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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

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MAKING THE WORLD
A BETTER PLACE
THROUGH EDUCATION

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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN



Dear UBC Friends and Colleagues,

At the beginning of 2022, when all thought the worldwide pandemic of COVID19 is the worst what could happen, not many of us could predict what in the next couple of months would happen. I expect very few could see the biggest war since World War II to be affecting the whole Europe through Russia's brutal attack on Ukraine and its citizens.

UBC is an organization that has always supported the values of democracy, peace, freedom, respect for the law, equality, cooperation and friendship between neighbours. We could not remain indifferent when innocent inhabitants of the Ukrainian cities were and are still dying from bombings and at gunpoint. Alongside with the rest of European cities and organisations, the UBC has strongly condemned Russia's war on Ukraine and has called for an immediate end to aggression.

Furthermore, a special UBC Presidium, Board and General Conference were held online, where member cities voted on whether to suspend or terminate the membership of the Russian cities from the UBC. As a result of the vote, the membership of St. Petersburg and Gatchina were terminated. Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine **Anatolii Komirnyi** also participated in the special General Conference and presented the loss of infrastructure in Ukrainian cities.

I am sure the decisions we took were not easy, but they only strengthen us as a union, not separate us. Equally, I trust that the 30 years of experience we have will help us to get out of any crisis and I am sure that at the moment regional cooperation is more important than ever, because common voices and common shoulder-to-shoulder cooperation helps crucially every day. That is why we are here and no matter what happens, the UBC was and always will be here for its member cities and the whole Europe and the values of democracy.

On 4 April 2022, the UBC Executive Board accepted the City of Vilnyansk as an Associated Member City of UBC. We continue to reach out and support the Ukrainian cities and citizens in every way we can. Many UBC cities have been helping Ukrainian cities by sending not only money but e.g. buses, money, medicines, food, water and sewage equipment, building machines and many other supplies. 15.000 EUR was donated from UBC to Lviv for the help for internal refugees. All the support data was collected and can be found on the UBC website www.ubc.net. Thank you to all the cities for the work and support for Ukraine – it shows true solidarity and supports the founding values of the UBC.

On a more encouraging note, UBC Commissions and other UBC bodies have continued their excellent work during these exceptional times. Many Commissions have been able to hold their first face-to-face meetings since the beginning of the pandemic and the reunions have been both fruitful and joyous. The UBC has also continued with its strong strategy and policy framework, especially through the UBC Antenna in Brussels.

It is not an easy time we are going through, however, Europe and the world have never been more united than now. I want to believe that something good may arise from this tragedy, and that the Baltic Sea Region will continue on the path of solidarity, unification and inclusiveness.

Wishing you safe holidays,

Mantas Jurgutis
President of UBC

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SACRIFICE, HELP, SUPPORT

LEARNING CITIES:

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE THROUGH EDUCATION

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UBC online General Assembly decided to establish the new UBC Learning Cities Commission on 20 May 2022. The new Commission will be a significant tool in improving the joint collaboration of UBC cities in the field of education.

Global pandemic meant huge challenges in all fields of society, including education. Especially the most vulnerable groups have suffered school lock downs and struggled with distance learning. School dropouts and absenteeism present a significant risk of social exclusion, and when they are combined with problems in basic skills, there is an extreme danger of a vicious circle of exclusion. Basic skill deficiencies can also be a major obstacle for adult participation in society and working life. Education is the best way to combat the social exclusion of children, young persons and adults and face the contemporary and future challenges.

When we combine here other social and environmental risks, challenges and wicked problems we are facing right now and in the near future, we can be sure that we need new innovations in education to help present and future generations to create solutions and innovations that will save the planet and humanity.

A new Commission on Education can be a significant tool in improving the joint collaboration of UBC cities in their work

on these issues. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) education and other new innovative education practices together with different forms of support and guidance systems, for instance, guide children, young people and adults into the individual educational paths leading to high employability, meaningful life and new innovations. These practices can also offer, for example, learning-by-doing options for those who struggle with regular, theory-oriented classroom study.

The new commission is built on the work done by a former UBC Task Force for Supporting Youth Employment and Well-Being, which original mission was to create a UBC program to prevent youth social exclusion. The Task Force has also produced an extensive follow-up report on the program, carried out several parts of its action plan (dissemination of best practices, joint projects, study visits, workshops and meetings), and organized a UBC Youth Guarantee seminar in Brussels in collaboration with the European Committee of the Regions.

