



Baltic Cities Bulletin

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TOWN TWINNING IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION



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COVER PICTURE
Photo: Heléne Söderström
Municipality of Karlskrona

Baltic Cities Bulletin

Dear UBC Friends,

The Union of the Baltic Cities is the biggest organisation grouping local authorities in the region. The potential is even greater if we add all twin cities within the network and in the whole Baltic Sea Region. The majority of the UBC cities have at least two twin towns, many have even several. This makes our organization a far larger network, with an enormous capabilities. But here many questions come up. Is twinning fully exploited? Is it still relevant in the times when short-term cooperation projects seem to be prevailing? Does it bring any direct benefits to the citizens? Do we need formalized ties with other cities at all? Aren't we a big European and Baltic family yet?



This issue of the Bulletin attempts at addressing all these questions. The cities' stories present the roots of their international relations and their impact on the local development, evoke the touching moments from the past, provide an outlook on the future prospects.

Our experience shows that joint activities may be helpful in enhancing collaboration above the borders. At the time of the post war division of Europe, engaging in the international contacts of the cities was the alternative to the official foreign policy. These brought many positive results, e.g. friendships, mutual understanding, experience of new cultures. But also, what is even more important, our Eastern cities gained a great moral, emotional, social and material support on their way to democracy.

Today twinning helps in coordinating international projects. It seems to be more and more business-oriented. Transfer of knowledge and best practices, especially in the environmental field, tends to be dominant in the international relations of the Baltic cities, which reach far beyond the region. However, still various social, cultural and environmental concerns are high on the agenda. Twinned towns choose to encourage tourism, and bring us closer to places all around the world.

Enjoy reading the stories!

Per Bødker Andersen
President of UBC

Kolding, May 2014



I. TOWN-TWINNING IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

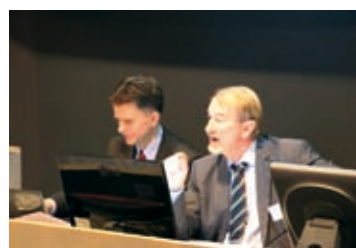
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Transfer of know-how and environmental solutions is one of the modern twinning areas.



The 69th UBC Executive Board meeting was held in Tampere, Finland, on 17-19 March 2014.

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TOWN-TWINNING - AN IMPORTANT DRIVER OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

Do we need town-twinning in today's Europe at all?

By Ewa Kurjata, City of Szczecin

A significant number of European municipalities are linked to each other through a formal twinning agreement. There are about 200 twinned cities among the UBC members themselves and altogether 532 twin cities in the Baltic Sea Region. The majority of the UBC cities have at least two twin towns, many have even several. St. Petersburg in Russia holds the record for the largest number of partnership arrangements with other communities. All in all, this makes our organization even a larger network, with an enormous potential that may seem not to be fully exploited.

When you come to think of it, a number of questions can be posted up about twinning. Is town twinning a reality in the Baltic cities or does it rather exist on paper? Do we need formalized ties with other cities at all? What are the biggest challenges and barriers in this kind of collaboration? How has this special relationship evolved over the years in your cities? Aren't we a big European family yet? Is it still relevant in the times when short-term cooperation projects seem to be prevailing? What is the added-value of town twinning for the citizens and our municipalities? Does it bring any direct benefits them? The answers can be found in our pages, where the Baltic cities willingly share with their rich experiences.

A history in a nutshell

Though bilateral relations between European towns date back to Ancient Greece, the concept of town twinning, as an official relationship-builder, started in Europe after the Second World War. European towns decided that developing grassroots, people-to-people relations across old national frontiers, was an essential way of building a peaceful Europe. The idea was simple: repair damaged relationships between France, Germany and the UK. Find towns that suffered during the wars and pair them. Then encourage people from these areas to meet, mix and get along. That's why town twinning – at its core – is a good and important thing.

The distribution of twinned towns within the different countries has not changed much in recent years. Geographical constraints have proven to be very strong, in spite of the fact that the absolute number of twinning links has considerably increased. Today, some 30,000 twinings bring together towns from over 30 European countries, helping to create a Europe of citizens and covering a wide range of key issues. Twinning gets citizens involved in concrete actions, and promotes the coming together of, and mutual respect between, the peoples of Europe.

Today, after more than sixty years, town twinning has grown into a movement linking together towns and citizens from all Europe, and indeed the entire world.

So, what is town-partnership, or town-twinning?

Partnership cooperation between towns, in other words town twinning, is a form of long-term international cooperation between local governments. Such cooperation is usually based on an official document such as a partnership agreement or a resolution adopted by the relevant legislative body of the town. Some partners choose informal partnership – informal cooperation without any signed agreement or contract. Some twinings are made because of political reasons, too.

Over the long period of time of its existence, partnership cooperation has proved its worth in efforts to promote understanding between European nations and cultures. Its added value is not only a live intercultural dialogue between ordinary citizens, or the overcoming of prejudices between nations, but also the strengthening of citizens' participation in public life, support of civic awareness and the integration of the European Union.

The town-twinning movement is unique in that it integrates all groups of citizens – from ordinary citizens, experts, businessmen and employees of different institutions, people of different ages, men and women (youth, economically active citizens, senior people, the handicapped, etc.), to civic associations and NGOs. It helps start lasting friendships and build professional links between citizens, organisations, offices, schools, etc., and exchange experiences.

It also seems it is very important for the exchange of experiences in different areas of the life of the community, whether this concerns town development, the social area, education, the environment, tourism, or the functioning of self-government. Through cooperation the local governments can support the economic links of their businessmen and entrepreneurs with their counterparts in the partner towns and influence favourably the economic development of their towns and regions. Last but not least, twinning creates a unique opportunity for the citizens of European towns to meet, to get to know each other, exchange ideas, experiences and views and overcome historically conditioned prejudices and mistrust.

So, why do we need town-twinning?

For one thing, most know-it-all will tell you that town twinning encourages exchanges of experiences on a variety of issues of common interest. It may also provide opportunities to learn about the daily lives of citizens in other European countries, to talk to them and very often to make friendships. Thanks to the combination of those elements, town twinning has a real potential to enhance mutual understanding, fostering a sense of ownership of the European Union and finally developing a sense of European identity.



Our experience shows that joint activities may be helpful in enhancing collaboration above the borders, and in coordinating international projects. With the post war ideals, such as peace, friendship and mutual understanding, modern town twinning has gained more and more business-oriented face. Still, various social, cultural and environmental concerns are high on the agenda. Twinned towns choose to encourage tourism, help to experience new cultures and bring us closer to places all around the world.

A recent study has concluded that geographical distance has very little, if any, influence upon communities' selections of a twin town or sister city. Twinned towns are often chosen because of similarities between them. Many former West German cities are twinned with former East German cities; these twinning links were established before the fall of the Iron Curtain. Famous examples are the partnerships of Hanover and Leipzig, both of which have import and trade fair grounds, or between Hamburg and Dresden. Relationships between communities can also arise because of shared names; they may be named after one community or their names may have a common etymology.

Since the 1990s, Poland has seen a great transformation. Not only has twinning transformed Polish towns, it has transformed into friendships and resulted in direct contact between active citizens. Poland now has the most twinning links of any European country, amounting to almost 3000.

So why do it? And why have twin towns? After all, people can travel all around Europe easily, cheaply and freely these days. The answer is very simple: „because town twinning is a relationship”. It's long-term. It starts, it grows and it can flourish. When it's good and healthy, it puts its people first. It introduces them to new experiences and new friends. It helps us all to meet, mix and get along. The relationship is about you and the people in your twin town – not councillors or committees. It's yours to mould. You just need to find some energy to get involved and make something happen. You and your twin share something. A history, some DNA. You're twinned for a reason and that reason will be positive. So you should pay them a visit. They'll love it if you do. And getting to know your neighbours isn't easy.

CEMR as twinning advocate

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), which represents over 100,000 local and regional authorities, is the oldest and broadest European association of local and regional government, which seeks to strengthen the links between municipalities, as these links are a driving element in the construction of Europe. Many describe the organisation as the “patron of the twinning movement in Europe”.

It is the only organisation that brings together the national associations of local and regional authorities from 40 European countries and represents all tiers of government. Ever since it was established in the early fifties, CEMR gave priority to promoting twinning, which it saw as a basic factor in bringing Europeans closer together and building a united Europe. The launch of the twinning movement between Western European towns and the growth of CEMR as a representative

organisation of European local authorities went hand in hand, both gaining momentum at a similar pace.

Town twinning continues to evolve. It allows two or more municipalities to concentrate on common issues which can sometimes be very specific, such as water management, economic development, or the improvement of social services. CEMR works to ensure that town twinning remains an instrument adaptable to contemporary issues and to the current environment.

Money is the key

Very often, it is a key question to be resolved. How to finance town-twinning activities? Should we solely depend/rely on the EU support? Anyway, twinning is not only focused on the mayors and presidents of each city, but citizens getting to know each other, working together and experiencing different cultures.

There is a long history of support to the town-twinning activities by the European Commission. This support has now reached a new stage as a community action programme “Europe for Citizens” was launched in 2007 to cover the period until 2013. In this programme town-twinning has found its place alongside the activities of non-governmental organisations, think tanks, trade unions, citizens groups and other agents in the field of active European citizenship.

The new Europe for Citizens programme gives it a prominent position, expands its forms and activities, and allows it to develop its potential. Priority is given to new twinning arrangements, to projects involving small municipalities or municipalities in geographically disadvantaged areas, to projects involving young people or disadvantaged groups, to multilateral events and to events involving towns and municipalities in the candidate countries.

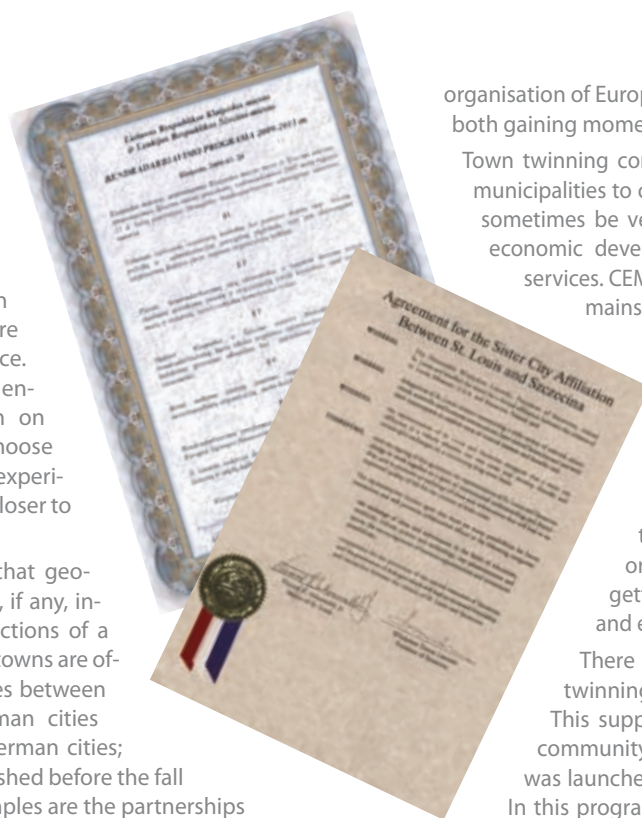
One major advantage of town twinning, as the European Commission sees it, is that it involves large numbers of citizens directly, driving home the benefits of EU integration at the local level and helping citizens from different Member States to create a strong feeling of belonging and of a common European identity.

What of a Future?

In today's fast-changing world, much twinning action is based on exploring and exchanging ideas on specific themes and issues. Social inclusion, economic development, and the protection of our environment and cultural heritage are just a few of the areas in which twinning can play an important role. Twinning in the 21st century allows, thanks to new technologies, for networking and greater interaction between the citizens of Europe. These involve a broad base of actors from local life, the organisations of civil society, schools, universities and the private sector as well, involving citizens in their cities' projects.

A new trend has been observed in twinning partnerships: “Town-twinning becomes green”. Cities chose to develop projects such as e.g. IEE-funded Project Green Twinning, which seeks to strengthen the capacity of local authorities in institutionalising sustainable energy policies into their operations.

Conclusion? Local issues are EU issues and we can only be successful if we get citizens involved. We also need to make it clear that everyone can contribute.



MORE

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Entering the World of Twinning



by William John Callow

Much of Europe's six-decades experience consists of "twinning ideals". In 1950 Robert Schuman famously declared the aim to twin France and Germany's economies making war "impossible". The subsequent Treaty of Paris led Europe down a path of increasing interrelatedness.

Around that time, the Council of European Municipalities & Regions (CEMR) was founded in Geneva. According to CEMR, city twinning is pivotal in taking European thinking beyond national boundaries. The CEMR now reports on 30,000 twinning projects throughout Europe.

It is worth remembering that many UBC friendships are revived ones. The European Community increased western European twinning options, and communism's demise broadened the potential for East and West to forge links and find ground to promote common ideals.

The UBC takes twinning seriously, and most cities have at least two twins, giving environmental, social and economic advantages.

Aalborg has also twinned its ambition to be a sustainability front-runner with multiple cities outside the Baltic region. It has hosted two European Sustainable Cities & Towns (ESCT) Conferences, and is birthplace to the Aalborg Charter and Commitments. Indeed, the UBC's Commission on Environment had a Nordic Baltic Aalborg Commitments Network that worked steadfastly for sustainable



Photo: Anders Sandberg

Aalborg invites the UBC and its individual members to share their ideals, knowledge and best practices at sustainablecities.eu

growth based on an ESCT mandate.

Instead of defining the term "twinning" narrowly, as city A and city B making agreements, "twinning" should be defined broadly, as an instrument to match ideals with multiple others, including city authorities, institutions, businesses, universities and citizens.

Put simply, a twin is just a similarity; it is the "one" of two comparable things. The original 1991 UBC Statute attaches importance to similarity of ideals: Each member will work for development of

the region and beyond to foster harmonious relations throughout Europe. The 2015 Strategy, in addition, seeks to promote UBC ideals and secure a louder European voice.

The strong sustainability capabilities developed over 20 years in the ESCT, professionally and knowledge-based, provide another foundation and infrastructure that the UBC can use to twin its ambitions with others. Common ground is found on multiple levels, with numerous actors using various tools to achieve ideals like sustainable economic growth, a healthy environment and human happiness.

MORE

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A Method of Exchanging Best Practices

by Michał Karpiak

Twin Cities of Chojnice are: Emsdetten (Germany), Korsun-Shevchenkivskiyi (Ukraine) and Mazyr (Belarus).

The twinning agreement with the City of Emsdetten was signed in 1996. From the very beginning, youth exchange and exchange of best practices, e.g. in the field of management of public spaces, were the most common forms of cooperation. Technological solutions from Emsdetten were used while reconstructing the downtown area of Chojnice. Regular cooperation of schools for handicapped from both cities has started. In 1997, an investor from Emsdetten built mattresses factory "Relaks" in Topole, near Chojnice.

