

UBC

UNION
OF THE BALTIC
CITIES

30 years
of boosting cooperation
in the Baltic Sea Region





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Foreword from the UBC President

Dear UBC Friends, Colleagues and Partners,

Activating leadership of the future – was and will be the mission

The 30th Jubilee of Union of the Baltic Cities is taking place at a significant time in history. The Covid-19 global pandemic has changed our lives, in some instances permanently, and we have been compelled to find solutions and innovations in an extremely exceptional situation.

Although there are thirty years in between, there are similarities to be found in the circumstances around the time the UBC was established and the present day: promoting a vision of UBC as peaceful and prosperous Baltic Sea Region, and learning from each other. In both times it was crucial to establish and promote advanced regional cooperation between Baltic Sea Region countries, cities and actors in order to find a way into a new common future.

Community of the international cooperation practice – to all our communities

UBC's achievements and developments include:

UBC Strategy is being renewed in 2021 and will present the guidelines for UBC work until 2030. The process is dynamic and open to develop a flexible and modern new UBC Strategy. The new Strategy will be adopted at the XVI UBC General Conference in October 2021.

UBC Policy Positions Papers have been prepared: on Urban Agenda, Social Cohesion, Resilient Cities and Sustainability with a selection of projects and initiatives. They are a huge step forward for advocacy and lobby for the UBC and its member cities.

UBC has been proactive in terms of project engagement. It has been a partner and co-beneficiary in EU funded projects.

UBC is also a reliable partner in regional cooperation. It has been a coordinator of EUSBSR Horizontal Action "Capacity" together with Norden Association and Swedish Institute. We have been working to strengthen the involvement of the local actors in the EUSBSR implementation. UBC will be a partner of the next EUSBSR Annual Forum.

Our number of members has increased in 2021. We warmly welcome the cities of Hamburg, Valmiera, Rokiškis and Sejny and a returning member city of Haapsalu into the UBC family.

Sustainability of democracy and participation will keep us going forward

Culture of all THE FAMILY ensures UBC transition from generation to generation. In 2021, we keep striving to turn obstacles into chances for something new and to develop our societies further, despite the current global situation. I am convinced we cannot just wait for the crisis to pass – instead we should continue with all our important work. Our cities and societies are challenged to become even more proactive, more unified, more resilient. This is why the theme of the XVI UBC General Conference is "Resilient Baltic Sea Cities. Tackling the challenges and creating the future(s)".

Through this jubilee publication, I hope all UBC friends are able to glance back at our history and its stories but also to position ourselves towards the future. Thank you very much for the cooperation throughout these decades – looking forward to the next 30 years!

Mantas Jurgutis
UBC President





UBC – 30 years of boosting cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

For 30 years, the Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) has been boosting cooperation around the Baltic Sea. The UBC has created a friendly forum that inspires and enhances cooperation and urban development. Our members possess various experiences in different fields, e.g. energy, environment, smart transportation, business, etc. UBC mobilizes their potential for a safe, sustainable and smart Baltic Sea Region. The UBC's intention is to spread out good solutions across the whole region and Europe.

How did it all begin?

The Iron Curtain, which had been dividing Europe and the Baltic Sea Region for over 40 years into two political and economic systems and two military blocs, collapsed 30 years ago.

The Baltic Sea Region faced the clash of cultures, economies and mindsets.

The best way to diminish existing gaps and to prevent future risks was to create a new common system based on cooperation between countries on various levels and exchange of experiences and best practices. People hungered for contacts with others and were curious about other cultures. In the early 90's many international organisations were established and prolific initiatives emerged on different levels – intergovernmental, regional, local.

Maritime tradition has been a factor binding the countries in the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, the concept of Homo Balticus – a person who lives off working at sea, appreciates nature and landscape,

inhabits a port city, is open to the world, has become a symbol of the Baltic identity that all countries could refer to.

In September 1990, upon the initiative of the Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson the Baltic Sea Environmental Conference was held in Rönneby, Sweden. The Heads of Governments and High Political Representatives of the Baltic Sea States, Norway, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Representative of the Commission of the European Communities adopted the Baltic Sea Declaration, which encouraged, among others, for cooperation between the local and regional authorities.

The incentive for founding the UBC came from Gdańsk. In 1991 Mayor of Gdańsk Jacek Starościak and Mayor of Kalmar Anders Engström took the initiative of establishing the Union of the Baltic Cities. Numerous meetings and consultations with the Baltic mayors showed their eagerness to cooperate.

Jacek Starościak, Mayor of Gdańsk (1990–1991)

Beginnings of the Baltic cooperation

Political transformation in Poland in 1989 changed the directions of the Polish foreign policy. Gdańsk has become a natural centre of creating the Baltic regional policy.

Many important initiatives had been undertaken that time, of which the historical meeting of Prime Ministers and other representatives of the Baltic countries in Rönneby, Sweden in September 1990 was held upon the initiative of Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson.

Point 15 of the Baltic Sea Declaration, adopted at Rönneby, stated that the international cooperation should be encouraged and the human contacts facilitated “to improve the environment of the Baltic Sea, including inter alia participation of local and regional governments, governmental and private institutions, industries and non-governmental organisations in the fields of trade, economy, science, culture, information, etc.”

Consequently, the direction of further practical actions had been taken. When developing relations at the level of the BSR states, it was necessary to initiate multilateral relations at the local and regional levels at the same time. It was necessary to conclude new bilateral agreements between the cities. The Declaration in Rönneby could find its practical fulfilment by creating a Baltic Sea network of local authorities. The name of such an organization – Union of the Baltic Cities – seemed evident.

How to start, who to consult this idea with? We could not afford any inconsiderate actions, giving thought to the history, sensitivity and ambitions of the political leaders on the state and regional levels. From Gdańsk perspective, it was natural to initiate the cities' network together with its Swedish sister city of Kalmar. Anders Engström, Mayor of Kalmar, took part in the inaugural Gdańsk City Council session on 6 June 1990, when the Declaration on boosting the Baltic cities cooperation was approved.

When a new partnership agreement between Kalmar and Gdańsk was signed in May 1991, I talked to Engström about



The UBC logo in 1991–2016



the UBC initiative. We had a preliminary version of the statute thanks to the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs' legal help. The only thing to set up was the date of the founding conference and then to decide about the candidate for a first president. Immediately did I think about Anders. There was no better Baltic leader. I suggested Gdańsk as the seat of the UBC Secretariat, what would significantly raise the city's status on its way to the democratic self-governance.

In June 1991 during the V European Conference of Border Regions at Finnish Rovaniemi, I was happy to learn that Engström agreed to candidate for the UBC President. Urgent consultations with the authorities of Lübeck, Turku, St. Petersburg, Riga and Kaliningrad took place. I encouraged Piotr Krzyżanowski to lead the secretariat. 44 representatives of the Baltic Sea states, including Polish Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki participated in the UBC Founding Conference that took place in Gdańsk on 19–20 September 1991.

The process of creation of BSR cross-border cooperation network was completed when the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC), and the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference were set up to coordinate the collaboration of the regions and national parliaments.

In March 1992 the conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs took place. It aimed at establishing the forum for state cooperation. The conference adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and decided to establish the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The growing number of tasks related to the Baltic cooperation and the need to their more efficient coordination resulted in the decision on establishing a permanent international secretariat. Upon the Swedish motion, the Secretariat opened up in Stockholm in 1998. I felt distinguished and privileged to head the office.

Overall, then, it is important to stress that since the beginning of the Polish transformation, the city of Gdańsk has significantly contributed to initiating and developing the Baltic cooperation – on self-governmental, regional and national levels.

Jacek Starościk passed away in May 2021.



“Two trends have met and united in the UBC. The trend of the extensive needs of the cities delayed in civilization development, looking forward to contacts, knowledge and experience, as well as the trend of readiness for partnership cooperation and support from highly developed cities, also affected by recession and looking for new stimuli. Everyone was united by the will to act to improve the quality of life by the Baltic Sea. Therefore, the organisation has been formed: not against somebody, but for something.”

(The first UBC booklet)

Founding Conference

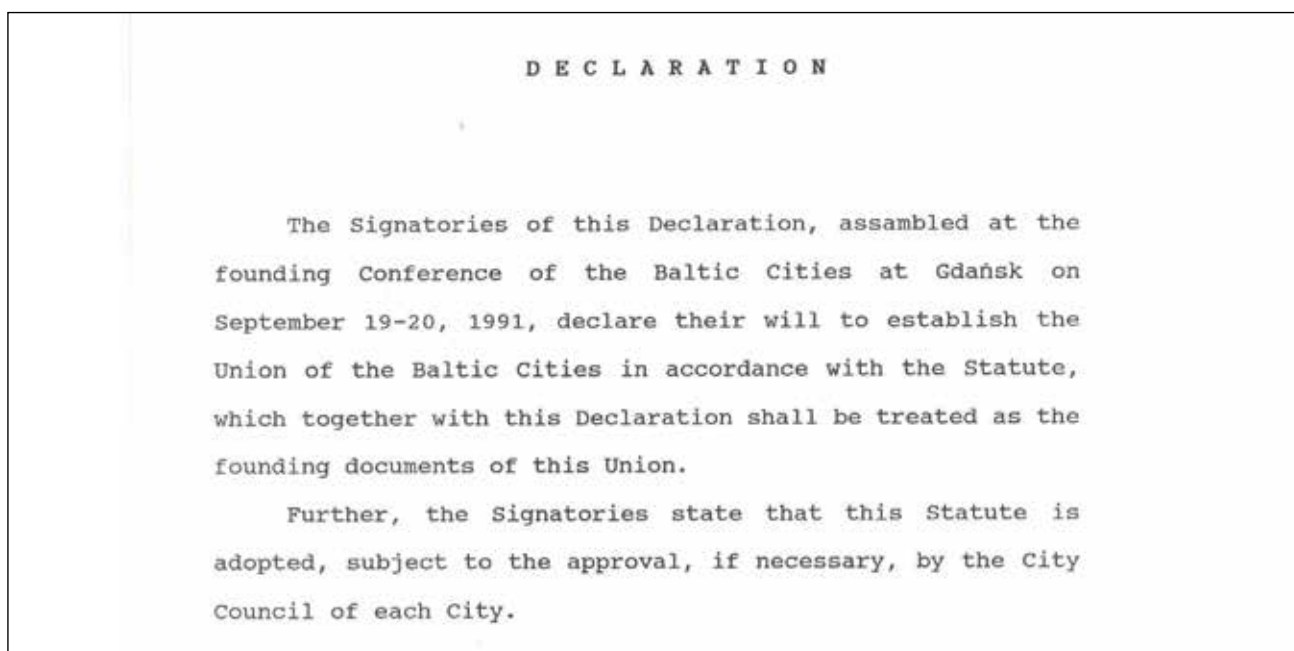
Upon the invitation of the Mayor of Gdańsk Franciszek Jamroz, the Founding Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities was held in September 1991.

The delegations of 45 cities, several international organizations and institutions attended the conference.

Polish Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, President of the Nordic Council Anker Jorgensen, representative

of the Council of Europe John Morgan and Chairman of the Helsinki Commission Harald Velner delivered the opening speeches.


Anders Engström, the Mayor of Kalmar, was elected the first UBC President and he was taking the chair for 10 years. Since then, Mr Engström remains the Honorary President.



Anders Engström, Kalmar UBC President in 1991–2001

My formula for the UBC was to find out as soon as possible what member cities expected from the UBC. In the years 1991–92, I spent a lot of time visiting member cities and talking to mayors and employers working with international relations about their expectations. Of course, they had many different expectations and interests. I have never noticed that they competed. There was an enormous will to cooperate. I very often noticed that if a city wanted some help in solving a problem, other cities would always be ready to offer their expertise and experiences to learn from. As stressed in the major UBC documents, it has always been an organization built upon cooperation, exchange of experience and partnership. These three count most.

Homo Balticus has been the joint spirit of the Baltic Sea Region. It has always been present here and in the cities. It is our common Baltic identity. A true gift that still needs to be revealed. Cities must speak to the world well beyond national government. They need to attract investment bankers, inward-investing companies, property developers, and the most talented people in the world ever. They need to court the media through which the city's resonance is either confirmed or generated.



32 cities declared their willingness
to establish the UBC:

Aalborg – Kaj Kjaer

Aarhus – Olaf P. Christensen

Bergen – Audun Oiestad

Bremen – Ernst Grimmke

Elbląg – Dariusz Waldziński

Gdańsk – Franciszek Jamroz

Gdynia – Jerzy Biedrzycki

Kaliningrad – Viatcheslav Nalivayko

Kalmar – Anders Engström

Karlshamn – Göran Holmberg

Karlskrona – Bo Löfgren

Kiel – Otto Flagge

Klaipėda – Povylyas Vasilyauskas

Kołobrzeg – Henryk Bieńkowski

Kristiansand – Paul Otto Johnsen

Lübeck – Michael Bouteiller

Naestved – Hermann Weidemann

Nakskov – Benny Sonne

Norrköping – Ulla Petterson – Carvalho

Nykøbing F. – Peter Rygaard Andersen

Rostock – Klaus Kilimann

Riga – Edvins Lautsis

St. Petersburg – Aleksandr Petukhov,

Votaniar Yagya

Sopot – Henryk Ledóchowski

Stralsund – Horst Voigt

Sundsvall – Hjärdis Höglund

Szczecin – Władysław Lisewski

Turku – Pekka Aalto

Ventspils – Ainars Ozolins

Visby – Erik Carlsson

Wismar – Thomas Beyer

Ystad – Kaj Jonsson

The Founding Conference adopted the Statute, elected the Executive Board and decided to locate the Secretariat in Gdańsk for the first two-year period.

The goals and objectives for the Union were set out, and four Commissions working in the fields of Transportation, Social aspects and Culture, Environmental Protection and Telecommunication were established.

On 30 March 1992, the new premises of the UBC Secretariat opened in the historic building “Green Gate”. The UBC President, delegates from Kaliningrad, Polish cities, diplomatic corps, and special guests representing science and culture, honoured the opening ceremony with their presence.



The current seat of the UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk



Piotr Krzyżanowski, Gdańsk

In 1990, I received an offer from the then Mayor of Gdańsk Jacek Starościak to visit a number of cities together to consult the conditions and possibilities of regional cooperation at the city level. At that time, the Helsinki Commission for the Protection of the Baltic Sea Environment in which I was the Chairman of the Environment Committee, in cooperation with the International Financial Institutions, conducted an inventory of pollution sources in the entire Baltic catchment area and estimated costs necessary for their elimination. Cities as direct point pollution sources played an important role in process. So I accepted the offer, not knowing that this was how my story with the later UBC would begin.

In September 1991, in the building of the Wybrzeże Theatre, a Founding Conference was organized, at which the charismatic politician and visionary from Kalmar Anders Engström was elected the first UBC President. It was decided that the secretariat located in Gdańsk would handle the Union's affairs, and I was elected the UBC Secretary.

From today's perspective, it is difficult to realise what difficult conditions we had to work in. One must be aware that a few years back, the Baltic countries



were divided by the so-called Iron Curtain. Communications and communication links were lacking in many places. Only thanks to outstanding organizers and social activists such as Urszula Baranowska, Piotr Sroczyński, Marek Maciejowski and Paweł Żaboklicki, we were able to turn the flywheel of a young international organization. Together with Anders, we travelled to the cities around the Baltic Sea, presenting the Union, explaining its goals and tasks. A passenger ship, with an orchestra giving concerts together with musicians from the cities visited on the way, set off from German cities on a cruise around the Baltic Sea. At the Conference of Transport Ministers, at our proposal, the hegemony of national air operators ended and small operators were allowed to fly over the Baltic Sea. New areas of cooperation had been discovered. We started publishing a newsletter, organised conferences and meetings, and thousands of people took part in folk festivals. Relations between cities flourished in terms of exchange of experiences, contacts between companies, etc. These were busy and enthusiastic beginnings that immediately generated multilateral benefits.

During my subsequent work at the World Bank, many times I had the opportunity to present UBC as a role model. During the work on the Convention on the Protection of the Caspian Sea, I encouraged to use our experience, and that resulted in visits of politicians and training trips of municipal companies from Central Asia to UBC cities. Similarly, later as part of the GEF Danube / Black Sea Basin Strategic Partnership on Nutrient Reduction programme.

I feel honoured that I was able to contribute to building the organizational structure for our common good. We are the Homo Balticus family who shares a common history and the sea. I would like to thank my friends and colleagues met thanks to UBC for the opportunity to work together for the benefit of others and the future of our region.

How we work

UBC is a network of cities and provides numerous meeting platforms for politicians, officials and specialists from cities of all sizes, from all countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

The highest authority is the General Conference, which convenes biennially. The representatives of all member cities are invited to participate.

Part of this event is always devoted to the topics high on the UBC agenda. The General Assembly takes decisions on the internal matters, such as: the election of the authorities for the next period, membership fees, reports of activities, new regulations etc.

Between the General Conferences, the Executive Board, consisting of one city from each BSR country, is heading the political work. The Board convenes about two times each year.

The UBC President and the UBC Presidium, with four Vice Presidents, work as the executive organs. For 18 years, **Per Bødker Andersen** served as the UBC President (2001–2019): “It has been a fantastic period with quite a lot of development. This has been extraordinary for me and a chance of a lifetime”, stated President Andersen.



37th Executive Board meeting, Rostock, 18 June 2003

19th Executive Board meeting, Aalborg, 28–29 October 1997





The present UBC President, elected at the XV UBC General Conference, is **Mantas Jurgutis**, Deputy Mayor of Kaunas. “In UBC’s future I see an inclusive and value-based UBC by the content and the results, and also some developments inside the Union. I am looking forward to putting shoulder to shoulder to deliver the results the Member Cities want”, stated President Jurgutis right after the election.

UBC structure is coordinated by the UBC Secretariat, located in Gdańsk since the beginning.

The majority of practical work among members takes place on the forum of seven UBC Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities.



After serving the UBC for 18 years, Per Bødker Andersen stepped down from the UBC presidency in 2019. The XV UBC General Conference, held in Kaunas on 15–18 October 2019, elected Mantas Jurgutis, Deputy Mayor of Kaunas, as the new UBC President.



Per Bødker Andersen, UBC President in 2001–2019

My big and beloved family

In 2001 I gained a new family. And a big one, too. I was elected President of the Union of the Baltic Cities at the General Conference in Rostock. It was also the beginning of a string of pearls of personal relationships, of a deeper understanding of the value of our different cultural and political backgrounds in our common work for progress in a lot of political areas for the future.

It was about 10 years after the fall of the iron curtain – and during the first 10 years of the UBC, the main object was to create a platform for capacity building in the cities to secure the local democracy and the citizens’ rights. And that was done in an unusual way.

The UBC is not a traditional international organization with a big secretariat for policy making as we know it from other cooperative bodies. The UBC was created as a “cities helping cities” organization. The policy topics were not to be discussed and decided solely in the Executive Board, but instead handed over to the Commissions to debate on and to make suggestions, involving cities who decided for participation in one or more commissions according to their topical





XIII UBC General Conference, Gdynia, 27–30 October 2015. Photo: Piotr Manasterski

interest. And more importantly: Commissions should be open to both politicians and civil servants, providing the broadest points of view before decisions could be taken. And all ideas, reports and decisions should be available for all member cities – and for free!

