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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

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INCLUSIVE AND HEALTHY CITIES IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

AARHUS • ARENDAL • BERGEN • BERGEN AUF RÜGEN • CĒSIS • CHOJNICE • DARŁOWO • ELBLĄG • ELVA • ESPOO • GARGŽDAI • GÄVLE • GDAŃSK • GDYNIA • GREIFSWALD
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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN



Dear UBC Friends,

UBC celebrates the 25th anniversary of its foundation this year. During these years UBC facilitated the exchange of know-how among the member cities in such areas as culture, social affairs, youth issues, gender equality, environment, urban planning, safety or business development.

Though the circumstances have significantly changed during 25 years, our cities have been consequently working to become sustainable, smart and inclusive.

We all want to live in safe, well-designed, well-connected cities whose growth is based on participation, dialogue, transparency and knowledge. That's the vision the cities are striving for. How far are we on the way to fulfil our dream?

This issue of the Bulletin is entitled "Inclusive and healthy cities". The stories prove clearly that the urbanization creates opportunities, but at the same time inequalities and exclusion remain a challenge. How can we prevent them? How can we ensure social, spatial and economic inclusion? Our cities share their experiences in the Bulletin's pages. The ideas range from sport competitions, planning of recreational areas that foster meetings, involvement of NGOs, senior call centres and volunteering to more comprehensive solutions. The latter implies reformulating the city's policies and changing the way of thinking. Instead of care, support is offered to activate those from vulnerable groups as everyone has something to offer to the whole community. The cities create opportunities that shift people's focus to co-operation for the common interest and welfare. All these ideas pave the way to get everyone on board.

The UBC Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission promotes the idea of the Open Social Space. It is a place where people can meet, work and play together, talk to each other and discuss matters important for the community. This is also a place where common actions, projects and solutions develop that can make the community a better place to live. Open public spaces provide an opportunity for networking, unexpected meetings, joint initiatives, etc.

I do hope the UBC is also such an open space on the regional level. Let's meet and discuss. There are still a lot of opportunities ahead of us, so we look forward to further interesting projects between our cities.

With the Baltic Sea greetings!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Per Bødker Andersen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Per Bødker Andersen
President of UBC

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SUPPORT INSTEAD OF CARE



GETTING EVERYONE

ON BOARD

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The Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission has been running for almost two years now. We have had several meetings annually in varying constellations to further the works. **The objective of the Commission is to build relations upon which it can develop common challenges and share experiences.**

This is an important task for the Baltic cities. So is to ensure that knowledge is not wasted or doubled at any point. We should rather be progressing through a common knowledge base and through best practices.

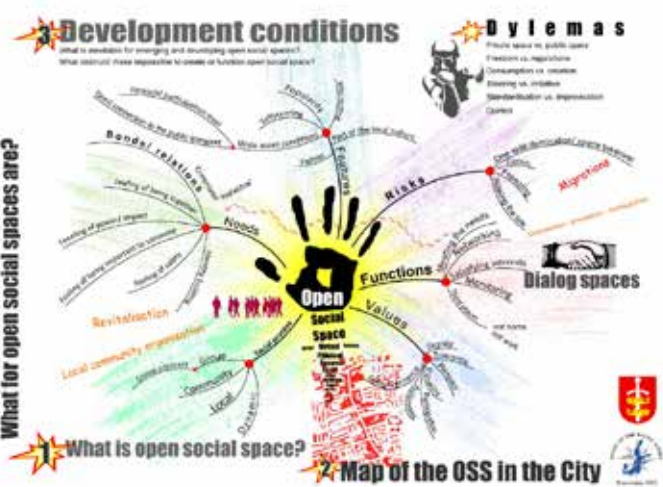
Throughout the first year of the Commission's activities, a working concept was developed on what was a healthy and inclusive city like or how it could be created – Open Spaces.

The working group defined it as follows:

“An open social space is a particular social phenomenon consisting of appropriating, developing and using a place, time and emerging relations to satisfy people's vital needs”. (Open Social Spaces Gdynia Report, 2015.)



The Commission, led by the City of Trelleborg, is now preparing for 2017. How to ensure every citizen is on board? This will be one of the Commission's priorities.



In other words, it can be a virtual space or a physical space, a meeting place or a public place. The phenomena that can be examined and discussed are therefore nearly endless. It is a cross-cutting idea that has the potential to combine the power of culture, sports, health care and social services. It is also an idea that can unite generations and various groups of people. The open social space is strongly rooted in the concept of the sociologist Ray Oldenburg (The Great Good Place, http://regdevelopment.ru/uploaded_files/files/20130522160050zwU3H.pdf).

A quote by facilitator and expert in social development, Mr Piotr Wolkowski, lays out the idea behind the framework for case study layouts in this Commission:

“Open social spaces operate on the foundations of highly varying social relations based on the principles of reciprocity and various methods of “exchanging” social capital. Although it is said that they have to be defined, they are in fact dependent on the moment, actions and mutual plans and intentions. **Nonetheless, there are many moments when a resident fails to realise the formal status of a given space and may feel free in a space that is in fact private, or sometimes may not have access to a public space of which she/he is a “co-owner”.**

However, open public spaces provide an opportunity for networking, unusual meetings, joint initiatives, and for

learning about co-dependency: using a street requires respecting certain rules, whereas yet different rules have to be followed in a public library, in a theatre or in a club for residents. In other words, different open spaces have different qualities and capabilities. They are context dependent and cannot, therefore, be clearly defined. Residents or visitors use the spaces in different ways and, perhaps, not always as expected.

Different actors create or facilitate open spaces and enable the residents to learn co-dependency within a city. We can link the co-dependency concept to the big migration processes we are facing nowadays. **People are more mobile. They change their living places a few times per lifetime, which is why we have to take care of the opportunities to learn the “locality” and to facilitate human relations in a positive way.**

Through using the concept of open spaces, some interesting questions have arisen. Discussions have been possible regarding who the generators of the open spaces are. Is it a municipality or a state organization of some kind? Or is it a private initiative by a business or perhaps a grass-root level initiative based entirely on voluntary actors? Is it dependent on one person or change agent to maintain or to start up, or is it based on a strong organization for arranging the open space? Can we as civil servants, politicians or local activists add value to the open social space? How can we make it stronger? How can we avoid oversteering or dictating in the given open social space?

Several case studies have emerged from the Commission and, above all, relations have been built that further the possibility for continued exchange and learning processes. Ideally, the Commission will continue to develop with new and involved members and participants in the UBC community.

The Commission is now preparing for the next stage for 2017, as well as for fostering the relations that have been built so far and learning from each member city. Perhaps a new interesting concept can be developed **to find new ways to ensure that every citizen gets on board towards a sustainable development and more inclusive and healthy cities.**

AARHUS:

FOCUS ON HEALTH

by Jes Bak Sørensen | jbs@aarhus.dk

To be a healthy and inclusive city one must strive to give all citizens equal opportunities. This means treating citizens differently. Aarhus aspires to be a healthy and inclusive city that is reflected in the vision of "Aarhus – a good city for all citizens".

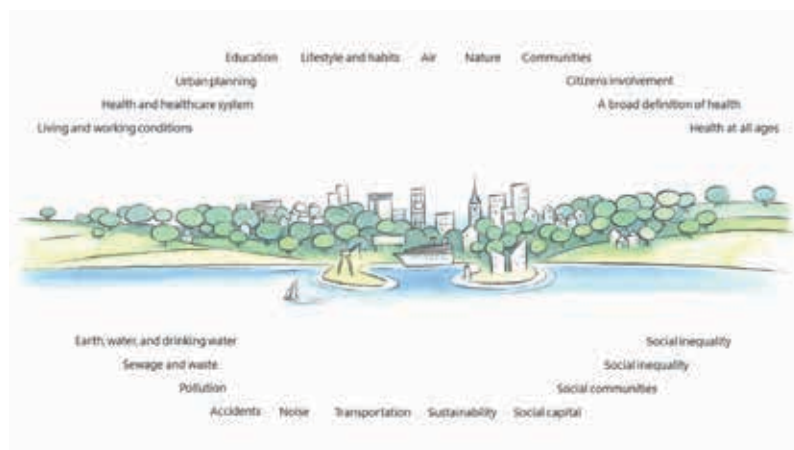
In line with the vision, the health policy primarily focuses on health for all and on reducing health inequalities. It further aims at making healthy choices easy and attractive for all citizens. Also, it is targeted at groups of citizens with severe health challenges.

Other aims focus on increasing well-being, reducing smoking and alcohol consumption, reducing children's overweight and increasing physical activity. All the municipal departments actively contribute to implementing the policy and its success. The health policy recognizes that a number of different factors affect health and well-being (figure). This is a movement towards recognizing that health and well-being are complex matters, which can only be improved when working on interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral basis.

An example of integrating health promotion in core activities outside the health department supporting healthy choices is the planning strategy for urban development in Aarhus. In this strategy, health promotion covers active transportation, fighting segregation and improvement of life conditions in the communities, improving public spaces, green areas and recreational activities. Among other initiatives, this means focusing on cycling and walking as means of transportation to help reducing congestion, improving liveability, reducing pollution and accidents, and further promoting health and well-being.

Collaboration with the social housing associations on social support and health initiatives within the community is another example of health initiatives for groups of citizens with severe health challenges. Residents in social housing areas are offered health consultations, support for smoking cessation and guidance in finding the right activity in their pursuit of health and well-being.

In 2017, the preparation for the next health policy in the City of Aarhus will begin. This policy is expected to have an increased focus on health inequality through interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral initiatives, along with shared budgetary objectives across municipal departments.





PRIORITY FOR THE YOUNGEST

by Barbro Müller | barbro.muller@lulea.se

Luleå has taken a holistic approach and developed a new model for the overall strategic work in the municipality. A vision for Luleå in 2050 was developed and after that prioritized directions were gathered in six programmes that form our master plan. Sustainable development is the basis for all the work, taking into account all three sustainability components: social, ecological and economic sustainability.

Welfare reports describing how health is distributed among the population on the basis of geographical distribution, sex and educational level have been developed. They have been used as a basis for the programmes were developed and helped to increase understanding that the growth conditions, living conditions and space for actions are affecting health equality. Each local business has to operate in accordance with the programmes.

Now the development plans and geographical locations are undergoing the development process, based on the programmes. Dialogues are carried out with those who live and reside in the area, with the civil society, entrepreneurs, government agencies and others, to get a fuller picture of the needs of each urban district. For example, the percentage of children in economically disadvantaged families, the percentage that can get good enough grades in the ninth grade so that they come to the high school and the percentage of the unemployed in order to provide the right conditions for equal health in each urban district are closely examined.

The municipality's work for equality is in our structural work. Children and young people have a particular priority. The school decided that it should be completely free, in other words, no fees shall be charged for outdoor or other activities. There is a free municipal music school and all young people in the ninth grade and first grade in a high school are offered summer jobs. Together with sports associations, free sports equipment is provided, so that children can be physically active regardless of economic conditions of their families.



Photo: Luleå municipality

A YOUTH HEALTH

by Neringa Tarvydiene | direktore@visuomenessveikata.lt

The health care system does not completely satisfy the needs of young people, which would meet criteria of the World Health Care Organization.

“Reducing of Health Inequalities in Klaipėda District Municipality Implementing Youth-Friendly Health Care Model” is the project which contributes to young people's health and quality of life improvement. The project is not intended to change the structure of health services. It aims at strengthening inter-institutional relations. Its promoter is the municipality and partners: Klaipėda District Municipality Public Health Bureau and Union of Youth Non-Governmental Organizations of Klaipėda District “Roundtable”.

The project attempts to draw attention to four problematic areas among young people: sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies; use of psychoactive substances; suicide and self-harm; overweight and obesity-related health problems.

Problematic areas include a broad audience of young people from various social groups; therefore, the project contributes to the reduction of social exclusion among youth.

This current project has led to the establishment of the Youth-Friendly Health Care Coordination Centre (YFHC) under Public Health Bureau, including two remote units in the Klaipėda district. Here young people can consult with an YFHC coordinator all health-related topics. The YFHC coordinator carries out case management functions and leads motivational interviews.

The outdoor fitness equipment has been installed near the one of the YFHC units. Free events are carried out in youth spaces, educational institutions. Hopefully, it will reduce municipal expenditures for health care, unemployment and disability allowances. Economic and business conditions will improve and less population will experience social and economic exclusion.

The project contributes to one of the aims of the Strategic Action Plan of Klaipėda District Municipality for 2016–2018 – “to reduce health inequality related to health behaviour” .