In 2006, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the partnership, the authorities renewed the twinning agreement. Citizens' meeting, organized with the support of the European Commission within the confines of "Active European Citizenship" programme, initiated the cooperation in new areas with broader citizens' involvement. Among the results of the musicians' cooperation there was creation of a Big Band in Chojnice and a continuous exchange of rock bands. Also, twinning associations were established in both towns.

In 2008 Emsdetten was awarded with the EUROPA PREIS for the cooperation with Chojnice and the Dutch town of Hengelo by the Institute of European Partnerships and International Cooperation in Bonn. The prize was awarded for such projects as joint music workshops, musical performances at the festival against racism and discrimination in Emsdetten, cooperation of kindergartens.

Since several years non-governmental organizations have been the

main actors of cooperation. Town Twinning Association from Chojnice in collaboration with the Runners' Club of Emsdetten organize sports camps for children. Volunteers of Foundation for Development of Chojnice and Czluchów Land visit Emsdetten every year to help in the organization of the festival against racism and discrimination.

Youth of Chojnice, inspired by good practices of Emsdetten and Hengelo, established Self-governing Youth Centre in Chojnice - a place for independent, extracurricular social activities. Currently, the partner organizations from Chojnice and Emsdetten are completing the implementation of the project "Senior Volunteers in Youth Work" within the confines of Lifelong Learning Programme.

It became a tradition that citizens of twinned towns meet during the Days of Chojnice and Emsdetten.



Photo: Klaas Wind (Hengelo, Hollandia)

Photographers from twinned towns (Heinz Huelskoetter and Ben Stegemann) preparing the photo exhibition about Chojnice.

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International Business Twinning

by Merike Järv

Young people leaving school have to face many challenges such as insecure labour market, fast changes in business life, globalization or immigration. Today, one of the most important parts of the twinning cooperation is to promote young people's participation in the twinning activities and to get business cooperation involved.

Since 2010 Elva participates in twinning activities with Salo, Finland; Gardony, Hungary; Rzev, Russia; and Anija, Estonia concerning the globalization from the point of view of young people, education and enterprises. In cooperation with twin and partner towns, the International Business Twinning (IBT) programme was launched.

During the IBT Conference the young people have opportunity to meet representatives of different cities, countries and to discuss common challenges concerning their future as employees or entrepreneurs. This programme enables participants to learn from each other's experiences and to find common objectives to improve the living conditions in the region. Additionally, the project gives an opportunity for the companies to know other companies in twin towns and to promote themselves. Students also provide reports



Students from Elva presenting the ideas at the IBT Conference in Gardony, Hungary.

and studies the companies are interested in.

The emphasis of the twinning cooperation is not only on economy but also on communication and inter-cultural relations. Being an active citizen in the local and international cooperation can influence understanding of common unity. In the current situation institutional communication of local bodies (municipalities and provinces)

can function as a cohesion factor promoting an exchange of ideas which is the very basis of democracy and EU citizenship. Young people offer a variety of innovative and challenging ideas concerning living environment, promoting mutual understanding of culture, tolerance, etc. IBT-project is beneficial for all participants and it would bring valuable long-term results.

IBT Conference takes place every year in different twin and partner towns of Elva. This year, 2014, IBT Conference will be held in Elva on 11-16 May.

MORE

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Youth in the Nordic Town-Twinning

by Niina Ekstam & Emma Aalto

The idea of involving young people in Nordic twin city cooperation emerged at the Nordic twin cities' meeting in Espoo in May 2013. In addition to the city officials from Espoo, Kongsberg, Kristianstad, Køge and Skagafjörður, a group of local Youth Council members was invited. Young people expressed their wish to be involved in the twin city partnership and to cooperate with young people from other twin cities.

Before the meeting, the group of young people in Espoo sent a short questionnaire to all Espoo's Nordic twin cities to ask other youngsters if, and how, they were interested in cooperating with each other. According to the results presented at the meeting, young people are motivated to take part in twin town relations. They want to meet each other face to face, build friendships and learn about cultures and politics in the Nordic countries. They are also interested in young peoples' engagement in local politics and tools and mechanisms of youth participation.

As the city officials gave green light to youth participation, the young have started to plan a twin city activity of their own. Each city appointed an adult contact person to help young people to build up the cooperation. With the help of two youth workers, the young people in Espoo took responsibility for coordinating the process. They opened a Facebook group where young people from three twin cities have joined to communicate and share their ideas for a future activity. The next step will be to put it into practice.



Espoo Youth Council presenting their ideas at the city officials' meeting.

It seems that promoting mutual understanding between young citizens of Nordic twin cities, learning about daily lives, cultures and identities is of great value to young people. They also wish to exchange good practices that are relevant to them, like strategies to enhance their involvement in local decision making. However, it is essential that adults do not lead or control their cooperation, but encourage them to act together.

MORE

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Gdańsk Shares its Knowledge after EURO 2012



by Maciej Buczkowski

Town twinning encourages exchanges of experiences on a variety of issues of common interest. Gdańsk experience shows that joint activities may be helpful in enhancing collaboration above the borders. Sharing the knowledge tightens the links and results in mutual benefits.



Photo: Dorota Miroszniczenko/www.gdansk.pl

Gdańsk was one of the hosts of UEFA EURO 2012 Football Championships. The event was found very successful both in terms of organization, as well as friendly atmosphere the city and its inhabitants created. The city decided to run the

project "Polish – Russian Best Practice Exchange UEFA Euro 2012 – FIFA World Cup 2018" promoting the exchange of experiences in organization of championships with Russian cities that will host FIFA World Cup 2018.

The range and size of both events differs. However, similar challenges have to be faced, especially those connected with the safety and security of the visitors.

Two workshops on the organization of the sport events were held in Gdańsk in 2013. The representatives of twinned St. Petersburg, Kaliningrad, and also Moscow, Saransk, Kazan and Sochi had an opportunity to visit the key places, e.g. the airport, PGE Arena, Amberexpo – exhibition centre and the risk management centre in Gdańsk.

Five years still to go to the World Cup is not a long time. We want to be well prepared and we are aware there is still a lot to do. That is why we are keen on learning from Gdańsk experience. – Said Andrey Kozlovskiy, Local Organizing Committee in Kaliningrad.

The programme of the workshops comprised the questions of safety, transportation, risk management, voluntary service, accommodation, etc. The study visits and presentations provoked numerous questions and vivid discussions were held.

The visits were a part of Gdańsk policy to tighten the links and to enhance the cooperation with its Russian partners, especially with the twinned Kaliningrad.

The project, run in the framework of the competition 'Supporting the civic and local dimension of the Polish foreign policy in 2013', gained the co-financing from the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

MORE

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Town Twinning in Gdynia

by Joanna Leman

Gdynia started to establish town twinning contacts in 1976, with the conclusion of the first agreement with the British Plymouth. As the time passed, the town twinning cooperation of Gdynia concentrated on activities which were to contribute to greater EU integration. Gdynia established the Baltic Circle of Gdynia's Sister Cities enabling active participation in the implementation of projects within the scope of education, culture, sport and social issues.

Owing to town twinning, it was possible to introduce to Gdynia a very interesting educational project, based on Washington Business Week summer school organised in Gdynia's sister city of Seattle since 1976. The programme called Gdynia Business Week is an intensive six-day course, conducted by American tutors and business leaders. It is aimed at teaching the principles of entrepreneurship and is addressed to secondary school students. So far, almost 500 students from Gdynia schools took part in five editions of the programme realised in Gdynia since 2009.

Upon Poland's accession to the European Union, the nature of international cooperation changed in a natural way and the implementation of short-term cooperation projects financed with the EU funds started to be promoted. Gdynia, as well as its various institutions, implemented a number of projects in cooperation with their foreign partners. In the field of education, schools in Gdynia carried out numerous projects under the Longlife Learning Pro-



Photo: Paweł Łazniak

gramme (Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius) and the Youth in Action Programme. Among the innovation-related activities i.a. Baltic active education network for development of people-to-people initiatives (eduPEOPLE) – a project implemented by Gdynia Innovation Centre in cooperation with Kalmar Science Park, eXperimentLabbet under South Baltic Cross-border Cooperation Programme (ERDF) may be listed.

The Social Welfare Centre in Gdynia (MOPS), in cooperation with its partner Vard – och Omsorgsforvaltningen from Helsingborg in Sweden, implemented a project entitled: Experience beyond the borders – Gdynia – Helsingborg partnership for the disabled, under the Longlife Learning Programme – Leonardo da Vinci.

The international projects carried out by Gdynia within the field of transport include i.a. a project entitled: TROLLEY – Promoting Electric Public Transport financed by the ERDF under the Central Europe Programme, led by Salzburg AG for Energy, Transportation and Telecommunication (Austria). It is aimed at making public transport more attractive, especially by promotion of trolleybus transport. Additionally, Gdynia has for years participated in activities of international organisations the city is a member of, i.e. Union of the Baltic Cities or Euroregion Baltic.

MORE

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GULDBORGSUND

7 Years of Twinning in Guldborgsund

by Frede Danborg

Twinning is one of Guldborgsund's ways of international cooperation, beside participation in development projects (INTERREG), or in small network projects, and networking (UBC and other international forums).

The purpose of the cooperation through twin cities is formulated in the city's International Strategy:

to support inter-community understanding, contribute to the professional development of the municipal employees and develop the municipality into a better place to live and work.

When Guldborgsund was founded in 2007 by merging 6 smaller municipalities, all together it had 23 friendship cities, mainly located in three neighbouring Nordic countries and Germany.

However, there were only limited contacts and activities with most of the twin cities and these had to be reviewed. Now Guldborgsund has 4 friendship cities: Iisalmi (SF), Harju County (EE), Liepāja (LV) and Eutin (DE). Over the last 7 years these twin city relations have provided framework for at least 40 study visits and delegations involving around 80 municipal representatives and 340 citizens from associations, youth activities and school classes.

Even though it is difficult to measure, it is believed that the purpose of twin cities cooperation has been fulfilled. Inter-community understanding has definitely increased from the many visits and re-visits, particularly based on the school classes and young people that have been involved in these activities. It has also contributed to the professional development of the municipal employees. Also, according to the city strategy, actual project cooperation



Meeting Other Ways of Living project with participation of the youth from Guldborgsund, Liepāja, Kaliningrad and Klaipėda.

should take place among the twin-cities providing concrete results. A number of projects have been completed with partners from Eutin and financially supported by INTERREG IVA covering the Femern Belt region. Youth culture projects have been completed

with partners in Liepāja and other partners with the support from the Nordic Council and the EU Youth in Action Programme.

Now, the main international project partner is the Hanseatic City Rostock. This cooperation has included 8 INTERREG projects, 20 culture and tourism events, and many exchanges by citizens associations, young people and school classes. As a result, Rostock and Guldborgsund have now started a process to become twin-cities. This is believed to be an important framework to broaden the political support and their involvement in the cooperation. It will also increase cooperation among local citizens group and municipal core service areas as health, elder care, education and employment.

MORE

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City Festival Gathers Guests from Jēkabpils Twin Cities

by Laura Afanasjeva

Presently Jēkabpils has seven international partners - Melle in Germany (since 1998), Rokiškis region in Lithuania (since 2010), Maardu in Estonia (2003), Lida region in Belarus (since 2005), Czerwionka - Leszczyny and Sokołów Podlaski in Poland (both since 2005), and Garachukhur region in Azerbaijan (since 2012).

The partnership agreements name the cooperation areas, namely education, economy and business development, environmental projects, and culture. The latter is the language that is understood in every part of the world.

Each year in the framework of the annual city festival Jēkabpils organizes the folk event „Jollity in Jēkabpils“. In 2014 this event will take place for the eighth year in a row. It gathers traditional folk dancers and singers, as well as modern folk groups and artists.

During these years Jēkabpils has welcomed guests from our partners in Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, as well as Estonia, Spain, Italy, Germany and others.



Photo: Jēkabpils Municipality

This event is a wonderful opportunity for citizens of Jēkabpils and surrounding area to get acquainted with the cultural features of the friends abroad. It strengthens links between different cultures and people with common interests and goals, helps to preserve traditional culture values and pass them over to wider audience.

„Jollity in Jēkabpils“ is a festive event for both participants and locals, who are cheering up singers and dancers with

loud applause and dancing to the melodic sounds of the traditional repertoires. The festival takes place at the very special scenery - at the open air division of Jēkabpils history museum “Selonian farmstead” that gathers buildings of the historical Selonian region of the 19th century.

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Jõhvi Benefits from Twinning



by Maria Laanemäe

The history of Jõhvi twinings have begun in time, when Jõhvi was part of its neighbour-city and before it recovered its town rights. The first partnership agreement was concluded in 1989 and now this document is the cornerstone of Jõhvi twinning and one of the page of Jõhvi's new history.



Nowadays the city twinned municipalities in Eastern and Western Europe countries. Some of them are in the neighbouring countries, some are the project partners, some appeared thanks to assistance of the national communities and citizen's organizations.

The length and intensity of cooperation differs. At the beginning of the 90s the main target for twinning cooperation was to get new knowledge and methods used in new municipality in contemporary conditions. Time went by and the cooperation have been changing, too. Some of the contacts ended with the completed projects, some expanded as the common undertaking gave an extra impuls for collaboration.

Nowadays, Jõhvi can share its own experience and knowledge with the twinned municipalities through the long-term projects. In 2013 the joint project was launched with Jõhvi Russian twin of Kingisepp on energy-efficiency topics. The project was supported

by the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Estonia - Latvia - Russia. Its overall objective is to contribute to achieving higher energy-efficiency in the two neighbouring regions - Jõhvi and its surrounding county of Ida-Virumaa (Estonia) and the district of Kingisepp (Russia).

The specific objective of the project is to rise citizens' awareness on energy saving methods and using the contemporary technologies at reconstruction works in buildings owned by municipalities. In the frame of this project, it is planned to organize the study trip to one of the Scandinavian twin towns. This proves the effectiveness of the twinning network Jõhvi belongs to.

The cooperation with twin cities is multidimensional and covers many areas, e.g. culture and sport. Students of art, sport and music schools take part in the joint events and projects.

Although Jõhvi is quite a small town and its resources sometimes are limited, this kind of international cooperation is found productive and beneficial.

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30 years of Junior Ice Hockey Tournaments between Twin Towns

by Satu Heikkinen

On 28 March 2014, 12-13-year-old Linden Hockey juniors travelled from Eskilstuna, Jyväskylä's twin town, to play in the traditional weekend hockey tournament hosted by JYP 2001 boys. The traditional tournaments between JYP from Jyväskylä and Linden



Photo: Hanni Viljainen

Eskilstuna Linden Hockey and Jyväskylä JYP juniors shaking hands before the game on 28 March 2014 at Peurunka Icecat Arena in Finland.

Hockey from Eskilstuna has been running almost uninterrupted since the 1980s. The teams take turns in hosting the tournament each year.

Teuvo Kangas, team manager of JYP 01, says:

The tournament offers the boys valuable experience of playing in a foreign country. The valuable tradition also means responsibility for the organiser. After all, many of the young players' fathers have also taken part in the tournament.