In the first couple of decades, it was of special interest for the “Eastern” cities to have a stepping stone to the EU and Brussels via the “Western” cities. After the enlargement that picture of course changed a great deal. That meant that together we could strive to influence the decision-making through cooperation in the European Committee of the Regions. Or let me put in another way: using the common knowledge of our Baltic surroundings to the benefit of us all. The creation of the first macro region in the EU, namely the Baltic Sea region, was in my eyes a recognition of the fruitful cooperation between countries and cities.

As earlier mentioned, despite different backgrounds in politics and culture, I think, the common wish of citizens is mainly the same: that we serve as politicians, providing a good daily life for ourselves, our families and our children. Good health and treatment, if needed. We want our children to have good possibilities in life through education and social activities. Good condition for our elderly citizens. And we want to preserve and to protect our nature as a vital resource for the coming generations.

Dear UBC family. You gave me the possibility to work and to live in our common dream. You taught me about the past and wishes for the future. And you showed me the fruitful diversity of our beautiful Baltic part of the world. From one city to the next. A fantastic gift for all of us and for the UBC during 30 years.

Congratulations to us all.

Independent as they are, Commissions initiate and implement numerous projects in their respective fields, ranging from music festivals and sports events to training seminars or webinars, and many others.

A significant work is carried out by the UBC Working Group on Gender Equality, UBC Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-Being, and UBC Communications Network.

Other UBC organs involved in the organization's activities are: the Board of Audit and the Brussels Antenna. The latter aims at providing more effective advocacy and lobbying for the UBC cities' interests, increasing the organization's visibility in the European institutions, and as a result influencing the EU policies.



Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General, Gdańsk *UBC – my great adventure*

My adventure with the Union of the Baltic Cities began as follows. After having graduated from the Gdańsk University of Technology, Faculty of Environment, I went to Gothenburg, Sweden for a four-month internship in the local water and sewage works (VA-Verket Göteborg). I worked in the design office and at the sewage treatment plant. After returning to Gdańsk, armed with the knowledge gained from technologically advanced Scandinavians, I started looking for my first job. I had an interview with the president of Saur Neptun Gdańsk water works (Polish-French joint venture) and SNG was interested in hiring me. On



Marie-Louise Rönmark, UBC Vice-President 2005–2019, Lord Mayor, Umeå

Hip Hip Hurray

Union of the Baltic Cities is a network of people, cities and countries around the Baltic Sea. I got in contact with the UBC during the 90s and got inspired. The city of Umeå became later the UBC member and part of its development.



Roger Kaliff, Chair of the City Council, Kalmar

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, an intense phase of democratization began in the Baltic Sea Region and throughout Europe. At that time, I was representing the Committee of the Regions, and worked closely with local and regional representatives in the countries around the Baltic Sea. The contacts with Gdańsk were natural for me as Kalmar and Gdańsk have been twin towns since 1968. I made my first visit to Gdańsk in 1978.

The formation of both the UBC and the Euroregion Baltic, with Gdańsk and Kalmar as two of the initiators, was natural at that time. Initially, the focus was on developing formal paths for exchange and strengthening democracy and



27th Executive Board meeting, Kemi, 1 April 2000

the next day, by chance, I met a friend who informed me that UBC was looking for an employee for its Secretariat. The prospect of working for the union of cities from 10 countries around the Baltic Sea seemed very interesting to me and, to my joy, my candidacy was accepted. After a few years, my predecessor dr Piotr Krzyżanowski was hired at the World Bank in Washington. I became the executive secretary and then the general secretary of the UBC.

Over the years, the cooperation between cities within the UBC network has developed dynamically. The Union has become the largest regional network of cities in Europe. I am glad that the city of Gdańsk is the heart and leader of this cooperation. I have worked with many wonderful people from the Baltic Sea cities, who became my dear, life friends.

I am grateful to the Mayors of Gdańsk: Tomasz Posadzki, Paweł Adamowicz and Aleksandra Dulkiewicz, who have always supported the Union. I have had excellent cooperation with the UBC Presidents: Anders Engström, Per Bødker Andersen and Mantas Jurgutis. I have had a privilege to take part in the Union's growth and I'm happy that our organisation substantially contributes to the development and integration of our beloved Baltic Sea Region.

Our common challenge to secure local democracy is constantly in focus; cities helping cities with good examples of urban planning, culture, sustainability and gender equality. Meetings with young people and their free, open thoughts have been inspiring.

UBC continues to make an impression. All the fantastic meetings, local dishes, songs, understanding of our common history and happy laughter fill my heart with warmth.

I open my arms and congratulate the UBC on another 30 years of a continued, open and stronger Baltic Sea Region.

human rights. Over time the cross-Baltic exchange has proved to be mutually beneficial, contributing to economic growth, social security and improved ecological sustainability across the Baltic Sea region.

For example, in the field of water management, there has been a dramatic progress among the municipalities in the region. During my first visits to Gdańsk, there was a bathing ban on the beaches of the Baltic Sea and in Kaliningrad the water treatment plants consisted only of coarse separation. Nowadays, there are well-developed treatment plants on site, the water quality has improved dramatically, and the coastal communities are tourist-magnets during the summertime. In Sweden and in Kalmar, we have been efficient in ditching wetlands for agriculture. But now, based on the experiences from, among others the Baltic countries, we are now recreating wetlands to capture nutrients and save the Baltic Sea.

To conclude, the collaboration within the UBC framework has been successful over the years and is still important today, as we – the municipalities – are shaping our future together in the Baltic Sea Region.

Working towards safe, sustainable and smart Baltic Sea Region

In a survey conducted in 2020, the member cities described UBC as democratic, future-oriented, professional, member-driven, proactive and goal-oriented.

Accordingly, UBC's strongest quality is being a good networking provider. What UBC does best is:

- keeping the member cities active, when sharing experiences, expertise, good practices and information from which it derives learning and cooperation opportunities
- bringing cities and municipalities around the Baltic sea together and fostering projects between the members about key joint interests and creating sustainable initiatives
- providing good and professional communication, organising meetings and being recognised as a reliable partner
- contributing to developing and fostering joint Baltic identity
- disseminating project results, good ideas and methods among its member cities.



XIV General Conference, Växjö, 24–27 October 2017



72nd Executive Board meeting, Kemi, 25–27 February 2015



52nd Executive Board meeting, Kuressaare, 5 June 2008

Urve Tiidus, UBC Vice President 2007–2011, Mayor of Kuressaare 2005–2011

UBC 30

Kuressaare joined the Union of the Baltic Cities in 1993. This was an important step for a small local government in the Republic of Estonia that had only recently regained its independence. Everyone knows the saying “no man is an island”. The



42nd Executive Board meeting, Luleå, 4–6 March 2005

same goes for a city. Even if it is located on the largest island in Estonia– Saaremaa. In addition to being on the shores of the same sea, the Baltic cities are bound together by hundreds of invisible threads. The UBC has proven a great help in creating a sense of unity. Not only with information, but also with practices and contacts. Comparing yourself to others, always shows you where you can develop yourself further. Just like in sports. Role models inspire us. The aspiration to develop and to seek better solutions for our home towns is definitely one of the important merits of the UBC.

It is a positive organisation that has introduced cooperation among cities which despite being located on the shores of the same sea, found themselves at very different starting lines 30 years ago, to use a sports metaphor. Of course, the finish line is always moving away from us, but if we take for example Kuressaare, my home town, it would not be what it is today without our excellent cooperation partners from the cities around the Baltic Sea: Turku, Ventspils, Visby, and many others. Our work meetings are enhanced by additional values that come from the informal information exchange and the moments filled with culture. These are invaluable in creating a sense of unity. Our cooperation has extended to work in the committees, publishing a common cultural calendar, writing articles, and lobbying in Brussels. All this work has been carried out without much publicity or limelight. Although limelight would not hurt either. Our organisation deserves it. Good luck for the next 30 years!



In UBC's future, the member cities recognise its role as being the main centre connecting the cities, thus enabling collaboration and funding. UBC is seen as a platform that:

- provides expertise and bridges knowledge for mutual development through projects
- attracts more outside speakers, professionals, motivators, etc. to become a common voice and stronger political actor for cities
- enables practical changes connected with the EU goals and programmes, and becomes a more proactive and important voice on the EU political level.

Moreover, it is seen as being more of a leader in trying to find different ways to solve member cities' shared issues or challenges, and to have impact on the economic and tourist development of the region.

XV General Conference, Kaunas, 15–18 October 2019



Piotr Grzelak, UBC Vice-President, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk

At the time when UBC celebrates its 30th Anniversary, I celebrate my own, too. It has passed almost ten years since Maciej Lisicki, former Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk and my predecessor, invited me to get involved in the UBC activities. I was the city councillor at that time, and probably as many of us, I felt uncertain as to my language skills, and if I could succeed. But the first



Roland Methling, Mayor of Rostock in 2005–2019 UBC – innovative promotor of the Baltic cooperation

Rostock people have always been Baltic-oriented, but only when the iron curtain collapsed we could move freely. In the early nineties, UBC began to be important for me. Since the beginning, it has been the strongest and most



impression of the General Conference in Liepāja was the atmosphere and the feeling that we met within one European family. No matter what the nationality, age or perspectives were, every statement counted. This was, and I am sure still is, one of the foundations of this organisation. Secondly, you get as much as you give, so it is worth to get involved. And thirdly, I find it personally most important – during the years I had had the opportunity to meet many people. It does not matter if you come from Växjö, Åland, Umeå, Kristiansand, Rostock or Gdańsk. People have similar problems, challenges to meet, fears, happiness. And the best way to go through our lives is to meet other people, exchange experiences, find solutions together and understand the world, as it is rich in its variety. Thank you for all of that my UBC family!

reliable city network of the Baltic Sea Region. We started to boost the cooperation, with so much enthusiasm, especially when other very important organizations came to birth like the Baltic Port Organization (BPO) and the Baltic Tourism Commission (BTC). The readiness of the UBC cities to connect with one another and to exchange their experiences was so unconditioned. For me that was a new way of working. Many outstanding projects were developed. One of them was the Baltic Sailing Association (BSA), promoting the Baltic maritime heritage in function, so that many people around the Baltic Sea coast could enjoy the windjammers during numerous harbour festivals in the summer. For me the UBC has a great potential for the future. All the best and good winds for this network!

Resilience through challenging times

The global Covid-19 pandemic hit the Baltic Sea Region in early 2020. During this difficult time, the UBC network has continued its work by exchanging good practices, building capacities and as much as possible looking for technological solutions to turn the crisis into opportunities.

UBC Executive Board meetings were held online in 2020 and 2021 to let the organization move forward. The Commissions organized different thematic webinars to exchange approaches and measures taken in the cities towards the pandemic, and to mobilize and support each other in various fields, e.g. culture, tourism or safety. The projects went on smoothly, though the majority of activities moved online.



Gunārs Anšiš, Deputy Mayor of Liepāja

For Liepāja as a city and for me personally, an experience within UBC has been very inspiring. I would even say, encouraging: to venture upon higher limits, to open the mind and broaden the horizon, think deeper, aim for higher peaks and best practices. The Baltic states had been divided for decades by the Iron Curtain and no cooperation was ever possible at that time. The founding of the UBC in 1991 was like a ramp to jump on and reach the future we sought – a modern, elaborated, sophisticated, comfortable and advanced city. From today's perspective, we seem to have chosen the right path and the right companions nearly 30 years ago!

Liepāja is one of the founding cities of the UBC and has been its active member since the very first day. But I am well aware of the origins and feelings that we had then. We were young, having just restored our independence, yet at the



Photo: stock.adobe.com

same time having inherited a completely degraded city infrastructure. Collapsing bumpy streets, no lighting, a shadow of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, a dramatic unemployment rate. Large factories that had previously focused on the vast market of the Soviet Union, were in insolvency battles and people were in a quietly depressed mood... As a former closed military city we had to learn and build things from scratch, and that is exactly why the experience of our UBC colleagues at this stage had played an enormous role.

Sweden, Denmark, Finland and many others – these were countries which, in addition to the practical advice in terms of organizing the city's economy and everyday maintenance, were very much our support pillars in terms of psychological boost – to change our own thinking and to believe that we can and are able to be open to Europe and the world. I remember vividly how more than 40 architects from all around the UBC came to Liepāja. We walked across the city and shared our ideas and experiences with our chief architect about what to consider when planning and developing our own city. This is the biggest advantage that UBC gives you – the opportunity to be up, close and personal – sometimes just a phone call to your friends in another city in the Baltic Sea Region with a simple question: “Hey, how did you solve this or that problem?”

UBC Antenna in Brussels

The UBC Antenna in Brussels was launched in spring 2020. Some activities related to advocacy and lobbying for increasing the visibility of UBC in the European institutions and preparing the ground for greater involvement in relevant EU policy dialogues have not stopped during the pandemic.

The UBC policy work was developed e.g. through the Task Force for Policy and Projects. One of its aims is to create a comprehensive policy framework and position papers on relevant topics for the UBC, related to the EU Urban Agenda, Cohesion Policies beyond 2020, Climate Change and Sustainable Development, and Resilient UBC Cities. Moreover, the new UBC Strategy for 2021–2030 is in process. All these positive changes make the UBC stronger, more efficient, and better organised to serve the needs of its member cities.



Per Schöldberg, Member of the Swedish Parliament, Växjö

Happy Anniversary Union of the Baltic Cities!

The member cities from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden, this year celebrate 30 years of successful cooperation on the municipal level.

UBC, as a network, works according to the bottom-up philosophy. The whole idea is based on the principles of voluntary engagement, proactive networking and ability to mobilize useful projects for its members, coordinated by the Executive Board, the Secretariat, national coordinators, and the seven Commissions.



Marta Chetkowska, UBC Board of Audit, Pomorskie Region

My adventure with UBC began in 1995. I represented the City of Łeba, the smallest town in the organization at that time. The cooperation within the UBC resulted in receiving great support in building the yacht port, financed by the PHARE funds. For such a small community, the positive response given to the project by UBC President Anders Engström, was like a gift from heaven.

For several years, until 2007, I represented the city of Łeba, and then worked in the Board of Audit, representing the Pomorskie Voivodeship.



Ewa Back, Sundsvall

Ten years with the Board of Audit

I was a member of the Board of Audit (BoA) from 2005 until 2015. Marta Chetkowska was the second member during these years, the third member was at first Silvia Löbner and later Jukka Vilen.

I had the pleasure of going to Gdańsk for the audit five times. The first time was in 2007. These visits in Gdańsk opened my eyes for being a tourist in Poland. (If anyone thinks Marta had something to do with this, I would say: of course!)



V General Conference,
Stockholm, 24–25 September 1999

Northern Europe opened up in the 1990's, and my first trips to Gdańsk, Tallinn and Riga gave me new perspectives and ideas. The potential for economic, cultural, environmental and social enrichment was obvious then and still is today. My personal opinion is that good ideas flourish when people meet, and UBC has enabled thousands of politicians and civil servants during the past 30 years to be inspired by the colleagues across the Baltic Sea.

But the flow of inspiration between the cities happens only if Mayors and leaders embrace the potential. During these times with current environmental, democratic and pandemics' challenges on the table, it is more important than ever to enable cities to broaden their horizons. Closed doors and narrow minds cannot create economic, social, cultural and environmental development! In this context, I want to congratulate UBC as a successful engine and facilitator for a positive development across the Baltic Sea Region. Let the ideas and principles that were founded 30 years ago, create prosperity during the next 30 years!

Over the years, I have found this cooperation an opportunity to meet exceptional people, involved in the UBC and BSR culture. New ideas, design initiatives, solutions were all the driving force for further activities in their own communes. Thanks to UBC, the municipalities of Łeba and Bornholm became friends and cooperated with each other for many years.

Today it is easier to overcome difficulties, because thanks to UBC we know and understand each other better. It is also easier to develop cooperation between cities and regions.

The UBC Presidents: Anders Engström, Per Bødker Andersen and Mantas Jurgutis, the leaders of the leaders, are respected by the local authorities in all countries around the Baltic Sea. It is my honour to cooperate in the organization with such high culture and to offer a small share in the integration of the Baltic countries and their inhabitants.

The work in the BoA has developed over the years. Initially, when we met for the first time one of the tasks was to count the cash kept in the Secretariat. However, even though we looked into the book-keeping quite a lot, the focus shifted to the work of the Executive Board. Documentation of economic decisions made by the Board or the Presidium, as well as routines for following up the work of the Commissions were two important parts of our job.

We recommended improvements of routines or documents to every General Conference – and to our joy most of them were followed up.

As the BOA member, I had the possibility to participate in some meetings of the Executive Board. This was a valuable source of information, but also a chance to get to know the UBC family better. Finally, to Pawel and the girls at the Secretariat: Thank you all for good cooperation!

UBC Communications Network

UBC constantly aims to serve its member cities even better, also in communications. One of the central goals of the UBC in recent years has been to energize and streamline the UBC work. As part of this, UBC has gone through a visual evolution, adopted the new logo, updated the Baltic Cities Bulletin and opened up the new UBC website.

Alongside with the commissions renewal process, UBC Communications Network, established in January 2015, had an important role in defining the purpose and contents of the current website and other communications processes. The network has organised three international seminars, with almost 40 participants from all UBC countries each.



Marek Maciejowski

The Green Gate to a better world

Privilege, excitement, significance, responsibility and fun – this is what I felt as a newbie who, having just graduated from the Technical University of Gdańsk, joined a small team of professionals led by Piotr Krzyżanowski in the final preparations for the UBC founding conference and soon after became a member of the newly set-up UBC Secretariat, located at the prestigious Green Gate of the Gdańsk old town. A privilege – as I appreciated being part of international cooperation that, to me, was like a (Green) Gate to a better world featuring interesting contacts, as well as new experiences and knowledge that come with them. The circumstances, the spirit and the developments were truly unique at that time given that we were part of a new “grand opening” in the Baltic cooperation. An excitement – as such historic moments occur



Urszula Baranowska

I had an exceptional privilege to support forming the UBC from its early beginnings. The founding conference was a great logistic challenge: several hundred people from several dozen cities at a time, when nobody heard about mobile phones, event agencies. Sending a fax to Helsinki took several hours and sometimes the telex was the only way of communicating.

Placing the UBC Secretariat in Gdańsk gave me a unique opportunity to further participate and support the cities' cooperation. It was quite unusual to find myself right in the middle of fast political and social changes in that part of



The first meeting of UBC Communications Network was held in Turku on 15–16 April 2015.

only once in a generation. I felt part of trail-blazing efforts aimed to help restore regional cooperation, which had been so unhappily impaired by the Cold War. Significance – as I was aware of new value and quality that we were creating by helping raise foundations of UBC, contributing to policy development and project implementation. We saw how our efforts were tangibly assisting cities, in setting up new contacts and facilitating transfer of knowledge from their partner cities. Responsibility – as we, at the UBC Secretariat, saw many eyes carefully watching, if and how we can deliver and make a difference. During those early days, virtually every day was bringing new challenges, which we had to face and properly address. There were both bigger challenges and smaller ones. Some of them you could not even imagine to happen in the current days of modern IT. Last, but not least, fun – during those past 30 years, apart from working at the UBC Secretariat, I also had a privilege and honour of working in several international/intergovernmental secretariats, such as those of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Baltic 21 and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being, as well as in international organisations, such as the Helsinki Commission and the Coalition Clean Baltic. But never have I seen so passionate discussions like those during the UBC meetings, followed by equally passionate dances during gala dinners, as well as great excursions.