Last year, despite the worldwide pandemic, the Task Force organized eight events (webinars, workshops, study visits etc.) with a combined attendance of over 200. The Task Force has also continued to collect and disseminate best practices, promote networking and plan for new joint projects.



Sport and volunteer work are the central means that can revive our social interaction.

The UBC Executive Board had a discussion on the future of the Task Force in its December 2021 meeting. According to the Board, the Task Force had produced excellent results and its work should continue. However, since the Task Force now operates in a much wider field than was originally intended, the Board authorized the City of Turku to prepare a proposal for a Temporary UBC Commission on Education. City of Turku sent a letter to UBC Cities about this proposal on January 2022 and the proposal was supported by six member cities. UBC Board accepted the establishment of the temporary Learning Cities Commission in its April 2022 meeting.

Main objectives (2022 and 2023) of the Temporary Commission will be as follows:

- Strengthen the UBC cooperation in the field of education
- Organizing workshops, webinars and study visits
- Planning and implementing BSR Education Conference
- Planning of the new transnational projects (including a search for external funding) and other initiatives
- Implementation of two General Conference workshops (STEAM & More inclusive Vocational Education and Training)

- Collection and dissemination of good practices
- Deepening cooperation with the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Policy Area Education (PA EDU)
- Cooperation with other networks, such as Flagship School to Work, StartNet and Exchanges for All
- Implementation of the Advisory Board (the role of the Advisory Board is to support the Commission in its actions by offering national and theme-related expertise and recommendations)

New Commission will also strengthen cooperation with European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Policy Area Education (PA EDU), which contributes to increased prosperity that presupposes access to quality education and training for all, an effective and inclusive welfare system and a well-functioning labour market supporting geographical, professional and socio-economic mobility. Furthermore, Commission will support the UN's sustainable development goal 4.7 to ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.



GDAŃSK SCHOOLS LOOK TO THE SEA

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Photo: Dominik Paszliński/www.gdansk.pl

The third edition of the Maritime Education Program in Gdańsk has started, the main goal of which is to develop local identity, popularize the maritime tradition and heritage of Gdańsk, develop key competences and shape pro-ecological attitudes.

Classes on Optimist boats and sailboats, cruises onboard of Gdańsk oldtimers or training for a yacht sailor's license. This is only part of the offer of the already launched 3rd edition of the Maritime Education Program in Gdańsk, which has been implemented since 2010. The novelty of this year's edition is the offer for students with special educational needs.

The Maritime Education Program initially assumed the introduction and popularization of the maritime tradition and rich heritage of the city. It was also supposed to be an opportunity to get to know Gdańsk from the water side and learn the basics of sailing. Several-hour-long cruises on the waters of the Port Channel and the Bay of Gdańsk for students of the first grades of junior high schools served this purpose.

In 2017, during the 2nd edition, the program was extended to all age groups, from kindergartens to secondary schools. Various activities were carried out on the water: on Optimist class boats, kayaks, rowing boats and cruises on yachts and oldtimers. Additionally, educational activities were started in 127 school Maritime Education Clubs and the National Maritime Museum, courses and training for teachers, as well as day camps and ecological competitions.

- The Gdańsk Maritime Education Program is much more than swimming and sailing. It is a matter of identity, because Gdańsk is a port city turned towards the water. However, to actually experience it, we must encourage children and their parents to swim and sail from an early age - says **Monika Chabior**, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk for Social Development and Equal Treatment.

In the third edition of the program that has just started, the main educational goal is to develop local identity, popularize the maritime tradition and heritage of Gdańsk, develop key competences and shape pro-ecological attitudes. The health goals of this program have also been set: promoting sport, active ways of spending free time by the water and on the water, as well as prevention and health promotion of the young generation through water sports and a healthy lifestyle.

Program participants take part in stationary educational classes adapted to age groups, i.e. meetings with a sailor, a water sports master, and educational classes at the National Maritime Museum.

There are also practical classes on the water: on Optimist boats for students in grades 0-3, on sailboats with a departure to the Gdańsk Bay, canoeing / rowing classes, cruises on Gdańsk oldtimers and training for a yacht sailor's license.