This year, eight teams took part in the tournament, with the hosting JYP junior teams getting the most wins. For JYP Jyväskylä, the tournament is an annual tradition. The most important role in the

tournament organized between the twin towns is played by the young players, as well as their teams and parents.

Jyväskylä's Nordic town twinning network was established in 1947 when Jyväskylä started cooperation with Eskilstuna in Sweden, Esbjerg in Denmark and Stavanger in Norway. Neskaupstaður, later Fjardabyggd, in Iceland joined the network in 1958.

Nordic town twinning has a long tradition. In the early years, the towns were engaged in fairly concrete cooperation, such as after the Second World War, when Jyväskylä received material help from Eskilstuna, its Swedish twin town, in the form of building materials and household goods.

Young people and sports have formed the cornerstone of town twinning between Jyväskylä and Eskilstuna from the very beginning. Sports teams have continued their cooperation throughout the decades.

Town twinning is valuable when it comes to long-term cooperation. Municipal organisations play a supporting and encouraging role. What is most important, the citizens build long-lasting international relationships and networks – as well as friendships!

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Karlskrona's International Cooperation

by Tore Almlöf

Currently Karlskrona has twinning agreement with Klaipėda in Lithuania, Gdynia in Poland, Baltijsk in Russia and Aizpute in Latvia. There is also a well-developed partnership with Rostock in Germany. The twinning relations were established after the Iron Curtain had collapsed. All twin towns are located in Karlskrona's geographic proximity, within a radius of 300 km. These cities are the first choice when it comes to the EU-funded projects. With the twin cities around the Baltic Sea Karlskrona has chosen a model where the city, in addition to the formal town twinning agreement, also works out concrete cooperation programmes for the period of 3-4 years. These programmes specify in detail what is to be accomplished in this period. In Karlskrona these programmes are adopted by the City Council.

Historically, twinning between Karlskrona and the cities from the Nordic countries started in the 1940s and developed after the second world war. Some years ago the responsibility regarding town twinning with Nordic cities was moved from the municipality to an organization called Norden Association which is also seated in Karlskrona. The Norden Association is a politically independent organization (NGO) with approximately 60 000 members throughout the Nordic countries. The Federation of the Norden Associations is the umbrella organisation for the Norden Associations.

The aim of the Norden Association is to stimulate and improve



Photo: Heléne Söderström

Nordic co-operation on all levels, especially in the fields of education, culture, labour market, industry, mass media, international aid and environmental care. Currently, there is a collaboration with Hillerød in Denmark, Loviisa in Finland, Ólafsfjörður (part of the municipality of Fjallabyggð) in Iceland and Horten in Norway. The municipality

supports the Nordic Association's work, but there is no cooperation between the cities as organisations.

The Municipality of Karlskrona has decided that no "classical" twin town agreement will be signed in the future. There are going to be the so called municipality partnership agreements on specific topics instead. Such agreements have been signed with Pretoria in South Africa and Chuxiong City, Yunnan Province in P.R. China with focus on education and culture.

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A Way to the Democratic World

by Lina Duobaitė

Kaunas has a large network of international partners – more than 20 twin cities in many countries of the world. The relations with the regions and cities of the many countries were started upon the restoration of independence of Lithuania, and the new relations and friendship with other cities were regarded as a way and means to the new democratic world.

Having learnt a lot and received support from the international partners in the beginning, Kaunas is now an active partner and initiator of many international projects, inviting and engaging its sister-cities in them. It is true that the projects often are short-termed and they last for a limited period of time, or sometimes consist of a single event. But when starting a project, the city often looks for partners, first of all, among its twin cities, as the established long lasting relations help to know the partners well, to learn from their experience, and to benefit from the joint work. Besides, it gives full trust to the partners, which is very important for a stable and smooth cooperation and implementation of projects.

The added-value of town twinning is interest of citizens in another city, country or culture, which not only may encourage and enlarge tourism or develop business, but also create emotional affinity and fellow-feeling among the citizens. Long-lasting close relations and the constant exchange of ideas and information among the twin cities help to keep one's finger on the pulse of the world and find out about the newest trends in the



The award of the Flag of Honour from the Council of Europe Parliament member Mrs Orinta Leiputė to Mayor of Kaunas City Mr Andrius Kupčinskas).

economic, cultural, business, scientific, social and other spheres of life in other cities and countries.

Kaunas was awarded the Council of Europe Flag of Honour by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly in 2013. This award is granted to a municipality having evaluated its activity in various local and international organizations, participation in the twinning programmes, cooperation with foreign partners, organization of international events, as well as dissemination of European ideas and values.

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With and Without



by Ina Sidlauskienė

A town of the 21st century can hardly be imagined without human communication stretching far beyond community boundaries and national borders. Town-twinning is an official form of such a communication. Its very foundation after WWII was laid with key values: *friendship* and *understanding*. A new page of the twinning history opened after the greatest democratic shift - the fall of the Iron Curtain. Towns have become not only witnesses, but also promoters of a high wave of twinning activities in the Baltic Sea Region. In the early nineties contacts between its formerly segregated nations were lit with genuine manifestations of political idealism. On their way back to full independence, democracy and market economy, eastern Baltic towns needed Westerners' friendship and understanding. Those values were standing behind the official relations with foreign counterparts: *We knew what our cities can win with them or lose without*.

At the dawn of the Lithuanian independence and soon after its restitution, over the period of five years, Klaipėda concluded nine twin city agreements out of the today's nineteen. Their geography embraced cities from countries on three continents. Among them were Karlskrona, on the other shore of the Baltic, and Kuji, Japan, over the remote waters of the Pacific ocean.

Klaipėda pragmatically oriented itself towards experiences exchange in the fields of major municipal functions with the general aim to change the citizens' life for better.



In the most difficult days of Lithuanian struggle for independence in 1990-1991, Klaipėda received direct political support from Karlskrona, and Kuji in various forms. It is recognized that town-twinning activities may be an important part of national policy implementation. The remarkable political support deeds of our partners stand out bright in the general picture of twinning. The manifold international activities which united ordinary citizens

and local politicians from different countries have significantly contributed to creating of modern Baltic Sea Region and the European Union. In the context of the current European security crisis, our cooperation with the twin cities of Odessa, Kaliningrad, Mogiljov and Cherepovetz acquires extra importance. Klaipėda, the winner of the Council of Europe Europe Prize 2003 for propagation of European unity ideas, is ready to further cooperate without prejudice, but with the prevailing feelings of friendship and understanding.

MORE

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Twinning for Maritime Safety and Water Tourism

by Mirva Salokorpi

Several aspects of cooperation between the cities of Kronstadt (Russia) and Kotka (Finland) focus on marine affairs. It is natural, based on their history and location, as both cities are located by the sea. The extraordinary environmental conditions and growing traffic, as well as winter conditions of the Baltic Sea made it vulnerable for accidents. Improving maritime safety is important to protect the environment, to ensure efficient and economic maritime transport and to develop maritime tourism and yachting.



Voluntary maritime rescuers from Kotka and Kronstadt held joint search and rescue exercises.

One example of town twinning cooperation is maritime safety enhancing project, called RescOp that was conducted in 2011-2014 by joint efforts of Finnish, Russian and Estonian experts. It was funded by the South-East Finland – Russia ENPI CBC 2007-2013 Programme.

The scientific part of the project produced assessments and methodologies for managing the risk of navigation incidents, as well as tools and models for risk assessment in both open water and ice conditions. VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) operator training is an important part of the safe

maritime transportation and management. Joint simulator-assisted exercises between the Russian and Finnish VTS operators were developed and tested in the RescOp project.

Voluntary maritime rescue service often supplements the official Search and Rescue organizations. During the RescOp project, the operational level of Kronstadt's voluntary maritime rescuers was developed. The goals were to get more trained volunteers and instructors, create a training system and develop the society in order to be part of the official Russian maritime rescue system in the future. It also trained a total of 255 ecological volunteers in the city of St. Petersburg. A programme of theoretical education and practical training for ecological volunteers involved in oil spill response on the shoreline was developed in the project.

Inland waterways in Russia are now open and a new passport and customs control point for boaters was established in Kronstadt a year ago. A voluntary maritime rescue society has now the capacity to assist boaters in trouble off the coast of St. Petersburg and Kronstadt. As the facilities exist, it is now important to convey the message to the boaters and try to get water tourism to grow in the area. The next project and cooperation between the cities and other stakeholders will focus on this welfare-enhancing issue.

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LAHTI

Together against Climate Change

by Marko Nurminen

Akureyri, Lahti, Randers, Västerås and Ålesund has been fighting together against the climate change since 2007. This cooperation is a result of the special twin town relationship that has evolved over the past two decades. The relationship is not only based on contacts between the environmental authorities, but is also coordinated by other actors in different contexts and levels. For example, fifteen years ago a youth summer camp in Akureyri gathered teens and political decision makers from each twin town to learn together about environmental responsibility. These different contacts on various environmental issues laid the foundation for common climate change cooperation.

The Ålesund meeting in 2007 was the starting point to more systematic collaboration between the twin cities. Since then annual climate meetings have been arranged in turn. Also, climate declaration in Ålesund was signed. The other Nordic municipalities were encouraged to take climate change seriously and to create local measures to meet these challenges. The declaration also urged to create networks on the twin town level to face the challenge. For Lahti the declaration serves as a guidance document for its twin town cooperation.



Town twinning can be a windmill of change.

At the Randers meeting in 2010 more focused phase of the collaboration was initiated to enforce the cooperation and to take into account different conditions and interests of each Nordic twin town. A joint steering group made the cooperation more efficient by managing the overall planning of the annual climate meetings. The specific predetermined subthemes of the meetings, ranging from energy to communication issues, provide better opportunity to learn from

each other and to exchange experiences.

For Akureyri, Lahti, Randers, Västerås and Ålesund town twinning is not merely official declarations, but a tool for real environmental collaboration. Lahti's long-term cooperation and formalised twin town ties are even more relevant in the current situation in which short-term projects are prevailing ways to cooperate. As a matter of fact, town twinning gives a solid ground to build relevant and interconnected projects.

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A Road towards Development

by Anete Jonase

After the collapse of the Soviet Union Liepāja was very keen to establish as many partners as possible, resulting to 14 at some point.

Years passing by, Liepāja city has grown its knowledge and strengthened connections, as well as shaped town-twinning and partnership policies, putting much effort in keeping the most valuable and thriving collaboration. Twinning and partnering today continues through different perspective, putting emphasis on common projects of development between organizations, institutions or establishments. One of the examples of twinning without official agreement is relationship with Kaliningrad (Russia).

Yet another example of direct cooperation between organizations is Liepāja Society of the Blind, one of the most active NGO's who is successfully using international cooperation as a tool in achieving its goals. In its leader's Māris Ceirulis opinion:

The best road to development is exchanging information, experiences

and implementing projects through town-twinning, in result reaching needs of society. The most valuable is to learn from experience. We can learn a lot from others mistakes and advise a better approach.

Good example of twinning based on the common EU funded projects and activities are partnerships with Liepāja's closest neighbours and twin cities – Klaipėda and Palanga in Lithuania. Recent exchange trip to Palanga outlined some new directions that can be used in achieving better exploitation of available funding, particularly in SPA and tourism development.

On the other hand just few weeks ago the delegation from Klaipėda learned more on installing and operating new lighting system that Liepāja introduces with the support of EU money.

After twenty years of twinning with more than ten partner cities, new trends has emerged. Citizens and organizations are more active in their individual twinning with the cooperation

cities, often not requiring assistance to establish ties with counterparts from the municipality. This civic engagement is very welcome and applaudable.

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Annual visit marking 20 years of mutual cooperation of partners from Liepāja's sister city in the United States – Bellevue, WA.



Twinning is a Real Asset



by Elina Letjutsaja

Maardu's character, the traditional web of relations between Estonians and Russians, serves as a guarantee of its ability to create a human and economic bridge with other countries.

The city administration uses a balanced policy, which encourages the spiritual, ethical and cultural development of the local community. Multicultural society and active external relations are characteristic features of Maardu. Representatives of more than 43 ethnic groups live in the city, making its life colorful and varied.

Maardu has 21 twin towns in different countries and corners of the world. It is a result of long-term cooperation. The most exotic twin-towns are in Cambodia and China. In most cases town-twinning partnerships allow to maintain close links in the social and cultural fields, to implement developmental programmes, to gain positive exchanges in tackling environmental issues. A direct involvement in the European programmes provides more opportunities to receive new subsidies.

The most indicative examples for Maardu are two towns. The first one is a French twin town La Seyne sur Mer, where the waste burning plant was constructed much earlier than in Maardu. It became an example of effective sharing experience in the sphere of business and ecological development. Faced with an environmental challenge that requires maximised energy savings more than ever, Maardu was committed to increase the use of renewable energies by additional construction of waste to energy plant. Using the most

modern and environmentally sustainable combustion technology, the Iru power plant is now able to convert around 85% of the energy locked in waste into electricity and heat. Energy from waste represents a financial saving over energy imports. It means saving the planets resources that helps to reduce greenhouse gases.

Another example of fruitful cultural cooperation for Maardu is twin town Mirgorod from Ukraine. It is a city of rich cultural heritage and venue for the world famous trade and cultural fair in Sorochintcy. Twelve years ago Maardu administration decided to impart this cultural tradition to an Estonian town, too. Creative collectives, national handymen and sales representatives were invited to the festival of the Ukrainian culture in Estonia. Thus, just one unique Sorochintcy Fair now exists abroad in Maardu and every year in September the town gathers trade entrepreneurs from different towns of Estonia.



The cultural fair is also a holiday for Maardu citizens.

MORE

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Malbork Exchanges its Experiences

by Amelia Graban

Malbork has now six twin towns: Nordhorn in Germany (since 1995), Trakai in Lithuania (since 1997), Solvesborg in Sweden (since 1999), Margny-les-Compiègne in France (since 2004), Monheim am Rhein in Germany (since 2005), Larvik in Norway and recently Offagna in Italy. The official town twinning agreement is planned to be signed in June this year.

Each year Malbork coordinates international projects between twin towns.

This year a group of students from the Third Century University on an invitation of the Association of Malbork's Friends had an opportunity to actively take part in the most important carnival events in Monheim am Rhein. The carnival exchange between U3W seniors and seniors from Monheim was the effect of the partner's visits in May last year.

Also, the schools benefit from the twinning cooperation. In April last year youth from two high schools were hosting pupils from Nordhorn. They completed a joint project concerning the history of the Malbork castle. In June, also the youngsters from the twin town Margny les Compiègne started their visit in Malbork. During the 12-day exchange the pupils took part in sport competitions, culinary and music workshops.

Malbork took part in the Nordhorn's annual celebrations of the 50th jubilee of the partnership with Montivilliers and Coevorden. The

international exchange of the youth was under the theme: 'What does Europe mean for us?'