Thank you, UBC, for being an important part of my professional life, and good luck for the next 30 years!

Europe. Every meeting, each conference sped up the integration of those societies that had been isolated before 1990. The Secretariat at the Green Gate became a focal point of all these changes.

I can safely say that my work for the UBC has had a strong impact on my professional path. It taught me to work in the challenging international environment and that there was no challenge too big to cope with. Our motto: “Nothing is impossible”, was the reality we worked these days in.

That experience allowed me to effectively manage communication and marketing in such corporations, like PKN ORLEN or PGE later on. And my boss at the time, Piotr Krzyżanowski, was the best mentor I could meet at the beginning of my professional path. His networking skills and the ability to bring people together around a common idea have always inspired me.

“Communicating about BSR Cooperation” UBC Communications Seminar

UBC Communications Seminar was held on 15–16 April 2015 in Turku, Finland. Its aim was to provide concrete tools and ideas for member cities’ and the Commissions’ everyday work, and the possibility to influence and to create new ways of thinking in UBC communications.

The themes of the seminar included: UBC and its role in the Baltic Sea Region cooperation; HELCOM – a case example on developing external communications; Attracting the media; Social media as a tool for getting UBC messages known; Developing UBC’s external communications; Developing UBC’s internal communications.

City Branding in the Baltic Sea Region

During the XIV UBC General Conference in 2017, UBC Communications Network held a joint seminar and workshop “City Branding in the Baltic Sea Region”, where current trends in city branding, such as place branding, place making, talent attraction and change leadership, were explored.

UBC Seminar on International City Marketing and Business Marketing

The seminar, organised by the UBC and the City of Rostock was held in Rostock on 28–29 November 2018 as part of the work of UBC’s Communications Network. The covered themes included: business marketing, city marketing, cultural marketing, online marketing and brand development in social media.



Anna Sośnicka, UBC Secretariat, Gdańsk

UBC is my first job. After my studies, I could decide between working as a journalist in the local newspaper and becoming part of the UBC team. As work in the international environment had always been close to my heart, I finally chose the UBC.

I could observe how UBC had been developing in different fields. The changes were really impressive, for example if you take the way of communication.



Ewa Kurjata, Szczecin

What UBC means to me?

As a person with almost 29 years of work experience, UBC means a lot to me. It made me what I am today – a truly Homo Balticus, and it brings these memories when I think of UBC.

UBC is work. It has exerted an enormous impact on my whole professional career, and made me an expert on the Baltic cooperation. Without it, I would not have travelled to the Baltic states so often. It also brought me to the US twice.



Iwona Śmigierska-Belczak, Gdańsk

I have worked for the UBC for 10 years (1995–2005). That decade was a time of establishing new structures in the changing geopolitical environment and at the same time a time of rapid growth of the organisations. The UBC was the organisation gathering people with passion, who aimed at creating better sustainable region and steadily improving the level of living and well-being. In



UBC Communications Network's seminar held in 2018 in Rostock discussed among other things brand building.

I was told that in the early days of the UBC documents were typewritten. Only few member cities had connection to the Internet, so the documents like the minutes from the Executive Board meetings or the reports from the General Conferences were printed out and then sent out by post to the members. We contacted our cities by sending out faxes and making phone calls. It was more difficult and time consuming, but on the other hand we had personal contacts with our members. Today, we can send emails and hold online meetings.

During all those years, I have had the privilege to cooperate with many people and to meet them at numerous UBC meetings and conferences. I believe that those persons, open for cooperation, eager for the UBC's development, and curious for people from other cultures, are the greatest strength of the organization.

UBC is people. *I smile widely, when I recall some of our meetings and sometimes vivid discussions! I do recall laughs, songs, meeting new persons and ideas, delicious cuisines and making life friends! UBC is Anna, Paweł, Dalia, Gunars, Anders, Karin, Klaus, Esa, Mikko, Risto, Tõnu and many others!*

UBC is emotions. *It is wind in my hair and rays of sunshine at the beach in Liepāja. It is a big disappointment when the city of Szczecin had decided to leave the organisation. It meant the end of certain era for me.*

UBC is city. *Each Baltic city is unique and so are its citizens. So is the Baltic heritage. Without visiting Baltic cities in person and experiencing them, my knowledge of the world would certainly be poorer.*

UBC is language. *It is a conglomerate of cultures and languages. As a linguist, I have always found it a fascinating world to discover. And UBC talks a language of tolerance!*

I am grateful to UBC for all these years.

my memory that time was not only hard work, but also making new connections, learning about other cultures and uniting people, living around the sea on a common goal of prosperity and peace. It was also the time of changes, taking place in our region and cooperation with many people. Many dreams have come true and many aspirations and goals have been achieved, yet some remain unfulfilled. It seems that the results in the economic and political field from the perspective of the past cooperation and the forms and the directions of this cooperation remain adequate to the challenges to be faced in the near future. I am still interested in the Baltic Sea Region that has resulted in some publication on this subject.





Social dimension of UBC

UBC advances cities in their way to become inclusive, diverse, and creative hubs, where active citizenship, gender equality and participatory policy making are promoted. The social dimension has been present in the activities of the organisation since the very beginning. The wide scope of social activities have been carried out on a daily basis by various Commissions.

Social affairs, including long-term unemployment, humanitarian help, health promotion, were dealt by the UBC Commission on Health & Social Affairs, established in 1991.

The Commission on Sport, established in 1995, put the emphasis on promoting sporting events among the youth, the disabled, the elderly and integrating them through sports activities.

The cooperation in the field of culture, involving single cultural activities, as well as professionalization of this field, was dealt with by the Commission on Culture / Cultural Cities Commission.

Cross sectoral gender equality issues have been taken up by the UBC Women's Network / Working Group on Gender Equality since 1993.

UBC has also been responding to the current challenges, like sending humanitarian help for Baltijsk and Kaliningrad in 1998, preparing a Statement Against Trafficking adopted in 2006, or exchanging experiences in the rapidly developing question of migration in 2016 and 2018.

Humanitarian help for Kaliningrad and Baltijsk

In September 1998 the UBC Secretariat distributed a call from Kaliningrad and Baltijsk for humanitarian help in connection with the severe crisis in Russia, which dramatically affected the living conditions in these cities.



Laine Randjärv, UBC Vice President 2005–2007, Mayor of Tartu 2004–2007

I had the honour to participate in the work of UBC while I was the Mayor of Tartu. Despite the fact that Tartu is not a sea-side town, we were able to participate in the organization that united the maritime region of the Baltic Sea. It was the time that taught me, a young politician, to communicate



Rytis Račkauskas, Mayor of Panevėžys

Panevėžys has been a UBC member since 1994. All these years spent together with the friendliest Baltic Sea family, we have been sharing common values, various challenges, sometimes different perspectives. Today differences are plentiful, but many similarities uniting us prevail. Historically and culturally, the countries of the Baltic Sea Region bear strong resemblance to each other. The fate of Soviet occupation, democratic transitions after 1991 have united the

Such institutions as orphanages, nursing homes for the elderly, hospitals etc. desperately needed food, medicines, medical equipment, hygienic articles, clothes etc. Between October 1998 and February

1999 some UBC Cities contributed with help, e.g. Elbląg, Gdynia, Kalmar/Karlskrona, Kiel, Koszalin, Riga, Rostock, delivering several hundred tonnes of needed goods.



internationally, which was a new experience. It was exciting to listen to and to learn from experiences of mayors of such an important region. I remember that some of the presentations I heard at UBC gatherings could also be used very practically in the day-to-day work of running my own city. During these years, I gained many new colleagues, friends and relationships that have been important throughout the rest of my career as a politician. I am especially grateful to those who trusted me enough to elect me to the UBC governing bodies. I remember that special feeling, the feeling of pride and gratitude that held me at the 2005 conference in Turku. Congratulations to the UBC in the current difficult world situation. We need such a network based on real partnerships. Let's stay healthy and until the next time we meet!

people of Baltic Sea Region. We have really learnt much from each other. The signs of increased individualism, civil society and public participation can also be attributed to the advantages of being together in the Union of the Baltic Cities. Social movements and associations, cities and local communities have stimulated the development of Baltic Sea Region thanks to the UBC, celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2021.

Let us wish and hope that democracy, respect to other opinions and innovative ways of thinking will accompany the Union of the Baltic Cities in meeting further challenges!

The UBC Executive Board at its meeting in Kaunas in 2006 adopted the Statement against trafficking upon the initiative of the city of Umeå. It defined trafficking as a trade of human beings for sexual exploitation closely connected with national prostitution. The trade with women and children is not only an affront to human dignity but also an infringement of international human rights regulations. The UBC Statement stipulates to recognize the trafficking as a serious problem to be solved both at political and social level as the trafficked women and children made to prostitution are the victims of crime and deserve the support from the society.



Margita Ivholm, Kalmar Memories of the UBC

Gdańsk and Kalmar have been twin-cities since 1968. In 1997, Gdańsk celebrated its 1000 year Anniversary, in connection with which different events, conferences and celebrations took place, including the Kalmar Days on 6–7 August 1997. The delegation consisting of politicians, officials and the choir was present. We served Swedish herring, potatoes, hard bread and drinks on the huge stand located in front of the Green Gate. It was very popular!

Numerous meetings between the representatives from Kalmar and Gdańsk took place in the big conference room in the Green Gate, where the office of UBC




Lillian Westerberg, Stockholm

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it meant that the Baltic Sea became a sea with open countries around the Baltic Sea. Close afterwards, UBC was formed in 1991 with Anders Engström, Kalmar as the first chairman. Mr Engström convinced the politicians in Stockholm to join the UBC. Many cities in the countries around the Baltic Sea also became members from the beginning. I myself got the opportunity to be responsible for the work in UBC on behalf of the City of Stockholm.

I have great memories from numerous meetings with colleagues from the UBC cities, be it large or small ones. And I participated frequently in the meetings until 2007, when Stockholm left UBC at the same time, as I left the City of Stockholm.

I would like to mention a few meetings I particularly remember. The first one is UBC women's visit to Kaliningrad in the early 1990s. We were about 20 women, who went by bus from Gdańsk to Kaliningrad and after hours of problems at the border we were met and welcomed by the Mayor and her colleagues. There were



“It’s time to act both with words and with actions against trafficking. We have to work for women’s and men’s possibilities to have power and influence to take decisions in their own lives and also for the society they live in.”

was seated. That was the first time I met Paweł Żaboklicki.

I have worked at the International Department in Kalmar for many years. One of the managers was Anders Engström, who had contributed to the development of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

This led to a lot of contacts with the staff of UBC during the years 1997–2019.

Visits of Kalmar’s Lucia and performing for children in Gdańsk schools, visiting the mayor in the city hall and the Swedish General Consulate, and of course the UBC Secretariat – all have been part of the cooperation between Kalmar and Gdańsk since 1999. Bringing music, light, happiness and joy has become a nice tradition. Last time I participated in the Lucia visit was in 2019.

I want to send my greetings to the UBC staff. The memories will stay in my heart forever.

enormous language difficulties, but they were cordial meetings. So it was great to visit a city that had been completely closed for so many years.

Another example was the UBC General Conference in Stockholm in 1999 with meetings in the city hall and the gala dinner in the Vasa Museum. The Vasa ship capsized and sank in Stockholm in 1628. After 333 years on the sea bed the mighty warship was salvaged and the voyage could continue. Today Vasa is the world’s best preserved 17th century ship. The most exciting was that some ministers of the Swedish government wished to participate. That shows the interest in UBC also on the national level.

To work with the UBC, most important and impressive were meetings and fruitful discussions with so many colleagues in almost one hundred cities around the Baltic Sea. It was also stimulating to visit so many areas and cities round the Baltic Sea, earlier unknown to me.

I myself have benefited greatly from the UBC contacts, with many of which I continue to work today in Sail Training International, an organisation responsible for the Tall Ships Races, organized every year in different port cities in Europe and very often in the Baltic Sea. In summer 2021 again many UBC cities, Turku, Mariehamn, Tallinn, Klaipėda and Szczecin are going to host the Tall Ships Races.

I am sure that UBC has played a role through exchange of experiences, positive development of municipal administrations, business and culture in the Baltic Sea Region.

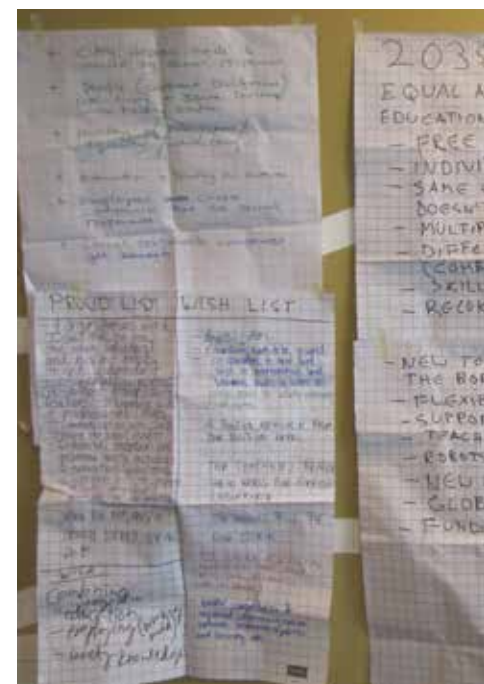
UBC wishes to be a platform to help cities in facing the refugee influx and migrations

Upon the initiative of the city of Rostock and the UBC, the **Conference “Impact of the European Refugees Crisis in the Cities of the Baltic Sea Region”** was organized in Rostock, on 14–16 March 2016. The role of municipalities, best practices and the needs, challenges and the chances faced by the cities were discussed. The conference gathered together around 70 civil servants from the region.

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

The follow-up conference: **“Sharing The European Dream” UBC Conference on Integration of New Citizens into the Urban Society**, was held in Rostock in 2018.

During eight workshops, using modern analytical methods, equipped with the lessons of the past, the participants from the Baltic Sea Region including migrants addressed the questions on the role of migration in the cities’ development. How should our cities be in 20 years? How to master the integration of new citizens as full members of the society? How to live, work and learn together to share the European dream?





ACCESS TO
MEANS

DUAL PLANS
CHANCES (BACKGR.
MATTERS)

LANGUAGES
BENT PATHS
(THE WITH ENG.)
SCHOOL
VALUABLE

KNOWLEDGE BREAKS
BARRIERS

SELF LEARNING
TEACHING, POLICIES
OF COACH
TEACH

LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

ALL POLICIES
BE SERVED BARRIERS,
TEACHING, POLICIES
TEACHING, POLICIES
TEACHING, POLICIES

GLOBAL CO-OPERATION
ACROSS THE CONTINENTS
FIELDS ETC

- GLOBAL EDUCATION
TEACHERS TRAINING,
STUDENT IN COOP
- MULTI-NATIONAL EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
- COMMON TOOLS
- GOOD STORIES
- COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- SHARING
- MORE WITH EDUCATION
- COMBINED THINKING
- HUMAN EDUCATION
+ SOCIAL SKILLS
FLEXIBLE
- HOBBY EDUCATION
X COMPANIES INVOLVED
- DIFFERENT LEVELS
- SINGLE TEAM COLLABORATION



Inclusive and Healthy Cities

The Commission was created already in 1991, with the lead cities of Rostock and Lübeck. During its history, the Commission was led by the cities of: Elbląg, Gdynia, Karlstad, Kristiansand, and Trelleborg.

In 2015, the Commission was changed into the Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission.

From the beginning, the Commission was dealing with the question of unemployment. The following events were organised: workshops on employment development in the Baltic region, preliminary survey of unemployment situation in UBC member cities, conference on “Labour Market and Social Policy” in the Baltic Sea Region 1997, Baltic Bicycle Ride for Charity 2003, Labour Market Project ROLAST 1998–99, Survey and then a book on the social state of elderly citizens in Baltic Cities 1999–2000.


Other topics were also present on the Commission’s agenda:

- Senior citizens and the city, 2011
- How to meet the demographic challenge in 2011
- The ageing society, “Social welfare, health promotion and preventive actions in the UBC cities”, 2012
- “Ways to a community based system of social services for vulnerable groups. Social welfare of vulnerable groups in the BSR”, 2013
- “People with disabilities in the era of the twenty-first century”, 2014
- People with disabilities in the era of the twenty-first century
- Open Social Spaces idea, 2015, 2016
- Design thinking, 2017
- Intergenerational City – Challenges in Demography and Opportunities for Sustainable Development, 2017



Karin Wohlgemuth, Rostock

UBC has been part of my professional life since June 1994. After the fall of the iron curtain, the UBC network opened the gate to the Baltic Sea Region, and immediately I had colleagues in ten nations! I was able to experience how many colleagues suddenly filled the new space in a creative way – what a mood! Today hardly anyone believes that the first contacts were made via fax machine and that we had to take care of the international activation of our telephones! And then, we experienced free, unrestricted discourse in the UBC workshops – today, so normal. That gave us a new self-confidence. Reliable project consortia were formed. Within a short time everybody had an extensive international network



In 1998 the Commission signed an agreement about collaboration between UBC and WHO. At the meeting in Copenhagen, WHO offered to provide political commitment and support to cities' health policy, sustainable campaigns, Healthy Cities Programmes, information about main policies, events and common projects for the bulletins and underlined that it was ready to provide experiences in form of lectures, seminars or written statements, as well as training and capacity building.

The **UBC Social Charter** was adopted at the VI UBC General Conference in Rostock in October 2001. The Charter includes the social goals for the UBC and its member cities. It shall be treated by the member cities as a guideline and it is up to each city to follow the UBC Social Charter. The Charter was translated into 10 languages.

of specialists. Coordinating former UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs from Rostock and Lübeck opened the view for problems and possible solutions in other cities. We experienced honest discussions in a flat hierarchy and the recognition of successful projects. Bulletins, reports, studies were made. Working in a foreign language was also new for all – and our English became more polished. UBC started like a boiling cauldron. Every event was a celebration – we worked so hard to prepare them, looking forward to the exchanges.

This spirit has been preserved! UBC stands for intercultural communication and intercommunal cooperation, based on mutual trust. This is what makes the UBC family so strong.

UBC has a future! It has matured and is more accurate in everything. It is still the strongest association of municipalities in the Baltic Sea Region. It is getting tapered right now, and that's a good thing, as the organisation becomes more dynamic. The united voices of the UBC member cities cannot be ignored neither in the EU, nor in the cooperation with the Baltic Sea Council.

Commission on Sport

The Commission on Sport was established in September 1995 to promote healthy lifestyle and sport among the youth, the disabled, and the elderly. The lead cities were Gdynia and Karlskrona. The Commission was included in the new Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission in 2015. Since 1996, the Commission has supported almost 70 projects and activities in the UBC member cities, e.g. “Bicycle Paths for Everyone”, Liepāja 2011; “Go, Seniors, go!”, Ustka 2009; “Gym at home!”, Turku 2007, “Cēsis Sport Festival for the Handicapped”, Cēsis 2002.