A SENSE OF SECURITY

by Laima Grobiņa | laima.grobina@jurmala.lv

Jūrmala is one of few municipalities with growing number of residents. One of the essential reasons is the stable social support system, focused on the needs of residents, thus offering a sense of security. The municipality provides the 19 types of social services and 21 types of benefits.

Providing support to those unable to take care of themselves, and who cannot be included in the labour market, i.e. lonely pensioners and the disabled, is the priority. Children and senior citizens in Jūrmala may use the city buses free of charge. The seniors have easy access to free health care services provided by the local government, as well as to cultural events. Jūrmala also provides a 100% discount in the city buses for completely disabled persons. There is an increase in demand for assistant services provided by the local government.

The pregnant women and seniors are offered free of charge health services paid by the municipality. Residents and visitors may participate in health projects implemented by NGOs, such as exercises, inclusive classes, trainings, lectures. The municipality has granted financial support to the projects aimed at the residents with hearing impairments.

Together with partners from Estonia and Finland, Jūrmala will implement a new project to raise awareness of the children's health issues in needy families that form socially excluded groups.

"Jūrmala has been recognised as a healthy city both in the competitions of the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments, and internationally. Since 2005, Jūrmala owns an international certificate verifying the status of a Healthy City, and is the first Healthy City in Latvia. Yet, the relationships among people are very important. I have met very positive people who are full of energy and ready to help. I have seen how neighbours help an old person or a needy mother. It is a concrete support in a concrete situation to the community we live in," concludes Laima Grobiņa, Head of the Welfare Department.

TO LIVE IN HEALTH

by Laura Afanasjeva | laura.afanasjeva@jekabpils.lv

In August, a unique charity campaign was held in Jēkabpils. Its aim was to provide free medical consultations and necessary surgical manipulations for pensioners, the disabled and politically repressed persons of the municipality and the surrounding region.

Elderly people are the ones who by their hard work have created a Latvian economic base, and lots of them are suffering from consequences caused by overwork - degenerative changes of congestions of shoulders, knees and hip joints, that are causing pain and reducing quality of their lives.

During the charity campaign "Live in health" 326 people received free medical consultations, 21 of them had free surgeries, and 91 had free foot care procedures and 32 had injections of Platelet-rich fibrin.

This was the first time such a charity campaign took place in Latvia and Jēkabpils. In the frame of this campaign doctors and medical personnel gathered together to work free of charge for the needs of society. The idea of the campaign came from traumatologist - orthopaedist Dr. Kaspars Udris who has participated in such international missions in India and was willing to transfer his experience to Latvia. And Jēkabpils was the first city to launch his idea.

The campaign was organised with the assistance of the municipality. Medical infrastructure was provided by Jēkabpils Regional Hospital. 25 900 Euros were gathered from sponsors and individual contributors during the "Live in health" campaign.

Donated funds covered expenses of medical materials and economic costs. The Jēkabpils authorities express a sincere gratitude to all contributors, medical staff, doctors and others involved in the organisation of the charity campaign.

Initiator of the charity campaign Dr. Kaspars Udris during one of the surgeries





WITH A HEART FOR ARENDAL

by Elisabeth Nærestad | elisabeth.naerestad@arendal.kommune.no

Photo: Arendal Municipality

Norway is among the best countries to live in – but the Red Cross states that loneliness is the largest national illness. Loneliness often leads to sadness, anxiety and depression. The proportion of loneliness is highest among young people aged 18 to 29 and those over 70 years. We need good friends and we need places where we can meet them!

In 2013 the municipality of Arendal launched a plan for better health and living conditions, called “Early intervention - for better living conditions 2023”. The year 2023 is an important milestone as it marks the 300 year anniversary of the town of Arendal. The aim of the plan is to establish a public health perspective through all community development, encourage citizens to take responsibility for their health, facilitate healthy choices and reduce social inequality.

The proposed strategy for urban and district development in the new town plan for Arendal is a logical consequence. In the years to come, more people should live and work in the town centre and in our local community centres. Future growth must help improve the urban environment, public health and encourage prosperity, and improve the municipal economy. Our streets should once again be public spaces providing opportunities to stop up, sit, hang around and talk to friends. Public spaces should encourage companionship, play, parties, entertainment and the sale of goods. Ground floors in buildings along the streets should contain many activities such as cafes, restaurants, schools, kindergartens, workplaces and shops.

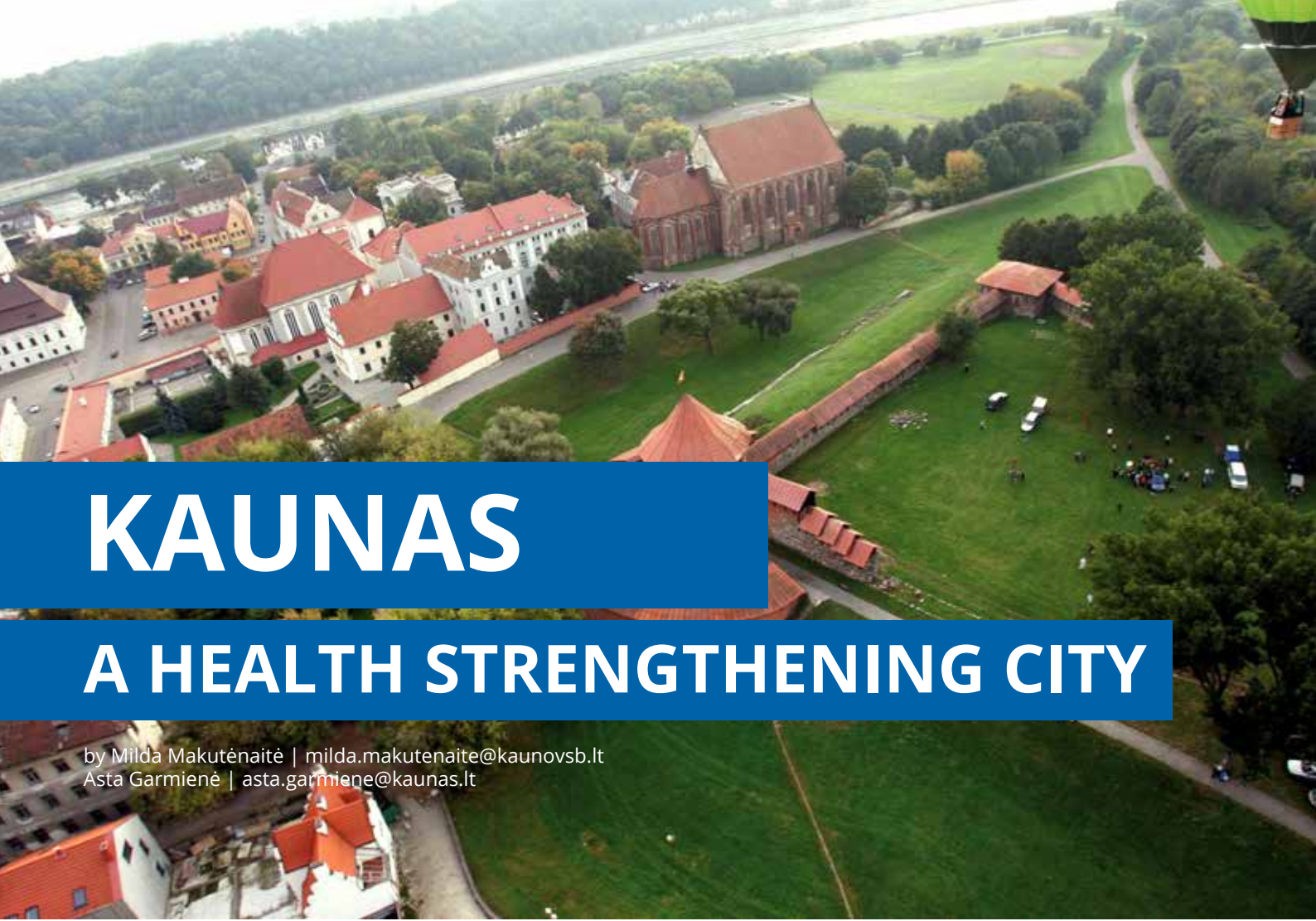
Arendal, in cooperation with the organization of Municipalities in Norway (KS), invited five volunteers / non-profit organizations in 2012, to look for opportunities to develop

a sustainable interaction model for the development of citizenship and welfare of the municipality. This resulted in the partnership “With a Heart for Arendal – a good place to live for everybody”.

This has evolved into an organic cluster network of more than 100 organizations and partners. The overall goal is to strengthen social inclusion through sharing knowledge and creating inclusive meeting places and activities, creating measures against loneliness, promoting public health, and preventing poverty and marginalization, through participation and interaction across generations.

A shared vision, shared experience and knowledge, combined with active working groups, local actions and projects, make systematic and co-ordinated efforts possible – with better results.





KAUNAS

A HEALTH STRENGTHENING CITY

by Milda Makutėnaitė | milda.makutenaite@kaunovsb.lt
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Kaunas City joined the Healthy Cities Network of World Health Organization in 2014. In this way the city has committed to constantly develop and improve its physical and social environment, and to enlarge the resources of communities that would allow citizens to lead a healthy lifestyle. This project is under supervision of Kaunas city and the Kaunas Public Health Office.

A healthy city

The Healthy City movement strives at making health the priority item on the political agenda and to develop a strong issue on the local government level. After becoming a member of Healthy Cities Network of Europe, Kaunas has taken care of the most important problems, such as developing the age-friendly city; encouraging healthy nutrition and initiating the construction of bicycle routes, developing recreational areas and promoting actions to reduce alcohol consumption – a driving policy, marketing, regulation of prices and illegal consumption of alcohol. Kaunas has improved the work of health institutions and living and working conditions for the citizens. It is also politically committed to restructure the health institutions, and start planning based on partnership and innovative projects.

Solving problems together

The programme 'Initiatives for Kaunas' invites non-governmental organizations and communities to contribute to solving the problems faced by Kaunas. Each year the communities are invited to submit their applications with the aim to strengthen public health and priorities related to: healthy nutrition, preventive measure against alcohol, tobacco, drugs abuse, psychological health and its strengthening (prevention of suicides, violence, or stress management).

The first Health Strengthening Region of Lithuania was created among the cities of Kaunas and Birštonas, and the districts of Jonava, Kaišiadorys, Kaunas, Kėdainiai, Prienai and Raseiniai in 2012. The activity of the Region is coordinated by the group of 16 persons and Consultants' Council consisting of scientists, professors and acknowledged specialists.

Towards a healthier society
Most of all the economic-social situation, education and level of culture, spread use of harmful materials, living conditions and personal attitudes of citizens have influence upon the health of people. That is why the main concern is to unite the efforts of all the stakeholders for the benefit of better health of the society members.



Kaunas
– Healthy City

HEALTH PROMOTION IN JELGAVA

by Anna Zeņina | anna.zenina@dome.jelgava.lv

Jelgava has been taking care of health and social inclusiveness of inhabitants for a long time. The municipality not only ensures health care accessibility for the inhabitants, but also provides health promotion environment and infrastructure in the city.

Every year more people are involved into health promotion activities – 5000 inhabitants were involved in outdoor exercises in the parks, as well as in different educational seminars about healthy diet, emotional health, addiction problems and complex prevention activities in 2015. Different target audiences – children, youngsters, adults, and the elderly including people with disabilities, minorities and representatives of other socially excluded groups participate in activities free of charge. Every year new free-access fitness grounds are opened, bicycle paths are developed and urban environment is cultivated to promote inhabitants' health and interest towards healthy lifestyle.

Health promotion program for Jelgava 2016–2022 has been developed. It includes wide current situation description and the planned actions and activities. Responsible institutions already work in complex - to promote physical activity, healthy diet habits, reduce dependency, promote people's emotional and mental health, to work on disease prevention, to further develop health-promoting and inclusive environment and to improve coordination and communication with both – public and government internally and in cooperation with NGOs, public and private institutions.

Representatives of Jelgava gained new inspirations about a healthy and inclusive city issues participating in the UBC Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission meeting at the beginning of 2016. A healthy and inclusive city is not a status but an endless process which aim is an inhabitant who feels supported in the city and has an opportunity to act to the good of one's health.



A SUMMER FUN

by Cathrin Vestergren | cathrin.westergren@umea.se
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The Municipality of Umeå was given money from the Department of Youth and Civil Society earlier this year to improve personal growth and integration between children from different social backgrounds. This led to a lot of amazing ideas on how to use the money in the best way possible.

In the beginning of June, shortly before the summer break, all kids in the municipality were given special summer cards delivered by their schools. These cards served as free tickets to a range of interesting activities all over the city. In total, 13,000 cards were delivered to excited kids between 6 and 15 years old. The card also contained the website information.