- A novelty in our program is equal educational opportunities. This is a new module for children and young people with special educational needs, aimed at kindergartens and special schools. Of course, this is a big challenge for us, but we will cope with it - assures **Michał Rychlicki**, the implementer of the Maritime Education Program in Gdańsk. - This year we want to conduct classes for over 4,000 people.

More information:
<https://www.facebook.com/edukacjamorskagdansk/>

GDAŃSK CIVIC LESSONS – MODERN CIVIC EDUCATION

by Agnieszka Tomasik | a.tomasik@zso8.edu.gdansk.pl



Civic education is one of the most important challenges for modern school. So if we need a modern and enlightened reflection on what the future democracies should be and what to do to build an open and responsible society, this reflection will surely happen in Gdańsk.

Inspired by the book of Mayor **Paweł Adamowicz, Aleksandra Dulkiewicz**, the current Mayor of Gdańsk, presented the Gdańsk model of civic education to the European Parliament in 2020, which was met with great interest. The first stage was the creation of scenarios for Gdańsk Civic Lessons, written by teachers from Creative Pedagogy, a cooperation network within the project promoting new ideas in education. In 2021 the Week of Democracy in Gdańsk kicked-off the Gdańsk Civic Lessons addressed at all citizens including the youngest ones. The common election campaign: elections to student councils and voting on student budgets was one of the most innovative solutions.

Civic Lessons

The Model of Civic Education includes, among others, activities such as: a series of civic lessons, student study visits to municipal institutions, meetings with local government officials and activists involved in civic life, workshops and lectures for teachers. The first topics of the civic lessons were: 1. I am a citizen: mine, yours, ours, 2. Law - from the Convention on the Rights of the Child to civil rights, 3. Entrepreneurship and agency, 4. In the world of narration and manipulation, 5. I have the right to say NO! From assertiveness to civil disobedience. 6. Together for the good of others.

During the pandemic, the lessons were held online. The sce-

narios took up such issues as freedom of speech, human rights, but also challenges of the digitalisation and cyberbullying. During the classes, students had the opportunity to learn how they could engage in solving problems of the local community. They could learn about various forms of social participation, e.g. civic budget, citizens' assemblies, volunteering, and the Youth City Council of Gdańsk.

One of the important points of the program was to familiarize students with activities for democratic sustainability, such as: the Gdańsk Model of Immigrant Integration, Model for Equal Treatment, Freedom and Solidarity Holidays, Ethics of Solidarity, etc. During each lesson, there was plenty of room for a very modern understanding of the citizenship as a pro-ecological approach. Elements of critical thinking, used during lessons as a method of work, will contribute to the development of the ability to use resources, as well as skilful navigation in the virtual world.

Gdańsk Civic Lessons is a project aimed at pre-schoolers, elementary school students and secondary school students. The content has been adapted to the intellectual and emotional abilities of children and adolescents for each age level.

The culmination of the pilot project for civic education was an event organized in Gdańsk on 4 June 2022 within the Holiday of Freedom. Creative Pedagogy prepared the civic workshops for children, a visual summary of the project and joint debates with residents about education.

Civic education should arise at grassroots level and result from a sense of responsibility for the future shape of both the local homeland and the state community.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



GIVES ACTION COMPETENCE

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The municipality of Gävle is a medium-sized municipality with a little more than 100 000 inhabitants. The number of children and students in municipal preschools and schools is 17 700, and the number of employees around 3 300.

Since 2015 the municipality of Gävle has a strategic plan for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The plan has a whole school approach, and all preschools and schools are expected to have a certification for ESD, for example Eco Schools. For a good outcome, it is important that the principals take the lead (see this movie – english version – from the Swedish National Agency for Education for more information: (399) Leading Education for Sustainable Development - YouTube).