In the beginning of June, 'Trakai summer' took place in the twin town of Trakai. Besides the delegation from Malbork, guests from Belarus, Georgia, Turkey and Giżycko participated in the event. The programme of the 'Trakai summer of 2013' was extremely rich in cultural and sport events. During this time the football tournament for kids, a sport competition, a glider, small plane's parades and sailing races were held.

Italian Offagna will be the next twin town of Malbork. First contacts between the towns were established in 2012. The visit of representatives of Malbork in Offagna and the revisit of the Italians during the Magic Malbork event showed how much both communes have in common – a medieval history, an architecture, an input of Polish soldiers into the liberation of the Marche region – deliverance of Ancona and Loreto by soldiers of the 2nd Corps led by general Władysław Anders. Education, culture, sport, and economy will be the main directions of cooperation.



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Malmö - Hong Kong Sustainability Charter

by Ola Nord

Times change and today cities develop new forms of twinning agreements. They have learned that agreements have to be beneficial, market oriented and well-structured to bring something back.

In 2011 Malmö and Hong Kong signed a joint Sustainability Charter that identifies 5 areas of cooperation where both cities' expertise is used. The agreement is being evaluated every 3 years.

Within the cooperation, Malmö and Hong Kong meet at least 3 times per year, and stay in contact via email, Skype and phone for the rest of time. The meetings involve city officials, politicians and invited companies.

Currently, the work is focusing on waste management and renewable energy. A Swedish interest organization is now involved with a Hong Kong partner in a pre-study on biogas development. Malmö waste company SYSAV is also involved in possible selling know-how to Hong Kong on waste treatment.

Energy efficiency is another area of cooperation, where Malmö is looking for new technologies that can be used and tested in new city districts, as well as in the older parts, currently under refurbishment and renovation.

In Hong Kong, an InnoCarnival, an innovation carnival for children, students and young adults, started in 2005. This year for the first time in Europe InnoCarnival Skåne 2014 will be organized as part of the exchange program. In connection with the carnival there



Mayor of Malmö Katrin Stjernfeldt-Jammeh and Hong Kong Environmental Minister KS Wong visiting Malmö.

will be arranged an InnoConference which will focus on The future school, The food of the future and The Cities in the Future.

Students from Hong Kong PolyU, Lund University and Malmö University will cooperate on creating products within Internet of Things, Healthcare for the elderly and Smart energy solutions. In addition to Skype meetings, they will live together in Campus Hong Kong in August and the result of the student cooperation will be presented at the InnoConference.

And finally, sustainable transport is being explored and developed at the joint meetings and discussions on future cooperation around public transport systems, e-vehicles, as well as models to fund future public transport investments.

The cooperation has had other spin-offs on Malmö business with contacts between univer-

sities, as well as a cooperation agreement between Hong Kong and the Copenhagen Malmö Port authority. At the end of this year, Malmö will be back in Hong Kong during the Business of Design week with a delegation of designer companies and loads of opportunities.

This modern way of twinning, has proven very fruitful, though it requires political support, long-term presence based on actual needs and demands.

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Strengthening the Ties with Neighbours

by Vjatšeslav Kononov

Last year Narva has extended the geography of its twin-cities to include China and US, making friends with people of distant nations and hoping for mutually benign contacts. However, it is important to keep in focus the ties which are close to home, particularly if the twin-city is located within the "flight of an arrow" distance.

Situated on the other side of the Narva River Ivangorod has been a reliable partner for Narva for many decades. Cooperation has developed on different bases and in different frames: through signing bilateral agreements of cooperation, through membership in the City Twins Association, and through participation in international projects. They have increased their importance in recent years as both cities have received a hefty amount of over 10 mln euros for joint projects from the Est-Lat-Rus Programme. Having gone through all the stages together - from brainstorming and prioritizing the project ideas to forming steering groups, from starting the implementation of the project to completing and reporting on - both partners have established very strong connections and trustworthy relationships that help to solve any issue either neighbour-city might encounter. The partnership has truly benefitted the citizens because the resources gained from the Programme are spent on development of the historical sites - Ivangorod fortress and the Narva Castle - and reconstruction of the embankment on both sides of the river, thus creating a more comfortable living envi-

ronment for the locals and making the twin-cities more attractive for tourists.

Projects are vital for Narva and Ivangorod, but cooperation is not limited just to them. Among the events planned for 2014 there are: participation of cultural groups in the neighbour's days of the city, a football tournament, joint sessions of the Councils, competitions for photographers to spot the most interesting images of the other city, and a traditional meeting of Ded Moroz and Santa Clause with children residing on either bank of the river.

Narva feels convinced that strengthening the ties between the neighbours is the key in weathering any storms and forging on along the road of cooperation, trust and development.



Every year, the Chairs of the local Councils sign a coordinated plan of activities the cities are going to carry out in the course of the year.

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Twinning Makes a Difference



by Eva Hjalmered

For the last six years students from Oscarsgymnasiet in Oskarshamn, Sweden, have visited the twin city Pärnu in Estonia. This exchange means a lot for both cities.

The twinning agreement between Oskarshamn and Pärnu was first signed in 1989 and then renewed in 2000. During the years a lot of people from the communities, different schools, organizations and companies have met and built up friendly relations.

The town-twinning project started at the senior high school Oscarsgymnasiet six years ago. During the second and third year the students at the Industrial Programme construct, design and build equipment for playgrounds. They made swings, climbing frames, pirate-towers, football goals and sandpits with small excavators. One week in May the students go to Estonia to build the playgrounds.

These are students who rather do practical work than theoretical studies. Within this project they get an opportunity to do a task that is for real at the same time as they actually do all their school subjects and feel that they can make a difference for others. They grow and they get memories they'll never forget, says the teacher Ulf Ljunggren.

This is a win-win situation from many aspects. The students get unique experiences and they leave an improved environment for the local community they visit.

Last school year another project also started at Oscarsgymnasiet. The students repaired bikes that had been given from people in Oskarshamn as a gift to kids and youth in Pärnu and surroundings. During their stay in Estonia they have also repaired apartments.



We get so much warmth and love. Despite the misery we leave with a sense that the kids have it somewhat better than when we came. We have created a refuge for them but also a haven for ourselves, says the teacher Helena Gren.

Last school year another project also started at Oscarsgymnasiet. The students repaired bikes that had been given from people in Oskarshamn as a gift to kids and youth in Pärnu and the surroundings. During their stay in Estonia they have also repaired apartments.

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Culture – the Way Palanga Connects with Town Twins

by Robertas Trautmanas

Since 1990, when Lithuania restored its independence, a small town of Palanga with a population of 17 thousand inhabitants has formed partnership with 9 cities from 7 European countries: Simrishamn city (Sweden), Frederiksberg (Denmark), Pärnu (Estonia), Jūrmala and Liepāja (Latvia), Bergen auf Rügen (Germany), Ustka (Poland), Svetlogorsk and Cherniakhovsk (Russia), Kobuleti (Georgia).

Successful cultural cooperation with Bergen auf Rügen in Germany is worth noting. Between 2011-2013 15 cultural projects have been implemented, e.g. the photography exhibition about Palanga "Palanga-Bergen auf Rügen – the Bridge Between the Towns 2011" in the tower of Bergen, the photography exhibition about Palanga and Bergen on the ferry "Vilnius", the German Days in Palanga, during which the German culinary heritage was presented.

Palanga Cultural Centre "Ramybė" presented exhibitions of the famous Bergen artist J. Korkhaus and Palanga photo artist A. Sendrauskas who had spent 3 weeks in Bergen and created a new photography album about Bergen "Glance at Bergen auf Rügen". M. Hermerschmidt, a businessman from Bergen, organised the event "Baltic Weeks" in Bergen, during which photography, folk art, cultural and culinary heritage of Palanga and Lithuania were presented.

The exhibition of Lithuanian photography "Lithuanian Seacoast" embarked on a journey to Germany in 2013, thus proclaiming the partnership of both cities.



Representatives of Palanga and Bergen celebrate 400-year anniversary of Bergen auf Rügen and a successful two-year cultural cooperation, 19 June 2013.

It is worth noting that politicians or administration specialists are not the only ones who maintain international ties with the partner cities and other municipalities. Personal ties and firm friendship have developed among the employees of education, art and sports schools, as well as social protection and health systems.

The Palanga Municipality, as well as various organizations, associations and schools implement individual and collective exchange programmes, organize international

holidays, celebrate Europe Day in schools and kindergartens. Also, every year the idea of Europe's unity is more and more frequently expressed by the citizens.

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Paldiski - Norrtälje Cooperation



by Vassili Golikov

Paldiski and Norrtälje have been twinned since 1996. Education, culture, environment, tourism, social affairs and exchange of democratic values have been the main topics of the cooperation during the last years. The common projects are initiated to find solutions in the challenging world.

In the past, the cooperation between football clubs of Norrtälje and Paldiski was very intensive. Also, teachers and students exchange visits which enable finding partners for cultural or educational activities.



In the beginning of April this year, a delegation of Norrtälje visited Paldiski. This time the questions connected with the city planning and development were discussed.

The environmental issues and tourism are one of the major topics of cooperation. Paldiski is conveniently communicated with Tallinn by fast trains and buses. It has a direct ferry connection with Swedish city Kapellskär, which is only 20 km from Norrtälje.

Regular meetings of the twinned towns are a core part of the collaboration. In the beginning of April this year, a delegation of Norrtälje visited Paldiski. This time the questions connected with the city planning and development were discussed.

The delegation (most of them were from planning and development departments) visited the new municipality building. A Paldiski development specialist gave a presentation about the city development, investments and business perspectives for the future.

Tiit Peedu, the Mayor of Paldiski, expected that the cooperation and ties between Paldiski and Norrtälje would be even more intensive in the future. A new cooperation agreement is taken into consideration.

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Pori and Riga – 50 Years of Town Twinning

by Aino-Maija Luukkonen, Mayor of Pori
& Nils Ušakovs, Mayor of Riga

The cities of Pori and Riga share a common history. Over the centuries these two cities have been part of the same country – first the Kingdom of Sweden and then, from the beginning of the 19th century, the Russian Empire. Since Finland and Latvia gained their independence, the intensity of the relationship between these two countries has varied. There were relatively few contacts after the Second World War. However, the town twinning relationship between Pori and Riga was at the core of Finnish - Latvian co-operation during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

The twinning of Pori and Riga dates back 50 years to 1964, when the twin town agreement was signed. The first visit from Riga to Pori was made in the spring of 1965. Since then, co-operation, both official and unofficial, has spread into practically all areas of life.

At first, co-operation consisted mostly of visits by delegations of politicians and public officials, as well as formal cultural exchanges. The co-operation has covered all administrative sectors during the past five decades: schools, social work, museums, sport and culture, housing, environment. Both cities have also co-operated on business development issues and EU projects, as well as organizing visits to the fairs.

It was clear from the start that the co-operation should not be carried out only on the official and organizational level, but also by individuals and associations on the grassroots level. This informal co-operation ranged from tourism and jazz to golf. The Pori district branch of the Finnish - Latvian Friendship Society was established in 1992.

The relationship between Pori and Riga has deepened since Latvia



joined the EU. The EU has formulated its own strategy for the Baltic Sea, prioritizing the environment, energy, competitiveness, transport and logistics. This strategy and priorities provide many opportunities for future co-operation. The Union of Baltic Cities has also created a good framework and platform for wider co-operation.

The future is promising. Both cities can deepen their co-operation for example in business and enterprise development issues and environmental matters as well as in the field of higher education (research and mobility). EU programmes, such as the Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020 and Horizon 2020 provide funding opportunities. School and youth exchange, as well as tourism and travel offer possibilities for even deeper informal co-operation.

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Partnership and Volunteering



by Dalia Gurskienė

Panevėžys and Goes (the Netherlands) have been partner cities for over than 20 years. The first contacts started in 1993 and aimed at fostering friendship, understanding between different cultures. Later trade, business and tourism also served for the increasing development of town twinning contacts.

Soon after signing of partnership agreement the Council of Goes established Panevėžys-Goes Partnership Committee uniting people willing to work for the benefits of both cities and countries. These people spent and devoted their free time for charity activities, search of contacts and organization of visits which brought a really great contribution towards the 20 years cooperation history between both cities.

The inhabitants of Panevėžys are well aware with the fact that for almost 20 years the students from Goes CIOŠ College have been doing their internships at Panevėžys social care, educational,



health care and sports institutions. Cultural exchange of folk dance groups, choirs, theatre groups and music schools provided the possibility for the citizens of both cities to learn about each other more.

Thanks to the good will and enthusiasm of volunteers from the partnership committee we even have a Dutch fruit garden in Panevėžys. It is a pity that this cooperation cannot be expressed by concrete numbers but it brings not only material value, but also an intellectual one. The implemented

projects, possibility to cooperate with Dutch colleagues help us to know each other better, enrich our personality, upgrade the skills. It creates a favourable base for mutual understanding and better relations between states.

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A Crucial Work for a Peaceful World

by Karin Wohlgemuth

Rostock, the most important harbour of the former German Democratic Republic, was the so-called Gateway to the World of the foreclosed socialist system. The East German state, as a result of the territorial division of Germany after the Second World War, was striving for international acknowledgment in order to be accepted as a partner in economics and politics. City twinning played an important role in this process.

Rostock was able to seal twelve city twinings all over the world, even with a city in the former Federal Democratic Republic: Bremen. All twin cities of Rostock from that time were ports, where East German commercial ships headed for. To avoid conflicts with the international policy of the state, some of the agreements were negotiated but never signed; the cities simply started to cooperate under the silent political consent of the national leadership.

Today Rostock is cooperating with thirteen twin cities and six befriended cities world-wide. Since 1957, Rostock has been holding the oldest German - Polish twinning link with Szczecin and, since 1959, with Turku. Rostock is also a member of several important city networks, namely the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Union of the Baltic Cities and the New Hansa. In 1996 the Municipal Parliament decided to prioritize the international activities of Rostock within the Baltic Sea Region.

A twinning really starts to live when citizens, associations, schools, universities, theatres, free lancers, start to interact by own interest. This way now Rostock is experiencing an increasing cooperation with its Danish neighbour Guldborgsund, just 45 km away, bridgeable by ferry in less than two hours. Students are visiting each other, artists cross to perform on the other side, local politicians make common statements of regional importance in order to break marginalization, and families jump to the other side just to pay a

visit. It is expected that in near future a new twinning relationship between Guldborgsund and Rostock would be welcomed. But first, Rostock and its Danish twin town Aarhus are preparing to celebrate fifty years of cooperation. A citizens' delegation is being

prepared, an exhibition of paintings of North German Hanseatic street views will travel to Aarhus, and a lot more.

Today Rostock maintains a formal relationship with Aarhus (Denmark), Antwerp (Belgium), Bergen (Norway), Bremen (German), Dalian (China), Greater Dunkirk (France), Gothenburg (Sweden), Raleigh (USA), Riga (Latvia), Rijeka (Croatia), Szczecin (Poland), Turku (Finland) and Varna (Bulgaria), being befriended as well with Guldborgsund (Denmark), Haikou and Hefei (China), Kaliningrad (Russia), Kalmar, Karlskrona and Växjö (Sweden).