The Commission on Sport ran Social Campaigns, including conferences, grant sessions and competitions:

- “Without Limits” 2002–2003, aimed at the exchange of experience and cooperation to effectively solve problems of the disabled, as well as to eliminate social and mental barriers.
- “Always Active” 2008–2009, whose objective was to prevent social exclusion originating from advanced age and consequent physical mobility restrictions.
- “Sport is cool!” 2010–2012 to promote sport among young people.



International Art Competition “Dreams without Limits” was organized within the Commission on Sport Campaign “Without Limits”. 78 works from 18 cities from 7 countries were sent to the competition.



Conference “Without Limits” Gdynia, 2001.

Gender equality

The gender issues were brought up already in 1993 in UBC, when the Union initiated the idea of organizing a number of conferences dealing with the women's problems in the Baltic countries. The aim of the Network was to promote a gender perspective and work on gender equality.

Today, the Working Group on Gender Equality does not stand up for a particular commission. Its aim is to rather help strengthening the gender equality perspective in the work of all the UBC commissions. The main purpose of the group is to develop the strategy regarding the fact that gender equality concerns all the other components of creating an inclusive and attractive city, including health, culture or safety above the other aspects.

Issues considered as gender-related practically engage all the factors of improving local life and it is of great importance to strengthen and accelerate the work on gender equality in the UBC and its member cities and regions.

Local authorities play a key role in the work for gender equality because of their closeness to the citizens. Both women and men can take part in this work and both women and men will benefit from a gender equal society. Regardless of the personal coordination, the idea of managing the group is to make the decision processes horizontal and inclusive for all the other members, participants and allies.



Vyatcheslav Kalganov UBC Vice-President, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations, St. Petersburg

My deepest impressions are from the General Conference in Kaunas, Lithuania in October 2019.

I was pleasantly impressed by the process of changing the leadership and generations in the Presidium of the organization. Everything went as constructively as possible, with a high degree of trust, smoothly and somehow in a kindred way. Often the head of a family business, when transferring affairs to his son, encounters greater internal difficulties than it was during the transfer of the presidency from Per Bødker Andersen to Mantas Jurgutis.

I see in this the continuity of the Union's work and the opening up of new prospects for the organization.

In my opinion, establishing the post of First Vice-President of the Union and electing to this position Elina Rantanen, Chair of the City Council Turku, Finland, the sister-city for more than half a century of Saint-Petersburg, Russia, was also extremely important.

I consider this not only the success of the charming Elina, who certainly deserved it with her talents and significant contribution to the work of the Union, but also the wise decision of the Executive Committee of the Organization, as an important step on the way of establishing gender equality in the UBC. For Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Region, gender equality in governing bodies has already become a commonplace, but for our future partners, regional organizations in other parts of the world, it will become an important example of institutionalizing the role of women in the management of influential and recognized international organizations.

EU project “Gender equality in Local Agenda 21” 1999–2000

By answering questions under the headings Representation, Resources and Realia, (the 3R) activities can be analysed from a gender equality perspective. The analysis shows how power is shared between women and men and how gender aspects affect the activities. The UBC Board decided to use the 3R-method for analysing gender equality work in all UBC activities.





LVRLAC UBC Women's Network participation in the UBC-LVRLAC project funded by SIDA

The network helped create a similar network in the Lake Victoria Region.

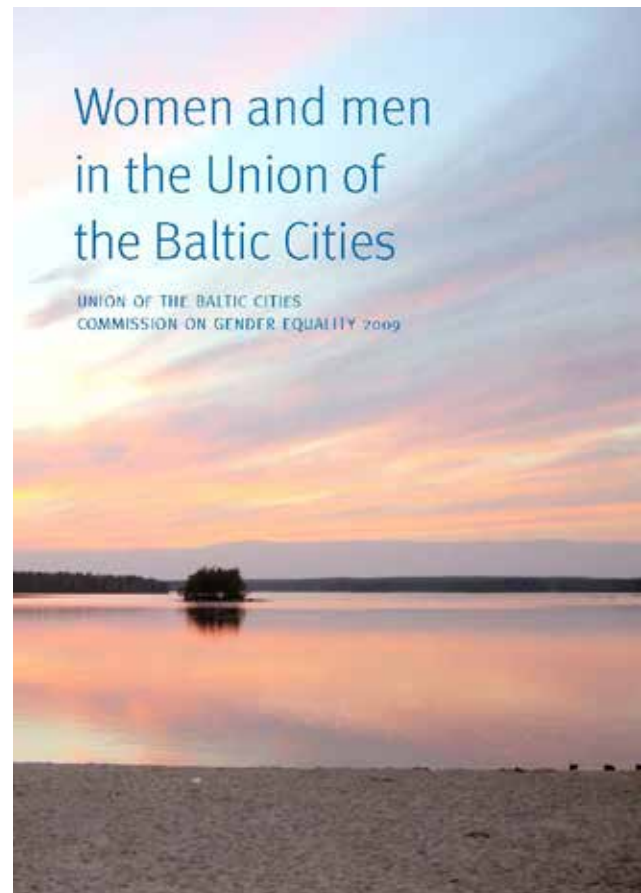
In February 2001 a seminar was held in the city of Entebbe, Uganda. 15 women representing cities from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda took part in the seminar. They decided to create the LVRLAC Women's Network and adopted a document stating that "the Women's Network desires to be a strong part of LVRLAC".

Reports "Women and Men in the UBC" 2009, 2013

The "Women and Men in the UBC" report 2009 describes the living conditions of women and men in the UBC area. The publication includes statistics on persisting gender related inequalities in political decision-making, as well as in economic, social and civil life. It also provides a framework for the concept of gender equality.

The report presents examples of good practices of gender equality work from some of the member cities, and by using examples from different countries it allows for flexibility and creativity in fulfilling the objectives of gender equality. It underlines how local authorities can promote gender equality by integrating a gender perspective into the development of services and infrastructure. The first report was presented at the X General Conference in Kristiansand 2009.

In 2013 an updated gender equality report "Women and men in the UBC 2013" was prepared. The new report was presented and distributed at the XI General Conference in Mariehamn, and then to all cities in the UBC, other organizations working with gender equality and stakeholders of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy.



The UBC Gender Equality Working Group in partnership with the City of Gdańsk and the European Solidarity Centre organized the conference on *Attractive and Inclusive Cities – Promotion of Equality of Men and Women in Local Life* in Gdańsk on 11 April 2017. Its aim was to get more cities to sign the *European Charter of Equality of Women and Men at the Local Level* by informing the participants what it means in practice.

Cultural Cities

The Commission on Culture, now Cultural Cities Commission, created in 1993, promotes and develops tools for the cultural field to enhance professionalisation. It creates strategic partnerships with national and international bodies dealing with policy making in the cultural field and stimulates third parties to provide research on cultural issues that are important for the local level. It wants to be a voice for culture on the local level.

Chairing cities: Szczecin, Visby, Vaasa, Kolding, Pori, and Kaunas.



Tarja Hautamäki, Vaasa *My UBC is a matter of culture*

In 2003 the coordinator of the international affairs of the city of Vaasa asked me to participate in the annual working session of the UBC Commission on Culture (now the Cultural Cities Commission), just to get familiar with UBC. To my big surprise, I was elected as the vice-chair and only one year later I found myself as a chairperson. Its former chairman Sławomir Szafranski had to step down after about 11 years of leading the Commission.

So, there I was in the challenging situation, trying to find out how to go on. Together with the key persons of that time, Olov Gibson (Visby), Charlotte Lundkvist (Umeå), Agrita Ozola (Tukums) and Olga Cherkasova (St. Petersburg), we worked hard. We have introduced, among other things, the statutes to stabilize the work, established the UBC Cultural Prize, started to rotate the annual sessions in the member cities, published some thematic reports, updated the catalogue of the cultural institutions on the website, etc.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to chair the Commission. It was an excellent chance to meet many, very inspiring people, dedicated to culture in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2011 I started to work for the Regional Council of Ostrobothnia, and it was my turn to say goodbye. But the past was leading to the present. The Regional Council and the Cultural Cities Commission have become partners in the project called Baltic Sea Cultural Cities that has a motto “water connects us, but culture unites us”.



Annual International Art & Culture Festival of the UBC

To develop active cooperation and cultural exchanges between the Baltic cities, the arts & culture festivals were organised:

- Kaliningrad, 1993. Motto: "Unity through rebirth"
- Kaliningrad, 1994
- Szczecin, 1995
- Szczecin, 1996, Motto: "Art of Musica"

They covered various spheres of art such as: music, theatre, cinema, dance, folklore art. The programme included concerts, performances, exhibitions and sport competitions.

N.E.W.S. the contemporary art exhibition 1999–2000

The event presented art of the 90's, panel discussions and video presentations. Around 265 Baltic artists participated in the show. It was presented in Riga, Szczecin and Visby.

Cultural Prize 2006–2013

The UBC Cultural Prize was awarded for extraordinary achievement by artistic groups or associations working in the field of cultural activity in UBC member cities. While allocating the prize the Commission was taking into consideration various priorities in accordance with topical cultural tendencies. Each year a special theme was chosen, e.g. "Multicultural dialog", "Creative use of information", "New Footsteps of Youth Culture".

Since 2006 the prize has been given to Cēsis City Council (Latvia) 2006, Umeå/Library 2007 – project (Sweden) 2007, Jyväskylä 2008, Gdańsk 2009, Liepāja 2010, Visby/Rakvere 2011, Tartu/Cēsis in 2012, Art Line in 2012 – an international art project investigating and challenging the concept of public space.



Sławomir Szafrąński, Szczecin

UBC – "...the University of Baltic Region..."

During the 7th Executive Board Meeting in Turku, Finland on 4 September 1993, UBC decided to develop its activities in Culture, Environment, Transportation, Telecommunication and Social Affairs. The Board proposed to establish five Commissions in these areas and each of them to be led by two cities from different countries. The decisions about Commissions and its leaders were accepted during the II General Conference of UBC in Svetlogorsk, Kaliningrad District in Russia on 24–25 September 1993.

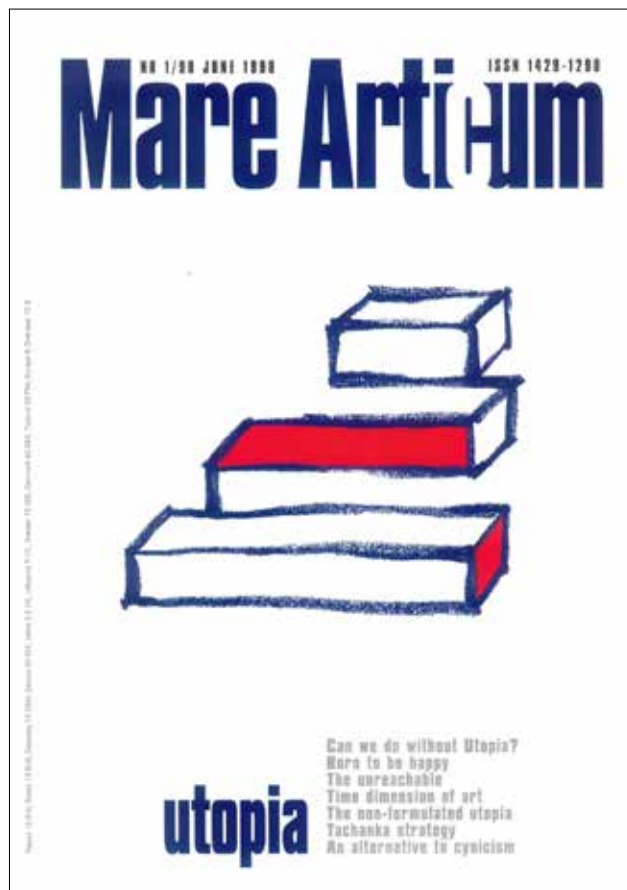
I have heard about UBC for the first time only two weeks before visiting Svetlogorsk, where I had to present the Action Plan of the Commission on

Mare Articum

Mare Articum was created in 1995 as a cooperative platform for the development of regional artistic and cultural exchanges, by the UBC Commission on Culture, the City of Szczecin and coordinated by the National Museum in Szczecin.

The important parts of Mare Articum were: the Baltic Contemporary Art Biennial, international exhibitions and partnerships, Mare Articum Magazine.

More than 300 artists, performers and musicians participated in the Baltic Contemporary Art Biennial's eight editions (1995–2015). The part of the event were seminars aimed at drawing artists, curators, critics, collectors, institutional directors, politicians and the general public together, enabling exchanges of ideas and information on topics relevant to each exhibition's curatorial theme.



“Mare Articum” Magazine was published semi-annually in the years 1995–2013, in Polish and in English. It addressed the dominant themes and leading trends in contemporary art during, including Beauty, Nomadism, Utopia, Autonomy of Art, Art and Politics, Globalization, New Art of St. Petersburg.

Culture for 1993–1995. Szczecin and Visby (Sweden) led the Commission.

I have worked with the UBC for over 10 years. And for me it was a kind of “the university studies on the Baltic Region”. I could discover that part of Europe – its people, cultures, rich history, etc. The UBC experience was also a solid practice of democratic, international cooperation – so important in Poland after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

I have met hundreds of interesting persons and visited many fantastic places in 10 Baltic countries. It is impossible to present all the names connected with activities of the Commission, so I mention just several friends from that period: Olov Gibson (Visby), Björn Holmvik (Bergen), Riitta Hurme (Espoo), Yrjo Larmola (Helsinki), Magda Lewoc and Marlena Chybowska (Szczecin).

Now I work at the University of Szczecin at the Conference and Educational Centre, located in a historic manor house in the village of Kulice. The University Centre was established in 2002 to conduct social education, academic exchanges and knowledge transfer via conferences, seminars, workshops, summer schools, as well as cultural and artistic events. The Centre prepares to develop projects with Baltic partners.



Photo: stock.adobe.com

CCC teams up with BSR organisations for strategic partnerships and projects:

Regional identity. 2018–2020, Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Cooperation in the project “Baltic Sea Cultural City“

Professionalization of the cultural and creative field / audience development. 2018–2019, ARS Baltica. Cooperation in the project “ARS BALTICA Creative Dialogue (ABCD)“

Urban transformation through culture. 2019–2020, Danish Cultural Institute. Cooperation in the project “UrbCulturalPlanning”.



Cultural Cities Commission meeting during the XV General Conference in Kaunas, 16 October 2019

Cultural Cities Commission webinars

The webinars held in 2020 were devoted to the new conditions in the world pandemic, the questions and challenges that the new worldwide situation has brought.

At the first webinar those questions were tackled: What is the role of the governments and cities in the Baltic Sea Region in sustaining culture during and after the pandemic period? What specific measures are taken in different countries and what is up to come? How can the cultural sector transform/adapt its ways of operating in these stressful times? What are the new ways and formats to sustain? Invited speakers and the participants discussed and exchanged their worries and ideas.

The second one was devoted to the topic: “Pandemic and border closures – how to sustain cultural exchange?”

Threats of the self-isolation of countries in the face of the quarantine: how does it affect various communities? Is there still a possibility for an intercultural exchange inside and outside the countries? The second part of the webinar discussed the new notion of a cultural mobility: as a cross-border movement is suspended for an indefinite period, what specific formats of international cooperation/representation are to be used further? Is there a need for creating new tools or platforms, or is it that we do not take an advantage of already existing ones?





Youth in the spotlight



“Hey, we’ve got something to say!” later transformed into “Nothing about us, without us” has been a motto of the work on mainstreaming the youth issues in the cities and BSR development and also in the UBC agenda.

Youthful cities

In 1999 the first ideas to include views of young persons in the UBC work were fostered. In order to have a better platform for activities, the network was proposed to act as an informal structure. The UBC Network on Youth Issues was established in 2003, then in 2005 the network was transformed into a Commission on Youth Issues and in 2015 the Commission changed the name into Youthful Cities Commission.

The Commission consists of young people, as well as civil servants and politicians dealing with youth issues on the local level. It is a platform for young citizens to express their views and carry out initiatives and projects. It promotes youth engagement in city politics. The Commission also monitors the UBC agenda from a youth perspective.

Transforming the Network on Youth Issues into the Commission gave a new impetus for the young leaders who have been coming up with many ideas and projects, e.g. EU co-funded “Different History, Common Future”, “Life, Media and Participation – Youth in Baltic Sea Region” and ongoing “Baltic Sea Youth Platform”.



Dmitrijs Zverevs, Chair of the UBC Youthful Cities Commission, Riga


Learning by living the UBC

My UBC story started in 2006 when the city of Riga joined the Commission on Youth Issues. Back then I had just started working for the municipality, so participation in the activities of the Commission provided a lot of opportunities to explore best practices in youth work and participation, as well as in international cooperation.

The UBC appeared to be much broader than just the Commission's meetings. I helped to organize several Youth Conferences took part in numerous projects, and joined the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being for some time.

For me, the UBC has always been about people and the atmosphere, about the feeling of community and joint pursuit of the thriving Baltic Sea Region. It has been the source of knowledge to draw inspiration from and a safe hub to return to when looking for a reliable project partner.

While looking forward to the next thirty years of the UBC, I am grateful to all those who once took the courage to expand the scope of the UBC into the youth dimension.



“My dream city is open for new ideas, it has a lot of spare time facilities, it can offer everyone a job and it has a lot of education possibilities and is an open-minded city.”

(“Book of Demands”)



Youth conferences

A dialogue between the youngsters and politicians have been enhanced through the idea of **youth conferences** that have been held every two years since 2003. The young participants representing youth city councils, schools, NGOs have been discussing together with the civil servants and city politicians such questions as youth influence and involvement, tolerance and intercultural dialogue, equality, unemployment, and many more.

The UBC approach developed from “Talk about the youth” to “Talk with the youth” and the youth conferences have been evolving, getting more and more intertwined with the UBC General Conferences. At the General Conference in Växjö, Sweden, the young participants presented their solutions, ideas and comments at the plenary session called “Listening to the voices of tomorrow”, which can be watched on UBC YouTube.

- “Young voices of the Baltic Sea Region”, 2003, Kalmar, Sweden
- “Young and active in the Baltic Sea Region”, 2005, Vilnius, Lithuania
- “Under the surface”, 2007, Pärnu, Estonia
- “Bridges over the Sea”, 2009, Kristiansand, Norway
- Youth Seminar “Your Lifestyle. Your Choice for Happy Life in Our World”, 2011, Liepāja, Latvia.
- “The Baltic Youth”, 2013, Mariehamn, Finland
- “Youth for equality, equity and peace”, 2015, Gdynia, Poland
- “Migration, participation and leadership”, 2017, Växjö, Sweden
- 9th Youth Conference, 2019, Kaunas, Lithuania



“Listening to the voices of tomorrow”
Plenary Session at the XIV General Conference,
Växjö, 24–27 October 2017



Discussion with the youngsters at the session
“Cities promoting and using smart solutions in practice”,
XIII UBC General Conference, Gdynia, 27–30 October 2015
Photo: Piotr Manasterski



On 8–11 June 2019 over 100 young people aged 18–25 attended the Baltic Youth Camp in Gdańsk. The camp elaborated the Youth Declaration that was presented to important stakeholders and politicians at the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Annual Forum where this year’s topic was “Circular and sharing economy as an answer to demographic changes and environmental challenges in the Baltic Sea Region”.