In Umeå there is an outdoor swimming centre called Umelagun located in a popular recreational area Nydala. This area is easily reached on foot or by bike. There is also a quick access to the area by public transportation. During the summer it is the working place for a high number of staff from the municipality and the civil society organizations. This makes it a safe place for kids and a great open public space.

This summer all kids with the summer cards were given free entrance to Umelagun during special hours when a staff organized games and other fun water activities. It was very appreciated by the kids. In total, 4308 kids (of which 2358 were girls and 1950 were boys) visited the outdoor swimming centre during this period with their cards.

In the area there were plenty of other fun activities to explore. In the middle of it there is a lake where one could go boating or fishing. All equipment for these activities could be lent free.

Every summer has a story – and this is our story on learning how to build an inclusive and healthy city – while having fun at the same time!



Photo: Jan Virtanen

YOUTH PASSES

LAHTI CALLING!

by Tiina Marttinen | tiina.marttinen@lahti.fi

Finland's new National Core Curriculum for Basic Education emphasises community-based activities and participation, such as multi-disciplinary learning modules for comprehensive schools. One of these will be 2017 Lahti FIS Nordic World Ski Championships, launching a unique project that interests upper secondary schools, too.

The collaboration between Lahti's Educational Services department and the games' competition organisation offers participation for schools based on their own resources. A steering group consisting of principals and teachers coordinates activities, working in close cooperation with the Education Services and the competition organisation.

A 2017 World Ski Championships webpage at the city's education network and schools' websites allows users to follow up the collaboration, access participation instructions, browse the idea bank for tips on how to approach subjects and submit their own tips. Projects related to the games can be conducted throughout the school year. Citizens can follow pupils' participation in the learning module, as well as in art exhibitions at shopping centres, videos on social media and pieces in newspapers.

In the games, the opening ceremony will include a singing performance by school pupils' large procession. On the opening day pupils will get free admission to the area and enjoy watching cross-country skiing and ski-jumping practice session, a children's concert, and various types of children's entertainment.

On the following days, pupils will organise singing and dancing patrols along ski tracks and around the city. Since one of the competition's themes is sustainable development, pupils will take part in sorting waste and conducting interviews with competition-goers about various related topics, such as their carbon footprint. The pupils of secondary schools and upper secondary schools will also be able to complete a work experience period as, for example, a messenger at the games.

by Sirpa Kynäslahti | sirpa.kynaslahti@pori.fi

The city of Pori wishes to enhance recreation, exercising and participation in cultural events among youths in their home town. Every Upper Level child attending school (youths between ages 13 and 15 years old) are granted the so called 'youth pass' in the beginning of a new school year.

Free of charge, the youth passes include a versatile setting of cultural benefits, exercising and other experiences. Some of the benefits are linked to services offered directly by the municipality and some are executed together with external partners. The most popular offers have turned out to be entrance tickets to the public swimming pool, to a gym or to the cinema and free bus tickets. Moreover, the passes allow free entrance to the outdoor swimming pool, museums, skateboarding track, bowling alley, disco, to the Porispere rock festival and to an ice hockey game.

The purpose of the youth passes is to increase hobbies, exercising and cultural awareness amongst young people and in this way to orientate youths to make everyday usage of the services in their home town.

The passes have been developed to promote young peoples' concerns and interests in a positive spirit. At their age, they are likely to end some of their childhood hobbies. But it is of benefit to everybody to find something else to fill up the spare time and to gain new experiences.

The passes serve all youths on an equal footing, without marking anyone on the basis of their income or other background factors. Moreover, the youths who are attending special education or severely disabled youths, are offered better targeted services. For instance a Wibit-track in the public swimming pool, a winter sports day in the downhill skiing centre offering special aids and a music day, including a disco.

Offered for the first time in 2012, the youth passes have received lots of positive feedback. This year the city of Pori offers also an application that enables the youth passes to be downloaded to smartphones.



Photo: Antti Lietjärvi



GDAŃSK

ON THE MOVE

by Damian Kuźmiński | damian.kuzminski@gdansk.gda.pl

Investments in the recreational areas, playgrounds, bike routes, numerous projects activating people make Gdańsk not only a healthy city. It also challenges exclusion and discrimination.

“A city is like an organism. All its parts interact making it bursting with life”, says Grzegorz Szczuka, the Head of Social Development Department of the city of Gdańsk. “The diversity of processes in the city is extraordinary, and its dynamics changes”.

How to make people meet in such circumstances? What to do to ensure smooth cooperation and even integration? The city of Gdańsk focuses on sport.

“Sport is especially important to me”, admits Szczuka. “Maybe that is why I find it a perfect tool for integration, trust building and self-development. Many of city’s activities are directed at sport”.

Sport brings many educational and social benefits. Not only does it promote respect and tolerance or prevents from violence and discrimination, but it also involves people, activates them. “Football Gdańsk” is the city’s flagship project that has been implemented as a follow-up of the European Football Championships EURO 2012. It is a series of games for kids and the youth from the city’s schools. They learn team-working and fair-play rules. For now 58 teams have taken part in the project, 1660 goals have been netted.

Also, football tournaments are organized annually on different occasions, e.g. on Children’s Day, during winter and

summer holidays. More than 300 teams have encountered so far accompanied by parents and professional partners, e.g. city’s sport clubs. Sport grounds are also a good place for integration. In cooperation with the NGOs Gdańsk initiated the football league with the newcomers. That fosters interactions, breaks down the stereotypes, and encourages meeting. Also, the football fans are involved in the project “Fans together”.

The city involves its citizens also in the decision-making process concerning the urban planning. A number of projects have been implemented to improve the availability of recreational areas. New playgrounds, garden squares, bike routes have been developed. Gdańsk supports numerous local initiatives and NGOs projects to get thousands of people involved in sport, exercise and activity classes that make the new spaces bustle. Marathons, joint rambles, yoga, Nordic Walking, outdoor gyms attract people from all different backgrounds, age, gender, etc. Shared activities help break down barriers and strengthen the community.





Photo: City of Kotka

LET'S DO IT!



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WELL-BEING IN KOTKA

by Johanna Sipari | johanna.sipari@kotka.fi

Through urban planning, Kotka hopes to create a stimulating environment that will support exercise and recreation. Nature, parks and diverse cultural offerings create lasting experiences and increase the sense of community.

Working together

In 2015, the youth of the Karhuvuori district took part in designing their own youth activity centre and created the rules for their own organization. New electronic services and feedback channels are always being constructed. Peer-group activities are carried out with children, youth, senior citizens, and immigrants alike.

Breaking boundaries

Sector boundaries are crossed when the library can loan exercise equipment or provide health kiosk services, when a schoolchild can walk the cultural trail, or when a neighbourhood centre can offer advice and guidance on promoting well-being. Varied clubs and free-time activities, nearby exercise facilities, as well as free or affordable exercise and cultural facilities, contribute to well-being equality.

New structures

The new partnership building "Viikari" brings together under one roof associations and organizations. The "Cockpit" provides young people with activities, information and support all in one place, and a family centre unifies services for families with children. The "Corner" brings together youth activities, a day centre for the elderly, a health kiosk, and child protective services in the same building.

Opportunities for influence

At Occupy City Hall event, 1,000 young people gather to use their influence. Various opportunities are also offered by the Children's Parliament, the Youth Parliament, the Senior Citizens' Council, and the Council for Persons with Disabilities, which meet annually a total of 30 times.

Enjoying nature

The national urban park in Kotka extends from the islands in the Gulf of Finland through urban and industrial cultural environments far up the Kymi River. The area of 24 square kilometres accommodates unspoiled nature, historical sites, recreational areas and the urban centre of the city.

What are the most important challenges concerning social or economic inequalities in your city?

Unemployment and a lack of qualified labour force on the island are challenges. Families need to survive despite economic difficulties. They can obtain state support while unemployed or get some business support to build up a new company. The focus is on keeping a working age population occupied as long as possible, and not on donations. In our opinion, support has to be temporary until business situation has been improved and family members reach to labour market. Another question is – how to live healthy life in old age? We work together with unemployment fund, victim assistance workers and the police. NGOs and traders, including social entrepreneurship play important roles here.

What does your city undertake to prevent marginalization? How does it help to lift people out of exclusion and improve lives?

We organize many social events all over the island. This is one way to prevent marginalization among people from different places. There are also many opportunities to be involved in NGO and to be active in local politics. All development documents pass beforehand publicity period and all citizens can send us proposals. Our community is small and that's why every person does matter.

What makes inclusiveness stronger?

The main thing is communication, and even more important is right attitude. People need to be heard and to be respected. We use different levels of inclusiveness: sharing information through social media, webpages or local newspapers, but also in regular meetings and just talks. One of our great progresses is a free municipal newspaper. No less important to a small community is cooperation among various organizations, which is of interest to the parishers.

How does your city encourage local community to work together? What are the NGOs statuses?

The municipality regularly supports the NGO activities. Every year, the municipality organizes the "Let's Do It" Programme, which involves all the residents, caring for the clean environment.

Does your city provide any space for common activities?

Kärdla Harbour, Kärdla Park, Cultural Centre, Youth Centre, Day Centres for different target groups, Hiiumaa Sports events, Strength and Fitness Association of Hiiumaa group, Kärdla Music School, etc.



GDYNIA OPEN FOR DIALOGUE

by Jarosław Józefczyk | j.jozefczyk@mopsgdynia.pl

Photo: Mateusz Skowronek

In 2009–2011 Gdynia designed and conducted an open dialogue project with all stakeholders in the field of care services. More than 900 people were asked about the optimal image of the city care services. Mostly seniors, their families, volunteers, care providers, politicians, decision makers, coordinators, social workers had been involved in a 6 month dialogue that resulted in creating a jointly developed local quality chart. It has served to establish care services standards and is used in public procurements.

A City with a friendly architecture

Started in 2012, the public space diagnostic strolls aim at gathering practical information about space perception by people with disabilities. Volunteers (seniors, youngsters) invite people to walk in a given city area and to share their feedback on elements that help to be mobile, those hindering movement or causing danger for those in wheelchairs and those who cannot see or hear. By this simple method, architects expand their practical knowledge and different perspectives about the city.

A City open for special needs

Gdynia, as one of few cities in Poland, initiated and developed in 2009 the programme for children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Now the children and their families have a Diagnostic and Therapeutic Centre at their disposal. The centre offers a wide array of services tailored to their special needs. Gdynia also carries out the media campaign to broaden knowledge and awareness of risks connected with consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

A City full of open social spaces

Youth centres, museums, Social Innovations Laboratory,

theatres, community gardens, neighbourhood cafés, clubs, Gdynia InfoBox - Observatory of Changes, open schools, libraries, playgrounds, beaches, green areas... all these provide plenty of opportunities for meetings, making friends and establishing relations between people. With free of charge (or with a minimal admission fee), safe, attractive, and filled with interesting proposals of activities, the city is more lively, more open and more inclusive. 15 places falling under these criteria were identified.

A City that totally changes institutions

Gdynia is devoted to deinstitutionalization. In 2007, through the systematic and planned activities, the struggle to change a huge orphan house into the small, family-like forms of care for orphaned children was initiated. As a result, in 2011 the orphanage for 90 children was closed down, and with this the dark era of child care in such institutions finished.

In 2015 Gdynia initiated the “A Flat Instead of a Shelter” plan. It is about supporting (financially and professionally) those homeless who just signal their will and readiness to leave the shelters and move to rented rooms or flats. Within just one year 91 people have changed their lives and moved from shelters and streets into the flats.

We should further struggle for inclusiveness, knowing that there is no ready solution for emerging needs and barriers. The key elements are: building relationships, networking, dialoguing, exchanging, supporting brave ideas and dreaming about new horizons.



URBAN FARMING

by Bo Hjälmeffjord | bo.hjalmeffjord@vaxjo.se

In the strive to find solutions to a number of societal challenges and at the same time building a more attractive city, Växjö has established "Östrabobacken", an urban farming space, which is operated in close cooperation of the city administration and local NGOs / social enterprises.

Situated only some 300 metres from the city centre, Östrabobacken is a green oasis where people can meet. It also produces and sells local high quality organic food for restaurants and citizens of Växjö. The city wishes to have an attractive green space, providing locally produced, ecological food, while promoting health, well-being and social inclusion at the same time.

By combining those values, Växjö does not only live up to the nickname of "the Greenest City in Europe", but it has a chance to create jobs for young people and persons who may have difficulties to find employment in the traditional working market, including refugees. The hope is that Östrabobacken will develop further as a friendly place where people can meet, no matter who they are.

To proceed in developing urban farming Växjö has joined forces with Gothenburg and Malmö, both cities having the same aims. They will establish a model for promoting commercial urban farming within or close to the city. The project will gather different actors for creative, interactive, innovative, green workshops; arrange inspirational farming events and try out farming events.