City twinning is not only a friendly exchange. City twinning is a daily contribution to open human minds, to sensitize one for each other. City twinning is an indispensable and crucial work for a peaceful world.



March 2014: Student from Guldborgsund and Rostock all-together after a rally through the Darwineum in the Zoo of Rostock

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The Culture Bridges the Gaps

by Eevi Paasmäe

Sillamäe is a multicultural city, because it is home to over 20 different nationalities, and the major ethnic groups – Russian (St. Petersburg), Ukrainian, Belarusian and Estonian - have been actively working to preserve their language, culture and customs.

Cultural bridges of the Baltic Sea in Sillamäe started over 20 years ago. Over the years, the event has grown both in form and in content. Cultural Bridges links different nationalities, people, cities and countries. On the last weekend of May it gathers participants from twin cities of Brovarö (Ukraine), Mstislavl (Belarus), Kingissepp (Russia) and Kärdla (Estonia) to weave a beautiful cultural tapestry, made up of songs, dances and the warm gaze of the words.

The festival is enriched, both in repertoire and excellent links with the partners. Residents and visitors enjoy the high-quality concerts, numerous exhibitions, workshops and handicraft fairs, where all can advertise their skills and accomplishments.

Planting the chestnut tree is an integral part of the event and is a symbol of the bonds of friendship.

The city dwellers eagerly await the Cultural Bridges all year round, dance and choral groups prepare themselves for the event which is a visiting card of the town. The commitment of all citizens is very important and it influences the international relations of the town.

This year, on 24 - 25 May the Baltic Sea Cultural Bridges takes place for the twentieth time and more than 200 singers, dancers, musicians, performers, plus the same number of participants are expected in Sillamäe.



Welcome to the Cultural bridges of the Baltic Sea in Sillamäe - the fresh sea breeze on the town!

Thanks to the twin cities reciprocal links the town organizes many cultural events and launches new ones. Equally important is that the town is visited by twin cities which makes it an exciting melting pot of various cultures and nationalities.

MORE

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Triple Entente Carlisle - Flensburg - Słupsk

by Rafał Kuligowski

Among 47 European Council member countries there are more and more cities with which Słupsk has concluded agreements on multifarious cooperation: Carlisle (United Kingdom); Vantaa (Finland); Flensburg (Germany); Archangielsk (Russia); Bari (Italy); Buchara (Uzbekistan); Vordingborg (Denmark); Cartaxo (Portugal); Ustka (Poland); Grodno (Belarus) and Fredrikstad (Norway).

Within the twinning a wide range of activities for citizens take place, resulting in sharing knowledge, overcoming barriers and prejudices, establishing new relations and strengthening of those already existing. This is how we implement the motto *United in diversity*.

The wide scope of activities encompasses participation in youth exchange, mutual cultural activities (theatre shows, artistic plein-air, concerts), sports events, improvement of qualifications of volunteers, apprentices, trainees and employees, as well as mutual projects.

The most intense cooperation between foreign partners is based on Triple Entente concluded between Flensburg, Carlisle and Słupsk. The agreement was signed on 28 June 1988 in Flensburg. It was the first partnership agreement of this type between the European cities in the history of modern Europe. It is regarded as one of the major events that constituted basis for overcoming prejudice and political change in the point of view of the citizens of European regions.

The 15th anniversary of signing Triple Entente by the partner cities was celebrated in Słupsk on 16 May 2003. The celebration fell on the day before the referendum on Polish accession to the European Union. The importance of this event was emphasized by the presence of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, President of the Republic of Poland, during the meeting with the authorities of cities, which concluded Triple Entente.

On 22-25 August 2013 there were held celebrations in Carlisle to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the first Triple Entente in modern Europe signed between European cities. During those meetings 25 years of cooperation was summed up, including exchanges of youth, city authorities, experts and organization of many exhibitions and theatrical performances. During the ceremonial meeting of the representatives of the cities, it was stressed that the priority has always been, is and will be the youth and the cooperation in regard to Triple Entente should mainly focus on them.



The most intense cooperation between foreign partners is based on Triple Entente concluded between Flensburg, Carlisle and Słupsk. The agreement was signed on 28 June 1988 in Flensburg.

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28 April - World Day of Twin Cities



Evgeny Grigoriev

Partner area of St. Petersburg accounts for 90 foreign cities and 27 regions. This unprecedented number of partners is not a result of single campaign, but a good example of huge interest in Leningrad - St. Petersburg. Contacts with some cities are closer and more intensive, the relations with other cities are less active.

More than in formalities, St. Petersburg is interested in detailed joint activities programmes that are implemented. Maybe that is the reason for changing nomenclature: we often say "partner cities" instead of "twin cities".

International cooperation of St. Petersburg tries to balance pragmatic issues of economy and communication in the spheres of culture, education, sports, health care, etc. For example, partner-cities host business missions of St. Petersburg and St. Petersburg Theatre Seasons that attract large audiences.

The movement of town twinning emerged after the Second World War. After the terrible massacre, people tried to forget pain and hatred, wanted to know more about each other. The first twin city of St. Petersburg was the Finnish City of Turku. In 2013 the 60th anniversary of this partnership was celebrated. Then - in the Soviet time - Leningrad established twin-city relationships predominantly with towns of socialist camp. In contemporary history, public diplomacy of "town twinning" regenerated into a modern and more legally



strict form of "town partnering". Moreover, the modern trend of town partnering has a tendency of consolidation. There are not only cities, but whole regions among the partners, for example, regions of Sweden and Finland, the Federal States of Germany, etc. It promotes implementation of more ambitious, budgetary intensive and strategically important projects in industry, innovations and investments.

There are several bright programmes planned in the cities of the Baltic Sea Region in 2014. For example, Days of St. Petersburg in Riga – European Capital of Culture 2014 will be held in early June. The city's delegation will certainly take part in the Days of the Baltic Sea to be arranged in Turku, and will also visit Stockholm to establish new business relations in the sphere of urban transport, urban development, etc. Such programmes help to understand that it is more efficient to be partners than competitors, including fight for investments and for tourist flows.

And this axiom is constantly proved by the project ONE BSR, the active member of which is St. Petersburg. Twin cities in the Baltic Sea Region become stronger when they are united.

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Twinning Solves Problems

by Maija Šulca

Tukums is a twinning partner of five municipalities in the EU: Tidaholm (Sweden), Scheessel (Germany), Plunge (Lithuania), Andrychow (Poland) and Chennevieres-sur-Marne (France). The cooperation with Tidaholm, Scheessel and Plunge started already 20 years ago, whereas the cooperation with Andrychow and Chennevieres-sur-Marne began 5 years ago.



During these years, both smaller and bigger scale projects have been implemented. With the support of Tidaholm community, the environmental project on the clean Baltic Sea was started that included the reconstruction of the old wastewater treatment devices in order to prevent marine pollution. Within the project, a new water treatment plant was built and now Tukums can boast of high quality drinking water. With the help of Scheessel, a new

sports hall was built for the secondary school. For many years, students participated in exchange programmes in both municipalities. Tidaholm and Scheessel municipalities have helped to solve social issues by providing material support to families in need. Municipal employees have participated in exchange visits to get

acquainted and have discussions on the best possible solutions in various fields. Within the programme "Europe for Citizens", several experience exchange events have been organized on the nature of the EU, on the functions of local governments in the fields of social life, sports and culture. In 2013, for instance, senior citizens from Tukums visited Andrychow with their culture programme and explored the life of the retired in Poland. Andrychow senior citizens, in their turn, participated in Tukums town festival both with an exhibition and dances, songs and shadow theatre.

Every year Chennevieres-sur-Marne cooperation committee organizes trips to Latvia, Tukums, to popularize Latvia in France. Tukums' dancers and singers gave a concert for the citizens of Chennevieres-sur-Marne in 2012.

The possibilities of cooperation depend on the availability of funding. This year, on 4-6 July, Tukums Festival of Roses will take place. A wide programme of events will be offered to the Festival guests, including performances by the Tidaholm music school and the Plunge youth folklore group. The cooperation with these municipalities speaks for itself and is considered necessary because essential problems concerning the improvement of life quality are solved together and the history and traditions of the twinning countries are explored.

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Twenty Years of Fruitful Cooperation

by Sakari Neuvonen

Tampere in Finland and Tartu in Estonia have been twin cities since the mid-1990s. The twin cities have established a joint culture centre in Tartu, which is called Tampere Maja. Although the main task of the centre is to enhance cultural cooperation between Tampere and Tartu, it also assists cooperative initiatives between other communities and the general public.

It was clear from the start that the centre would be partially self-funded. For this purpose, it has 6 rental hotel rooms, with 18 beds in all. The income from the guesthouse, rental sauna and other premises covers nearly 80 percent of the centre's operating costs.

The guesthouse facilitates easier exchange of officials and residence operations between the cities. In a quiet winter season, writers from Tampere lodge there. Each writer organizes a literature evening introducing their work. During summers various bands and theatre companies perform in the centre's inner courtyard.

The centre's gallery hosts exhibitions from both cities. The exhibitions change at three-week interval. The exhibition space is free of charge, but the exhibiting artists are asked to donate one work to the centre's collection in exchange. Over the years, Tampere Maja's collection has grown to over 150 artworks, which to date have been displayed on two separate occasions. Tampere Maja's policy is to select artists who are starting their careers. Consequently, the collection includes works of established artists and new-coming talents.

Tampere Maja is a foundation, with two representatives from each city on its administrative board. The building is owned by the city of Tartu, but both cities have participated equally in the renovation.

The centre has grown into a valued cultural asset for both Tartu and Tampere. In addition to having provided many work exchange opportunities for cultural figures between the twin cities, the centre has also become a popular social hub for Finnish students and other Finns living in Tartu. For example, on Tuesday of each month, Finns residing in Tartu gather at the centre for the traditional pea soup. Estonian war veterans who fought for Finland assemble at the centre regularly; they are the most moving expression of the long and enduring friendship between these two nations.



The cooperation centre of Tampere and Tartu offers culture and accommodation.

MORE

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Exchange of Know-How

by Kajar Lember

A development strategy 'Tartu 2030' sees the city as an open regional centre via international relations, including twinning, and strengthening local civil society.

Twinning in general has been quite fruitful for Tartu. All in all, there are more than 20 twin and partner cities. Six of these belong to the UBC: Greifswald, Kaunas, Riga, St. Petersburg, Tampere, and Turku. Amongst the most fruitful international projects that have been realized by twinning there is *eCitizen*, which was mostly focused on providing mobile solutions by engaging citizens in participative action, and its follow-up *eCitizen II*, that was focused on participation, but also resulted in concrete results nowadays used by many people in Tartu. Both projects were run in active cooperation with Tartu's twin town Tampere. The leading partner in *eCitizen II* was the Finnish Baltic Institute residing in Tampere, other participants came from Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland, Italy, Greece, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Spain.

The main goal of *eCitizen II* was creating a model and a web manual for e-participation that could be used in different European countries. In Tartu, it was applied in the process of designing the city's new homepage, from the basic analysis stage to the composition of navigation scheme; the process is still in continuance. Another result is Tartu's mobile application that is very popular amongst lo-

cal residents, especially the module that gives real time information about public transport.



The current colour scheme of buses in Tartu was chosen by the citizens on a vote, using participation methods that rose from the project *eCitizen II*.

Although *eCitizen II* was completed in 2012, the work has continued in the same direction, using the experiences gained and guidelines designed within the projects.

The biggest result in the field of e-participation has been the implementation of participative budgeting. In 2013, Tartu was the first local government in Estonia that has realized participative budgeting process on larger scale, giving 1% of its investment budget – 140,000 € – up for the citizens to propose and vote for its use.

The winning proposal was procuring audio equipment for a cultural cluster in midtown Tartu, including a theatre, a cinema and a concert hall.

Hopefully, Tartu's experiences will be helpful for other cities both in Estonia and abroad.

eCitizen projects were a perfect example of how the exchange of experiences starting from the cooperation between twin cities can be used to strengthening the ties between local civil society and city government, and then carried on to help the other municipalities.

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Town Twinning – Investment for the Future!



by Cathrin Alenskär

Umeå is the European Capital of Culture in 2014. Since many years it has been opening up the doors to the international community in several ways.

The city believes in “glocalization”, i.e. the world is represented in Umeå and Umeå is to be seen in places around the world. Umeå has six sister-cities; Vaasa in Finland, Harstad in Norway, Helsingör in Denmark, Würzburg in Germany, Petrozavodsk in Russia and Saskatoon in Canada.

The city of Vaasa is an important sister-city to Umeå. It is our closest city geographically and we have been sister-cities for many years, since 1953. Vaasa is a strategic sister-city with whom we are working on the east-west enlargement of the region. We invest in better infrastructure together, we exchange citizens and we build a better common future together, says Marie-Louise Rönnmark, Mayor of Umeå.

The long cooperation and good friendship, which has been institutionalized through the interregional association “Kvarken Council”, provides a strong and stable platform to push on these important issues that are common to both cities, says Joakim Strand, President of Vaasa Council and Chairman of the Kvarken Council.

Another example of joint projects is “Selling”, which promotes collaboration between culture actors. The project’s basic idea is to im-



The joint project Selling included four workshops for artists from the Umeå and Vasa regions, led by Curator Timothy Persons.

Photo: Andreas Nilsson

prove the operational conditions to the culture entrepreneurship and cultural performers in the region through increased collaboration, training and dissemination. According to Christina Knookala, the chairman of the project, it is extremely important to be able to continue the cultural cooperation over Kvarken. The traffic creates opportunities for people to move from one place to another, but something that will drive us to travel is culture!

MORE

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Ustka Twinning Story

by Joanna Koza

Often it is personal contacts between town residents, e.g. Polish immigrants, that lead to town partnerships but there are also other contributing factors. These include school partnerships as the first step into a more developed co-operation framework.

Ustka has been actively cooperating with its twin towns ever since 1991 when the first official partnership agreement was signed with Kappeln, Germany. Following the initial success with Kappeln, the circle of the twin towns expanded: Homecourt (France) – 2007, Palanga (Lithuania) – 2006, Pioniersky (Russia, Kaliningrad Oblast) – 2008.

Parties signing twin town agreements are to stimulate and foster international exchange in the fields of: culture, sports, tourism, know-how and experience, to implement youth exchange programmes, support business liaising and establish cooperation between local NGOs. The cooperation with Ustka partners includes regular reciprocal visits of the residents and local authorities.

Sailing is one of the cooperation platforms and includes the annual sailing race called Memoriał Jana Kołpy where young people from Pioniersky participate. In 2012, Ustka initiated and organised the 1st edition of the Baltic Twin Town Regatta which turned the

town into the European Sailing Centre. The event took place under the auspices of Mieczysław Struk, the Marshal of Pomerania, and Maciej Kobyliński, the Mayor of Słupsk. In total over 30 people took part in the competition, sailing around Ustka’s harbour. Ustka hosted sailors from Kappeln, Palanga and Pioniersky and teamed up with Słupsk to form a joint Bi-Town Team (Ustka - Słupsk).