During these four days the youth participated in seminars, workshops and presentations related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Topics such as waste management, forestry, marine life and education were discussed.

The Youth Declaration contains 10 proposals that are both feasible and realistic in terms of implementation. The proposals include different projects that are generated and planned by the participants of the Youth Camp.



Photo: stock.adobe.com



On the European arena

The voice of the Baltic Sea youth has been heard on the European arena. Youthful Cities Commission in cooperation with other BSR organisations: CBSS, BSSSC, Euroregion Baltic, organized several seminars and conferences within and in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Fora. They were aimed at including young people in the discussions about the future, sustainable development or climate change. Also, the questions of the youth empowerment and involvement, democracy challenges and digitalisation were raised at the events.

Youth seminar "Nothing about us without us - making it work!",
8th EUSBSR Annual Forum Berlin on 13-14 June 2017.
Photo: Irene Pendolin



Youth Employment

UBC General Conference decided to establish a Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-Being in Mariehamn in October 2013. It offers the UBC members many services and networking opportunities, e.g. seminars, workshops, study visits. During the last years the Task Force has strengthened a cooperation with the EUSBSR Flagship School to Work (S2W). The Flagship aims to strengthen transnational cooperation between stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region in the

field of education and works in order to prevent early school leaving and develop new support methods for vulnerable groups of students/youth, which means that their goals are parallel to the ones of the Task Force.



Photo: stock.adobe.com



Matti Mäkelä, Chair of the UBC TF on Youth Employment and Well-Being, Turku

My Journey with the UBC

The theme of the UBC General Conference in 2012 was combating youth unemployment and marginalisation. Because of this, Finnish member cities had appointed their own experts to the working group, which was tasked with preparing the programme to promote youth employment and well-being.

The city of Turku took the leading role in this work and I was asked to lead the working group. At that time I was told that the work would take about half a year. Well, little did I know.

The UBC Programme to Promote Youth Employment and Well-Being was introduced in Mariehamn at the General Conference. Discussions in



UBC Task Force on
Youth Employment and Well-Being

FINAL REPORT: The Good, The Bad and The Next Practices

The report “**The Good, The Bad and The Next Practices**” was published. It serves as a handbook for professionals and others interested in the topic. It presents concrete measures and raises questions to be solved in the future and is a valuable tool to combat youth unemployment and marginalization.

Mariehamn clearly indicated that UBC Member Cities were interested in working together to tackle youth unemployment and marginalization. That is why, the UBC GC decided to establish the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being.

During the past seven years, the Task Force has been very active and successful. We have arranged over 20 study visits, seminars and workshops, collected best practices and implemented new projects.

*I want to highlight two specific outcomes. In 2015 the TF published *The Good, the Bad and the Next Practices Report* on implementing the Youth Guarantee in the BSR. Secondly, in May 2019 we held the Youth Guarantee Conference in Brussels, together with the European Committee of the Regions.*

In 2020–2021 the TF is and will be concentrating on three themes: STEAM, attractiveness of the VET and basic skills.

My journey with the UBC family is packed with good memories. I have met many innovative, funny and inspiring people, found new friends, learnt a lot, and as I hope, I have been able to do my part in supporting youth employment and well-being.

Youth Education

In 1998–2015 youth education and exchange were also handled by the UBC Commission on Education. One of its flagship projects was **Erken Laboratory Research School** organized for the science students aged 15–20 from the UBC member cities. The main objective of the Research

School was to let the students work with scientific research. The participants were responsible for asking and answering the scientific questions, planned and designed field- and laboratory work. They worked independently in the laboratories, and reported research results.





Projects

“Different History – Common Future!” Youth as a resource for a sustainable future in the Baltic Sea region 2007–2008 project included tolerance trips, NGO meetings, EVS (European Voluntary Service) seminars and a Youth Conference. One of its outcomes was the “Book of Possibilities”. Around 200 young people participated in this project.

Tolerance Trips with youth from Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Denmark and Germany were made into the German-Danish border region. During those trips young participants gained intercultural, historical knowledge, experienced tolerance and cultural diversity during meetings with local minority groups.

“Life, Media and Participation – Youth in Baltic Sea Region”, 2012–2013.

The main theme of the project was how democratic life worked in different cities and countries and how young people can influence it.

The activities of the project consisted of:

- an intercultural seminar in Tallinn, during which youngsters from Sweden, Denmark, Latvia and Estonia exchanged their experience on youth participation and Youth Council work
- local round tables with politicians on young lifestyles, subcultures and youth democracy combined with workshops on creative techniques and making the campaigns
- the exhibition of campaigns in the cities and virtual Internet exhibition.



*Natalia Vecvagare, Liepāja
Windy greetings on the UBC family
30-year Anniversary from Liepāja*

The most valuable touch in every cooperation process is always people, because only then the cooperation will “live”. I remember joining the UBC family in the early 2000s, feeling that amazingly positive charge finally swimming in



Photo: Lukas Kosowski

the international waters I studied and aspired to. The UBC was the missing puzzle piece – that grip of the world. That grip was our endeavour in 2011 and we embraced it in all the 270% (as the number of participants who came to Liepāja) when we accepted the baton to hold the XI General Conference. Many of the UBC colleagues still remember that time spent together, planning and implementing this mega-project (Well, at least for us it was), which we here in Liepāja later on nicknamed “The Grand Conference” (Because until then no such large international conference actually happened here). This kind of memories bring me back to the message roots – it is people who are UBC. The family. You may not remember me, but by the time of the conference I knew each of you by name and position, I knew your personal interests and preferences, I tried my best to get back to every one of you with your questions. Thank you for that grip of the world!

Baltic Sea Youth Platform

The Youthful Cities Commission has successfully applied for the EU funding to co-finance its events. Its project activities include also the cooperation within ERASMUS+ funded project Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP), implemented together with CBSS (lead applicant), BSSSC, Euroregion Baltic.

The platform is to empower the youth in the Baltic Sea Region. The project focuses on three areas:

- To improve the political impact of youth on decision-making in the Baltic Sea Region
- To develop tools for better knowledge transfer, as youth involvement in policy making is subject to high fluctuation in human resources
- To serve as a facilitator for various innovative projects relying on the interests and capacities of youth in a broad range of policy areas.





Support of the
Programme
European Union



Photo: Dennis Borup Jacobsen, City of Aarhus

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Vancouver, showing a mix of urban architecture and green spaces. In the foreground, there's a large, modern building with a curved, metallic facade. To its right is a large, green park area with several trees and a paved walkway. In the background, there are more buildings, including a prominent church spire, and a body of water. The sky is clear and blue.

Smart development

The UBC and its Commissions believe one of the basis of increasing quality of life of inhabitants is sustainable, smart and safe development.

Globalization affects increasingly the economic development of cities. Competition is growing and challenges have become more diversified. Regional cooperation and collective actions are key for future success. To be competitive and resilient, the cities have to invest in smart development, digitalisation, and innovations.

Smart and Prospering Cities

The questions of smart development in the UBC were dealt with by the Commission on Tourism (established in 1996), Commission on Business (established in 1997), and the Commission on Information Society. They were merged into today's Smart and Prospering Cities Commission. It offers a reliable network of administration experts, entrepreneurs and scientists, runs seminars and projects on city attractiveness and innovation. In the last years, it has been focusing on attractiveness of cities, promotion of innovation and digitalisation.

Challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the UBC cities had been seeking for solutions how to cope with short- and long-term consequences of the crisis. To provide some good ideas to the tourism sector, the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission organized a webinar in June 2020. 60 experts from the sector of tourism and marketing discussed the ways out of the lockdown, future marketing of the region, and changes in the tourism industry. The main findings of the webinar were that cooperation was more important in the crisis than ever before and that innovation and sustainability were the future of tourism. In 2021 the Commission inaugurated a series of webinars under the main topic "Resilient Cities". The resilient city, designed to meet challenges and crises, is discussed as a way to underpin the continuity of our urban societies. How do cities absorb and recover from past shocks and how do they prepare for future ones? Together the current thinking and practises are explored how sustainable growth, innovation and digitalisation can contribute to the resilient city.



Wolfgang Schmidt, Chair of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, Kiel

We are facing increasing challenges, like environmental protection, globalized economy or the path to a good educational or health care system. The importance of cities as actors to deal with these challenges to find solutions is increasing. Regional and transnational cooperation is the key factor for the future viability of modern cities, in particular. That is why, I have always been proud that the City of Kiel is one of the founding partners of the UBC. I have chaired the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission for many years.



A first Commission's event "Resilient Cities" took place on 23 April 2021 where **Ulf Kämpfer** (Mayor of Kiel), **Niels Højberg** (CEO of Aarhus) and **Mantas Jurgutis** (UBC President) in the light of the corona pandemic discussed the question of how cities absorb and recover from past shocks and how they prepare for future ones.
Photo: Pepe Lange

The UBC is definitely the only international organization in the world whose long-time President Per Bødker Andersen sat and performed well on the stage, as he did on the podium of the Executive Board. Humanity, vitality and professionalism characterize this important network.

Our union is a successful model for interregional cooperation that has become even more professional and powerful in recent years. We, in Kiel, have learnt a lot from our partners and made lots of friends. I am grateful to be part of this organization.



Heiki Hansen, Mayor of Elva

UBC: good experiences, productive contacts and friendly people

My feelings of UBC that have developed over the past eight years of working with the organisation are considerably positive. The cooperation within almost a hundred town-twinings has been exceptionally good for Elva municipality. I am sure this organisation offers a new era of communication between individual municipalities, instead of traditional twin-towns.

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn through experiences. UBC especially offers the possibility of ensuring contacts between large and small

The increasing digitalization is changing all municipal processes and it redefines relations between a city and a society, and also between a city and a region. The

seminar held in Malmö on 29 May 2018 by the Union of the Baltic Cities and the Baltic Development Forum (BDF) gathered answers to this disruptive revolution.

The Commission has been focusing on the following topics in the previous years:

- “Support of local business” and “e-city”
- “E-dimension: Public and Private partnership”
- “To meet, to learn, to socialize”
- Science and Technology Parks
- Talent Attraction Forum
- UBC Baltic Sailing Camp
- Innovation Ecosystems
- Attractive Cities
- From a growing into a great city

Also, two publications came out: “Economic Statistical Information leaflet” and “Technology Parks and Business Incubators”.



UBC Business & Tourism Commission, Kristiansand Talent Attraction Forum, Kristiansand, 8–9 April 2014, Participants of the Kristiansand Talent Forum: Hans Otto Lund, Anthony Jay, Øyvind Lyngen Laderud, Wolfgang Schmidt, Mirjam Külm, Lukas Wedemeyer, Jørgen Kristiansen, Waldek Sypianski



Smart and Prospering Cities Commission Joint Workshop with BDF, Malmö, 29 May 2018.

municipalities. It is great to see that all representatives on both sides can feel like they are operating as equals, no matter whether someone comes from a municipality of ten thousand inhabitants or a million.

UBC has changed a lot during the last decade. Its commissions have been activated and numerous interesting, useful meetings and workshops have been organized. My colleagues have gained great experiences from the commissions' work, especially from the Planning Cities Commission and its workshops.

The former UBC President Per Bødker Andersen used to start meetings with the words “Dear UBC family”. He was right. UBC is a large family, full of helpful, friendly, nice people who are ready to support each other. I am sure that it will remain that way for a very long time.

Planning Cities

Issues, such as how to face the city planning problems of today and tomorrow, open and friendly public spaces, green areas, and gentrification, have been on the Planning Cities Commission's (former Commission on Urban Planning) agenda.

Established in 1998 to promote interaction and cooperation between Baltic Sea cities and towns in

the field of urban planning and construction, the Commission has been aiming to increase the awareness of the issues facing urban planning, construction and architecture. It has formed a network of experts, including town planners, master planners, regional planners, architects, civil engineers and other professionals committed to improving the quality of life in the Baltic Sea cities.



Sirpa Kalio, Helsinki

City Planning in good and funny company since 1997

In one fell swoop I joined the UBC network in April 2001 when Jussi Kautto, my boss at that time asked me to join him in the Commission on Urban Planning seminar in Riga. Jussi had founded the "CUP" as we called the Commission in 1997 together with the late Lars Brattberg, Town Planning Chief of Malmö, and Tomas Sikström, Planning Chief of Umeå with the support of their respective mayors. Their first statement was that the Baltic Cities wanted to be visible on the maps, because in the end of the 1990's Google Maps had not existed yet and printed maps often showed Denmark and maybe some part of the southern Sweden, but most of the Scandinavia and the Baltic countries were not visible.



Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the UBC Planning Cities Commission, Gdynia

My first contact with the Union of the Baltic Cities was in April 2005 in Gdynia at the Commission of Urban Planning Seminar “Cities as regional engines – Improving the city core”, which I was co-organizing. I was at the beginning of my professional path – a new employee in the Gdynia City Planning Department, with a two year-experience in the private architectural office in Gdańsk, three years after graduating from the Architecture and Urban Planning at Gdańsk University of Technology and one year after initiating Ph.D. Studies at the same university. .

The seminar astonished me. I was amazed by the methods of exchanging ideas during common work and open talking about good and bad experiences. I met many friendly and open-minded, really fantastic people, who wanted to share their knowledge. That was the first time I could feel the magic of being part of the UBC Family. The fact is that around the Baltic Sea we have similar problems and challenges and that we are all committed to improving the quality of life in our cities.

Since that time, I have taken part in eighteen seminars of the UBC Commission of Urban Planning/Planning Cities Commission. During the workshops I very often served as a workgroup leader. A few times I have been honoured to be a keynote speaker and to give lectures, co-organised several seminars. In 2007, I obtained professional powers in spatial planning and became a member of the North District Chamber of Urban Planners, defended my doctoral dissertation on the “Continuity of public space within buildings; new places in-between building and the city space” (in 2010). In 2016, I became the member of the Planning Cities Commission Steering Group and was promoted to become Urban Planning Team Leader in the Gdynia City Planning Office. Since 2018 I have been chairing the UBC Planning Cities Commission, a great challenge and obligation for me. Since 2019 I have been working as Deputy Director of the City Planning Office.

As you can see, UBC has accompanied most of my professional career, fulfilled and enriched it. It has offered me fantastic opportunities to share my knowledge in the Baltic Sea and also to share the lessons learnt from the Baltic cities with my colleagues in Gdynia.

I am grateful to Mayor of Gdynia Wojciech Szczurek, Deputy Mayor Katarzyna Gruszecka-Spychała and former Deputy Mayor Marek Stępa for supporting the Union of the Baltic Cities and my involvement in its work.

The CUP slowly grew in to a vibrant network of professional planners, architects, researchers, engineers and sociologists from their city organisations around the Baltic Sea Region. At first, we met once a year, but as we managed to get economic support from the Interreg IIIB programme for the ABC – Alliance of the Baltic Cities in 2003–2005, we started to meet twice a year. After the ABC Project we remained stuck to the schedule of arranging City Planning seminars every spring and autumn. As the Chairperson of the CUP between 2006 and 2011, I was responsible together with the Commission Steering Group and host organisations of many Baltic cities for organizing seminars on current city planning themes. I am delighted to see that today’s Planning Cities Commission is still actively working and applying the same working methods as we developed in the early years of the CUP. I wish the UBC and especially the Planning Cities Commission many more active and cooperative years!

The outcomes of the Commission's work contribute to better quality of life in the Baltic Sea cities, positive economic development by initiating dialogue between city residents, the private the public sectors, sustainability and attractiveness.

The Commission organised more than 30 seminars, all of which were very much appreciated by the cities as they provided valuable outcomes and were very fruitful in terms of integration of specialists from the Baltic cities.

Architects, urban planners, civil engineers and other professionals have been working on solutions for planning problems or subjects indicated by the host city. They focused on infrastructure and commerce, life and cultural heritage, public facilities, transportation, and planning methods and many more. Concepts, plans and spatial development projects have been prepared free of charge. The results have been later presented to local politicians and media.



ABC – Alliance of Baltic Cities – project

The Commission's flagship project was ABC – Alliance of Baltic Cities, financed by the Interreg III B Programme. It started in March 2003 and lasted for three years. 27 UBC cities from 7 countries in the BSR took part. The Polish partners received the financial support from PHARE. Lead party was the City of Malmö with architect Lars Brattberg as a project leader. The project engaged city planners and architects working in municipalities. The ABC project held six seminars and project meetings in: Kolding, Vaasa (2003); Liepāja, Viljandi (2004); Gdynia, Malmö (2005).

How did we work?

The participants worked three days at every seminar on the following issues: studying local conditions in the host city; planning legislation in the country of visit; burning current planning questions; workshops on how to solve local planning problems; workshops on developed urban management, cities as regional engines, renewal of city districts. The project resulted in networking and exchange of best practices.



Photo: UBC Planning cities seminar in Umeå 2013. The author and Isabella Forsgren to the left.

Tomas Strömberg, Umeå

To gain perspective on the municipality of Umeå's participation in UBC Planning Cities Commission, I had asked two former members of the Commission's Steering Committee: Tomas Sikström, former Planning Manager, and Isabella Forsgren, Strategist on Infrastructure and former Head of Planning department, what UBC meant for them. Tomas participated in work between 1999–2003 and Isabella in 2010–2013, both as members of the UBC Planning Cities Steering Committee. For Tomas, from the beginning it was a lot of preparatory work as Umeå, Malmö and Helsinki were commissioned to form the Urban Planning Commission (later Planning Cities Commission). The City Councillor of Malmö and Umeå and the City Director in Helsinki agreed in 1998–1999 to take responsibility for UBC's collaboration in these matters.



The urban planners from the UBC member cities met around the following challenges in the recent years:

- New dynamics in Söderhamn, Sweden 22–25 May 2016
- Public Realm Strategies on Waterfront in Klaipėda, Lithuania, 16–19 October 2016
- Spatial development of the city of Rostock within Interreg Johann network, Rostock, Germany, 14–17 May 2017
- Sustainable urban transformation in a small historic city, Visby, Sweden, 21–24 October 2018
- Urban green areas, Gdynia, Poland, 27–30 October 2019

Isabella Forsgren added that the Commission's work had an important role for the municipality for several reasons. These were: an inspiration for the daily work, possibilities to exchange experiences and make comparisons in tricky planning challenges.

For both of them, the membership in the Commission has been important to attract new employees, for team-building purposes and developing skills. It also offered opportunities for exchanging experiences between comprehensive and detailed planners in different countries around the Baltic Sea. We could create partnerships in development projects on urban development. It was a chance to gain the deeper knowledge of the planning systems and cultural differences. To our surprise, after a few meetings, we had discovered that our planning issues around the Baltic sea were very similar, despite different cultures, legislation, and organizations.