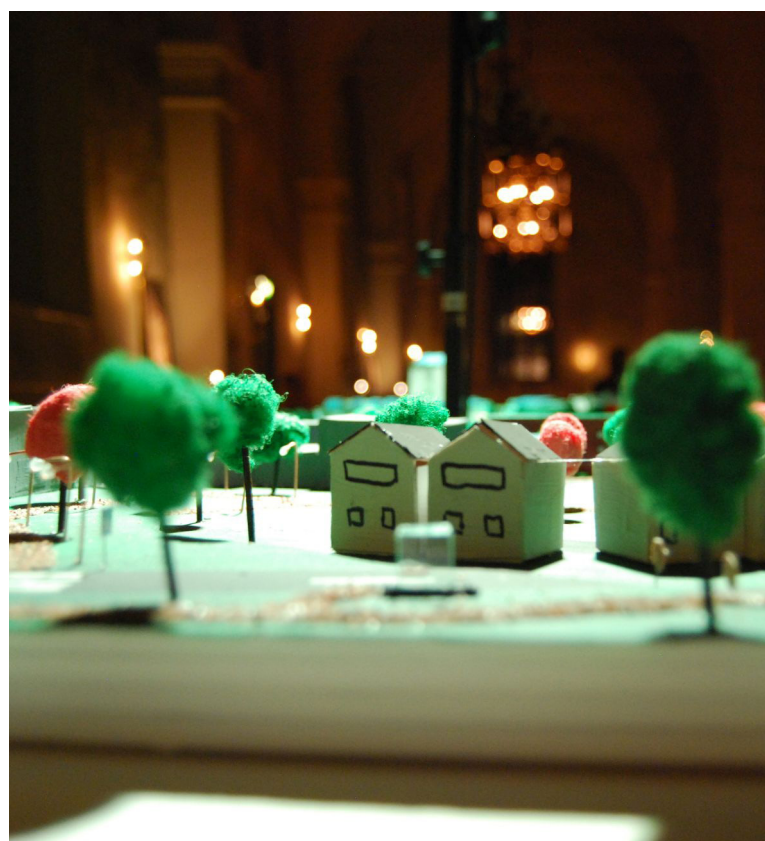
The local Department of Education in Gävle offers support for the preschools and schools in form of inspiration, education for teachers and principals, exchange of experiences, Gävle learning teacher network, projects, a digital platform, and regional, national and international projects.

The aim of the strategic plan is to "Give children and pupils action competence for a sustainable development of society". It is not only important to have knowledge, but also to know how to make a difference – and this must be practised in the framework of preschools and schools. ESD should not be viewed as a separate subject, it is meant to be part of the everyday teaching. From an early age the children learn and practise how to take care of each other, animals and nature. As they grow older, the problems the pupils face and try to change grow more complex – such as climate change, democracy and economic growth.

For the children and pupils to develop action competence, it is important to use different methods in the classroom context. To learn for life and motivate the learners, the teachers

need to start in real-life issues that are important to the pupils, and there needs to be a large amount of participation and influence from the learners.

One of the key success factors in Gävle has been the so-called ESD coordinators. In every school district, there is one teacher with a special assignment to coordinate the work with ESD in the district. The coordinators meet regularly to exchange experiences and develop their competence in the ESD area. Thanks to the ESD coordinators, the work with ESD flourishes in the whole of Gävle municipality, and the children and pupils continue developing action competence.



ACADEMY OF ACTIVE PARENTS

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Photo: Tomas Prėikša

Kaunas Education Innovation Centre has been organizing a cycle of free lectures called “Academy of Active Parents” for more than five years. The lectures are dedicated to parents who want to get to know, understand and protect their children better, to find ways to develop their competencies according to their natural powers, character traits, experience and educational needs to ensure the individual progress of every child.

The lectures are especially focused on modern approaches to the mental health of children and adults. During the pandemic, it is of utmost importance to know how and to be able to efficiently enhance and protect the emotional health of every person. Recently, the attendance of parents in the lectures has increased up to 5 times in comparison to the pre-pandemic period.

Lecturers with extensive experience and competencies (including psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, teachers, lawyers, police officers and book authors) share useful pieces of advice, recommendations on how to communicate with and help the child, answer the questions of the participants. According to the professionals, mutual trust and parental leadership are the most important elements in the life of every child.

It is essential to develop emotional wisdom: to expand the spectrum of emotions, to develop self-control, self-awareness skills, as well as social awareness, to cultivate mutual relations, to manage personal emotional states. Emotional safety at home is especially relevant for children. It is advised to talk to the child about emotions, to help the child recognize and name as much as emotions as possible.

It is also useful for parents to take time to think about and evaluate the emotions they experience themselves. It is suggested to relieve the stress not only by speaking openly, but also by applying specially designed methods, physical stress reduction exercises.