The project will also offer incubators, providing business advice and mentoring for start-up urban farms. Malmö and Gothenburg have already been successful in promoting some farming entrepreneurs to start city farms. Växjö wishes to draw on these experiences and launch promoting commercial city farming on a wider scale.



GROW YOUR CITY

by Dennis Grønbæk Christensen | dgc@guldborgsund.dk

The area of Lindholm is located in the periphery of Nykøbing and has a large proportion of immigrant families, elderly and single people, and unemployed. Poor health, isolation and social inactivity are interconnected and characteristic of the area.

To improve the situation the municipality has initiated the process of "Grow Your City" starting by establishing a number of mini-gardens that the citizens in the area may rent and use. The idea had come from the municipality, but the mini-gardens were planned by the citizens.

From the very beginning the citizens have shown great involvement and enthusiasm both in the planning and in forming the gardens. Building the gardens was organised by the citizens themselves, who also had bought all the needed materials based on funds from the municipality.

In just one weekend the first 20 gardens were ready in the areas where dull green lawns had been present before. In total 43 gardens have been established that the citizens may rent on a yearly base for a symbolic amount.

The results have been amazing. The gardens have created a new meeting place that did not exist before. Because of the gardens people have a reason to come out their apartments now. Out in fresh air, they can meet their neighbours and be part of social activities.

A much larger group is now involved in weeding and enjoying the gardens. The neighbours are invited and meet in the gardens, and discussions are going across ethnicity and age. Everybody finds it exciting to see the gardens growing.

The gardens have started the process where the citizens take on own initiatives. They have placed benches there and organise get-together meetings.

The process is still going on and includes focus on local food production and more specific health issues. It is managed by the City Planning Office, and involves other departments, mainly the health department.



BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER

by Mari Ala-Mikkula | mari.ala-mikkula@espoo.fi

Espoo's Matinkylä district has placed several city services under the same roof. Iso Omena Service Centre is hosted within the local shopping centre premises. The service centre includes open spaces where citizens and city partners can meet and arrange activities.

The aim of Iso Omena Service Centre is to make everyday life easier. Customers can, for example, charge their travel cards, return library books and take their sick children to the health centre, all under the same roof. Professionals from different sectors serving their customers at the same location make running errands easier.

The Service Centre houses a library, Kela (Social Insurance Institution of Finland), health centre, child health centre, youth services, a citizen service unit, as well as a laboratory and radiology services. The library, for example, stretches across the entire Service Centre. Even the health care centre waiting area is part of it.

Public services available in a new way

The Service Centre is an innovation in itself. When city employees from different branches come together, it becomes a breeding ground for new ideas.

"The Service Centre is a meeting place. Customer information and guidance to the services will become more streamlined as the service providers learn about each other's work. Because of this cooperation, we can provide a wider range of professional services for young people, for example", says Tiina Pasanen, Senior Youth Instructor at the City of Espoo Youth Services.

"The opening hours of the child health centre will be extended. We are approaching the new premises with the 'how can we help' attitude", Raija Vanhatalo, Manager of Health Care, points out.

The Service Centre serves all citizens and even the interior design supports this. The city design foundation Design Driven City (Toimiva kaupunki) has considered space use, architecture, activities and customer perspective. Design Driven City brought in students from the Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Service design methods by Design Studio Jouni Leino have been used to plan the way the customer and the service provider come together. Service touch points and service strings were used to create ideal solutions for service placement.

Iso Omena Service Centre opened up on 11 August 2016. The opening event attracted 15 000 visitors.



LEARNING FOR INCLUSION

by Ann-Karin Bohl | ann-karin.bohl@karlstad.se

Karlstad deals with several challenges connected with preventing social isolation and economic inequality. Our strategic plan covers a number of commitments related to the mission of reaching a good life for all the citizens.

The challenges are for example solved by vulnerable neighborhoods, social enterprises, and agreements with associations, developing activities for young people who left school early, creating a multidisciplinary team for early detection and intervention towards families with small children and receiving refugees.

The refugee situation

Karlstad has, like other cities in Sweden, received a lot more asylum seekers than in previous years. Depending on political decisions and agreements with the Migration Board, the city has to adapt decisions and activities to reach a functioning integration and inclusion of the newcomers. For example, we don't know about the need for homes for unaccompanied refugee children or the future need for staff working with Swedish tuition and labour efforts.

Knowledge

It entails an increased working load and staff in various sectors working with issues and target groups that they have not previously met. Karlstad has initiated a series of seminars targeted at new recruits and other municipal staff in the county of Värmland. The goal is to create better possibilities for municipal employees to perform a mission related to newcomers by increasing their knowledge about: migration and asylum, issues related to what society actors can provide target groups with, violence in war, in close relationships and in the name of honour, psychological and physical effects of escape and war trauma, practical and educational approach in the meeting with the target groups, and collaboration with the target groups.



GETTING NEW SKILLS

by Ingrid Wall | ingrid.wall@trelleborg.se

Like in many other cities in Sweden and Europe, Trelleborg faces problems with youth unemployment, marginalization and xenophobia.

There are a number of groups that can be seen as marginalized – older people, disabled, unemployed, and refugees. There are also a number of ways to address this challenge.

For older people Trelleborg has day centres where those over 65 can participate in various activities for a nominal fee. There is also staff to keep older people company for a few hours each month.

Some disabled people are used as reference group for the municipality, in questions where input is needed. The unemployed are contacted by the municipal employment office to help them get either a job or some kind of activity.

Refugees, during the great influx last year when 4 000 unaccompanied minors came to Trelleborg, were contacted by local sports clubs with an offer to take part in their trainings and activities. Support is provided to associations who are working to include newly arrived immigrants in their activities – this is a great entry into the society.

One of the undertaken efforts is “Sportoteket”, a newly initiated project thanks to which children and youths can borrow sports equipment, if they can't afford buying it themselves. This can make sports activities more accessible and people are more easily included in the society.

Another initiative is to increase the awareness of the staff of cultural and sports institutions to ensure that help is properly provided to people who need guidance and support.

“You meet friends and get competences from engaging with other people. This also strengthens associations that have difficulties in recruiting new members and leaders”, says Jenny Österlind, working for closer cooperation between the Community and the NGOs.

Last year the Culture and Sports Department in Trelleborg received 1 million SEK to support efforts to make sports more equal. This year other five associations will work with basically the same concept.



A BEACH IN LIEPĀJA

FOR ALL

by Elina Tolmacova | elina.tolmacova@dome.liepaja.lv

Beach Accessibility Complex (BAC) for People with disabilities is such a first innovation in Latvia and only Liepāja has a beach where visually impaired people can enjoy the sea. Innovations implemented in Liepāja helped people who did not have this possibility to use the beach earlier.

BAC works during the summer season from 15 May until 15 September and all the services are free of charge.

BAC includes:

- 3 sanitary modules with a changing room and a facility with shower and toilet, which are specifically adapted for visually impaired persons and those with movement disorders;
- 2 swimming wheelchairs (to be used by persons with movement disorders, accompanied by assistants);
- Audio buoys (to be used by visually impaired persons, accompanied by assistants);
- A wooden plank path in order to reach the sea;
- A tactile map, installed for visually impaired persons in order to understand location of the complex;
- It is not allowed to use the complex without assistance - 2 companions - assistants are working on site.

Also, the complex provides a diaper-changing pad. Training for the personnel was provided. Some assistants are also people with disabilities.

Main stakeholders of BAC are: the Municipality of Liepāja - financing and coordinating the project, supervising BAC and the NGO "Liepāja A Society of Blinds" - project idea and participating in the project; since 2014 providing companions - assistants and ensuring management of BAC during the working season.

During the first season 350 participants visited it, but during the third season already 1145 persons enjoyed the possibilities of BAC.

Each season the closing event is organized. The aim behind it is to discuss problems and good things about BAC, to get feedback and ideas for further development. BAC was developed with the Latvia - Lithuania Cross Border cooperation programme 2008-2014 project "My Social Responsibility". The total amount of the project was ~ 124 000 EUR, of which 85 % was provided by the ERDF, 5 % from the national budget and 10 % from the municipal budget. After the project implementation the municipality provides 10 000 EUR per season for the work of BAC.

Main conclusions from the project - listen to the target group, talk to them and find things, which can be implemented together. Involve them in the implementation.



WANTED:

SMART PUBLIC SERVICES

by Anri Niskala | anri.niskala@turku.fi



Voluntary work, engaging in associations and organizational activities, contacting city officials and taking part in parental meetings in schools and kindergartens are considered by the Finns the best ways to influence. All in all, people wish to actively engage in matters relating directly to themselves. Civic forums and grass roots level influencing are extremely popular, and social media gives a quick voice to large crowds.

A novelty in the City of Turku have been the 350 cultivation crates that the city gave the residents to be placed in parks and other public places around the city. The enormously enthusiastic welcome took the city officials by surprise. In late September the cultivators came together for a harvest feast – this demonstrates a true sense of community.

Wisdom resides in- and outside the office

My job in the City of Turku is to advance open participation and influencing, based on the principle that not all wisdom resides in the minds of the officials. Therefore, the residents need to be heard in issues such as developing health care services or interacting with the city's office-holders.

It is my strong belief that far more issues should in fact be organised and developed together with the city's residents. All in all, closer cooperation, proactive communication and interaction between the city's residents and officials are needed.

What does open participation mean?

Open participation equals to openness, interaction, communication and cooperation. In the end it comes down to how we use tax revenue wisely and if we see residents' contentment and energy as an asset. Turku works to improve ser-



There are seven influence groups in Turku that residents can contact regarding matters affecting them: the Turku Children's Parliament (in the photo), the Youth Council, the Disability Council, the Council of Senior Citizens, the Multicultural Council, the Equality Committee and the Parliament of Sports Clubs.

vices together with its residents: resident surveys and events, workshops, walks, co-planning, influence and sparing groups and resident panels are already being organized.

The idea of genuinely being interested in what people have to say challenges our old operational principles and practices. Next to the expertise of the officials, we now have the experts of their everyday lives – the city's residents. A city alone is not able to take care of everything. Instead, we need the businesses, organisations and associations to help out in the work.

How to use tax revenue sensibly?

By enabling open participation, we are also enabling satisfied residents and smart ways of producing public services – and savings for the city. A crucial question to ask ourselves is "Are we doing the right things?" In the end, open participation is all about making compromises and finding common ground.

In the title of my text I am calling for smart services through cooperation and networking as well as new ways of interacting. So please send your ideas, questions and comments to anri.niskala@turku.fi or in Twitter @anriniskala.

Looking forward to participating openly with you all!



A CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INTEGRATION

by Magdalena Prusinowska | m.prusinowska@um.slupsk.pl

Since this summer, Słupsk has a new instrument in its social inclusion toolbox – the Centre for Social Integration. The centre was founded on the idea that groups vulnerable to exclusion (e.g. the unemployed, homeless, people with history of mental illness and substance abuse) require active support in order to fully participate in the local community and working life.

The centre is run by the Horizon Association which is a local NGO experienced in addressing issues of homelessness and social exclusion. The participants of the project are provided with a diverse choice of workshops:

- construction and renovation;
- care and cleaning – including taking care for dependent persons;
- groundskeeping and maintenance;
- production, sales and services – work reintegration takes place in local companies.

The individual programme lasts 1 year (maximum 18 months) with 6 hours of training daily. Participants have access to a job consultant and other professionals supporting the process of reintegration.

After finishing the programme the beneficiaries can enter the job market through supported employment schemes. Employers can also benefit from employing the centre's graduates as they can receive a partial refund for their salary during first 12 months.

The project was created in partnership with the city of Słupsk, the Municipal Family Support Centre in Słupsk, the Horizon Association and the District Employment Agency in Słupsk; and received funding from the Regional Operational Programme for the Pomeranian Voivodeship 2014 – 2020.

The Horizon Association encourages all parties interested in learning more about the project and in collaboration to contact the manager, Monika Zenik at m.zenik@horyzont.slupsk.pl.

SENIORS' CALL CENTRE

by Andris Izinkēvičs | andris.izinkevics@riga.lv

At the end of 2015 the survey "Seniors and voluntary activities" was conducted within the framework of the project "Let us be active! – Social inclusion of older people through volunteering in Estonia, Latvia and Finland" (CB85).

In total, there were three hundred 60-year old and older residents of Riga interviewed. The survey results showed that only 4.4 % of Riga seniors were involved in voluntary activities, whereas in Turku, Finland, 1/3 of seniors were already active.

Thus, taking into consideration the growing tendency in Europe for senior people to be socially active by participating in voluntary work, and the results of the survey, Riga had to address the problem of social exclusion and make information on volunteering options more accessible for seniors.