Isabella thought that the seminar we held in Umeå 2013 was the best memory and I agree. Umeå proved to be at its best with the wonderful, spring weather. The seminar was held in cooperation with the Committee of Gender. Many hours of pre-planning to make an interesting programme and the topic of the seminar "Building the inclusive city – with focus on gender equality and children's perspective". Maybe Umeå was a little bit before our time, the topic did not appeal to everyone, but today social sustainability is really in focus.

Together with former members, I would like to congratulate UBC on the Anniversary and wish another thirty years to come.

Baltic Sea Region as a Tourist Destination

The Commission on Tourism was established in 1996 to promote tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. It promoted the Baltic Sea Region as a tourist destination and supported exchange of information and traffic, development of the tourist infrastructure, active and

healthy lifestyle. In 2015 it merged into the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission.

The lead cities:
Kalmar, Palanga, Koszalin, Szczecin, Ustka

Activities of the Commission:

- Training courses within Baltic Tourism Academy (January–May 2001), focusing on specific topics concerning working with events.
Route: Kalmar (event marketing), Karlskrona (the idea behind), Tallinn (financing), Gdynia (organisation), Vilnius (advertising), Rostock (sponsoring) and finally Nyköping F. (measuring effects).
- Annual meetings with main topics devoted to e.g. “Challenges & opportunities of tourism in BSR”, “Towards sustainable tourism in BSR”, “How to make the Baltic Sea Region more accessible and attractive”, “Baltic Sea region identity in the light of the UBC Strategy”.



Arkadiusz Klimowicz, Mayor of Darłowo

Travelling is the best form of education. This popular saying fits perfectly with the specificity of the Union of the Baltic Cities. Darłowo has been taking advantage of the experience of individual member cities only for several years. And each journey, each meeting is not only an opportunity to meet people full of energy and interesting ideas. It is also an opportunity to learn about the specifics of other cities and solutions aimed at increasing the quality of life of residents. We try to transfer the best and most interesting ideas to Darłowo.



Magda Marszałkowska, Malbork

My personal memory with the Union of the Baltic Cities goes back to 2001 and the UBC General Conference in Rostock. I was representing the city of Malbork as the Mayor's Plenipotentiary for Tourism and Promotion. I do not remember many things from that time, but one thing stayed in my memory – the hospitality and friendliness of the UBC colleagues and the Secretariat.

I felt part of a great family of friendly, open people with a great sense of humour and willingness to work and create great projects in the Baltic Sea countries.

One of the projects was the one of Baltic Welcome Centres. If it were not for UBC, I would not have developed and implemented this project in Malbork.



Photo: stock.adobe.com

Sometimes it is a general concept, for example, for port investments, and sometimes it is one detail related to the selection of a specific building material. You never know when and how a given place or person can inspire us to act. And this is undoubtedly the strength of the Union of the Baltic Cities. These do not have to be only matters related to large projects, because literally everything attracts my attention, such as an unusual type of fountain, bench or garbage can. I observe carefully, report and discuss ideas among the residents of Darłowo.

On the other hand, we also want to share our experiences and innovative solutions. The first example: a nature footbridge built on piles on a dune over the protected area. In Darłowo, we succeeded in implementing this unusual project. It is an extraordinary tourist attraction, and on the other hand, it does not interfere with the natural environment. UBC inspires all of us to act.

I received all the know-how from the city of Kalmar (as a member of the Commission of Tourism) and then I wrote a project and managed to implement it in my home town.

We opened up our beautiful Malbork Welcome Centre in 2007 and it became one of the TOP two tourism centres in Poland with a lot of prizes and certificates.

Although I am working for the luxury industry at the moment, I will always remember those 14 years of commitment, professionalism, unforgettable atmosphere and great people.

Wishing you another 30 years of great functioning, let our memories stay in our hearts forever!

Thank you the Union of the Baltic Cities, thank you Anna and Paweł! Congratulations on the 30th Anniversary to all the members!

Have a dazzling anniversary!

Baltic Welcome Center

The project, co-financed by INTERREG IIIB Programme, aimed at creating an international standard for visitor's centres in the Baltic Sea Region. Kalmar, Växjö, Malbork, Cēsis, Palanga were among the project partners. Budget total ca: 1.900.000 EUR



Ancientimes 2003–2005

The INTERREG IIIB project on how to integrate culture, history, education and tourism in one concept, aimed at establishing the basis for an authentic heritage site, and at developing Ancient Times' villages/ museums into successful tourist attractions.

The concept of “edutainment” is central within the project offering both education in history and entertainment value. This was realised by interactive exhibitions, historical scenarios, visitor involvement and do-it-yourself elements. Partners were: Kalmar, Cēsis, Medieval Museum in Nykøbing F.

INTERREG IIIB budget: 1.800.000 EUR, PHARE budget: 253.718 EUR.



Robertas Trautmanas, Palanga

In 1993 Palanga Town Municipality was accepted as the UBC member and became one of the first cities in the Baltic States involved in its activities, seminars, conferences, youth and cultural projects organized by the Tourism, Business, Education, and Culture Commissions. Our city has been regularly publishing information and articles in UBC newsletters and bulletins about Palanga's infrastructure, social and health system, sustainable city development, the vision and implemented projects, city news and the most significant cultural events of the year. I remember an interesting fact that Palanga had suggested

Enjoy the South Baltic!

This cross-border project was co-financed from European Development Fund within the South Baltic Programme 2007–2013 and implemented by partners from Poland, Lithuania and Germany. The role of the Commission on Tourism was to promote and disseminate information about the project.



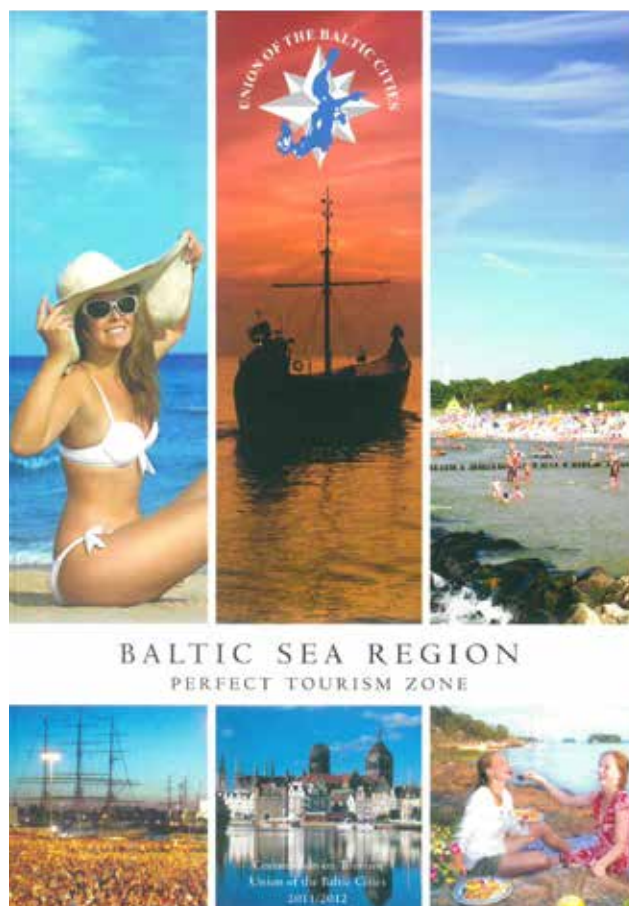
Catalogue “Baltic Sea Region – Perfect Tourism zone”

The publication had 3 editions, in 2007, 2008, 2011. The catalogue presented UBC member cities tourist information centres/offices/welcome centres together with member cities description and their most interesting places for tourists, including the surrounding areas. The main aim was to build the network of tourism information centres from all over of Baltic Sea Region.

AGORA 2.0 Heritage Tourism for increased BSR Identity

AGORA 2.0 aimed at strengthening the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region, based on its rich natural and cultural heritage. Substitutional for numerous assets, the project dealt with five concrete cultural and natural heritage potentials which were seen as possible bearers of a common identity: Castles; Red-brick gothic; Forests; Shifting sand dunes; Stones / rocks (as geological potentials).

24 Partners from 9 BSR Countries + Associated Partners from Russia (Kaliningrad)



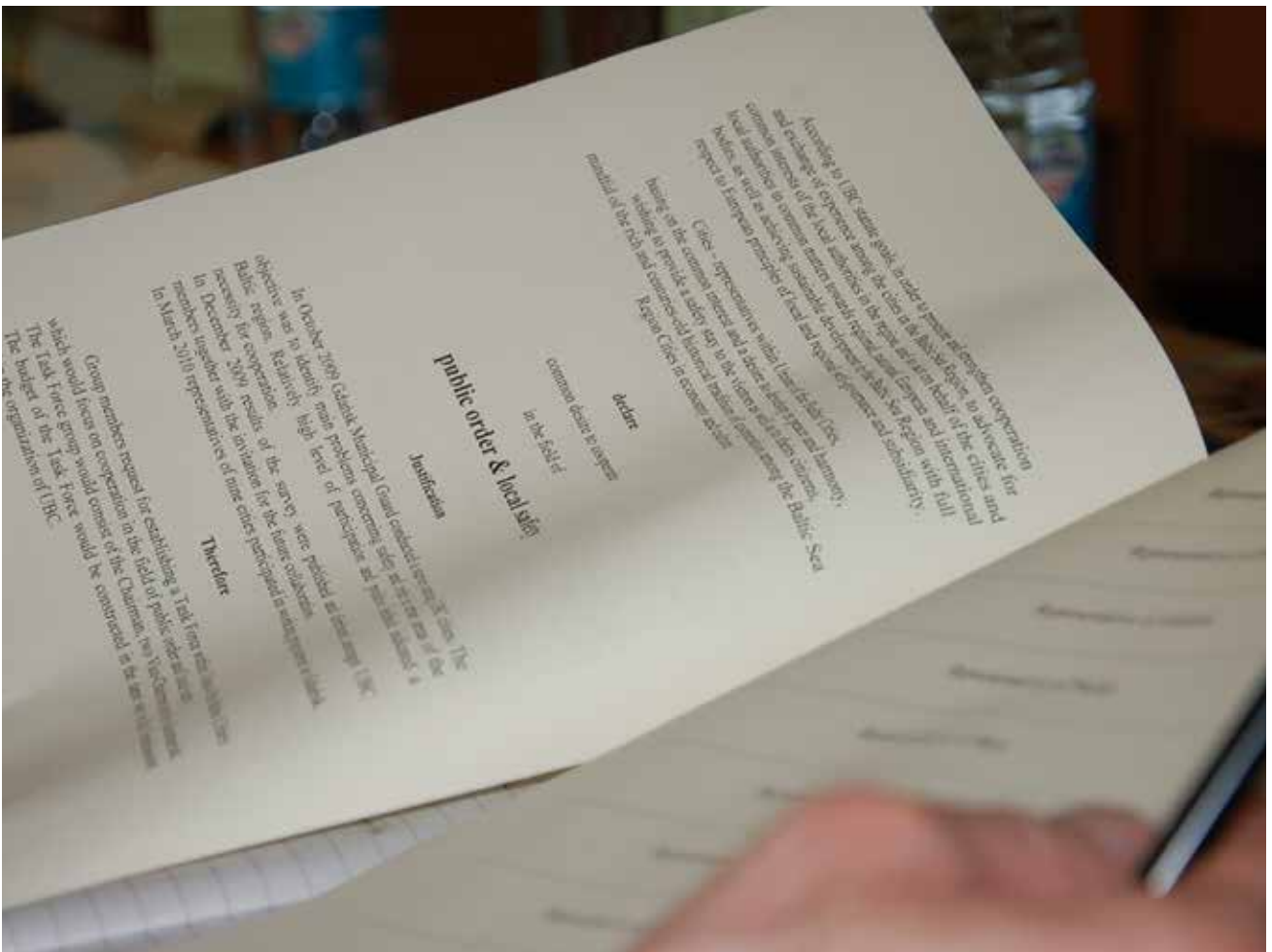
to its new partner cities of Ustka (Poland) and Bergen auf Rügen (Germany) to join the UBC, and so they became members in 2008 and 2015. At the same time Mayor of Bergen auf Rügen Andrea Köster invited Palanga to submit an application to the Council of Europe in recognition of Palanga's international cooperation. As a result, the Assembly of the Council of Europe awarded Palanga the European Diploma, Flag and Plaque of Honour. The UBC membership provides the information about the cities' best practices, useful partners in project development, and benefits for citizens. Also, it allows Palanga's recognition in the Baltic Sea Region.

We wish all UBC network members, success in all their projects. Stay healthy for a long time!

Safe Cities

The Commission on Local Safety (presently Safe Cities Commission) was established in 2010, as a follow-up of the questionnaire prepared by the Gdańsk Municipal Guard on safety and public order issues in the UBC member cities. Safe Cities Commission works to improve security services, as well as to assure better safety standards and procedures for all Baltic Sea Region (BSR) citizens. It holds city experts' meetings, runs campaigns and teams up for projects.

The lead cities were: Gdańsk and Liepāja.



Kaspars Vārpiņš, Chair of the UBC Safe Cities Commission, Liepāja

It all started with one meeting

The first time I learned about the Union of the Baltic Cities was when I participated in the seventh meeting of the UBC Commission on Local Safety (today Safe Cities Commission), which took place in Jelgava (Latvia) in June 2013. During that meeting, I understood the positive effects of the UBC as a



network and the possibilities for the cities in our region. I was elected to be the Chairman of the new named Safe Cities Commission in Gdańsk, Poland in May 2015. I am still looking forward to every Safe Cities Commission meeting because it is a great platform for the cities to share their experiences, exchange ideas and plan joint activities with a common goal – making our cities safer. We managed to receive a full membership to the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region Policy Area Secure Steering Group and now we have our voice heard among the countries' representatives.

I really enjoy our time in the UBC and I do hope that we will have many new memories in our long future. Long live the UBC!



Photo: stock.adobe.com

Building urban safety through citizens participation “Citizens for Safety” project 2015

The main project outcome was creating a website consisting of interactive threat map and database and unified platform boosting cooperation between local actors on macro regional level. The project website helped cities to improve their safety policy by gathering guidelines for real safety problems, practical examples for implementing and evaluation indicators.

Project “Youth for safer youth”

The main aim of the project was to research safety concerns of the youth and the best ways to reach them in the Baltic Sea Region.

Project “CASCADE” (Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation)

CASCADE aims at improving the capacity to understand, assess, and treat current and future climate change related risks on the local level, focusing on the particular conditions in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR).



CASCADE Kick-off meeting, Hamburg, 2019





Project “ReSit”

(Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region) – still ongoing. To ensure that society is as resilient as possible in natural and man-made disasters, authorities cannot function on their own. Active civil society organizations (CSOs) and skilled volunteers are needed to support authorities in their actions.



Three animation movies regarding safety were produced. They teach how to make your home safe and secure and promote safety behaviours.



Photo: stock.adobe.com



Meetings

The Safe Cities Commission organizes meetings that are devoted to e.g. “Safety for seniors, Crises and safety management in the cities” and “Neighborhood watch system”, Street violence – prevention, innovative solutions in safety and emergency management, civil protection issues – crises (flood, big storm, “black out” etc.) and what are the obligations and duties during the crisis time.

Safe Cities Commission meeting, 5–7 June 2019, Tartu, Estonia. In 2020, the Commission organised a series of 4 video meetings, during which participants shared knowledge and experiences on work and emergencies during COVID-19 pandemic.



Project “NEEDS”

The Needs-based education and studies in societal security project is addressing the skills gap and mismatch between the societal security education and the knowledge needs in the field, as well as the fact that there is a lack of structured transnational cooperation and dialogue between Higher Education Institutes, practitioners, and experts in tackling these issues.



Sustainable Cities



UBC promotes cooperation and exchange of experiences between cities in the BSR to advance and deliver sustainable urban solutions, and to bring added value for the cities, region and Europe. UBC supports cities as drivers for smart, sustainable, green and resource-efficient growth.

Sustainable Cities Commission and its Secretariat are hosted by the City of Turku, Finland. The UBC SCC is coordinated by the Head of Secretariat, in cooperation with three co-chairpersons and the Advisory Board, which currently includes 15 sustainability experts from the member cities.

Since establishing in 2016, the Sustainable Cities Commission is responsible for the environmental and urban sustainability activities within UBC and coordinates the UBC Sustainability Action Programme, which is closely linked to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The Commission operates via development projects, member city conferences and policy meetings. It also co-ordinates the cooperation with CDP. The policy areas of the Commission include sustainable urban mobility, maritime activities, integrated urban water management, integrated management, cooperation with Russia and Belarus, and the climate change.

The Commissions that worked earlier around the themes of the current Sustainable Commissions were:

- **Commission on Transportation** (established in 1991),
- **Commission on Energy** (established in 2006) and
- **Commission on Environment** (established in 1991).

Photo: stock.adobe.com





Staff at the Sustainable Cities Commission in Turku, Finland, in 2019.



UBC Agenda 21 and Sustainability Action Programmes

UBC Statute and Strategies identify sustainable development as one of the strategic objectives of the Union. For the implementation of this objective, the VII General Conference in Klaipėda in 2003 adopted **Agenda 21 Action Programme 2004–2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities**, executed by the Commission on Environment. The programme activities targeted five thematic areas: Good governance and sustainable urban management, Sustainable use of energy and resources, Good living environment and nature protection, Sustainable economy and transport, and Social integration and health.

The **Baltic Cities Sustainable Development Survey** 1998, 2001, 2004/2005, 2006/2007 and 2009 were completed. Results of the surveys show that many development steps have been taken by the UBC member cities. As a result, our Baltic Sea region is one of the global forerunner regions.

The **UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016–2021** was adopted in October 2015 during the UBC General Conference in Gdynia, Poland. The Action Programme is coordinated by the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission and is closely linked to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Its aim is to guide UBC work in the field of sustainable development. The main focal areas of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme – Stairway towards Sustainable Baltic Cities for the next five years are: green urban economies, climate-smart cities, sustainable urban ecosystems and natural resources and the Baltic Sea and its catchment area.

The next UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2022–2030 is currently under preparation. It will be presented at the UBC XVI General Conference in St. Petersburg in October 2021.





The Sustainable Cities Commission operates via development projects, member city conferences and policy meetings.



Elina Rantanen, UBC 1st Vice President, Deputy Mayor of Turku

From a trainee to Vice President

My first contact with the UBC was at the end of my studies in 2004 when I searched for an internship in my hometown. I noticed that the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission, which had a small office in Turku, was looking for a trainee, and since I was interested in the environment and sustainability, I applied and eventually got the job. During that summer I got to know the work of the UBC. I had had very interesting opportunities, for instance, in promoting sustainable harbours in the New Hansa project. Later that year, I became the Green Candidate in the municipal elections in Turku, partly inspired by the work in the UBC cities. I have been a city counsellor ever since, and in my different roles in Turku, I have always been interested in what was going on in the UBC. When I was elected Vice President of the UBC in 2019, I felt like coming back home. The Sustainable Cities Commission has grown much bigger in the last 15 years. So has changed the world in many other ways. The cooperation between the cities in the Baltic Sea Region has become even more important.