Sailing can be a great cooperation platform. The 1st Baltic Twin Town Regatta in Ustka was an opportunity to share experience on sailing environments.

The regatta was held in two categories: ‘Optimist’ for children under the age of 15 and ‘Delphia’ for representatives of all the Twin Towns visiting Ustka. The 1st Baltic Twin Town Regatta was a great opportunity to share experience on sailing environments and the required harbour infrastructure. Local sailing clubs Jacht Klub ‘Opty’ Ustka and Jacht Klub Ustka were a great help in the organisational efforts.

The most important results of town twinning were establishing and developing personal contacts between the towns’ residents, NGOs and students, which are further developing without any support from local authorities.

MORE

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Vaasa Open for New Ideas

by Anna-Majja Iitola

One of Vaasa's most memorable town twinning projects is connected with the Tanzanian city of Morogoro. Morogoro has been Vaasa's twin city since 1988 and the relations have been very productive, especially during 2000-2010. One of the goals of the co-operation was to increase the level of information technology with internet connection in Morogoro's library and to create a new municipality-specific curriculum for the schools. Also, a new plan to build up the traffic in Morogoro was developed.

Moreover, the co-operation focused on creating a social work model especially for supporting the position of orphans. The main purpose was to improve Morogoro's administration, entrepreneurship and general development in multiple ways.

Nowadays, the city educational institutions are quite active in collaboration with some of the twin cities. The universities for example have very vibrant international relations. The Estonian city



Photo: Ann-Britt Paaja

of Pärnu (twin city since 1956) and Vaasa have established the teachers exchange program involving schools from both cities. One of Vaasa schools has also quite a strong connection with the city of Kiel in Germany.

One of the Nordic twin towns, Umeå, just across Kvarken, has had a very productive relations with Vaasa. Vaasa and Umeå has a strong exchange in culture and knowledge.

Lately Vaasa has been busy with building up its position as the Nordic leader in energy, but it is still open to take part in other international co-operation projects and to keep up its long town twinning tradition.

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Växjö Deepens the Cooperation

by Monica Sandberg

The City of Växjö has a long tradition of international work and many positive experiences in that field has strengthen the view of international relations and exchanges as a good and natural way to reach one's aims and goals.

Växjö has 10 sister cities around the world. Lithuanian Kaunas is one of them, being also one of the most active partners.

The agreement was signed in 1990 and eight co-operation fields were emphasized in the agreement: development of democracy, education, energy, culture, environmental protection, police work, municipal economy and exchange of information. There have been many and various exchanges and co-operation projects during the years between teachers and students in high schools, sport clubs, Rotary Clubs, musicians and choirs, politicians and civil servants, police officers and youth organizations, just to mention a few.

Also, a very well-functioning relief work towards youth prisons and orphanages in and outside of Kaunas has been carried out by one the churches in Växjö, and regular relief consignments have been organized. Many young volunteers have given evidence of the importance of that kind of helping hand that enriches both receiver and donor.

Since Kaunas is an important industrial center in Lithuania, many private companies in Växjö and surroundings have had an interest in doing business in the Lithuanian sister city. In the begin-



The City of Växjö has been cooperating with Kaunas since 1990

Photo: Monica Sandberg

ning of 2006, a direct flight between Växjö and Kaunas was established to facilitate those new business relations.

Although the world seems to get more open and new international contacts are considered within easy reach, Växjö strives to deepen the sister city contacts and to get them more well-known, both within the municipal organization and among citizens, as a good way to reach one's aims and goals and to contribute to ecological, economic and social sustainable development, both local and global.

MORE

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Making Life Better



by Gabija Guscevičienė

Twinning is a 20th century concept meant to bring nations back on friendly terms after World War II. An easy way to renew cultural and commercial exchange across the border is by going into Agreements of Cooperation between cities. Vilnius managed to sign a number of them with Western cities while under the Soviet occupation and annexation of Lithuania.

The Head of the International Relations Department of the City of Vilnius, Audronė Kraštinaitienė, recalls the first sister city agreement with the Finnish Joensuu. In the 1970s, it opened up a window into the forbidden world of the West. The Mayor of Vilnius returned from Joensuu with many new ideas about economic management.

The majority of twinning agreements took place in the last decade of 20th century, when Lithuania had regained its independence and the world had opened up with a lot to catching up to do. Since then, Vilnius has signed 70 agreements with other cities. Some of them have been more successful than others.

The Mayor of Vilnius, Artūras Zuokas, asked to name his favourite twinning project, said:

The commemorative Vilnius gift of marble tiles to the cities of Riga and Tallinn made in to mark and remember the Baltic Way Human Chain of Freedom.

And here are some other favourites from the Vilnius International Relations Department:

Jurgita: *La Scala concert in Vilnius, hosted by the Mayor of Milan.*

Audronė: *Karelian Golden Cuckoo sculpture-gift from Joensuu and a very modern and sustainable Christmas tree-gift to Dublin from Vilnius.*

Monika: *the Free Culture Vilnius-Gdańsk programme.*



Vilnius International Relations Department recalls the most interesting twinning projects.

Eglė: *the Frank Zappa sculpture gift of Vilnius to Baltimore, USA.*

Have you noticed the mainly cultural nature of the projects? Culture is a uniting factor.

Vilnius also remembers a model social engagement initiative that came from Aalborg - another old friend sending a group of teenagers over to help assemble furniture donated by the Danes in a youth centre sponsored by the Vilnius police department.

Vilnius was moved very much when for ten years after the brutal events of 13 January 1990, Erfurt, Duisburg and Oslo had been delivering extremely needed humanitarian aid to the citizens of Vilnius.

Cooperation between cities is as old as civilization itself. Cities exchange help, gifts and knowledge to make life better.

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Gävle Twinning Experience

by Annika Lundqvist

Well-established cooperation between the municipalities of Gävle (Sweden), Næstved (Denmark), Gjøvik (Norway) and Rauma (Finland) started, as so many other Nordic twin town relations, at the end of the second world war. The first Twin Town Guidelines were signed in Rauma on 10 September 1950.

Since then, four founding members of the Nordic Twin Town partnership (together with Alftanaes, former Bessastadahreppur and now Gardabaer, Iceland, participating from 1988 to 2013) have stayed faithful to the initial ideas of building Nordic identity and strengthening the cities through mutual support, exchanges and learning. The activities of the Nordic Twin Town partnership have evolved over the years and include today: bi-annual Twin Town meetings (thematic high-level political meetings), annual City manager meetings (thematic), bi-annual Coordinator meetings, bi-annual sports rally for the youth (competitions in swimming, athletics and football), bi-annual cultural



Gävle and its sister cities

days, study visits and exchanges of officials.

2014 is a busy year with Twin Town meeting (theme: Youth in the City Centre) in Gjøvik in June, Sports Rally (with 250 youth from the four cities) in Næstved in July and City Manager meeting in Gävle in October (theme: Our cities as regional centres - cooperation with surrounding municipalities).

Even though there is a stable foundation from more than 60 years of cooperation, Gävle wants to develop

its relations further. The city would like to involve and secure a stronger participation of its citizens. Ideas of future activities and possible common projects in this field are discussed at the moment.

MORE

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UBC today

Tampere hosted the UBC Executive Board

For the 69th time the UBC Executive Board members met to discuss questions connected with the organization's development and future possibilities. Tampere, the third largest city and one of the three most rapidly developing regions in Finland, hosted the meeting.

The consolidation of the Commissions to improve the efficiency of the UBC work was on the agenda. The proposal to reduce their number raised a heated debate with the Commissions' representatives. The Board reminded that according to the UBC Strategy, the UBC should be re-shaped to fit into the changing reality, responding the cities' needs in a more flexible manner. All in all, the Board decided to establish a Task Force to propose the new division of commissions at the Board meeting in autumn 2014. The Board authorized the Presidium to appoint the TF members.

As far the organisation's development, the Board approved the proposals of the Task Force on the Internal Regulations so that it reflects the changes in the Statute, adopted at the General Conference in Mariehamn. The proposals presented by TF chair Mikko Lohikoski concern e.g. setting up the Commissions and their evaluation, cost reimbursement rules, etc.

Additionally, the issues connected with the EUSBSR implementation were brought up. The presentation of Marie-Louise Rönmark, Mayor of Umeå, 1st UBC Vice-President, focused on the role the local governments should play in this process. A stronger lobbying activity is needed to defend the democratic right of municipalities to lead and to be involved in the Strategy implementation.

President Per Bødker Andersen emphasized that the UBC as a key

The Board participants discussed i.a. the Commissions' consolidation proposals, and UBC involvement in the EUSBSR implementation.



stakeholder in the regional cooperation should submit its comments concerning the draft of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2014-2020. The statement was sent on 28 March to the Programme authorities.

Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, presented the financial report 2013 and budget proposal 2014 which was approved by the Board.

As a follow-up of the Mariehamn GC decision to establish the Task Force on youth employment and well-being, its first meeting was held in Tampere on 17 March. Matti Mäkelä, a chair of the TF, introduced the meeting's results.

Also, Wolfgang Schmidt of Kiel, reported on the CECICN activities in 2013-2014 and Linda Gustafsson of Umeå, presented the outcomes of the report: "Women and Men in the UBC published in the autumn 2013".

Upon the invitation of the Mayor of Turku, the UBC Board is to hold its next meeting in Turku, on 2 June 2014, in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Forum and BDF Summit.

UBC – promoting employment and well-being of young people

The UBC General Conference in Mariehamn (1-4 October 2013) decided to set up the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being, which shall work until the next UBC General Conference 2015, at which it will submit the final report. Meanwhile, it is encouraged to present proposals and initiatives to the UBC Board and all other interested organisations.

The work of the Task Force is based on the Action Programme, created by the experts of ten Finnish cities last year. *The task of the Programme is to ensure that this issue gets the attention it deserves and to give support to Member Cities and other interested partners in promoting the rights of the young generation,* wrote Per Bødker Andersen, the President of UBC, in his foreword to the original Programme.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held in Tampere on 17 March 2014. After long and fruitful discussion and workshops, the participants from ten cities around the Baltic Sea decided that all the UBC cities involved in the Task Force will provide an overview on challenges, good practices and innovations/new ideas in their cities/regions on the following themes:

- guidance and support,
- flexible educational paths,
- cooperation between various actors,
- participation,
- taking special groups into account,
- other services that prevent social exclusion.

Cities can pick 1-6 of these themes based on their challenges and special interests. Moreover, they can present, for example, good practices in one theme and challenges in other. The Task Force shall continue its work in Turku on June 2014.

MORE

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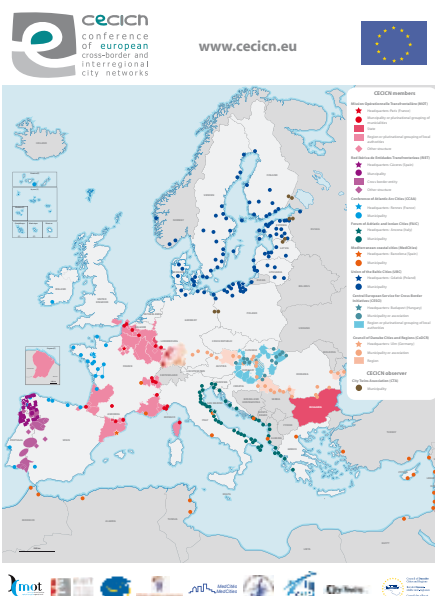
Per Bødker Andersen re-elected as CECICN President

The previous President of CECICN (Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks) and President of UBC (Union of the Baltic Cities), Per Bødker Andersen was unanimously re-elected on 3 April 2014 by the Presidents of all CECICN networks.

Due to his successful work during the last two years, his capacity as President of the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) and long term member of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), Per Bødker Andersen has exactly the background and European experience that CECICN needs.

President Andersen thanks the CECICN for trust: "I am looking very much forward to working for two more years with the Political Bureau and the Executive Board of CECICN. It is an honor and a pleasure to act as President of the biggest European city network. We will continue hard work to boost the European integration process and, to put European Territorial Cooperation at the core of the EU policies".

President Andersen sees a number of directly added values for the UBC member cities: "CECICN secures the direct access of the UBC to high level EU institutions and generates visibility of the UBC on



the EU level. It reinforces the important role of the Baltic Sea Region in the EU and offers the EU wide platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas. This network of networks also facilitates the partner search for EU funding projects. For the UBC cities it provides a sound and solid basis for the development of policy positions and proposals."

President Andersen finally says: "Together we have a powerful voice in Europe. Together we stand for sustained development in business, politics and the environment. Together we can trigger developments and change. Together we can take the EU crisis as an opportunity for a new beginning and emerge from it with greater confidence."

The CECICN, Conference of European Cross-border and Interregional City Networks, has been set up in April 2010. The UBC is one of the founding members. This European conference gathers nine cross-border and interregional city networks, representing

more than 500 cities in Europe, situated both at internal and external borders of the European Union.

MORE

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UBC strives for more local perspective in the Baltic Sea Region Programme

Being a key stakeholder and an active partner in the regional cooperation, the Union is of the opinion that the Baltic Sea Programme should continue to be the key instrument in enabling funding for viable projects in the forthcoming funding period 2014-2020.

However, the Union paid the attention to the role of cities and regions in the BSR Programme implementation, and took note of a worrying trend that the share of local/regional level has been diminishing during last years. The new draft Programme should more widely recognize the cities' role.

The new BSR Programme can build on the priorities formulated in the EUSBSR and its Action Plan. While the draft Programme and the Action Plan may differ in many ways, in general they have the same direction. However, as Union noticed, the BSR Programme should clearly state that it will finance, as a priority, activities included in the EUSBSR Action Plan – naturally provided they fulfill the quality criteria.

Moreover, the UBC strongly supports the opinions of a great number of PACs and HALs – some of which are our members - who in their joint letter to DG Regio and the BSR Programme 2014-2020 Joint Programming Committee express great concern about the

proposed level of Technical Assistance from the BSR Programme 2014-2020. If this assistance is not substantially raised, it may well endanger the successful implementation of the Strategy.

The Programme encompasses also partner countries of Belarus, Norway and Russia. Many of the challenges can – as the draft Programme states – only be tackled in cooperation between the EU and partner countries. This is also stressed in the EUSBSR and its Action Plan, which includes a specific Horizontal Action Neighbours to promote the dimension "across the borders". UBC, which includes also Norwegian and Russian cities as its key members, stresses the importance of this inclusive approach.

Then, UBC wants to draw the attention to the social issues, including gender equality, which are important for the full mobilization of the full potential of our societies.

Last, but not least, the Union expresses its readiness to take part in various advisory or other bodies on the Programme level.

