

Report of the XV UBC General Conference, Kaunas, Lithuania, 15-18 October 2019

INTRODUCTION

The XV General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held on 15-18 October 2019 in Kaunas, Lithuania, at the invitation of Visvaldas Matijošaitis, Mayor of Kaunas.

The theme of the XV General Conference was “Building an inclusive and resident-focused city. The Baltic way”. Questions and issues tackled at the conference included empowerment of the citizens’ involvement and participation, attracting young people and making them feel responsible for their future, dialogue between inhabitants and decision-makers.

The conference was attended by 248 participants including representatives of member cities as well as invited guests from governments, international organizations, NGOs etc. List of participants is enclosed. General Conference interacted with UBC Youth Conference attended by some 70 young people from UBC member cities.

TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2019

Meetings of UBC Commissions

The UBC Commissions: Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission, Planning Cities Commission, Safe Cities Commission, Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, Sustainable Cities Commission, Youthful Cities Commission, Working Group on Gender Equality and Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-Being held working meetings to present their work to the conference participants and discuss future activities. Cultural Cities Commission held its meeting on Wednesday 16 October.

Interactive parallel workshops

On the first day afternoon seven interactive parallel workshops were held:

- Youth for safer youth / Safe Cities Commission
- Baltic Sea House - Inclusive society / Colorclouds & Langeark, Aarhus
- Overcoming gender inequality in our society / WG on Gender Equality, Klaipėda
- How to make vocational education more inclusive, accessible and attractive? / TF on Youth Employment and Well Being
- The value of the citizens' participation for cities governance, EmPaci Project / Klaipėda University
- Good practices in UBC sustainable cities / City of St. Petersburg and Sustainable Cities Commission
- Fighting violent radicalisation with innovative policies, IT tools and education / Out of the Box

Presentations from the workshops are enclosed.

WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019

Interactive parallel workshops

The second conference day started with seven interactive parallel workshops:

- Culture as Catalyst for Cities` Development / City of Gdańsk, Poland
UrbCulturalPlanning: open practical discussion on the methods of cultural planning / Danish Cultural Institute in Riga

- Digitalization empowering citizens' participation / Elva, Kiel
- Promoting youth involvement in the city life / Out of the Box International
- Local perspectives for solving climate change related security risks – joining forces to effectively work with Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation / Safe & Sustainable Cities Commissions
- STEAM – Science and Technology Path for Every Child and Youngster / TF on Youth Employment and Well Being
- Engaging citizens to live climate friendly / Ducky
- Swedish Institute Project funding opportunities for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. When, how & concrete examples / Swedish Institute

Presentations from the workshops are enclosed.

Mayors' lunch

The Mayors' lunch held at Kaunas Old Town Hall was hosted by Visvaldas Matijošaitis, Mayor of Kaunas. Around 70 mayors, deputy mayors, councillors, minister and other political representatives discussed common challenges for Baltic Sea region cities and countries.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Plenary session 1 – “Inclusive Cities”, welcome and keynote speeches

The following speakers delivered speeches during the session:

- Per Bødker Andersen, President of UBC
- Visvaldas Matijošaitis, Mayor of Kaunas
- Saulius Skvernelis, Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, address delivered by Rugile Andziukeviciute-Buge, Counsellor to Prime Minister of Lithuania
- Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, address delivered by Gitana Grigaityte, Ambassador at large of Foreign Ministry of Lithuania
- Sirpa Paatero, Minister of Local Government and Ownership Steering of Finland
- Gediminas Kaminskas, Vice-Chair of Kaunas Umbrella Youth Organization "Round Table"
- Markku Markkula, 1st Vice President of the Committee of the Regions
- Bernd Hemingway, Deputy Director General, Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat
- Per Schöldberg, MP, Swedish Parliament
- Asta Avietė, Programme Manager of the Unit responsible for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, the European Commission
- Laurent Sens, Deputy Head of Unit for ESF for Lithuania, European Commission

Plenary session 2 – “Culture as Catalyst for Cities' Development”, experiences of European Capitals of Culture. The following speakers shared their experiences:

- Virginija Vitkienė, Director, “Kaunas 2022”
 - Saara Malila, Director of Communication, Turku, former Communications Manager of Turku 2011 Foundation
 - Krzysztof Maj, General Director, European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016
 - Fredrik Lindegren, Director of Culture, Umeå, former Artistic Director for Umeå 2014
- Presentations were followed by moderated discussion.

Plenary sessions were moderated by Tomas Jarusevičius and Agnė Biliūnaitė.

THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2019

The third conference day started with study visits:

1. "Kaunas: the Heart of Technological Innovations"
2. "Kaunas Free Economic Zone: Ensuring Industrial Future"
3. "Modernist Heritage Regeneration"
4. "Collective Memory for creating Contemporary Urban Identity"

STATUTORY GENERAL CONFERENCE

The statutory General Conference was opened by Per Bødker Andersen, the President of the Union. It was attended by 48 member cities.

Report on UBC Activities

President Per Bødker Andersen submitted the report on UBC activities during the period November 2017 - October 2019. The UBC activity report is enclosed. The General Conference approved the report.