“To reach a truly sustainable Baltic Sea Region, UBC members must respond to climate change by becoming resilient and adaptive, and by protecting civilians from the negative consequences of climate change. The UBC members have great potential in becoming leaders in climate adaptation and civil protection”

(Resolution on Climate Change Adaptation and Civil Protection)

Resolutions on Climate Change

Societies in coastal areas are especially vulnerable to climate changes and extreme weather. The impact of climate changes in cities is already present, for example by more frequent floods and/or heat waves. Building climate resilient cities and preparing for the consequences of climate change are therefore of great importance especially for cities in the Baltic Sea Region.

The IX UBC General Conference adopted the **first UBC Resolution on Climate Change** in 2007 in Pärnu. The resolution recognized the importance of cities and local authorities as key players in the Baltic Sea Region in planning and implementing relevant actions to reduce harm and unwished effects of climate changes. The resolution stressed that it is possible to combine increased welfare for our citizens and economic progress for our local companies with better energy efficiency and reduced emissions.

Ten years later in 2017, the UBC started a **strategic cooperation with the CDP**, the world’s leading climate reporting organisation. The CDP has built the most comprehensive collection of self-reported environmental data in the world. Contributing to a more sustainable, attractive, and resilient Baltic Sea Region, has been an area of focus for UBC during its whole existence.

The **UBC Resolution on the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals** was adopted at the XIV UBC General Conference in Växjö, Sweden, in October 2017. The resolution

stressed the importance of further mobilizing the potential and cooperation in achieving common goals. As the cities are key actors in making a positive change, the UBC will continue to focus on responding to climate change in alignment with the Paris Agreement. By adopting the resolution, the UBC committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with special focus on goal 11: “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is crucial for reaching a sustainable world in 2030.

At the XV UBC General Conference in Kaunas, Lithuania, 15–18 October 2019, the UBC adopted the **Resolution on Climate Change Adaptation and Civil Protection**, emphasizing the urgency for combating climate change. The UBC recognizes the need for integrated adaptation and civil protection policies, particularly long-term climate risk assessments to be an integral part of local spatial planning and daily management of cities. To reach a truly sustainable Baltic Sea Region, UBC members must respond to climate change by becoming resilient and adaptive, and by protecting civilians from the negative consequences of climate change.

This resolution calls for **increased actions and mobilization on climate adaptation**, as laid out also in the UBC Sustainability Action Programme. By using its extensive network and partnership, UBC will successfully cooperate in the field of **climate adaptation and civil protection**, establishing good practices that are globally relevant.

Mikko Jokinen, Turku

UBC first decades – Strong environmental focus from the beginning

As most of us know, the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 created dramatic changes, not only globally but also regionally. In the Baltic Sea Region, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania started as independent countries and also in Poland dramatic changes took place in political and economic structures.

That created a huge momentum for a new type of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). National governments, regional administrations, cities and many NGOs grabbed soon this opportunity.

UBC was established in September 1991, only a few months before the Soviet Union had formally collapsed.

While the Communist regime was disappearing, at the same time a new global thinking called sustainable development was rising. In 1992 United Nations organized the historical Earth Summit on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro. Preparations had been ongoing for more than five years, based on the famous report of the Brundtland Commission in 1987. From the municipal point of view, one of the main outcomes of the summit was the start of Local Agenda 21 movement, which very soon reached also our Baltic Sea Region cities.

UN Rio Summit was strongly underlining the importance of solid environmental protection as a prerequisite for all sustainable development at all levels of governance. Other important pillars highlighted were social equity and solid and fair economic development.

When UBC was established, it was then obvious that environmental issues should play an important role in the future cooperation of the Baltic cities. That was also confirmed in the UBC statute. The Environmental Commission was one of the first ones, which the founding meeting in Gdansk decided to establish.

Most of the founding member cities were from the very beginning interested to participate the work of UBC Envcom. At the Riga Board meeting in 1992, planning of work of the Commission started. Technical director Carl Nielsen from Århus became the first chairman. He was assisted by Environmental director Mikko Jokinen from Turku and Environmental and Health director Peter Gavelin from Sundsvall. Soon we formed a “troika”, which was successfully guiding the environmental and sustainability work of the Commission during its early years.

A big challenge for the Commission was to find proper ways for cooperation. Cities differed very much in terms of economic situation and political structures. One of the main questions then was how to find a common language and terminology to discuss environmental problems.

Cooperation started slowly. Work was focusing on education, capacity building and creation of professional networks between cities. But more and more projects between cities were initiated. Ex-soviet cities had a lot of interest in developing their cities into the same direction as Western cities, but there were many thresholds – the most important ones were: the lack of economic and human resources. Different administrative structures in cities and regional administrations were also preventing successful cooperation in implementing new ideas. If environmental sector people had adopted some good and innovative issues from their Western colleagues, often they did not have enough implementation power, but the decisions were made by the politicians, who were relying on old, ineffective (cheaper) technologies and solutions. As a result the sustainable development was slow, and it took time, before the attitudes and knowledge in local administrations changed enough to allow cities to more widely follow sustainable development track.

In early 1990s when we met at UBC events, the atmosphere was always warm and very special. First President Anders Engström and Vice-President Michail Boutellier among others, played an important role in this. Everyone understood that we were living in exceptional times. Expectations were sometimes perhaps too high, but year by year the cooperation found its forms and it became more successful and useful for both parties. The 1995 year became an important milestone, when Finland and Sweden became members of EU, making it easier for the Baltic cities to use EU funding for common projects.

There are a lot of important histories concerning that period which should be documented. It is a challenge for the present UBC Board to organize an analytical history writing of the first decades of the organization.

Much has been achieved during the first 30 years and now, when a new generation is leading the UBC. I believe that coming years will be also successful for the Baltic cities cooperation.

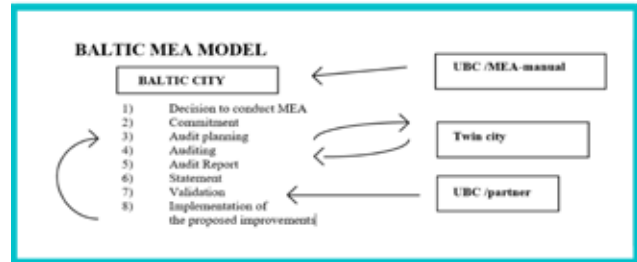


Commission projects

The Commission on Environment / Sustainable Cities Commission has run more than 90 projects throughout the years.

MEA Project

The MEA project, 1997–1998, was the first organization’s EU-funded project focusing on mainstreaming and supporting UBC member cities with their environmental management. The project led to several follow-up projects and direct consultations with member cities. A tool for better environmental auditing and management – The Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) Commission on Environment prepared a model on MEA for the Baltic cities. Environmental audit according to ISO standards is “a systematic, documented verification process of objectively obtaining and evaluating audit evidence to determine whether specified environmental activities, events, conditions, management systems or information about these matters conform to audit criteria, and communicating the results of this process to the client.” The concept and model of MEA in Baltic cities is based on the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS).





The New Hansa of Sustainable Ports and Cities project

The New Hansa project, executed during 2003–2005, was a forerunner project in Europe focusing on Maritime and Port issues. The project led to a stronger focus on Maritime and environmental policies and the EU. The New Hansa project was part of the UBC Agenda21 Action Programme 2004–2009 – Roadmap for Sustainable Baltic Cities and aimed at increasing cooperation between the participating partners when facing the challenges of increasing sea transport and trade and their effects on the environment. The New Hansa of Sustainable

Ports and Cities was a project of 18 ports, cities and other partners aiming for ecologically, socially and economically sustainable ports in the Baltic Sea region.

During the project, good environmental solutions were analysed and common practices for ports in prevention of ships' emissions to the air and receiving and handling waste and waste water from the ships, were created. The New Hansa of Sustainable Ports and Cities also developed the Memorandum of Sustainable Ports and Cities.



The Project on Urban Reduction of Eutrophication (PURE) project

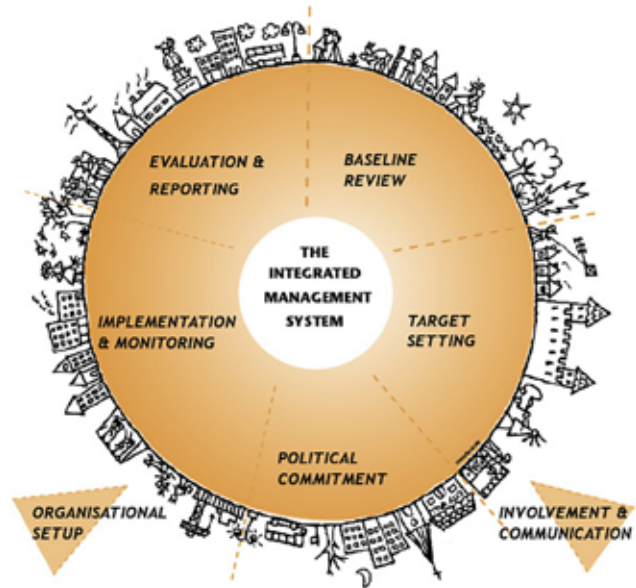
The PURE project, executed in 2009–2012, was aimed at an annual reduction of at least 500 tons of phosphorous load to the Baltic Sea. This was achieved by direct investments by selected wastewater treatment plants in Latvia and in Belarus. The objective was that Waste Water Treatment Plants reach HELCOM's recommendation regarding phosphorous content in the out flow. Reaching this target in municipal wastewater treatment plants in the Baltic Sea catchment area is crucial because of the alarming state of the sea.

The project was the first UBC project involved in doing physical investments and the first project operating in Belarus. Operating in Belarus is improving the state water bodies in Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The project also had positive influence in the cooperation and technical assistance between Belarus and European Commission. The Pure project was followed by several water and wastewater related projects, and UBC has been one of the strongest actors in water management in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Managing Urban Europe-25 project

The Managing Urban Europe-25 project was carried out in 2005–2008. At the time for starting the Managing Urban Europe-25 (MUE-25) project the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment was being developed. At that time there were discussions of making it obligatory for cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants to adopt a so called Environmental Management Plan to steer the improvement of the environment and the environmental impacts of European cities.

The DG Environment funded the projects to support the implementation of the forthcoming Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment. UBC Commission on Environment coordinated the Europe wide project with evaluations, development proposals and policy recommendations for sustainable urban management. The project led to further development of the concept of integrated cross-sectoral management later on much used by the European Commission.



Introducing video-conference facilities (online tools) to UBC cooperation in 2009

In 2009, the UBC Commission on Environment started to look into video-conference tools for improving the cooperation between UBC member cities and project consortiums. In 2009, UBC Commission on Environment purchased Adobe Connect Pro to support the work in projects and also to give cities with less resources to travel a possibility to participate in UBC activities. Several video-conference tools have been tested and used. Currently these online meeting and conference tools have become normal every day working tools and the COVID-19 made us very dependent on them. Today, every modern and well-functioning organization is well equipped and has become an expert in using online tools on a daily basis.

The UBC Commission on Environment has been a pioneer in looking into video-conference tools for improving the cooperation between UBC member cities and project consortiums.
Photo: Kristiina Paju



Björn Grönholm, Head of the SCC Secretariat, Turku UBC – the strongest city network in northern Europe

I was born under a lucky star! Born in the late 60s, I have seen the divided Baltic region and the new Baltic Sea Region. As a student, I was involved in establishing the Baltic University Programme, a university cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It has been a dream of mine to be able to work for the city network established in the intensive times of 1990–1992!

As a still young student, I had the opportunity to be involved in the first UBC project funded by the EU in 1995–1996 for the UBC Commission on Environment by the request of the co-chairman Mikko Jokinen. In 1999 I was involved in carrying out the first UBC Local Agenda 21 survey and also in



the upcoming surveys in 2001, 2004 and 2006. UBC has been the first city network in Europe to follow sustainable development on a regional basis, involving so many cities. This has been an important part of strengthening our reputation in Europe!

In 2006, I got the opportunity to start working for UBC, first as a project coordinator but in the same year as the Head of Secretariat. Over the years we have been coordinating lots of projects. Enormously active communication with UBC city mayors, directors and experts took place. Close cooperation with other international networks and organizations, including the EU, has been part of everyday work. We have been working closely for years with some cities. We shared common concerns, found solutions and experienced together ways of becoming stronger. Beside all projects and project results, the best thing has always been the persons involved in activities. Those were the great moments at numerous meetings with warm smiles, whenever we realized that we had worked out improvements together. One detail shall not be forgotten, that is our common language, Baltic English. Our smart way of communicating, the tolerant and understanding communication.



UBC TALKS webinar series

Working together to foster smart, safe and sustainable development in the cities is the core principle of the Union of the Baltic Cities. And, while the joint work can happen in different formats, most of them involve online and offline meetings for discussing current challenges and city trends. In 2020, the webinar series UBC TALKS joined the discussions offering a platform for cities for exchanging experiences and good practices in the Baltic Sea Region.

The monthly UBC TALKS series was launched by UBC Sustainable Cities Commission to highlight different

approaches to sustainability. In January 2020, kicking-off the first webinar in the series with a talk about marine litter, it was not possible to imagine how the relevance of online meetings would dramatically rise starting from March. As a result, UBC TALKS have become a harmonious part of the overall information-sharing trend during the pandemic. While news portals prepared latest reports on the coronavirus, and orchestras opened their concert archives, we invited experts from UBC Member Cities to discuss sustainable development practices.



Bo Hjälmefford, Växjö UBC family, friends and inspiration

I have had the pleasure to serve as the Växjö's UBC Coordinator since 2013 and as the national focal point for UBC's Swedish members until last year. Because of this engagement, I regularly joined our Deputy Mayor, who was a member of the UBC Executive Board, in different cities around the Baltic Sea region several times a year. I also kept regular contacts with and organised meetings with Swedish UBC cities.

My first encounter with the UBC was at the Executive Board meeting in Turku, Finland in 2013. I met there engaged group of friendly professionals, devoted to



Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award

In 1999 at the meeting in Lübeck, the Commission on Environment proposed to grant the UBC Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award. The intention was to encourage member cities to develop administrations and services in innovative ways for the good of the whole municipality and its citizens. These cities were granted Best Environmental Practice in Baltic Cities Award:

- Tartu, 1999
- Gdańsk, 2001
- Cēsis, 2003
- Kaunas, 2005
- Växjö, 2007
- Umeå, 2009



Tartu gets the Award, V General Conference, Stockholm, 24–25 September 1999

the development of the Baltic Sea Region. I immediately felt welcomed and was directly included in the group which felt more like a family than a group of city representatives. After this meeting, UBC became an important priority for me. It provided a platform for high level intellectual discussions and an access to the valuable network of devoted colleagues from around 100 cities.

One tangible example is when Växjö applied for a grant from the Urban Innovation Actions (UIA). The city of Lahti most generously shared ideas and offered their insights from its own UIA application process, which helped us to excel our application and get almost 4 million EUR to work with digital transformation in the DIACCESS project. Another great experience was to be the “general conference project manager” for the 2017 UBC General Conference in Växjö, where some 300 persons met for a few days to share knowledge, ideas and inspirations for a strong path towards cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. This gave me a fantastic possibility to work closely with the UBC colleagues, including the professionals at the UBC Secretariat. I am very happy that UBC has given me the opportunity to visit many cities and get to know so many engaged colleagues in the Baltic Sea Region, so many interesting encounters and discussions.



Public Transport Seminar in Riga, Latvia, 2002

UBC Conference on Actual Problems of the Baltic Sea-Land Transportation Systems, Gdańsk, 1995

The conference was devoted to the problems of the sea-land transportation systems of the Baltic Sea Region. The conference dealt with the actual issues of the Trans-European Motorway realization, underlining the potentials existing in the development of TEM-Scandinavia project and discussed the economic

importance of Via Baltica and Via Hanseatica motorways. The conference drew attention to the important factor characteristic of the Baltic countries – the increased efficiency of ferry and ro-ro connections in the Central and Eastern Transport Corridor of the Baltic Sea.



Jorgen H. Kristiansen, UBC Vice-President, Councillor, Kristiansand

My best memory from the UBC is the following. In 2008 we talked about implementing free public bus transport in my city Kristiansand in Norway. I talked to our director for environmental issues. He said that the idea had not been done anywhere in Northern Europe. I thought to myself that it could not have been true. So I sent an email to the UBC family and asked. Has anyone tried free public transport? It turned out that almost 10 out of the UBC member cities had tried it. I thought this was a great way to use the network. And I am still thankful for the reply.

Commission on Transportation

Seminars on Public Transportation Reform in Baltic States

The project involved five largest cities in Lithuania and four cities in Sweden. It started in 1995 with a grant from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), and received additional financial support from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (SALA).

The purpose of the project was to build long-lasting contacts between the public transport authorities in the Swedish and Lithuanian cities, and to support the change of public transport organization to sustainable and efficient system. In 1995–1996 a number of study visits and seminars were conducted in Lithuania and Sweden, which dealt with local and practical questions related to the transfer of responsibility for public transport from the state to the local level.





FLAGSHIP PROJECTS

- 1. ...
- 2. ...
- 3. ...
- 4. ...
- 5. ...
- 6. ...
- 7. ...
- 8. ...
- 9. ...
- 10. ...



International Conference on Logistics and Distribution Centres in the BSR, 1998

Commission on Transportation, together with the Maritime Institute of Gdańsk, organised the International Conference on Logistics and Distribution Centres in the BSR in November 1998, in Gdańsk, Poland. The aim of the conference was to promote the idea of organizing and constructing such centres in the BSR countries. The program included analytical and research activities related to the development of such centres and examples of concrete solutions to problems of location, organization and rules of work of some centres in Europe.

The other topics discussed at the Conferences:

“Worst practice in managing public transport – mistakes we have made for others to avoid” 2002, Bicycle Seminars 2002 and 2004; Mobility Management Seminar 2003, European Transport Projects 2004, Revitalize the city for sustainability” – joint seminar 2012.

Among the other activities of the Commission there were:

- Road Safety Campaign for UBC member cities 2009–2010:
Road Safety course for children – Autochodzik, Brochure “Safe on the road”, Seminar “What can we do to increase the road safety among children and young people?”
- Grant sessions for projects:
2007 “Sustainable Mobility in the City” and “Road Safety Contest”;
2011 “Bike to School”; 2012 “Walk to school”
- Projects and initiatives:
Document on “Short Sea Shipping and Land Transportation Systems in the Baltic Region”, BUSTRIP project 2005–2007, Transport Questionnaire 2006, Survey on transport issues 2011, European Road Safety Charter.







UBC on regional and European arena

Only by working together with other Baltic and European institutions and organisations for the sake of UBC members and the whole Baltic Sea Region, the goals set out in the UBC Statute and UBC strategies can be achieved. Supporting the cities' development as dynamic, innovative and attractive growth hubs, where success is based on smart, green, resource-efficient and sustainable economic and social development, has required from the UBC its involvement in partnerships and different collaborations.

The Union has been developing contacts with i.e. the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area, Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Helsinki Commission, Baltic 21, Norden Association, Euroregion Baltic. The links and nature of common actions have varied from joint statements through co-organised events to EU-funded projects.

UBC was granted the observer status with the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) in 1993, Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) in 1994, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in 2004, and Parliamentary Conference on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area (BSPC). For several years UBC was a member of the Conference of European Cross-Border and Interregional Cities Network (CECICN).