MORE

<http://www.ubc.net/plik,6859.html>



Working on the COYI's Strategy

On 1-4 April 20 youngsters and 16 civil servants from Kolding, Guldborgsund, Karlstad, Falun, Gävle, Turku, Kotka, Tallinn, Maardu, Kuressaare, Riga, Liepāja, Kaunas and Gdańsk gathered in Kaunas at the spring meeting of the UBC Commission on Youth Issues. The main aim of the meeting was to develop a strategy and an action plan for 2015-2017, when the cities of Turku and Gävle will take the chair.

All participating cities made presentations about things the others could learn from their municipalities and the challenges they face regarding the youth. The cities presented the inspiring projects and programmes on the youth issues. The presentations gave a good overview of the current situation on the youth work in Baltic Sea Region and triggered many interesting discussions.

The rest of the day was dedicated to the existing strategy and the action plan. Analysis and brainstorming on partnerships, burning issues on youth and priorities of COYI were on the agenda. The second day's sessions gave a good preparation for the work on the new strategy and the action plan. After many discussions, the draft of COYI's strategy and action plan for 2015-2017 was adopted.

On the last day of the meeting, the Commission created a working group for the next Youth Conference which will be held parallelly to the UBC General Conference.

The Commission decided on convening their autumn meeting in November in Riga, which is this year's European Cultural Capital.

Last, but not least, the participants were introduced to the Lithuanian culture and could get acquainted with the beautiful Kaunas.



The meeting gathered 20 youngsters and 16 civil servants from 15 UBC cities.

MORE www.ubc-youth.org

Commission on Business & Tourism

Kristiansand Talent Attraction Forum

Talent attraction and place branding with regards to workforce and tourism set the agenda for a two day public forum arranged by the newly merged Commission on Business and Tourism in Kristiansand, Norway on 8-9 April.

Jørgen Kristiansen, Deputy Mayor of Kristiansand and UBC Board member, welcomed participants from Denmark, Germany, Norway, Poland and Sweden representing local governments, international organisations, business development agencies and tourism organisations in Kristiansand. The extensive programme included the presentation and discussion of several projects from the Kristiansand region and the BSR.

Participants debated about strategies for fostering of regional start-up cultures through incubation (incubator Innoventus) and assistance for entrepreneurs (Connect network). The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO) presented their programmes to mobilize highly qualified talents for positions as leaders, board members and other decision makers from different target groups (Global Future, Female Future, Summit). The regional trainee programme Trainee Sør has attracted during the last 10 years over 100 highly qualified master graduates to the region. The programme is based on the network cooperation among 30 private businesses and public institutions in southern Norway. Based on its model four other regional trainee programmes have been established in Norway and the forum participants showed great interest in possible adoptions of the concept.



Participants of the Kristiansand Talent Forum: Hans Otto Lund, Anthony Jay, Øyvind Lyngen Laderud, Wolfgang Schmidt, Mirjam Külm, Lukas Wedemeyer, Jørgen Kristiansen, Waldek Sypiański.

The BalticiaB project is a EUSBSR flagship project and is managed by the CBSS Secretariat. It aims at bringing together young, creative minds in the Baltic Region to create and explore new perspectives and sources for inspiration.

The site visit at the Kilden centre of performing arts and the discussion with its marketing director Eldbjørg Dahl gave the participants insight in the cornerstone role that the concert, theatre and cultural house has for the attractiveness of the Kristiansand Region.

Along with key players, such as the Kristiansand Dyreparken Zoo and Color

Line, Kilden is a member of the USUS cluster for companies within the travel, experience and cultural industry in Southern Norway. Project manager Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl introduced the forums participants with organisation, strategic aims and the clusters regional repurchasing strategy.

During the past decade the economic development in Southern Norway has been significantly influenced by some fast growing energy technology companies. They are organized in the cluster Norwegian Offshore and Drilling Engineering (NODE) and participants discussed the mutual impact of cluster and region has with the founding cluster manager Kjell O. Johannessen.

To match ideas for possible future projects with EU policy and concrete programmes the South Norway European Office was invited.

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From a traffic corridor and wasteland to a lively city

Örebro in Sweden has an amazing city centre with a castle surrounded by water at the core of the city. Here you will find a vibrant city life, beautiful buildings and a park which has been named the most beautiful park in the country. However, when one arrives in the city by train or by car one is greeted by something entirely different.

We have decided to transform the central passage along the railroad. It is about giving the city a new face but at the same time keeping all functions intact. How can we make this happen?

On 18-21 May three UBC Commissions on Urban Planning, on Environment and Transportation meet to solve the most challeng-



ing problems of the city. The workshop area includes the region along the railroad and Östra Bangatan between the recreational area Gustavsvik and the water tower Svampen.

The aim of the seminar is to find the ways of redeveloping the area with all existing functions kept and some new added. The Commissions debate on how to make it greener and energy sufficient and at the same time more friendly and accessible.

MORE

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Conference on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans Gdynia, 23-24 October 2014

The UBC Commission on Transportation plans to organise a conference focused on the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP). Many cities may find it a challenge to elaborate SUMPs which require a high level of stakeholders' participation and establishing a detailed complex planning process. The conference will be organised with a view to supporting cities, focusing on the Baltic Sea Region.

Implementation of the SUMP in the cities is strongly recommended by the European Commission. It issued an official communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions dated 17 December 2013. Its purpose is to further support European cities in leading their transportation related projects, so that they can more effectively implement the EU policy of competitive and resource efficient mobility. The main idea of this document is to convince member countries to create guidelines common for all cities, while taking into account their unique character. These guidelines are supposed to ultimately help cities to develop and implement Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP).

MORE

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Commission on Gender Equality

Gender issues in Panevėžys



Cities of Panevėžys, Gdańsk (NEWW), Helsinki, Kristiansand and Umeå were represented at the meeting.

The seminar was held on 22-24 April 2014 in Panevėžys.

The focus of the meeting was the joint project application planned to be submitted to the EUSBSR seed money funding. Also, the cooperation with Winnet network and the Commission's role in the EUSBSR flagship project was discussed.

Two study visits were made. Family House serves as a crisis centre for women and children who are victims of domestic violence and also serves as a centre that offers leisure activities for children from underprivileged families. The second visit was paid to a social centre for children aged 0-18 which works with a programme on strengthening the families.

In Vilnius, two study visits, to a family centre called Nendre and to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), took place. Nendre provides a broad range of social services to single-mother families including day care for pre-school children, free time activities for school children, individual and family counselling, case management, crisis intervention, as well as social home services. EIGE is a EU agency promoting gender equality, fighting discrimination based on sex and raising awareness about gender equality issues.

The Commission plans to hold its next meeting in cooperation with the Commission on Culture in autumn 2014 in Umeå, Sweden.

MORE

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Citizens for Safety



In January 2014 the Gdańsk Municipal Guard and Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein entered into a grant agreement S37 - project "Building urban safety through citizens participation (Citizens for Safety)". The EU grant is 34 368,90 EUR (total budget of the project is 40 432 EUR). The project has been appointed as a flagship project of EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and operates under an umbrella of the co-financing mechanism for Seed Money Facility.

EUSBSR is a macro-regional strategy, which aims to strengthen cooperation within the Baltic Sea Region and to overcome the challenges and promote sustainable development in the region.

The entire project is scheduled for 23 January 2014-22 April 2015. The preparation phase for developing project idea will take no more than a year.

Gdańsk Municipal Guard as the lead partner will cooperate with two project partners from the Baltic Sea countries: Liepāja Municipal Police (Latvia) and Vilnius City Municipal Administration (Lithuania).

One of the key tasks of Gdańsk Municipal Guard is to collect data related to the security threats in the local environment, including studies of public opinion and the opinion of residents on their sense of security, to gather information on similar projects at the national level and to collect safety data together with project partners.

The project group will take into account all types of threats and problems the citizens face (juvenile delinquency, robberies, inappropriate design of public spaces, etc.).

The first introductory project meeting will be held in June 2014 in Gdańsk. Its purpose will be among others: to define goals, ob-

jectives and tasks of main stage project and to establish a macro-regional forum of exchange of knowledge and experiences with initiatives that encourage citizens to participate in safety. In the autumn 2014 the second meeting with project partners is planned in Liepāja (Latvia) where the group will discuss functionality of the project, its objectives, tasks and results.

Project "Building urban safety through citizens participation (Citizens for Safety)" is co-financed by the European Union.

MORE

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2nd International Conference of Municipal Police

The 2nd International Conference of Municipal Police, held in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 14-16 May 2014, offered a platform for an international exchange of ideas, opinions, perspectives, results and solutions concerning illegal graffiti, taxi services, offenses related to night bars, noise and youth delinquency, traffic offences, CCTV, etc.

The speakers presented their experience, ideas and findings. Participants had a chance to find out more on safety and reliability orientated talks and on the ongoing progress in innovations as well as the status quo in the cities.

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New seed money projects in the UBC Commission on Environment

UBC Commission on Environment is carrying out seed projects that lead towards project applications for the new programming period. Cooperation, dialogue and sharing the best practices are common themes in all of these projects.

ClimUrban – Supporting cities in climate change adaptation

ClimUrban is a project where land-use planners, scientists and climate change experts are jointly identifying financially reasonable and effective climate change adaptation measures for sustainable urban development. The goal of the main project is to support cities in the BSR to develop appropriate climate change adaptation strategies and work towards implementation. Cross-border cooperation and experience exchange will be key elements for the project's success!

More: Esther Kreutz, Project Manager esther.kreutz@ubc.net

IWAMA – Enhancing wastewater treatment

Interactive WAtER MAnagement (BSR IWAMA) project aims to reduce nutrient loads from municipal wastewater treatment plants

to the local water and to the Baltic Sea. This is achieved through combining high quality education and knowledge transfer with investments. The project focuses on three main topics: capacity building and maintenance, energy efficiency and smart sludge management of wastewater treatment plants. Information exchange and dialogue between the Eastern and the Western countries is an essential part of the project.

More information: Hannamaria Yliruusi, Project Manager hannamaria.yliruusi@ubc.net

Urban Forum for Smart Cities – A space to become genuinely smart

UBC Board has together with the Baltic Development Forum and City of Turku taken the initiative to prepare a concept for a Baltic Sea Region Urban Forum for Smart Cities. The project rises from the fact that a number of available and even proven green economy solutions are not adopted as everyday practice. The formation of an international and regional space for the cities to discuss those issues, learn from each other and share the best practices will help bridge this gap. The project will play an important future role for enabling urban areas in the BSR to move beyond "pockets of smartness" to becoming genuinely smart.

More information: Olena Zinchuk, Project Officer olena.zinchuk@ubc.net



NEWS

from Member Cities

Aalborg's Green Stores

Aalborg's Green Stores are part of a nationwide network of retail businesses that agree to certain minimum requirements to qualify as Green Stores. An annual, renewable diploma is issued to those that qualify. A green partnership is established comprising an energy and environmental review of each store. This culminates in expert suggestions for reducing the store's impact on the environment. Each Green Store appoints an employee who is responsible for visibility and ensuring that other employees become familiar with the concept.

To become a Green Store is voluntary. What is more, joining the initiative is completely free! The Green Store must pledge to work with sustainability and highlight itself as an active player in a green transition. Stores effectively serve as Green Ambassadors in Aalborg.

There are many advantages to becoming a Green Store. Among other things, stores get the opportunity to save money while taking into account the environment. There is also the opportunity to profile a green image to customers.

There are Green Stores in 13 cities in Denmark, but Aalborg is Denmark's premier Green Store city. There has been overwhelming interest in the initiative. In a town with a population of less than 200,000, nearly 100 stores applied for and earned the Green Store Diploma. Even Visit-Aalborg is among the stores certified by the city.



Photo: City of Aalborg

Two campaigns are used to further promote the Green Store concept, "Green Long Saturday" and "Aalborg Sustainability Festival". These are golden opportunities to send a clear signal to the city and its inhabitants that stores consider sustainability to be an urgent issue, and that they are active players in a green transition process.

The Green Stores, together with Aalborg's Network for Sustainable Business and the annually held Sustainability Festival (September) are part of a planned move towards making Aalborg into one of the most sustainable cities in Europe.

MORE

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Exporting technology to China

Jyväskylä and Kunming, located in the province of Yunnan in the south-west China, have worked together since 2005. Jyväskylä and Kunming signed a twinning agreement in 2008. In addition, Jyväskylä is twinned with 2.8 million city of Mudanjiang since 1988.



Photo: Jykes Ltd.

Signing of the MoU between the Mayors of Jyväskylä, Markku Andersson and Mudanjiang, Lin Kuanhai on 27 March 2014 in Mudanjiang.

Mudanjiang is located in the province Heilongjiang in the north China.

As a result of the cooperation between Jyväskylä, the Jyväskylä Regional Development Company Jykes Ltd, and the City of Kunming, a sludge treatment plant will be built in Kunming utilising the expertise of Jyväskylä.

Designed by MK Protect Oy, a Jyväskylä-based engineering office and technology supplier, the plant, which collects and treats sludge from eight wastewater purification plants, will be completed in 2014. It will produce biogas energy which will be used to dry the end product down to a minimum volume. The 25-million-euro project for MK Protech has been

Vaasa - the Nordic Leader in Energy

The region of Vaasa is the home for EnergyVaasa, the leading energy technology cluster in the Nordic countries. The cluster is extremely export oriented and the companies export up to 95% of their products and solutions. The demand for energy solutions is growing heavily all over the world and Finnish cleantech companies respond to that demand by investing in innovations.

The Vaasa Region hired, together with the region's energy technology companies, an Energy Ambassador, who exceeded all expectations in his task to communicate about the region's energy cluster all over the world.

To improve the city's air quality, Vaasa is going to purchase 12 bio gas buses for public transport. The buses start to ply in 2015. It is assumed that as the bio gas production accelerates, also citizens will be able to use bio gas to fuel their cars.

MORE

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a breakthrough for other environmental experts in the Jyväskylä region. The plant acts as a reference for other similar environmental projects and other export leads.

Currently, educational service export, environmental technology cooperation and market opportunities for Jyväskylä-based wellbeing technology are being negotiated.

A city can provide support in building business contacts in the Chinese market. Entering the Chinese market requires several intermediaries, visits in person and a complex partnership network. A twinning helps to bring negotiating partners closer and build up a reliable and long-standing basis for partnership.

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Tallinn Energy Agency launched

The globally known ascertainment : *let's think globally but act locally* refers to fact that acting on the local level actually affects global events. Today people's awareness should be increased that every-one can ensure the sustainable development.

The city of Tallinn joined the Covenant of Mayors in 2009. The "Energy efficiency action plan for Tallinn for the years 2011 -2020" provides an analysis of the situation in producing and using energy, transport and mobility, street lighting, water administration, waste management, residential buildings, etc. The main aims are to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, and to increase the renewable energy share to 20% by 2020.

Tasks and works related to the Covenant of Mayors are divided between different city's departments and facilities. Therefore, the need arose to create a coordinating facility and information consultancy centre, including advising and increasing the awareness of residents and third sector particularly in the energy saving issues.

Tallinn Energy Agency, governed by Tallinn Environment Department, was founded in January 2013.