Consequently, a volunteer call centre for seniors was set up in February 2016. It is managed by senior volunteers. There are three volunteers working for four hours in the call centre every weekday. They provide information about voluntary work options and leisure time activities, social issues or simply chat with those who feel neglected and lonely.

Since the launch of the call centre, there have been about 1040 calls registered. 70 dedicated seniors have been involved.

The volunteer call centre has turned out to be a place where volunteers come with pleasure. Janina from the Federation of Latvian Retired Persons is happy to be a volunteer in the call centre: "I feel good because I see that I can help others just with a word".

Within the framework of this project, the call centre will be operating in Riga by the end of November and it is expected that the number of seniors engaged in the call centre will grow to 100. In order to activate older people in senior volunteering and to promote volunteer movement, Riga is currently examining the means and ways to continue operation of the call centre also after the project completion.



Photo: City Hall of Słupsk



Photo: Johan-Kristjan Konovalov

CITIZENS

INVOLVED

by Krista Kull | krista.kull@viljandi.ee

Participatory budgeting is a process of democratic deliberation and decision-making, and a type of participatory democracy, in which people decide how to allocate a part of municipal or public money. Participatory budgeting allows citizens to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending projects, and gives them the power to make real decisions about how the money is spent.

For the third year the city of Viljandi has invited its citizens to participate in the decision-making on how to spend 30,000 EUR to improve the town's life. The main procedure is as follows. One should name the idea and add its short description. There should be a description of the target group and a possible time schedule. The proposal and possible investments should be completed during the next 12 months. The budget and estimated costs of the project idea play an important role. All kind of additional information, projects, and photos add a value.

It is very important to notice that everybody can make proposals, but only citizens of Viljandi can later vote.

The call for ideas was open until the end of September. There is a special web page where people can present the projects and propose concrete ideas. There are several commissions who read through these proposals and 10 best ideas are presented to the citizens of Viljandi. Voting is electronic or written and takes place until 4 November. The winner needs to gather at least 200 votes.

After two years of experience, it is clear that participatory budget is taken seriously and bases on mutual trust. The local government and citizens can benefit equally. Participatory budget has the potential to ensure social inclusion and equity in the decision making on the allocation of resources in communities. Participatory budgeting allows citizens to deliberate with the goal of citywide budget, not just with the allocation of resources for their particular neighbourhood. Two renowned projects resulted from the successful participatory budget – the renovated Uueveski staircase and neat and tidy Paala lakeside.

by Eva Kams,
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DESIGNING THE URBAN SPACE

Every citizen has an important role in the development of a town. It is difficult to involve citizens, because most of the inhabitants are inactive and the percentage of involved people is rather low. Participatory budgeting (PB) has been used as an opportunity to involve the whole community.

Citizens can submit proposals on how the municipality should use budget capital investments. This year it will be already the third time when such inclusiveness takes place. The sum of PB is 10,000 EUR. The submitted ideas have primarily concerned the city space. The winner projects have been so far: developing the sports facilities, placing tribunes at the town stadium, an outdoor gym (exercise devices) in the forest park.

The second step of involving the community is the active participating in the processes of detail planning. Majority of people who give their opinions are the citizens that live close to the place, which is being discussed, and in the perspective, the vigorous opposition may hinder city's development. There are no restaurants in Elva. The hotels and offices do not comply with modern standards. Additionally, a shopping centre is outdated.

Elva's Consumers Cooperative has launched a noteworthy project that concerns cityscape. The company would like to invest ca 4 million EUR into a shopping centre, which is rather unusual for a small town. The problem is that residents were truly against Elva City Council's decision to launch the detail planning, even though they had not yet even completed the draft of the detail planning. After the petitions, the city government arranged a meeting to explain the stages of detail planning process to the citizens. The local media were involved in the process, too. City government has planned to involve interest groups in the open-meetings.

Usually the most problematic is that people, who agree for and approve the changes in city space, are not eager to speak up. In this way, many excellent ideas can remain unrealized because of the confrontation of the marginal interest group. For the city's development, a broad involvement of citizens has a remarkable importance. A key issue for city government is how to ascertain the opinion of the whole community.

IT IS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE



by Toril Hogstad | toril.hogstad@kristiansand.kommune.no
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Scandinavian countries are often praised for their democratic approach and sense of equality. But still, it takes an effort to promote equality and social inclusion within these countries. This also refers to Kristiansand. Its 'Strategy for equality, inclusion and diversity' is all about people.

The document was unanimously adopted by the City Council last year. Kristiansand regards equality and social inclusion as a premise to being a safe and healthy city. The strategy aims to secure joint actions towards a more just city, and is as such an important tool in reaching the challenges of social or economic inequalities.

In Kristiansand, equality implies that everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, functional ability, sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity, has the opportunity to participate in the community on equal terms and to fully benefit from its resources.

A significant part of work equality and social inclusion has been devoted to gender equality. In recent years, sexual orientation, gender expression or gender identity have presented themselves as issues that demand special attention.

Statistics presented by the Norwegian National Centre for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression show that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans people (LGBT) more often report to have poor mental health and some show signs of marginalization.

LGBT people are also at risk of experiencing discriminating behaviour at school, at the work place, in their families and in the public realm. There are few statistics available on the local level on the living conditions and health in the LGBT pop-

ulation in Kristiansand. As a consequence, the City Council's Executive Committee has decided to carry out a survey on living conditions among the LGBT population. The survey is meant to lay the grounds for further action among LGBT people and initially create greater awareness on how to promote equality, safety and good mental health in the target group.

In August, the conference was organised during which LGBT people, service providers, researchers and others had provided a valuable input. Inputs from the relevant groups will be taken into account in the further process towards carrying out the survey. This will ensure results that are useful in the municipality's next actions for better public health in the city.





PREVENTING

EXCLUSION

by Cina Kedvall | cina.kedvall@gavle.se

One way of preventing exclusion is to invite NGOs to collaborate with the municipality. This method has been successfully implemented by the Care Management Department in Gävle, for a couple of years. There is plenty of space for support that cannot be provided by the municipality itself.

Churches, sport clubs and immigrant associations are examples of partners that are invited for collaboration. They get a chance to influence municipal work, disseminate information and enrich their own organizations. They form opinions and help the municipality build up new networks.

Meeting points for seniors is one important activity where seniors are involved in planning and implementing. The interest driven activities help create conditions for a good life for seniors. Cooperation with established businesses, organizations and private actors ensure future development.

Volunteer in Gävle is a service, which recruits, and trains people who want to act as volunteers for various activities. A very positive side effect of volunteering is the opportunity for young people to meet the older generation. Through the collaboration with NGOs, we help each other to find volunteers for those in need.

Carers' support centre is an activity for relatives who care for a loved one: children, adolescents, adults or elderly. The ones who take care of a loved one can get support, advice and counselling at the centre. Relatives' organizations provide advice to the municipality, which leads to improved services. The Carers' support centre facilitates the life situation and contributes to better life quality - for both the carer and the one who is in need.

Cina Kedvall, responsible for the Volunteer Service in Gävle.



“We work with constant development and measurable results. A salutogenic approach permeates all activities. The employees are committed and competent and we have a low staff turnover. Everybody has a high sense of responsibility towards each other and the business. In everything we do, we strongly focus on “a customer” needs and individually tailored solutions. We are confident that our work leads to reduced social costs for the municipality and to increased sense of citizen participation. When you feel that you are needed and that your thoughts are taken seriously, then you feel good. We build democracy”.

NGO FOR THE CITIZENS

by Vladimir Vshivtsev | vovav@akkesport.net

Narva's NGOs fulfil goals and dreams of their creative citizens. They unite people around one issue and add to businesses' status. NGOs are active in the fields of sports, theatre, pets, social and community work.

Narva's support to NGOs comes in the form of co-financing the projects, activities and events. Partial funding allows them to be more active in searching for the remaining funds for their projects.

There is a rich social life in Narva thanks to NGOs. People become more united in the community, spend free time together or get employment. Non-governmental activities make the economic component of the city more diverse through attracting tourism and making local services more popular.

With no conditions for practicing sports such as cross country skiing and biathlon in Narva, there were many citizens of various age groups who were interested in sports. One of the most popular places in Narva is „Äkkeküla“, which was set up by a NGO (sports club) and designed for active outdoor pastime. Äkkeküla sporting and ecological trails originated from the need of creating favourable conditions for outdoor activities and Narva's long traditions of ski events. In translation Äkkeküla means a nuts' mountain - it is the highest point in Narva and here you are always in harmony with nature.

From an abandoned part of the city, Äkkeküla becomes a mecca of outdoor activities. On a small area there are gymnastic grounds, disc golf areas, places to grill, and lighted trails for all seasons: running, Nordic walking and skiing in winter. In Äkkeküla a biathlon section works. There is a rich and varied calendar of events starting from health and national sports to end up with competitions of the highest skill. Äkkeküla is also popular for interactive lessons on local history, biology and geography.



GOOD

LIFE IN PALANGA

by Robertas Trautmanas | robertas.trautmanas@palanga.lt

Palanga is developing very rapidly as a resort – both in the field of infrastructure and reducing social and economic differences. In 2015, 15,379 residents were registered in Palanga, 2,706 out of which belonged to the youth group (aged 14–29). Compared to other social groups, the number of young people in Palanga is small, that is why the aim is to create the necessary conditions for young people to actively participate in addressing relevant issues on a municipal level.

Through various projects it is possible to satisfy the needs of different social groups. Support is also provided to informal group initiatives. There is also a close cooperation between Palanga Department of Klaipėda Territorial Labour Exchange, Education Support Service, Palanga Culture and Youth Centre, Social Services Centre, Sports Centre and other institutions.

As many as 7 youth NGOs operate in Palanga, and more than 10 other NGOs are active in their endeavours. Concert Hall, Kurhaus, Cultural Centre “Ramybė”, Music Club “Vandenis”, “Ramybė” art gallery and Palanga Public Library are the cultural areas offering free events and carrying out social projects that attract both younger and older residents, as well as visitors.

The public work programme, carried out in the town, provides opportunities for the unemployed and others who are looking for temporary work. All social groups, regardless of their age, are invited to express their opinions, provide reasoned comments and solutions to the raised issues.

Undoubtedly, the currently developed open space for youth will also become another place where ideas will be realized by the community members. A lot of attention is to satisfy the interests of social groups that have special needs – the renewed town's infrastructure and reconstructed or newly built public buildings are adapted to the needs of the disabled. Opportunities are provided for persons with impaired mobility to have access to the beach – by installing special paths and wooden observation platforms. Improved infrastructure also improves the quality of life of the town's residents.

UBC NEWS & FACES



The UBC Board met in Kaunas

by UBC Secretariat | info@ubc.net

The Agenda covered the following issues: the follow-up of the refugees' integration, youth employment and well-being, UBC's involvement in the EU Strategy for the BSR.

One of the main issues the UBC has been dealing with in 2016 is how to integrate the refugees. Our previous bulletin was devoted to the topic 'Refugees – a chance and a challenge for the Baltic Cities'. In March 2016 the UBC conference on the refugees' situation in the Baltic Sea cities was held in Rostock. The Presidium created a Task Force, led by the city of Rostock, to follow up the results of the conference and to promote exchange of experiences between the member cities. The TF meeting chaired by Karin Wohlgemuth was held on the eve of the Kaunas Board meeting. Matti Mäkelä, Turku, introduced the UBC Work Plan to Support Youth Employment and Well-Being, containing e.g. thematic workshops on refugees' guidance, public private sector cooperation for employing youngsters.

Margita Navickaitė, Kaunas, Youthful Cities, informed about youth leisure time as one of the instruments that prevented social and economic exclusion. Mara Liepa, Riga, Planning Cities, showed the presentation on developing an integrated and attractive urban entrance to the town centre on the example of Söderhamn. Jarosław Józefczyk, Inclusive & Healthy Cities, presented the concept of Open Social Spaces – where citizens could work and play together, and discuss matters important to the community.

Mikko Lohikoski, Strategy Coordinator informed about UBC's involvement in the EU Strategy for the BSR. UBC is one of the co-ordinators of the Horizontal Action "Capacity" along with

the Baltic Sea NGO Network and the Swedish Institute. At the next Strategy Forum to be held in Stockholm on 8–9 November 2016, UBC will organize a seminar on the role of cities and regions in the Baltic Sea co-operation, and co-organize the seminar on growth and jobs from the youth perspective.

The Board was also informed about the SI Baltic Executive Programme "Unboxing the sandbox" – a leadership programme designed to help organizations unlock the full potential of transnational co-operation.