At the beginning of the school year, lectures are organized for parents to help their children to adapt to the educational institution and the process of attending pre-school or

other educational institution. As the secondary education or other exam session approaches, respectful lectures are organized on how to help children to manage their relevant stress during the preparation.

At the end of the school year, the topics of the lectures are traditionally reoriented, focusing entirely on the safety of children and their environment. The lecture “Let’s Welcome the Summer Safely” for parents is organised by community officers of Public Order Board of Kaunas County Police Headquarters.

Their insights and consultations provide assistance in getting better prepared for the holiday season. It is important to remind the citizens, especially children, young people and their family members the basic principles of self-protection: how to protect themselves and others on the streets, traffic safety rules, pieces of advice for the drivers of scooter that are becoming more and more popular, cyclists, warnings about the dangers that await the vacation-goers near the water. Finally, it is essential to know exactly how to respond to an accident, where to turn for help so that it can be provided as quickly as possible, in order to avoid painful consequences.

It is equally significant important to draw the attention of the parents to the potential dangers that await the children in the cyberspace. It is advised to take interest in what your children do online, what pages they visit and who they interact with. The schedule of lectures is prepared every six months and published on the website of Kaunas Education Innovation Centre, moreover, the relevant information is disseminated to the school communities directly. Institutions are actively involved in sharing the information with the parents of the schoolchildren by inviting them to attend the events.

60 lectures for parents were organised during 2016–2021. 3757 citizens of Kaunas attended the lectures. “Academy of Active Parents” receives more recognition from the residents of Kaunas every year, thus, enhancing the interest of the audience and the ranks of the listeners respectively.



DIVERSITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE LIEPĀJA NATURE HOUSE

by Renāte Meļķe | renate.melke@liepaja.edu.lv

Nearly two years ago, the Liepāja City Education Department's Science and Education Innovation Centre Nature House has opened its doors on Zirgu Island in Liepāja and has become an important site for environmental education. Despite the pandemic, the Nature House has managed to find its way to students, teachers and local residents, bringing a variety of educational and research opportunities.

The Nature House hosts educational environmental displays for visitors to see and learn about insects and other environmental topics. During the pandemics, experts used creative solutions to ensure that the discovery of Nature would continue even bound by boundaries, for example, by placing displays in the windows of the building, providing visitors with additional information on a specific topic using QR codes.

Several exhibitions were displayed in the Nature House during this period, such as invasive species "Strangers in our nature", "Nature's healing place - the swamp", "Beautiful and dangerous vermin of nature", "Let's get to know the birds", and the personal exhibition of Monta Heidemane "The sweet souls of nature's hands". Monta's exhibition is a clear example of how environmental science can be expressed in different ways – at the Nature House, Monta studied plant cells by colouring and painting them on canvas. This shows the interconnection between environmental science, art and textile design. Several thousand people have visited the Nature House in person.

Various environmental education activities and workshops have been organised during the running of the Nature House, such as "Life in the Water", "Insects" and "Ant Explorer". The "Ant Explorer" class was particularly popular, as it offered the opportunity to learn about ants and their different

species remotely, as well as to see a live ant house with all its inhabitants. More than 2000 schoolchildren from all over Latvia took part in the "The Ant Explorer" activity, and more than 3000 participants took part in the various educational activities. They also held competitions to encourage students to engage in research activities that raise interest and career choices in STEAM and environmental fields.

This year, students had the opportunity to study the "Environmental Management II" programme, which consists of four innovative lessons on "Human Internal Organs", "Biotechnology", "Exploring the Earth's Layers" and "Zoology under the Magnifying Glass", thus creating an understanding of life, ecosystems and natural processes through both practical and theoretical research.

Work is currently underway at the Nature House on the installations, which will be in place by 2023, on equipping the environmental laboratory and developing related curricula. Various other activities are also being organised in and around the Nature House – youth discussions on career choices and biodiversity, summer outdoor activities, thematic days during school holidays, hosting various guests from Latvia and abroad, etc.

The building of the Nature House itself has been built with the support of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), within the framework of the "Implementation of Community-led Local Development Strategies", the total cost of the building and the surrounding environment is 458 703,65 euro, of which 270 000 euro is the EMFF and 188 703,65 euro the Liepāja City Municipality.