The Agency organised Tallinn's third Energy Day together with the colleagues of Tallinn Environmental Department last October. It was

a family event: children from the nursery schools drew pictures about saving energy and recycling things, a lot of companies introduced solutions and possibilities for saving energy and alternative sources of energy, etc.

Tallinn Energy Agency festive opening took place on 10 December last year. The info days will be arranged also this year. The citizens need independent and objective consultancy services about energy saving issues and renovation of the dwelling houses.



Photo: Rainer Kurbei

Tallinn Energy Agency is opened now!
From the right: Professor Anto Raukas, Deputy Mayor Arvo Sarapuu, Villu Pella, the Head.

MORE

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European Documentation Centre in Słupsk



The Public Library in Słupsk officially opened the European Documentation Centre. Janusz Lewandowski, EU Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget and Andrzej

Kaczmarczyk, Deputy Mayor of the City of Słupsk cut the ribbon and formally inaugurated the Centre.

The European Documentation Centre is part of a Europe-wide network of Europe Direct inquiry desks. Currently there are more than 600 such centers in the world, with about 400 in the European Union. EDC is the depository of the European Communities publications. The Centre collects and popularizes materials issued by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities in Luxembourg and also publications of various European institutions as well as the Polish government organizations and NGOs.

EDC collection includes books, magazines, brochures, maps, ephemera - both printed and electronic. Materials are mostly in Polish and English. The objectives of the EDC are: collecting, preparing and sharing publications that are thematically linked with the European Union and European integration processes, assistance in finding materials on the European Union. The Centre organizes meetings about Europe addressed to young people, students and other concerned with those issues. Słupsk European Documentation Centre is 19th institution in the country. It is located in the main building of the Public Library (former St. Nicolas Church) and is open during its working hours.

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Students working together on a joint stage project

In 2012-2013 Klaipėda District Education Centre participated in the project 'Creative learning environments (CreatLearn)', financed by the EU South Baltic Programme. The project involved also schools from Denmark, Sweden and Germany.

Three hundred students aged 12 - 16 from five Klaipėda district schools and twenty teachers were working on staging a mystery play called *Sandbox Citizens*. The main aim was to show that learning is possible even in unconventional learning environments.

The students were divided into 18 groups with a specific tasks. Some were making stage decorations and some were working on the costumes. The work in various groups was run by the teachers with an assistance of the experts: scenographers, artists, musicians, choreographers, producers.

The schools devoted a year to the production which had its premiere at the end of May, 2013. 123 performers appeared on the stage. The mystery play *Sandbox Citizens* was shown to Gargždai, Klaipėda district communities and project partners.

At the end of the performance one of the main characters says: "I will not hide any more. I will stay in my yard - in my sandbox, with my desires and my dreams". These words reflect the actual core of the project - young people are a part of the Lithuanian history.



The students handed everyone an apple as a symbol of new ideas and methods, perception and realisation.

MORE

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A New Season in the Polish Baltic Philharmonic

Proms will be the highlight of this year in the Polish Baltic Philharmonic. The idea of promenade concerts, abbreviated to Proms, was proposed in 1895 in London by the BBC. Originally they were supposed to educate people about classical music and make it more popular. For years they have enjoyed enormous popularity in the whole world. This year, proms will be organized for the first time also in Gdańsk. The first concert (23 May) will express the Pomeranian Artistic Hopes of young and talented musicians from Tri-City. During the next one (30 May), we will have a chance to hear French compositions and film music hits. Finally, the 2013/2014 season will close with La Grande Finale (sponsored by EDF Polska S.A.). Each prom will consist of two parts. The first one will take place in the Concert Hall, where musicians will perform classical repertoire. The second part will be held outdoor after a short break. Its programme will be lighter in character.

Opened at the beginning of 2006, the Music and Congress Centre (Polish Baltic Philharmonic) belongs to one of the most modern and best-equipped objects of this type in Europe and even in the world. Organizing various kind of artistic events is just one way of exploiting its potential. The Centre is an ideal place for conventions, symposia, conferences, seminars, banquets, training courses or occasional events.

The most important events that took place in the Centre included for example the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the



Photo: Paweł Klein

Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Lech Wałęsa. The celebration gathered many heads of the state (for example the 14th Dalai Lama, President Nicolas Sarkozy, José Manuel Durão Barroso and Prime Minister Donald Tusk). The Centre organized also the 29th European Peptide Symposium for 2000 participants and 4000 m² of exhibition area in 2006, as well as meetings for the greatest Polish and international concerns: ENERGA S.A., Gdańsk Ship Repair Yard "Remontowa" S.A., Lotos Group S.A. and McDonald's.

MORE

www.filharmonia.gda.pl

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlzy15HCFJ8>

Creative St. Petersburg

A distinctive feature of St. Petersburg is its strong local identity, mainly based on the cultural aspects and historical image of being a cultural capital of Russia. By stressing cultural heritage, tourist and talent potential, St.Petersburg tends to attract creative industries to the city and build a number of arts venues. The major part of creative industry of St.Petersburg is comprised by HORECA sphere with its arts and vintage cafes, hostels designed in an unique and attractive style. The city hosts a number of creative events that gain a lot of public and media attention outside the city, for instance, St.Petersburg Fashion Week, Art Prospect Festival, Velonette, Museum Night Festival, Bibliionight, etc.

Due to the fact that the city is tagged as a megalopolis, it possesses a vivid atmosphere, composed by energetic life, students exchange flows, numerous work opportunities, ambitious investment projects, tourist routes, etc.

All these factors bring in a peculiar mood into urban life – the citizens are keen on thinking globally, in a creative way, participating in the city transformation and development via smart and creative urban projects.

That is why the growing demand of local citizens to implement into practice the idea of mobile, flexible and creative St.Petersburg has brought about the spread of creative quarters and venues. Among the most popular ones are Tkachi creative space, Loft project Etaji,



Taiga Space and so on. In most cases they are multifunctional, since they provide the citizens with the opportunities to visit contemporary art exhibitions, buy artisanal Russian designers clothes, participate in different workshops and use co-working spaces. In the Len-Doc studio visitors can even feel the magic of romantic Soviet films while in other creative venues you are likely to be offered to take part in yoga or Brazilian culture classes or even charity events.

There is one more important idea to be discussed. St.Petersburg is interested in using creative clusters technology in re-developing or revitalizing abandoned architectural and industrial areas. Needless to say, their inclusion into the city environment in a form of creative areas has been recently recognized by the locals.

The youths of St.Petersburg are a great leverage for the city development and transformation. Their stamina and innovation-thinking are indispensable driving force for the city experiencing globalization. That said, new projects and formats of space organization are likely to appear in the near future and we anticipate them.

MORE

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Extreme winter swimming

Extreme winter swimming in icy water is becoming an increasingly popular sport in Poland. Many Polish winter swimming clubs have been active for decades, and new clubs are still being opened up. For members of these clubs, dipping in ice water, and even more - swimming throughout the whole year, is rewarding and relaxing, offers protection from many diseases, and promotes a healthy lifestyle. In almost all cities along the Southern Baltic coast winter swimming clubs are active: Białogard, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot, Kołobrzeg, Mielno, Łeba and others. The consequence of increased interest in ice water swimming, has resulted in the competitions in Poland, as well as the participation of Polish swimmers in the competitions abroad.



The First Polish Open International Championships in extreme winter swimming took place on 6-8 December 2013 at Charzykowskie Lake near Chojnice. Nearly 100 competitors from the Polish affiliated winter swimming clubs, representing nearly 20 cities, took part. Also, twenty six winter swimmers from the UK, 3 from Kaliningrad and individual swimmers from Germany and Sweden participated. The races featured two distances: 25m and 50m breaststroke, 25m and 50m freestyle and 4x25m relay, men and women raced separately, and were divided into different age groups. The youngest player representing Russia (Kaliningrad) was 20 years old, the oldest representative of Gdańsk Tough Guy Club "Lech Mors" was 77 years old. The Honorary Patronage was granted by the Marshal of the Senate of Poland Bogdan Borusewicz.

There were new challenges for 20 Polish winter swimmers who participated in the 9th World Championships in Rovaniemi Finland, held on 20-23 March 2014. Swimmers representing clubs from Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot won several gold, silver and bronze medals. Particularly noteworthy were Renata Polańczyk from Walruses Club of Sopot, winner of the gold

medal in extreme endurance distance swimming 450m, as well as Lech Bednarek, winner of the gold medal on 25m breaststroke.

The preparations for the 2nd Polish Open International Championships in extreme winter swimming already started. They will be held on 5-7 December 2014 in Sopot.

MORE

www.twardziellechmors.pl

A new Jõhvi City Hall

The coming of this spring was marked for the municipality by great event: the rural government was moved to a new house called the Jõhvi City Hall.



An interesting feature of this new house is its long history. The Jõhvi City Hall was built in 1930 as the secondary school building. It is one of the few historical houses remained after World War II.

After the war, the hall was a centre of creative life of municipality, serving as a seat of activity clubs for children and adults.

The new concert hall building, where the music school and many children's activity clubs have moved in, was a new challenge for this house. As a result of the combination of its creative spirit with the noble look, the new City Hall was born. One part of the building is used as rural government offices, other belong to the local leisure activity clubs. Located in the middle of the building a big hall with the stage is used as a meeting place of the local council and as the concert hall. Several old blackboards saved in the house remind of the old times.

During the last years a lot of new objects appeared in Jõhvi: a new sport hall, new kindergarden, pedestrian's promenade, concert hall, etc. All of them have changed the town, adding a new look and atmosphere.

MORE

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New intermodal terminal in Karlskrona



Photo: Tina-Mari Eriksson

On 31 March the new intermodal terminal in Karlskrona, close to the ferry port, was opened up by Ms Berit Andnor Bylund, Governor of Blekinge, and Mr Dan Sten Olsson, CEO, Stena AB. The terminal has been

financed by the Municipality of Karlskrona from the EU funding as a part of the *Baltic-Link Motorways of the Sea* project, and as a port track. The port track has also been electrified which means that environmentally friendly transport can be offered. There is going to be one freight train, Monday to Friday, from and to several hubs in Sweden.

The link connects Norway and Sweden with Poland via Stena Line's ferry service Karlskrona-Gdynia. The terminal is owned by the Municipality of Karlskrona and operated by KBP Logent AB. Green Cargo is responsible for the railway traffic.



MORE

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Photo: Liise Kallas

The bravest of the festival visitors could try out swimming in ice-cold sea, supervised by seasoned swimmers from local winter-swimming T-Club.

Spaaremaa Wellfest

In March a unique festival took place for the first time on the island of Saaremaa – a good life festival Spaaremaa Wellfest.

The number of spas per person in Kuressaare makes the town not only the spa capital of Estonia, but probably also the world's. Already seven years ago, Latvians were the first to nickname the island Spaaremaa, because Saaremaa as a whole is like one great wellness centre – fresh air, good exercising facilities, both indoors and outdoors, topnotch spas for relaxing and rejuvenating, mouth-watering local food, light traffic, friendly people.

The festival that lasted for 9 days offered a wide variety of events including midnight zumba classes and videodisco in the pool, a yoga retreat with many different styles, Schenker League volleyball final tournament, riding trips on horseback and hikes on foot to meet the seals, refreshing swimming in an ice-hole in otherwise frozen sea, several concerts to feed the mind and soul, healthy cooking classes and obviously wide-ranging spa rituals. On International Women's Day (8 March) a big spring fair and flea market took place together with a great fitness marathon, where exercise-loving women were instructed by excellent male coaches.

MORE

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In the heart of the Magic Valley



DOLINA CHARLOTTY

Hidden from the dust of roads, away from the noise of cities, a few kilometres from the beautiful Baltic beaches and the seaside health resort Ustka, there is a fabulous Charlotta Valley.

This place is familiar to all those who search for unique and unforgettable experience and crave for rest in a relaxing surroundings at the same time.



Charlotta Resort and SPA is a recreational and conference hotel centre located in a stylish building on Lake Zamełowski. The hotel area comprises a restaurant and four conference rooms, the World of Swimming Pools, Jacuzzi and Saunas, Bali Hai Spa, bowling alley and a Rock Pub. There are 91 comfortable rooms for guests including the suites called after the stars of the Rock Legends Festival: Ian Gillan, Carlos Santana, Alice Cooper and Bonnie Tyler. Charlotta hosted those legendary musicians on the stage of the amphitheatre and in the hotel.

The guests are offered luxurious accommodation in other places located near Lake Zamełowski, in beautiful forests (Iron Horse-shoe located over the stables or Houses on Trees). In the heart of a picturesque Valley, on the Island of Lake Zamełowski, there is

Sillamäe Jazz



On 14 June 2014 for the tenth time Sillamäe hosts an international music festival "Jazz Time". Throughout its history, the festival attracted different participants - from very young musicians, just starting their careers, to such masters as the famous

pianist and composer Raimond Pauls. Different bands come to "Jazz Time" from the Baltic states, Germany, France and Russia. The festival ends up with a big evening jam-session. In 2013 a musician, educator and festival producer Vladimir Võssotski with his colleague Toivo Unt opened a music club, named Voffka Club, which is part of Estonian Jazz Union network and gives local residents the opportunity to enjoy concerts of the top Estonian and international performers.

MORE

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"Gościniec Charlotty" restaurant and Fisher's Hotel awaiting you.

Stylish and original interiors, comfortable and cosy rooms and wonderful recreational infrastructure make everyone who just crossed its threshold wants to come back here again and again. Walks in the countryside provide unforgettable experience and the abundance of attractions appeals to both older and younger visitors.

Charlotta Valley is prepared for many recreational activities in the open air. Near the stables there is a horse riding school. The picturesque Lake Zamełowski offers great opportunities to practise watersports. The canoes and pedalos are at the visitors' disposal. Amateurs of adrenaline are invited to the Rope Park. Also, there are many attractions for children, e.g. the playground, Charlotta ZOO, Seal House and The Land of Fairy.

The Charlotta Resort is a supporting member of UBC.

MORE

www.dolinacharlotty.pl



69th Executive Board meeting, Tampere, 17-19 March 2014

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Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is a network of cities from all ten Baltic Sea countries, with an overriding goal of contributing to the democratic, economic, social, cultural and environmentally sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Union has based its operational activities on the following Commissions on: Business and Tourism, Culture, Education, Energy, Environment, Gender Equality, Health and Social Affairs, Local Safety, Sport, Transportation, Urban Planning, Youth Issues. The Commissions coordinate and execute specific projects, activities and special events. Each city is capable to have its own creative and fully independent input to the Commissions' work.

The Union has an observer status with the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the Committee of the Regions, the Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area, the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). The Union is also a Special Participant in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The UBC cooperates with numerous Baltic and European organisations.

The Union is open for new members. Any coastal city of the Baltic Sea or any other city interested in the development of the Baltic Sea Region may become a member of the Union by making a written declaration of its will to enter UBC.

Please contact the UBC Secretariat in Gdansk for more information about the UBC work and the rules of entering the Union.