Auditor's report

Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, informed the General Conference that the audit of UBC accounts for 2017 and 2018 had been performed by the licensed auditing company Bilans from Gdańsk. The report states that the Union financial transactions and records within the mentioned period have been handled properly. The conference took note of the report. The auditor's report is enclosed.

Board of Audit report

Roger Kaliff, Chairman of City Council, Kalmar and Marta Chełkowska, Director of Tourism Department, Marshal Office of Pomeranian Region, presented the report and recommendations of the Board of Audit. The General Conference took note of the report. The report of the Board of Audit is enclosed.

Absolving the Presidium, Executive Board, Secretary

Following the proposal of the Board of Audit, the General Conference acknowledged the fulfilment of duties by the Executive Board, Presidium, Secretary General in 2017 and 2018.

Membership fees 2020-2021

President Per Bødker Andersen presented the proposal of the membership fees for 2020 and 2021 (no change comparing to the period 2018-2019).

The General Conference approved the membership fees for the financial period 2020-2021. The table with fees is enclosed.

Amendments in the Statute

President Per Bødker Andersen informed, that the city of Liepāja, on behalf of Latvian member cities, proposed amendments in the Statute concerning the number of Vice-Presidents and term of holding office in the Executive Board. The proposal was sent to the UBC Secretariat on 14.10.2019 and sent out to UBC member cities on 15.10.2019.

Barbara Heinonen, Mayor of Mariehamn, opposed adding this point to the agenda as the proposal was sent out only two days beforehand. The President ordered voting. 47 cities voted in favour of adding this point to the agenda. Barbara Heinonen voted against. The General Conference decided to adopt the amendments. The amended Statute and proposal from Liepāja are attached.

Executive Board in the next period

After appointment/election amongst the member cities in each country the following cities were confirmed as members of the Executive Board in the next two-year period:

Kolding (Denmark), Elva (Estonia), Kemi (Finland), Rostock (Germany), Liepāja (Latvia), Panevėžys (Lithuania), Gdynia (Poland), St. Petersburg (Russia), Umeå (Sweden). The election of the Executive Board member from Norway was postponed till the next Board meeting. The General Conference authorised the Board to approve - after consultation with Norwegian cities - the member from Norway.

President and Vice-Presidents in the next period

The General Conference unanimously elected for a two-year period:

Mantas Jurgutis, Deputy Mayor, Kaunas, as President of the Union

Elina Rantanen, Chair of the City Council, Turku, as the 1st Vice-President of the Union

Piotr Grzelak, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk, as Vice-President of the Union

Vyacheslav Kalganov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations, St. Petersburg, as Vice-President of the Union

Jørgen H. Kristiansen, Councillor, Kristiansand, as Vice-President of the Union

Board of Audit in the next period

The General Conference appointed Marta Chełkowska, Director of Tourism Department, Marshal Office of Pomeranian Region, Roger Kaliff, Chairman of the City Council, Kalmar and Maria Santana, International Consultant, Naestved, to the Board of Audit for a two-year period.

Secretariat in the next four-year period

Following the proposal of the Mayor of the City of Gdańsk, Aleksandra Dulciewicz, the General Conference decided to maintain the UBC Secretariat in the City of Gdańsk, for the next four-year period.

Resolution on Climate Change Adaptation and Civil Protection

General Conference adopted a Resolution on Climate Change Adaptation and Civil Protection. In the resolution the urgency for combating climate change is emphasized. The resolution is attached.

Venue of the XVI UBC General Conference in autumn 2021

Vyacheslav Kalganov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations, St. Petersburg, put forward a proposal from Alexander Beglov, Governor of St. Petersburg, to host the next XVI General Conference in autumn 2021 in St. Petersburg, Russia. The General Conference warmly accepted the invitation from St. Petersburg.

Youth Conference

In parallel to the General Conference, the Youthful Cities Commission organised a Youth Conference with nearly 70 young people from UBC member cities. The conference was financed by the EU programme Erasmus+. Young people participated actively in the sessions and workshops of the General Conference providing youth perspective to debated issues. Youth was also active on social media.

Closing of the General Conference

Per Bødker Andersen warmly thanked representatives of UBC member cities, commissions and the secretariat for 18 years of fruitful cooperation. He thanked the city of Kaunas for great hospitality and professional organisation of the XV General Conference.

Mantas Jurgutis, newly elected President, expressed his warm thanks to the leaving President Per Bødker Andersen and Vice-Presidents Marie-Louise Rönmark, Umeå and Jarkko Virtanen, Turku, for their significant contribution to the development of the Union. President Jurgutis, on behalf of all UBC member cities, handed over the farewell gifts to the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents - the handmade graphics of the Baltic Sea region.

Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, congratulated the newly elected President and assured him of the support from member cities, commissions and secretariat to fulfil his vision and goals of further UBC development.

President Mantas Jurgutis thanked the delegates from member cities, young people, speakers, guests, city staff and the secretariat for their outstanding contribution to the success of the XV UBC General Conference.

Mantas Jurgutis
President

Paweł Żaboklicki
Secretary General

The attachments are available at:

<http://ubc.net/document-categories/general-conference-documents/xv-general-conference-kaunas-15-18-october-2019>