The Board appointed the Task Force for implementing the UBC Strategy 2016–2021 and preparing the programme of the XIV General Conference, Växjö, 2017.

The City of Darłowo, Poland, was welcomed as the UBC's new member.



UBC Attractive Cities 2016

by Wolfgang Schmidt | wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de

“The UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission seminar on Attractive Cities held on 21–22 September 2016 in Hamburg was a great success”, Wolfgang Schmidt, Chairman of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, says.

More than 50 participants from nearly all countries of the Baltic Sea Region joined a free executive seminar on talent management and place promotion, run by northern Europe’s # 1 place marketing consultant firm. They had a chance to experience designxport – the City of Hamburg’s exhibition and event center for current design. The secret of success of the Hamburg strategy and brand management was uncovered. Modernity means gender equality. This was brought up by the gender equality officer of the Commission, Toril Hogstad from Kristiansand. She showed that gender equality is a potential for cities in the Baltic Sea Region.

Also, the participants have learned from an international executive consultant about executive search, HR consulting and business coaching. They met practitioner from Hamburg Kreativ Gesellschaft, the municipal institution to promote Hamburg’s creative industries.

Talent management and place promotion – Executive Seminar

The war for talent is currently the hottest topic in Europe and the world. Tendensor, northern Europe’s # 1 place marketing consultant firm provided a comprehensive insight into talent management and place promotion.

Regions and cities of today need to be able to attract a broad portfolio of investments – from more traditional green field establishments to smart capital, start-ups and entrepreneurs. But traditional investment promotion has proven less effective in the knowledge and innovation driven economy.

The Commission’s meeting was held in connection with the Fehmarnbelt Days – an open forum for stakeholders (including the interested public) from all over the emerging Fehmarnbelt Region and beyond to exchange ideas and experiences, to discuss key issues and further cross-border collaboration.



Wide commitment is needed for gender equality

by Hanna Maidell | hanna.maidell@hel.fi
Małgorzata Tarasiewicz | tarasiewicz@neww.org.pl

In 2016 CEMR Declaration – European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life has its 10th Anniversary. “The capacity building in understanding the European wide commitment to gender equality is needed”, Małgorzata Tarasiewicz, coordinator of the UBC Gender Working Group, says. The WG is going to work towards getting the cities to sign the declaration and to make action plans and present them at the next UBC General Conference.

This was a conclusion of the WG meeting in Gdańsk on 22–23 June 2016. The participants agreed the most relevant articles of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life should be promoted for the adoption by UBC member cities. A good opportunity for this could be a planned conference in March 2017 in Gdańsk, devoted to the Charter.

Also, all participants decided that the UBC report “Women and men in the UBC 2013” needs updating: the report aims to be a tool for other Commissions in their work with gender equality and also a knowledge base for cities around the Baltic Sea.

The 3rd meeting in 2016 of the Gender Equality Working Group will be held in Stockholm, in conjunction with the 7th Annual Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region “One Region, One Future – Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region”, 8–9 November 2016.

The participants will focus this time on agenda 2017. How to promote gender perspective at the UBC General Conference in Växjö? How to increase Gender Equality Working Group visibility within and outside the organization? Also, the preliminary program of the conference with CEMR/European Charter in spring 2017 in Gdańsk will be discussed.



UBC promotes involvement in the Baltic Sea co-operation



by Mikko Lohikoski
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The European Union member states have nominated the Union of the Baltic Cities to serve as a Horizontal Action Coordinator (HAC) in the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). We share this function together with the Swedish Institute (SI) and the Baltic Sea NGO Network.

What does this joint responsibility for Horizontal Action Capacity (HA Capacity) mean in practice?

In essence, the HA Capacity has two main tasks:

Firstly, to build capacity among present and potential participants so that they can effectively participate in the implementation of the EUSBSR Action Plan and its main goals – Saving the Sea, Connecting the Region and Increasing Prosperity. Secondly, to promote involvement and participation of all kinds of actors in joint implementation of the goals of EUSBSR.

This action is called “horizontal” as it cuts through all the thematic policy areas of the Action Plan, such as environment, culture, education, health etc. In other words, our goal is to ensure, that not only governmental representatives, but cities, regions, business representatives, NGOs, universities, researchers etc. on all levels – pan-Baltic, national and local – participate in the implementation of the Strategy.

Why is this crucial?

The EU Strategy, though adopted by the EU and the Member States, is not and should not be something “cooked together” in Brussels, but is the blueprint of our common priorities in the Baltic Sea Region. The main goals of the Strategy are formulated by us, who inhabit the Baltic Sea Region – they are our common priorities, not something “imposed by Brussels”.

We know that these goals can be achieved only by involving all potential partners in our joint work – from European Union structures to member States, neighbouring states such as Russia, Belarus, Norway and Iceland, pan-Baltic organizations such as UBC to member cities, fishing and sailing clubs to schools and individuals. And it is crucial that we, who live in this region, feel “the ownership” – that we are recognized partners in shaping and implementing the Strategy – our own roadmap to a better future.

The recent signs of deep mistrust of “Brussels” in many countries increases the importance of working regionally, through macro-regional strategies.

Why UBC?

UBC, with its long and successful track record, is a valued partner in the Baltic Sea co-operation since 25 years. We do not only debate issues but also implement things that matter, especially through our Commissions.

The new UBC Strategic Framework 2016–2021, adopted in Gdynia 2015, states that the EUSBSR and its Action Plan are “the key framework in our regional work”. Our goal is to ensure not only that UBC cities, but also other cities and regional authorities and stakeholders see the value of co-operating within the EUSBSR framework to achieve concrete results.

Thus, nomination of UBC is both a recognition to our work and a commitment to continue it. We invite all to join us in this important work!

New cultures of education

by Jaana Simula | jaana.simula@pori.fi

In the end of September 2016 the joint seminar of UBC Commissions Youthful Cities and Cultural Cities called "New Cultures of Education" was held in Turku, Finland.

During two intense days we focused on different connections between culture, education and new technologies. The presentations' topics were about interaction design and citizens space, game designing in museum, the new core curriculum of Finnish schools, learning through experiences, e-sport activities with youth, the Art & Craft School Ropotti and functional art for a sculpture park made in interaction with users, politicians and artists.

After the presentations on-site study visits were made to the main library of Turku and the museum AboaVetus & ArsNova. Both institutions are very keenly using new technical tools in an interactive way in their audience work with children and youth.

The study visits were rounded up with Wimma, the main youth centre in Turku.

The second day was already an introduction to one of the Cultural Cities Commissions seminars in making with a working title Dislocation of Culture. We want to explore new venues, co-operation possibilities and how to locate culture when our permanent venues are under reconstruction and out of our use. Logomo in Turku is a former railway locomotive engineering workshop area now turned into a blooming cultural event arena, conference centre and premises for creative businesses.

The seminar was fruitful as co-operation ideas were born in the field of new media education and film. Also, the new Finnish national education plan with the phenomenal based education boosted a vivid discussion.

Based on the study visits, the seminar showed how coding and libraries, gaming and museums connect, how cultural institutions work together with schools and educators.



The UBC youth discusses about life online

by Lena Hernandez Modin | lena.hernandez_modin@gavle.se

In October 2016 the UBC Youthful Cities Commission holds its second meeting this year in Elva. The main topic of the meeting is "Life online", a current and important topic for all of us in our everyday life, in school, work and in private.

The Mayor of Elva, Mrs Eva Kams says: "Almost any activity can be performed in the Internet. In general, lives in the whole world have moved to online and social networks. It has both good and bad effects in our lives".

We work in groups on various sub-themes related to life online and probably extend the topic also to the next meeting in April 2017 in Gävle (the chair city of the Youthful Cities Commission).

The meetings usually start with a presentation about the UBC to remind about the Commission's involvement in a wider context. Also, the Commission and its work is presented to participants and newcomers, too.

The next youth conference to take place during the UBC General Conference in Växjö 2017 is planned. The Youthful Cities Commission is commissioned by the UBC to bring a youth perspective to the General Assembly. Usually, the youth conferences gather around 60 – 100 youth and leaders every second year. The Commission's members also meet the Mayor of Elva, Mrs. Eva Kams, see some of the scenery and visit the city of Tartu.

On 8 November the Youthful Cities Commission is invited to attend to the EU Strategy Forum, "One Region, One Future – Vision 2030 for the Baltic Sea Region", in Stockholm with youth representatives at the seminar "Nothing about us, without us – sustainable and a green future and prosperity, growth and jobs from a youth perspective".

The youth representatives come from Denmark, Poland and Sweden. UBC and the Youthful Cities Commission are invited by BSSSC (Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation). The seminar is co-organised by BSSSC, UBC and Euroregion Baltic.



Nature in urban planning

Mariia Andreeva | mariia.andreeva@turku.fi

How does your city apply the Article 6 of the Habitats Directive? What kind of Storm Water solutions and challenges does your city have, and how to combine NATURA 2000 into urban planning?

These and other questions are answered during the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission Meeting, being held on 12–14 October in Jelgava, Latvia. The meeting focuses on two topics: the NATURA 2000 initiative in the context of smart urban planning and Integrated Storm Water Management in the Baltic cities.

The central idea on the agenda of the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission is smart urban planning in its relation to the projects represented in the programme. On the first day, the discussion mainly focuses on NATURA 2000 sites, their protection and development.

Participants visit one of such nature reserves in Jelgava: the site covers over 352 ha hosting meadows, protected plants and animals. Afterwards, time is reserved for comments and peer review: attendants can share best practices, discuss common challenges and together look for suitable solutions.

The programme of the second day features the iWater project, which highlights Integrated Storm Water Management. This project has been launched to solve one of the climate change challenges in the Baltic Sea Region – more frequent and intense storms and rainfall affecting the cities.

The representatives of the City of Turku introduce the iWater's approach to green urban infrastructure and planning. Interactive group work follows the presentation to emphasize particular challenges and share best practices of the region.

UBC member cities actively contribute to the discussion on implementation of the projects' initiatives by introducing their experiences. The cities of Pori and Gdańsk present local cases of combining NATURA 2000 and urban development.

More at:

<http://www.ubc-sustainable.net/events/register-ubc-scc-commission-meeting>;

iWater website: <http://www.integratedstormwater.eu>





Well-being on the agenda

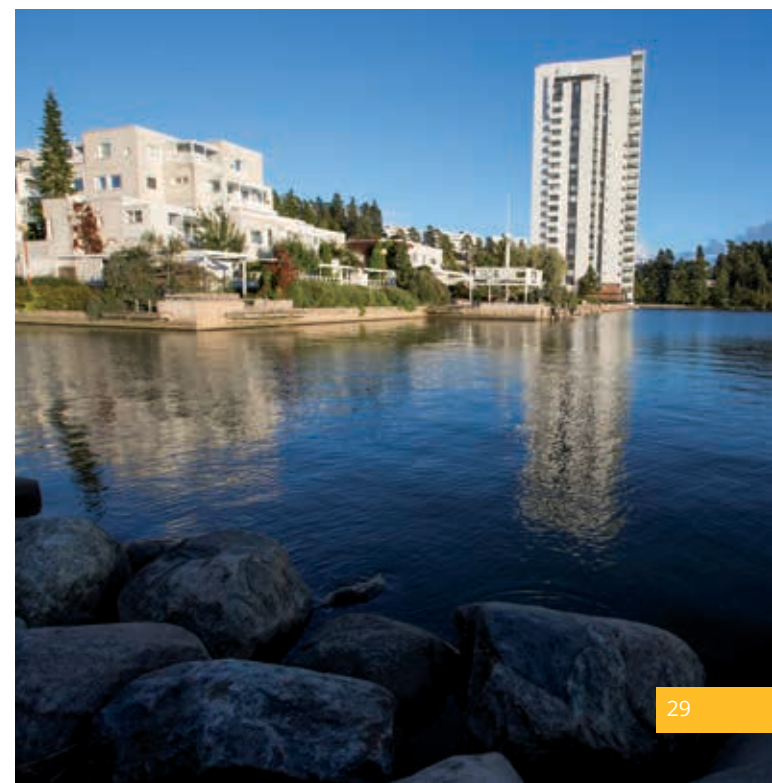
by Annika Forstén | annika.forsten@espoo.fi

The Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission gathers in Espoo, Finland, on 26–28 October 2016. The meeting focuses on well-being in cities, open social spaces and the Commission's future actions.

At the meeting, Espoo showcases some of its top services and innovative initiatives. The emphasis of the study visits is on sports services for all and youth well-being. The delegates get acquainted with projects piloting cross-sectoral youth work and visit new open service venues, such as the Iso Omena Service Centre. It is a new concept aiming at making everyday services easier. The centre includes a library, youth services, a wide range of social and health services, a citizen service office, as well as a meeting place for art and culture. Also, the welfare of elderly will be on the agenda.