The installations, curricula development and equipment purchase are part of the project "Development of Innovation Centre in the City of Liepāja", funded by the European Economic Area and Norway Grants Programme "Research and Education".



DIGITAL LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR EVERYBODY

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How to learn a new language independently even if you lack prior knowledge and someone to help you? With these thoughts we developed “Hejsvenska” (HelloSwedish); digital tools for flexible Swedish learning.

In Sweden around 160 000 people study Swedish for immigrants (SFI) with the aim of getting a functional Swedish for everyday-, working- and community life. It can be challenging for an adult to learn a new language; time should be shared with many other everyday activities. In addition, if you have a low level of education, this is even more difficult.

To get a functional language, extensive training is required and the teaching time within SFI is too short in scope for most learners. Many learners do not encounter the Swedish language outside school. With “Hejsvenska”, we want to give learners an opportunity for flexible training both in time and space, thus shorten the time for entry into work- and community life.

The tools is funded by the Swedish National Agency for Education, ESF (European Social Fund), AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), and the City of Malmö where the project leaders are active teachers in adult education in the City of Malmö.

Each “Hejsvenska” part is built around ten everyday themes within which the user can practice a functional, communicative language. The starting point is that reading and writing training takes place best when the user knows the meaning of words and therefore one starts from models and exercises where the user can listen and build up their understanding before moving on and train sounds, reading and writing skills.

Throughout the program the language is constantly expanding from words to phrases, to sentences, dialogues and texts. For the tools to be used independently by as many people as possible, various support functions are built in. Such as a help button and a feedback system which, after the user has made a mistake, always provides the opportunity to try again, after feedback, on the same example. This means that even people without prior knowledge can use the tools. The tools are open for free download both on the internet and mobile apps.

“Hejsvenska” is used all over Sweden in SFI education but also in many other activities. The website has about 2000 unique visitors per weekday but also about 1000 unique visitors on holidays, which shows private use. By the end of the project in April 2021, the apps had been downloaded over 2 million times. The project has worked with pilot- and comparison groups and tested oral language development.

The result was very positive and clearly showed better language development for the group that used the tools “Hejsvenska”. The webpage and the apps are now managed and supported by the County Administrative Board.

Hej 
svenska!



INNOVATION CARNIVAL ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

by Charlotte Hjerström | charlotte.hjerstrom@malmö.se

There was a carnival atmosphere in Malmö, Sweden, when InnoCarnival took the premises in April. Following months of preparations, 2,500 children and youth were on site. They creatively showcased their innovations, all linked to the global development goals of Agenda 2030.

Sustainable development as a cross-cutting perspective is an integral part of the education curriculum. The purpose of the InnoCarnival is to increase children and youths' knowledge of sustainable development, with a focus on the UN's 17 global goals. It gives them the knowledge and skills to creatively address interconnected global challenges. It empowers the children and youth to think critically and gives them tools to understand their own role and importance in contributing for a better future.

"InnoCarnival is part of the City of Malmö's work to translate Agenda 2030 into local action and development work. Throughout the education system, from preschool to college, creativity and entrepreneurship are emphasised as key competencies", says **Jenny Kölfors**, who works at Pedagogisk Inspiration Malmö and is project manager for InnoCarnival.

Carnival atmosphere with lots of activities

Months ahead and leading up to the carnival, the children and youth and their teachers participated in creative learning processes. The municipality, the civil society, the pri-

vate sector and academia have joined hands in giving the children and youth support in their innovation work. 2,500 children and youth from Malmö city's preschools, primary schools and upper secondary schools participated during the two days of the carnival. They creatively exhibited innovations linked to the 17 global goals and competed with their ideas. A carnival atmosphere prevailed in the stadium. The participants could take part in a lot of different activities such as trying out Virtual Reality, learning to juggle, writing climate-smart poems and coding and programming. On stage, the presentations were interspersed with panel discussions and various performances.

Innovations for a better future

Among the exhibits were Smoke Lock which would work by ensuring that one's mobile phone cannot be used if one has smoke left in the lungs, SafetyCar with an alcohol interlock system and facial recognition that allows you not to drive unless you have a valid driver's license, Smart Garbage Sorting Machine that is installed in all households and Food for the Sick where a robot provides food for the sick.

