our youth conference in Växjö in October 2017 and movies made by our youth participants on the theme “Life online”.

EUSBSR Forum, 8 November 2016, Stockholm

Four youth participants and two officials from YCC participated in the EUSBSR Forum in Stockholm and in the session “Nothing about us without us” -Sustainable and a green future and Prosperity, growth and jobs from a youth perspective” (BSSSC, UBC, ERB).

Commission meeting, 4-7 April 2017, Gävle

The theme of the meeting was “Digital renewal” that was a continuing of the theme “Life online” from Elva.

EUSBSR Forum 13-14 June 2017, Berlin

YCC was represented by 10 youth and leaders at the forum and all together with BSSSC and ERB almost 50 participants from 10 countries. It focused on sharing good practices on youth involvement and empowerment at local and regional level in the BSR and on discussing different approaches to active youth involvement in all ten Baltic Sea countries. The seminar "Nothing about us without us – making it work!" gathered a large audience in the EUSBSR Annual Forum on 13 June. The main topic was how to include young people in decision-making which raised energetic discussions on themes of democracy, political change and independence. The seminar and the Youth Conference were both organised together by UBC, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) and Euroregion Baltic (ERB).

Youth conference, 21-28 October 2017, Växjö

This youth conference will be a part of UBC General Conference that are held in Växjö October 24 – 27th 2017. Together with the theme of the GC "Leadership of the future" our youth conference will have the theme "Migration, participation and leadership".

In the youth conference 60 people will participate in total (47 youth and 13 group leader). The first days the youth conference will get to know each other, have workshops and prepare themselves for their participation at the GC. The youth participant will get tasks from each commission and they also are a part of several workshops and meetings.

- **Projects**

- **Youth for participation and migration and leadership – Växjö, 21-28 October 2017**

- An ERASMUS+ project 2017 for an exchange for the youth conference during the UBC General Conference. Partners: Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania, Latvia.

- Young people will discover, act, discuss and propose solutions for higher youth participation and interest in participation as well as bringing forward a declaration by the youth on the issues of migration.

- **CaSYPoT - Youth for Participation, Migration and Leadership 1 June 2016 – 30 June 2019**

- Projects partners: Regional Council in Kalmar County Sweden, Municipality of Emmaboda Sweden, Linnaeus University Sweden, Association of Polish Communes Euroregion Baltic Poland, Klaipėda University Lithuania, The City of Slupsk Poland

- The project addresses low participation of local actors in the South Baltic Programme and their need for capacity building. By bringing together new-comer local authorities, in cooperation with universities, the project aims at showing the benefits of soft cross-border cooperation in regard of solving common problems in the field of youth issues.

- **Cooperation with other organisations**

- Youthful Cities Commission cooperates with BSSSC and ERB with EUSBSR Forum in Stockholm 2016, Berlin 2017 and Tallinn 2018.

Working Group on Gender Equality

The workgroup has been coordinated by Hanna Maidell, city of Helsinki and Malgorzata Tarasiewicz from Network of East-West Women in Gdańsk.

- **Meetings/seminars/conferences**

The meetings included:

Gdańsk 21-23 June 2016

The focus for the meeting was to discuss strategies on gender mainstreaming in the UBC cities.

Gdańsk 11 April 2017

In partnership with the City of Gdańsk and European Solidarity Centre, GW organized the conference “Attractive and Inclusive Cities, promotion of Gender Equality of men and women in local life”.

- **Projects**

Building a stronger presence of gender issues in the work on UBC in the cities by strengthening the cooperation with commissions i.e. participation in meetings of other commissions (per invitation)

- **Other activities**

WG representative took part in the meeting in Rostock (21-22 September 2017) to work on the idea of the conference regarding immigrants and refugees in Baltic region that will take place in March 2018.

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.

In the last period the following issues have been published: “Sustain the world, use culture”, “Refugees - a chance and a challenge for the Baltic Cities”, “Inclusive and healthy cities in the Baltic Sea Region”, “Sustainable and Climate-smart Baltic Sea Region Cities”. Since spring 2017, only online version has been published. All Bulletins are available at: <http://ubc.net/publications>