The study visits support the discussion on well-being in cities and open social spaces. The delegates also elect Chair and Co-Chair for 2017, plan future tasks and zero in on the Commission's communication work.

Espoo nature is an astonishing experience. Here you'll find 58 kilometers of seashore, 165 islands and 95 lakes to enjoy, alongside the beautiful National Park Nuukio. The city has a vibrant cultural and sports life, top-quality educational institutions and an innovative and international business and research hub.



Rediscovering water in the city

by Niels-Peter Mohr | npm@aarhus.dk

Klaipėda and the Planning Cities Commission have joined forces to hold a workshop in October 2016. Three locations are in focus and the suggestions from the participants are to be presented to the local politicians, local planners and the press.

In Lithuania, Klaipėda is one of the most important rapidly developing metropolitan centres and the only industrial port. The city possesses a huge recreational potential, since part of the city's territory – Smiltynė – is in the Curonian Spit National Park, the UNESCO's protected natural heritage site.

The functional structure of the city was formed in such a way that the port, located on the shores of the Curonian bay, blocks the city both from the Curonian waterfront, and the Curonian Isthmus territory. Such a location makes utilization of the city's recreational possibilities worse and deteriorates chances to develop the uniqueness of the city. There is no access to the water. Public spaces are scarce and there are few marinas for pleasure vessels.

Klaipėda is a linear city. Major centres are located in one axis. There is a great reserve of the current territories within Klaipėda's administrative boundaries, which can be converted to new uses.

There is lack of functional and visual relations between the city and the Curonian Spit National Park. The central zone of Klaipėda has a structure of regular plan quarters with clearly expressed public spaces and the isolated from them private ones. Building up is of a clear perimeter type.

The Planning Cities Commission holds workshops once or twice a year in different cities. At the moment, there are no fixed appointments for the next two years. Interested cities are asked to contact the Commission.



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UBC – 25 years of co-operating and communicating

On 19–20 September 1991, the Union of the Baltic Cities held its founding conference in Gdańsk. Since then a great deal has changed in the world and the Baltic Sea Region, yet likewise many of the founding principles of the UBC have remained current. In today’s world it is equally if not even more important to build bridges between nations and regions and to find common ground as well as new innovations.

One way of realising this is developing the ways in which we communicate, interact and co-operate with each other online. Last spring, the UBC took another step forward by launching the new UBC website at www.ubc.net. So far the feedback has been very positive, but we would very much appreciate even more comments and ideas for further improvement.

During the autumn we are continuing with the website development and transferring information from the old website as well as applying the new visual look of the UBC in various applications, such as the general brochure.

Happy 25th Jubilee to all UBC Member Cities – let’s keep on working together for safe, smart and sustainable cities in the Baltic Sea Region!

Mr Anders Engström served as UBC President for 10 years, since the Union foundation in 1991 till 2001. President Engström substantially contributed to the development of the Union of the Baltic Cities.



Brownfield regeneration

by Henri Saarinen | www.balticurbanlab.eu

Coordinated by the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, Baltic Urban Lab is one of the major projects, co-funded by the INTERREG Central Baltic Programme between October 2015–end of 2018. The project aims at improving urban planning in brownfield regeneration to help cities revitalize urban space. New methods for integrated planning and partnership models are tested in four cities of the region: Norrköping, Riga, Tallinn and Turku.

During the first project meeting held in September in Stockholm, the city partners presented action plans for their pilot activities, which highlighted the ways of engaging citizens in the planning process.

Norrköping’s Inner Harbour pilot site is a heavily contaminated former industrial area, presently being revamped into a residential area. One of Norrköping’s challenges is to communicate the dangers of contaminated soil to people and private stakeholders, and the interventions that need to be done for soil remediation. For this, the Swedish city will develop a visualization tool that is both informative and interactive.

Riga’s pilot site Mūkusalas street is a former harbour area on the banks of the river Daugava. The core aim of Riga’s action plan is to test new methods and approaches for land allocation competitions and land-use contracts with the private sector, and to bring together different stakeholders to produce innovative ideas and solutions for the revitalization process management models.

Tallinn’s pilot site Skoone Activity Belt is an underused centrally located brownfield area in the Estonian capital. Tallinn plans, in cooperation with other stakeholders to create and test a public participation app, as well as to draft a development vision for the area.

Turku’s pilot site is an underused industrial area located in the Itäharju district. Turku’s first steps are to build networks with the key actors interested in developing the area such as land owners, universities and developers. Inhabitants will also be involved in the planned workshops.





UBC sets new goals for supporting youth employment and well-being



by Matti Mäkelä
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In October 2013, the UBC General Conference decided to establish the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being. The Task Force presented its final report during the next general conference in Gdynia, Poland, in October 2015. The final report called *The Good, The Bad and The Next Practices* was based on the idea of seeking answers to three basic questions: why?, where?, what?

The Task Force suggested that UBC and the member cities should be active in dissemination of the best practices collected by the TF. Moreover, UBC should encourage implementation of the new projects and other forms of joint development among the UBC cities.

UBC decided in Gdynia to disseminate the final report widely in EU and also to make a new working plan for the future. The report received a warm reception. It was presented in various seminars, workshops and meetings around Europe during the past twelve months.

A new agenda for the Task Force was set in UBC Board meeting in June 2016 in Kaunas, Lithuania. The agenda included the following measures:

- **co-operation within the UBC,**
- **joint projects,**
- **follow-up survey on the implementation of the Youth Employment and Well-Being Programme,**
- **workshops and seminars.**

Implementation of the new work plan has started well. For instance, UBC cities have developed new forms of co-operation with the Baltic Sea Flagship projects and also started to plan new projects together. Also, simultaneously with the writing of this article the planning of the Mentoring and Support for the refugee youngsters projects are in progress.

The Task Force conducted an online survey about the implementation of the Youth Employment and Well-Being Programme in early autumn 2015. The overall picture that emerged from the survey was mostly positive, but with some important caveats. Guidance and support measures and co-operation between different actors received mostly positive marks, and the general consensus was that in both areas things had been moving in a positive direction. When it comes to special groups such as immigrant youth and youth in need of special support, the picture was much bleaker. A new survey will be conducted 2017 to make sure that we are still moving in the right direction.

The next step for the Task Force is One Region – One Future seminar in Stockholm next November, where the results of the work will be widely disseminated. Moreover, UBC plans to arrange European-wide Youth Employment and Youth Guarantee seminar in January or February 2017.

CITY NEWS



Photo: Kerly Ilves

UBC WELCOMES DARŁOWO!

Darłowo, a coastal town located in the northwestern part of Poland, with around 14.000 inhabitants joined the UBC in June 2016.

During its 700 years history, the town was a residence of the West Pomeranian princes, a birth place of Eric of Pomerania, the king of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, a witness of wars, fires and hurricanes.

Darłowo is well-known for its port. Its renovation and expansion in recent years has made it an important commercial and tourist port. Being one of the ports on the West Pomeranian Sailing Route, it is a perfect place for yachting globetrotters who, above all, enjoy wind, water and sails. At the eastern waterfront, the sailors will find a safe haven and a modern, hospitable marina.

Also, Darłowo is one of the biggest fishing centres in Poland. Daily activities of fishermen are here attracting passers-by. Fish sold straight from the side, repairing fishing nets, fish auction taking place on board, gutting fish purchased on the customer's request, the smell of fried delicacies served on the Baltic or heat smoked sprat is a daily picture of the port.

The town is also a popular tourist destination. More than six kilometers of wide, sandy beaches, exceptional microclimate with high levels of iodine and unique neighborhood of two Baltic lakes – this is what makes Darłowo a unique resort. Its beautiful sandy beaches and numerous cultural events attract thousands of tourists every year.

by Krzysztof Walkow | walkow@darlowo.pl



Photo: T. Keller

A CONSTRUCTION OF SMART CITY DISTRICT

Tartu is taking part in a major European project entitled 'SmartEnCity', as a result of which around 20 Soviet-era apartment blocks will become an energy-saving city district operating on smart solutions.

"The aim is to renovate these old apartment blocks in such a way that they become near-zero energy buildings," explained Project Manager Raimond Tamm. "Their average energy consumption should be reduced three-fold, to 90 kWh per square metre per year."

Solar panels will be installed on the roofs, enabling their electricity needs to be partly covered by renewable energy generated on site. A number of other innovative solutions will be employed in modernising the buildings, including wireless home management solutions.

"It's likely to take around a year to put the renovation projects together, and the renovation work itself is planned to be completed by the end of 2018," said Tamm.

The project funding will cover around a third of the cost of renovation work, with the apartment associations having to cover the remaining two-thirds themselves.

Although the main focus of the project is on making the residential buildings energy-efficient, its overall scope is broader. There are also plans to establish recharging stations for electric cars, to purchase electric taxis and electricity-powered hire cars and bikes and to make street lighting more efficient and smartly managed.

A number of innovative solutions have also been co-financed from the smart city district budget this year for the refrigeration plant that was completed in Tartu this spring. At the plant, which is the first remotely controlled refrigeration station of its kind in the Baltic states, electricity is produced by solar panels, while water from the nearby Emajõgi River is used in cooling.

With the SmartEnCity project Tartu will bring 8.2 million euros into Estonia, around half of which will be used for the renovation of the buildings. The project is funded from the 'Horizon 2020' EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

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GDAŃSK FOR THE GULF

Flood control, modernizing a sewage treatment plant and educational programmes are the major directions of activities undertaken by the city of Gdańsk in order to protect the waters of the Gulf of Gdańsk.

For years the flood protection has been one of the most important issues accented by the city authorities. Since the 2001 flood up to the end of last year, the city has spent nearly 374 million PLN for investments on the disposal of rainwater and flood protection.

In the years 2007–2014 Gdańsk carried out a project entitled 'Protection of the Waters of the Gulf of Gdańsk – the construction and upgrading of the rainwater drainage system in Gdańsk'. It concerned the extension and modernization of the drainage system and treatment of rain and thawed water, as well as the retention system and prevention of rainfall flooding in the area of the city of Gdańsk and the city of Pruszcz Gdański.

The second project implemented in 2009–2014 was the 'Complex flood protection of the Żuławy Lowlands - Stage I – City of Gdańsk'. It covered the reconstruction of Radunia Canal in the Gdańsk area.

During this year's downpour, the functioning of the flood protection and rainwater drainage systems in the city have been verified. Investments made since 2001 helped to mitigate the effects of torrential rainfall, which could be clearly

seen when comparing the loss in the urban infrastructure. In the current financial perspective, i.e. 2014–2020, Gdańsk intends to continue flood protection investments with the EU funding. The value of these investments is estimated at approx. 120 million PLN.

Gdańsk Water and Sewage Infrastructure company (GIWK sp. z o.o.) also takes operations and investments aiming at improving the quality of the Baltic Sea waters. The largest GIWK's investment dealt with the modernization of Waste Water Treatment Plant Gdańsk East. As a result, all the beaches within the city are open, and the level of nutrients discharged into the waters of the Gulf of Gdańsk complies not only with the EU, but also with more stringent requirements of the HELCOM Environmental Protection.

Part of the improvement activities was carried out through the company's participation in the international project PURE (Project on Urban Reduction of Eutrophication), aimed at reducing the phosphorus load entering the waters of the Baltic Sea from the urbanized areas of project partner cities.

GIWK company has been implementing for 5 years the educational programme "Closer to the sources". It aims at raising awareness among the citizens of Gdańsk as to what happens to water they have used, and how much effort has to be made so that this "dirty" water did not affect the the environment.

The 'Green Sewage Treatment Plant' project is an initiative addressed to junior high school students who come to visit the plant on site and get acquainted with the process of treating waste-water treatment.

Presently, GIWK participates in two international projects: NonHazCity and Iwama (Interactive Water Management).



PORUKKA APP ENGAGES RESIDENTS

Lahti is the first city in Finland to fully capitalize the possibilities of mobile-based resident engagement. Lahti has done this with the new and exciting Porukka application, the name of which means “crowd” or “group”.

When beginning to outline the city’s new strategy, Lahti wanted to inspire its residents to think about what type of city they wanted to live in, spend their free time, study and work. As 75 % of Finns have smartphones, Lahti decided to use a mobile application to reach out to its residents.

Porukka is an easy-to-use mobile application with aspects of gamification and real-time interaction. It was launched in January 2016. During the first 24 hours, the city got 4 000 answers. By early September, Porukka had over 2 000 users and it had generated over 150 000 answers. Furthermore, 70 % are still using the app after downloading: 1 800 residents are active users.