The innovations were many and innovative was just the word. It was great to see the turnout of pupils who attended the site either as visitors or exhibitors. It gives hope for the future when you hear children confidently talk about their work linked to Agenda 2030.



STEAM – FACING THE WORLD'S BIGGEST CHALLENGES

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Photo: City of Turku

STEAM Turku is a science and technology study path that combines early childhood education, basic education and upper secondary education to provide children and young people of different ages with a pathway to the world of science and technology.

STEAM Turku aims to increase the attractiveness of the natural sciences and technology sectors in Southwestern Finland and to bring children and young people up as decision-makers facing the world's biggest challenges. STEAM comes from Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics.

STEAM Turku reaches more than 10 000 kids and students every year by offering a wide variety of activities from kindergarten science bags to short courses in industrial robotics. In this article we will present shortly two of our yearly activities: Junior UAS and Beyond 2030 Challenge.

Junior University of Applied Sciences (UAS) is a joint effort of Turku UAS and City of Turku. Junior UAS organizes STEAM related workshops for all 5th graders in Turku. This means approximately 80 workshops for more than 1300 pupils yearly. TUAS students teach and guide the 5th graders through the workshops as a part of their own studies. Starting of this cooperation has been an important step for increasing the attractiveness of STEAM among kids.

The city of Turku and Bayer started a cooperation in 2020 with an aim to increase the attraction of secondary level students towards science and technology. As a result of this cooperation Beyond 2030 Challenge competition was formed. This nation-wide science competition offers students an unique opportunity to come up with and develop new ideas, innovations and applications based on science and

technology that could save the planet and humanity.

The ideas may be related to climate change, sustainable development, circular economy, social environment, well-being technology or reducing poverty or illnesses, for instance.

The competition is supported by the Turku Technology Campus and private companies. The academic students of Turku Technology Campus work as mentors for the participants, thus offering a sneak peak into the academic life and studies. Private companies function as sponsors to the competition and are offering their work life and industrial expertise as jury members. This trifecta is unique and one of a kind setup in the Finnish competition landscape.

During the competition students get to deep dive into the world of science and technology, learn how to conduct scientific studies and reporting, product development and pitching in invigorating manner – all at the same time as addressing challenges that are important to them.

**BEYOND 2030
CHALLENGE**



SOME BEST PRACTICES FOR MORE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

by Tarumaija Aalto, Elina Sandelin & Tiina Vanhanen



The City of Turku is developing its early childhood and basic education in various ways with the financial aid of Finland's Ministry of education and culture. The overall goal is that every child would get the support they need to learn and feel comfortable in their local learning environment. In other words, to advance inclusion and every child's right to early support. Three examples of the steps the City of Turku is taking towards these goals are presented below.

There has been a three-tier support system in Finnish Basic education since 2011. Now an updated Act on Early childhood education and care extends similar three level support system also to the early childhood education. The updated law will take effect on 1.8.2022.

The City of Turku is now promoting implementation of this amendment. Teachers and other early childhood education professionals are provided education, research-based methods, and tools for how to better support language, communication, and social emotional development of children. Sufficient early support eases learning difficulties and prevents later social exclusion.

Another step the City of Turku is taking towards more inclusive education is that more attention and aid is going to be given to children with neuropsychiatric difficulties such as ADHD. Teachers are educated about different neuropsychiatric symptoms and trained how to support children

with these symptoms. These teachers with special knowledge about different types of neuropsychiatric difficulties will then support other teachers for example on how to structure and visualize their lessons.

They will also add awareness about these difficulties and develop the whole schools' activities and surroundings with the special needs of these children in mind. All these changes will be helpful to all children. Not only to those with these special needs.

Final example of the steps the City of Turku is taking on the way to making schools places where every-one can feel good and looked after is school coaches. The main objectives in the new school coach's profession are to prevent students' school absenteeism, dropouts, and social exclusion.

To achieve these objectives, school coach must be easily approachable, safe adult who listens and meets students, prevents bullying and loneliness, advocates communality and team spirit and teaches emotional and social skills.

All these steps are part of the City of Turku's strategy: strengthen the support of learning to promote a more well-being City.