EU dimension

The UBC-EU project was to prepare the cities in the Baltic Sea Region for the EU expansion in the region. The project dealt with such areas as: city administration, education, social affairs, labour market, environment etc.

Two seminars and a conference open for all cities were carried out. Organized in Tallinn in 1997, the conference was attended by 200 participants from over 30 member cities. One of the issues discussed at the UBC-EU conference was the document "Towards an urban agenda in the EU" published by the European Commission. The EU Coordinators Network was one of the outcomes of the UBC-EU project. It spread information about the EU funds and programmes, supported the development of new projects, assisted with the preparation of EU project applications and facilitated contacts with the EU representatives. The network helped matchmaking project partners.



Bernd Hemingway, CBSS

30 years of trustful cooperation of local actors around the Baltic Sea

I started a good five years ago in my position with the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). Already in my handover from my predecessor I learned about the importance of UBC, and it was actually one of the first abbreviations (out of many in the Baltic Sea Region) I memorized and knew what the letters stood for.



Krystyna Wróblewska, BSSSC

As a person involved in the Baltic Sea cooperation for years, I have been aware of the existence and role of the Union of the Baltic Cities nearly since its foundation. I have had the pleasure to cooperate with UBC when performing several functions, but most intensively as the Secretary General of the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation BSSSC (2000–2004, and again in 2020). I have always seen the UBC as a very



More than 200 participants from over 30 UBC cities took part in the UBC-EU project conference in Tallinn, Estonia, 1997. (Photo: Teet Malsroos)

Since then I have developed an excellent relationship with the Presidents and the Secretary General.

In many areas UBC has been a reliable partner for policy making and implementation. We are active together, and I can only give some examples: in the field of culture through the Baltic Sea Cultural Cities, in the field of climate change, and through the implementation of the Sustainable Development goals. UBC is an important partner in the fight against trafficking of human beings and in the fight for children's rights in the region. We are working together in making the region safer through reducing disaster risks.

I look forward to the next 30 years of cooperation with one of the most important partners in the Baltic Sea Region.

strong and important network, both for the Baltic Sea Region and for the individual cities, understanding that being together, speaking in one voice and addressing challenges together is a very important asset. For me, work for the sake of the Baltic Sea youth was one of the highlights of the joint actions. It took shape of the Baltic Sea Youth Camp in 2019, later transformed into the Baltic Sea Youth Platform. I think that this initiative provides a very promising foundation for the future of the Baltic Sea, its cities and regions. I wish the Union of the Baltic Cities many more years of good work for the sake of creative, innovative, green, great places to live and inclusive cities.

A clear EU dimension has been dominating since 2004 when Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined the EU. The Union expressed opinions and statements on the EU policies related to the region, namely the European transport, maritime and cohesion policies, urging the European Commission to include the local perspective into the EU documents and actions. One of the most significant UBC contributions was the Green Paper on Urban Mobility published in

2007. The UBC Commissions on Environment & Transportation were implementing a project BUSTRIP promoting the Sustainable Urban Transport Planning (SUTP) recommended in cities across Europe. The EC Communication on the Thematic Strategy for the Urban Environment confirmed the preparation of SUTPs as an important cornerstone in the decoupling of economic growth and transport growth in cities.

12 cities (Bremen, Gdynia, Göteborg, Kaunas, Kouvola Region, Liepāja, Pärnu, Sundsvall, Tartu, Turku, Vilnius, Örebro) from the Baltic Sea Region received ERDF co-financing for the realisation of BUSTRIP (Baltic Urban Sustainable Transport Implementation and Planning) project (2005–2007). The project objective was to provide practical solutions and tools for European cities and municipalities to deliver sustainable urban transport and thus improve the state of the urban environment, reduce urban sprawl, traffic and pollution.

The 12 cities taking part in the project were the first ones in Europe to prepare and implement Sustainable Urban Transport Plans (SUTPs) which were advocated in the European Commission’s Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (6th Environmental Action Plan).



Maja Wagner, Gdynia

As far as I remember I have always been involved in projects on international cooperation, whether in my professional career, educational development or simply as a teenager, dreaming about the world. As a child filled with curiosity, I have always wanted to know what is there behind the hill, behind the forest, behind the border, wanted to know the stories, dreams and desires of people from the other side of the sea. And that is why, consequently, for the last twenty years, I have been involved in the international programmes and projects that serve the idea of transnational cooperation and mutual understanding.



Lina Duobaitė, Kaunas

UBC – journey around the Baltic Sea

I was a new employee in the Foreign Relations Department of Kaunas City when I overtook the task to coordinate the UBC activities in Kaunas. This was a real challenge. There were so many member cities, so many contacts, so many activities each day, invitations to conferences, seminars, projects, newly introduced initiatives. I am glad that I followed many transformations of the UBC. I always tried to keep Kaunas agile in these activities, as I personally believe that this region of Europe is and shall be strong. We are united not only

At the General Conference in Klaipėda, Lithuania, on 18 October 2003, the UBC adopted the resolution appealing to the European Commission for regular consultations with local authorities associations on EC policies affecting local authorities.

The European Commission adopted a Communication on “Dialogue with associations of regional and local authorities on the formulation of EU policy”.

The first dialogue meeting between the EC and the representatives of local and regional authorities was organized by President Romano Prodi in May 2004 in Brussels. The meeting was attended by 150–200 representatives of the most important European organizations.



VII General Conference, Klaipėda, 18 October 2003

There is no doubt that UBC is of paramount importance, when it comes to these standards. Being so different countries and cities, yet having so much in common. Common values, common goals, yet respect for the individual histories and traditions.

At one of the conferences organized by the UBC in Karlskrona, former Prime Minister of Sweden Fredrik Reinfeldt said: “We – the countries around the Baltic Sea – are the example of the perfect union, because we all have something to take care of that is of international interest”. In his speech, he meant the Sea. There is no denial that UBC with its mission stands for the well-being of the nations around the Baltic Sea. We have the common treasure we should protect – the Baltic Sea – whether in its symbolic or literal meaning. And I am so glad to be in that team.

by the geographical location, but by similar cultures, common history, the same desires and aims for the future.

Each new city is discovering a new world, not only in the geographical sense, but also spiritually, culturally and mentally. When you get to know new people, you learn a lot from them, you follow their examples (or you do not, but that is also a good lesson). This lets you grow, both professionally and personally.

Kaunas City has actively taken part in many UBC activities, including chairing Commissions, hosting various events and a couple of Executive Board’s meetings. However, the biggest challenge and honour was to host the 15th General Conference in 2019, which gave a new impetus to the organization, as well as offered a chance to introduce Kaunas to the guests and participants.

I look forward to new, interesting and challenging years of UBC!

Statement on the new European Cohesion Policy

In December 2004 upon the UBC initiative, the major Baltic Sea organizations, namely B7 Baltic Islands Network, BSSSC, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission and UBC, sent the joint statement to the European Commission on the objective 3 of the reformed Cohesion Policy from 2007 – European Territorial Cooperation. The statement emphasized the fact that the cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region may be severely harmed if the limit of 150 km for maritime border is introduced. Such a proposal was in fact counterproductive to the very idea of strengthening the territorial cooperation and therefore the signatories strongly objected to it.

UBC, B7 and BSSSC signed in April 2006 the second joint statement on the new European Cohesion Policy 3rd objective – the European Territorial Cooperation, still opposing the limit of 150 km, and focused on the proposed thematic areas of the transnational strand as not satisfying for municipal and regional competences. The 2nd joint statement was sent out to the EU institutions and to the Baltic Sea states' governments.

As a result of joint efforts, the Cross-border Cooperation Programme for the Southern Baltic 2007–2013 was established. The approach of the European Commission as to the 150 km zone did not change, but the solution was Bornholm, which is located less than 150 km from Sweden and Poland.

Maritime Logistics Policy Paper

The UBC Executive Board at its meeting in St. Petersburg in June 2006, adopted the UBC Maritime Logistics Policy Paper. It addressed the challenges of the growing maritime transport sector in the BSR. The purpose of the policy was to define and highlight

the most important areas for development in maritime logistics in the BSR in relation to the operational environment of the UBC Member Cities and to offer common guidelines to them for dealing with maritime logistics issues.

Port of Turku



EU Green Paper “Adapting to climate change in Europe – options for EU action”

In 2007 the European Commission adopted an initial policy paper on climate change “Adapting to climate change in Europe – Options for EU action”. The document emphasized the dual challenge to be faced – necessity of substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and the need to adapt to the changing climate conditions. Together with CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, UBC responded to the EC Green Paper acclaiming the initiative. The UBC urged the

Commission to recognize the importance of local and regional authorities and existing regional groupings in developing and delivering climate change adaptation measures, and to recognize the need to provide them with the powers enabling them to develop adaptation strategies. The UBC also proposed that the EU should support the local authorities and regions in informing, educating and assisting citizens.

Prominent speakers at the UBC General Conferences

UBC has been inviting the prominent speakers from the high level national and European Union authorities as well as various international organisations, institutions and business world to the General Conferences.

Among many notable speakers there were representatives of: Lithuania – Rolandas Paksas, President of the Republic of Lithuania; Poland – Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, Prime Minister of Poland; Dariusz Rosati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland; Estonia –

Jüri Ratas, Vice President of the Parliament of Estonia; representatives of European Union Institutions: Karl-Heinz Lambertz, President of the Committee of the Regions; Alan Lloyd, Vice-President of the Bureau of the Congress of Local & Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe; Pierre Schori, Member of the European Parliament, Monika Wulf-Mathies, Commissioner for Regional Policies, European Commission.



Anders Engström, UBC President, Tomasz Posadzki, Mayor of Gdańsk, Dariusz Rosati, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Monika Wulf-Mathies, EU Commissioner for Regional Policies, IV UBC General Conference, Gdańsk, 12–13 September 1997



EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The UBC has been involved in the process of developing and implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region since the very beginning. The organization delivered several statements in 2008 and 2012 (also together with other Baltic organizations: BSSSC, B7, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission, Baltic Development Forum and Euroregion Baltic), focusing on the cities' role in the strategy implementation.

During 2016–2020, the UBC was a co-ordinator of the Horizontal Action (HA) “Capacity”, together with the Baltic Sea NGO Network and the Swedish

Institute. Its task was to increase the project capacity, skills and competence of all stakeholders involved in the strategy through the training programs. The other dimension of the Horizontal Action Capacity was to ensure broad participation of local and regional authorities, as well as all other stakeholders. The UBC activities culminated in November–December 2020 with a series of national workshops, aimed at raising the visibility of EUSBSR in the UBC member cities and increasing the commitment of local stakeholders in the strategy implementation.



EUSBSR Annual Forum in Stockholm, 2016



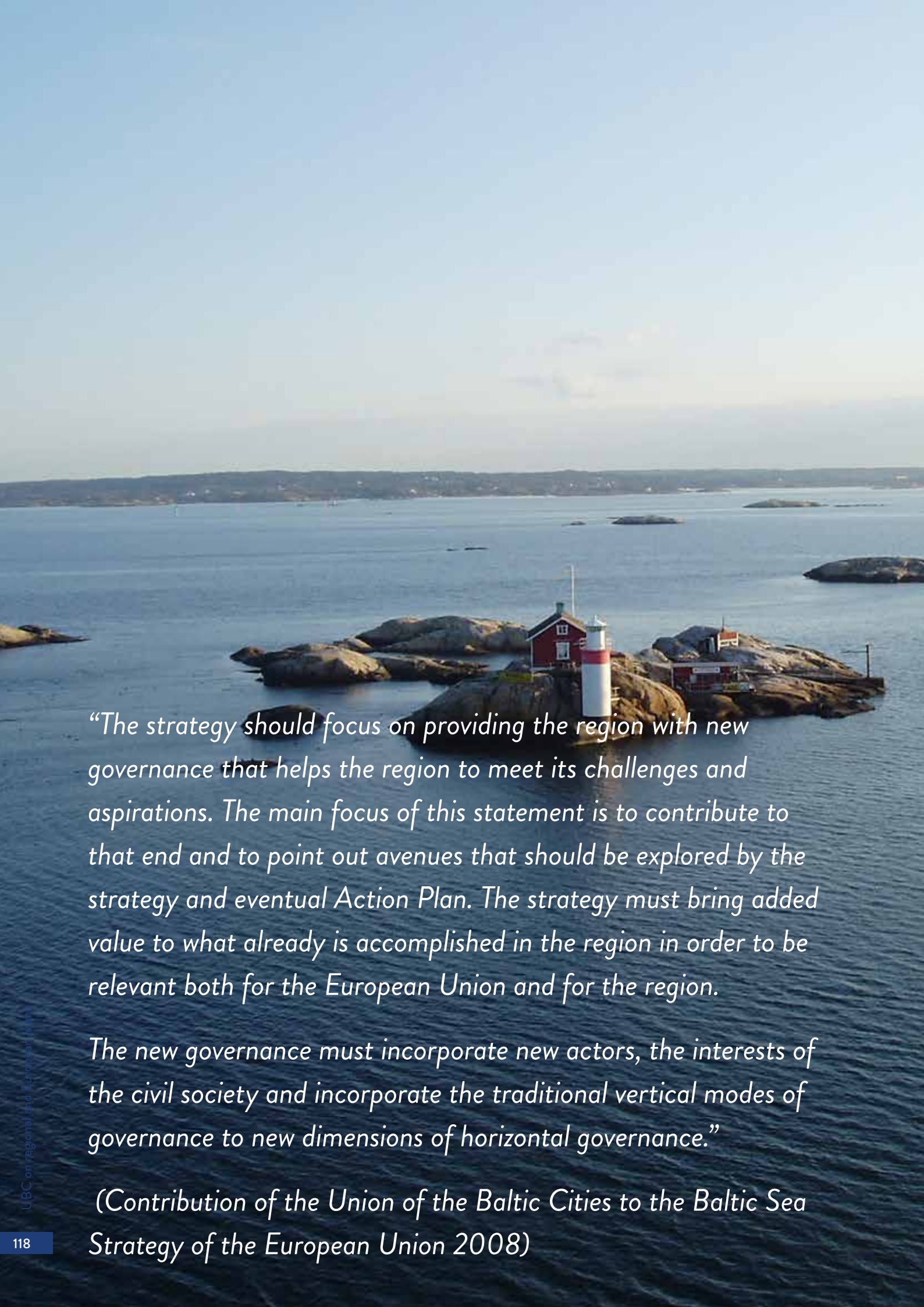
EUSBSR Annual Forum in Turku, 2014



Photo: stock.adobe.com

EUSBSR Annual Forum in Gdańsk, 2019





“The strategy should focus on providing the region with new governance that helps the region to meet its challenges and aspirations. The main focus of this statement is to contribute to that end and to point out avenues that should be explored by the strategy and eventual Action Plan. The strategy must bring added value to what already is accomplished in the region in order to be relevant both for the European Union and for the region.

The new governance must incorporate new actors, the interests of the civil society and incorporate the traditional vertical modes of governance to new dimensions of horizontal governance.”

(Contribution of the Union of the Baltic Cities to the Baltic Sea Strategy of the European Union 2008)

The UBC Sustainable Cities and Safe Cities Commissions and the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being have been running the **EUSBSR flagship projects**.

- Water project (Lead Partner – City of Riga). Flagship status from HA Climate
- IWAMA project (Lead Partner – City of Turku/UBC SCC). Flagship status from PA Nutri
- BSR Water project (Lead Partner – City of Turku/UBC SCC). Flagship status from PA Nutri
- Cascade project (Lead Partner – City of Turku). Flagship status from HA Climate
- School to Work /S2W (co-ordinated by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions/ SALAR and UBC Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-Being). Flagship status from PA Education

The UBC, through its Commissions, has also been involved in the EUSBSR flagship projects. It has been contributing to the EUSBSR Annual Fora e.g. by co-organizing seminars and workshops, e.g. seminar “Cities and regions: Drivers or bystanders in Baltic Sea cooperation?” (7th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Stockholm on 8–9 November 2016), Youth seminar “Nothing about us without us – making it work!” (8th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Berlin on 13–14 June 2017), Participation Days, to list just a few.





Photo: stock.adobe.com



UBC EU visibility on the agenda

The Union has been expected to represent and lobby for the cities' interests in Brussels. As early as in 2005 the question of having an EU antenna was discussed. It resulted in the official inauguration of the UBC Representation in Brussels a year later. The UBC Antenna Office, hosted by the Stockholm Region Office, offered an administrative support desk for the UBC members who could use it when visiting Brussels. In 2020 the partnership between UBC and Out of the Box International relaunched the UBC Antenna in Brussels. It offers the opportunity for more effective

advocacy and lobbying of the UBC cities' interests, increasing the visibility of UBC among European institutions, influencing EU policies, which exert impact on the member cities' authorities in the long term.





UBC goes beyond Europe

Union of the Baltic Cities and Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Join Forces. September 2009

The Union of the Baltic Cities and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative formally joined forces in September 2009 to advance the important role of local government in taking action and decision making around major water resources. Mayor George Heartwell of Grand Rapids, Michigan addressed the General Conference of the UBC in Kristiansand, Norway, with a rousing account of U.S. and Canadian

local government action and advocacy to protect and restore our shared, freshwater resource. Several leaders of the UBC came to GLSLCI conferences after that to share their Baltic Sea experiences. GLSLCI Executive Director David Ullrich joined Mayor Heartwell, and made a return visit and spoke to the UBC General Conference in Kaunas, Lithuania in October 2019.

UBC shared its know-how in Lake Victoria Region in Africa

In 1999 Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) launched a project to help the cities from Lake Victoria Region in Africa to strengthen their network. UBC delegation consisting of President Anders Engström and Chairman of the Commission on Environment Mikko Jokinen held several meetings with the authorities of cities situated in the Lake Victoria Region. President Engström signed the “Partnership Document” between UBC and Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Cooperation.

In 2000, upon the request of SIDA, Secretary General and UBC-EU Coordinator worked out the document indicating the areas of cooperation between UBC and LVRLAC. The document was signed in Uganda by the Presidents of both organizations. All project costs were covered by SIDA.

The project lasted for 3 years and its budget was 1.000.000 SEK per year. UBC acted as consultant in the project.

The project consisted of several sub-projects:

- Study tour by LVRLAC to Baltic Sea Region in April 2001. 15 high-level city decision makers from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania from LVRLAC visited Stockholm/Nacka, Turku, Kalmar and Gdańsk/Gdynia. The focus was on environmental protection issues.
- Functional internal communication. The overall purpose was to connect local authorities with the Internet and to provide Internet training.
- Functional Secretariat. The aim was to assist LVRLAC to build up the local authorities' network secretariat located in Entebbe, Uganda.
- Environment Pedagogic Centres (EPC). The purpose was to establish EPCs in the Lake Victoria Region. Such centres are meeting places for nature, culture and new environment-friendly techniques.
- Support for LVRLAC Women's Network. In February 2001 a seminar, attended by women from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and delegates of UBC Women's Network, was organized.



X General Conference, Kristiansand, 23–26 September 2009

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Gdańsk 2021

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with the 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 Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being, 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.



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