Gamification and ease-of-use has definitely attracted people to get involved. Porukka works as a conversation starter among users, also in social media channels. Lahti wants to create an on-going interaction relationship with its residents.

Lahti has been gathering development-related resident ideas and feedback through public hearings, idea development sessions and online surveys. As Lahti’s Head of Strategy Sirkku Huisko states: “With the Porukka-application we got a lot of ideas on how the city should be developed. It definitely brought additional value to our strategy work.”

Porukka enables a new kind of engagement culture in Lahti. It encourages and challenges both employees and residents. It has made participation fun and easy, while offering the city a chance to provide users with immediate feedback.

The app is available currently only in Finnish, for iOS and Android devices.

by Ilona Reiniharju | ilona.reiniharju@lahti.fi

Visualisation is one method of communicating the results. Here we can see what Lahti looks like in the future according to Porukka users (Graphic Designer: Jalo Toivio).



CREATIVE ARENDAL

The municipality of Arendal is participating in a national pilot project, initiated in April 2016 by the Norwegian Centre for Architecture and Design. DOGA is the national competence and communication centre for design, architecture and urban development. Its objective is to help making the Norwegian industry more competitive, reformed public sector and creating a more sustainable society.

Arendal was chosen as one of three cities dedicated to fill vacant retail space in ground floors in the city centre with life and activity. Traditional trade and service in the historical centre faces competition from internet-based commerce and trade locations outside the city centre that can offer larger area and free car parking.

That is why it is necessary to look at new innovative content to create activity and life in streets and in buildings. The project aims to achieve this in cooperation with the municipality, entrepreneurship, artistic/cultural sector, landlords and volunteers. With a strong focus on collaboration, co-creation and participation, the project has also a social focus, i.e. of making people able to participate in shaping their own lives and their own surroundings. The municipality wants the project to focus on public health, social inclusion and low threshold services.

Arendal has been working successfully on creating various meeting places with a variety of activities where people can come without paying to participate. Festivals, activities in neighbourhoods and public places, where participation of individuals and organizations is encouraged, is creating a feeling of belonging and community. There are several meeting places for people in the city, both in schools, cultural institutions and in public places. A new playground at the market place in the city centre is one example. A common information centre for the municipality, organizations and NGOs, close to the city hall (KLOA) is another.

by Elin Lunde | elin.lunde@arendal.kommune.no



THE YOUNGSTERS AND SENIORS TOGETHER

Since 2014 Riga branch of the State Employment Agency has been co-financing and organising employment of schoolchildren during summer vacations in Riga Region. The aim of this activity was to provide opportunities for schoolchildren to gain initial work experience, develop practical work skills, motivate them to learn and promote targeted career choice.

In 2016 Riga City Council took a decision to co-finance the establishment of 347 workplaces in the municipality and its municipal institutions. The schoolchildren were assigned jobs ranging from workers in the garden, project assistant, cleaning person to customer service specialist and other.

There were 30 socially responsible workplaces established in two municipal institutions – social care centre “Gaiļezers” and social care centre “Stella Maris” in which 21 and 9 schoolchildren aged 15–18 were employed, respectively.

Duties of schoolchildren involved both care assistant roles such as accompanying clients to specialists, shopping or going to the café, and organisation of leisure activities, as well as participation in social care processes (feeding, reading books, playing board games and other activities).

All these activities united these two diverse generations and allowed them to exchange views on various topics. Schoolchildren got better understanding of history, culture and the needs of older people. This experience helped them to become more socially responsible, while for seniors this opened doors to socializing by exposing themselves to younger generation with different opinions on current events in Latvia and Riga. Consequently, seniors could resume their communication skills and feel socially engaged.

The social care centres are committed to participate in similar activities also in 2017, because both the seniors and the schoolchildren have expressed their willingness to co-operate next year.

by Andris Izinkēvičs | andris.izinkevics@riga.lv



SUPPORT INSTEAD OF CARE

Last autumn, Trelleborg suddenly found itself in the middle of the refugee crisis. During ten weeks 45 000 people came to Sweden via Trelleborg to seek asylum. About ten per cent were unaccompanied minors. As a summary of the experiences gained during this period, the Labour Market Department phrased eight theses for better reception of new arrivals.

“In Trelleborg, we’ve been working since 2010 for new arrivals, as well as children and young people arriving on their own, to be viewed and dealt with just like any other competent citizen. We’ve focused on establishment rather than care; we’ve based our work on a normalisation perspective” says Cecilia Lejon, Head of the Labour Market Department.

The young person should know what he/she wants after no more than three months, and should be given information about what will be required for this goal to be reached. We do not have social welfare secretaries with a caring perspective. Instead, we have labour market assistants with skills and knowledge on what is required to join the labour market and the society at large.

We don’t believe extensive mapping or investigations to be the solution. We appraise the young person once per day based on five areas of responsibility. We involve trade and industry early on and create a backward schedule for the new Trelleborg inhabitant so that he/she knows when and how he/she should reach his/her goal.

As it is the case with so many other things, there is a main flow of new arrivals. 85 % can be expected to manage in the same way as other citizens. The 15 % that are not part of the main flow shall receive the support they need.

With a sound view, this means that all new arrivals, including unaccompanied minors, shall initially be assumed to be able and willing to contribute to their own development and to the community. They shall not be dealt with, assessed or investigated by social services. Sweden will be facing a gigantic challenge over the next few years. This requires something extraordinary from all of us – from civil servants to politicians and all authorities in-between.

by Ingrid Wall | ingrid.wall@trelleborg.se



PREPARING FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN 2017

In June the Estonian Parliament adopted the Administrative Reform Act, valid from 1 July. All municipalities with the population of under 5 000 must join with other, preferably neighbouring municipalities, to make the minimal level.

The worst criterion for the recommended size of a local government is 11 000 inhabitants. If municipalities do not manage independently, the state will merge them as they see it.

Elva started the negotiations with five neighbouring municipalities at the beginning of 2016. Presently, public meetings are taking place to introduce the idea of a new municipality and making proposals for the contract of consolidation. In September the neighbouring municipality that had originally pleaded for another direction, made a proposal to start negotiations with Elva.

As for Elva, it will mean around 16 000 inhabitants, addressed as Elva parish instead of Elva township.

New municipality will start operating after the local elections in autumn 2017.

by Merili Aasma | merili.aasma@elva.ee

TRADITION WITH TASTE

Bread Festival is one of the most important events in Elbląg. It is a three-day fair organised in the Old Town. This year's event was a record – the number of exhibitors at the fair rose to more than 260.

The visitors who were our guests in the fair come from Lithuania, Latvia, and Ukraine and even from Hungary and Germany. They brought their traditional products and presented them at the fair's stalls. Other exhibitors came from almost all corners of Poland.

At the fair everyone can find something interesting for themselves. There are plenty of fresh, fragrant bread, genuine home-made meat and cheese, honey and aromatic herbs, spices as well as dried fruit. Apart from that, visitors can find the craftwork – unique jewellery, products made of amber, sculptures and antiques. Children are tempted by the sweet smell of candy floss stands, popcorn, wine gum stands, waffles and handmade toys. There are also catering stands with original dishes, which ensure that the fair visitors can spend the whole day on the fair.

Elbląg's Bread Festival is not only the fair, but it has also a number of accompanying events. On the stage set in the Old Town during the whole weekend the visitors could see the life concerts and listen to the folk music played by the bands. This year we hosted, among others, artists from Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia and Belarus.

Bread Festival consists also in feasting together with world-known chefs – Joseph Sadkiewicz, PhD and Gregory Russak, PhD – who prepared traditional Polish dishes.

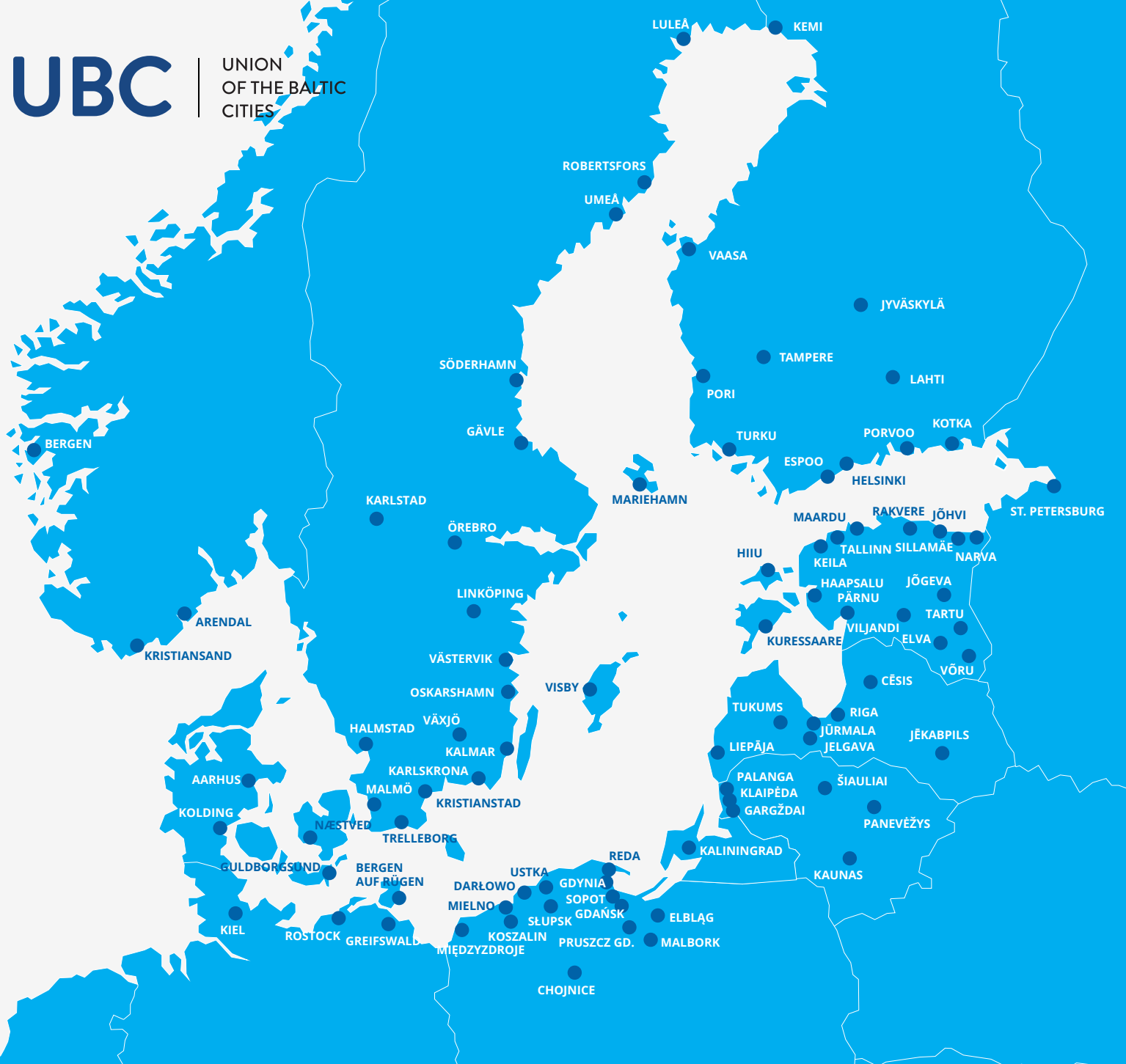
by Rafał Maliszewski | rafal.maliszewski@umelblag.pl



Photo: Kayvo Kroon

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UBC – working together to foster sustainable, smart and safe cities

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with around 100 members from all ten Baltic Sea countries. Founded in 1991 in Gdańsk, UBC is a voluntary, proactive network mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities for a safe, smart and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. The UBC cooperates with numerous Baltic and European organisations.

The UBC's practical work is carried out through active cooperation of the member cities in seven thematic Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities. The Commissions coordinate and execute specific projects, activities and events.

In addition to the Commissions, significant work is carried out in the UBC Working Group on Gender Equality and UBC Communications Network.

Any coastal city or any other city interested in the development of the Baltic Sea Region may become a member of the UBC – please contact the UBC Secretariat.

www.ubc.net



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ONE REGION – ONE FUTURE

THE 7TH STRATEGY FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION – VISION 2030

8–9 NOVEMBER 2016, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

The 7th Strategy Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) takes place in Stockholm, 8–9 November 2016, in conjunction with the 18th Baltic Development Forum Summit. Eight hundred stakeholders from all around the Baltic Sea Region will gather to discuss the future of the region within a 2030 perspective. The Strategy Forum is hosted by Sweden together with the Nordic Council of Ministers and in close cooperation with the European Commission.

www.strategyforum2016.eu
www.bdforum.org/18BDFsummit2016

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