INVESTMENTS IN HUMAN CAPITAL CREATE PROSPEROUS CITIES

by Niina Salonen | niina.salonen@turku.fi

Finland's international reputation has traditionally been based on advanced skills and competences. To safeguard that this will be the situation also in the future, the City of Turku published a regional Vision for Competencies 2040 in the spring of 2021.

The vision is a result of a process involving a wide variety of stakeholders, including higher education institutions, regional business representatives, and local authorities. According to the vision, the City of Turku will be at the global forefront of workforce skills and continuous learning by prioritizing learning and competencies on both political and practical levels for the current electoral term.

The vision will strengthen regional economic development and facilitate quick reactions and prudent foresight for future changes. According to the vision "in 2040 an attractive and diverse Turku is a global pioneer as an environment for learning and competences. The city offers an excellent framework for the multidisciplinary renewal of skills and their sustainable utilization."

Shortly after the vision was published, the City of Turku launched a Competence spearhead project, which will run until the end of the electoral term in 2025. The project is based on a municipal agreement between all political parties in the city council, and its work is also strongly supported by the City's Mayoral Program. It has three main themes leading the work towards the goals set in the Vision for 2040:

- 1) Strengthening of innovation and range of competencies,
- 2) Strengthening the vitality of Turku and meeting the skill needs of the labor market, and
- 3) Unlocking the full potential of citizens' skills.

During the project Turku will be conducting a multitude of activities:

- Creating flexible study paths between working life and education
- Ensuring faster responses to changes in the labor market
- Attracting international workforce to Turku area
- Improving the English language school path from kindergarten to university
- Strengthening the cooperation between the city and local higher education institutions
- Establishing a competence-related program for reducing segregation
- Emphasizing basic skills for everyone
- Increasing the share of male students applying to upper secondary schools
- Increasing the share of students from immigrant backgrounds in higher education

City of Turku believes that these long-term investments in human capital will be a key to prosperous future.



SCHOOL TO WORK FLAGSHIP

by Lovisa Fransson | lovisa.fransson@skr.se



School to Work aims to strengthen transnational cooperation with stakeholders in the fields of education and employment in the Baltic Sea Region - on preventing early school leaving and integrating young people who are not in education, employment or training into the labour market.

School to Work is a flagship project contributing to the objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. More specific, the intent of the flagship is to:

- Stimulate transnational understanding and learning
- Better disseminate successful methods and knowledge
- Inspire new initiatives, projects and partnerships
- Provide a platform for developing and testing measures
- Promote the allocation of funding for transnational activities
- Formulate policy recommendations

The flagship is organised in two thematic platforms: prevention of early school leaving and integration of young people in NEET situation. Furthermore, activities aimed towards its members include conferences, seminars, study visits and workshops.

School to Work is membership based. There are currently more than 60 members from all countries in the Baltic Sea Region. Members represent local and regional authorities, state agencies, schools, and civil society organisations. As the intention of the flagship is to contribute to strengthening the transnational work in the Baltic Sea Region, representation from various organisations and levels is the key to its success.

Close cooperation has also been taking place with the UBC throughout the years. UBC and School to Work have corresponding goals regarding young people in NEET situation. School to Work have cooperated with the UBC Task Force on wellbeing, which will now continue with the UBC Learning Cities Commission.

The flagship was initiated by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) in 2012, which has the role as flagship leader. Norden Association and City of Turku are collaborating partners. The launching of School to Work was in part a result of an increased interest from SALAR and its collaboration partners to learn about and disseminate well-functioning methods and ways of working in other countries.





Special UBC General Conference was held online

by Irene Pendolin | irene.pendolin@ubc.net

Special UBC General Conference (General Assembly) was held online on 20 May 2022, 14.00-15.00 CET. The topics of the Conference were: membership of Russian cities, establishing of the new UBC Commission on Education 'Learning Cities', accepting a new associated membership of the City of Vilnyansk (Ukraine), and information about the loss of infrastructure in Ukrainian cities.

In the beginning of the General Conference, President of UBC Mantas Jurgutis asked that the representatives hold a minute of silence for the victims and the Ukrainian people. Membership of Russian cities

On 24 February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children have been dying due to bombing of housing estates, schools, hospitals. The humanitarian situation is dramatic, people are hiding from bombs in cellars without food, water or heating. Over 6 million of Ukrainians have been forced to flee abroad.

In the face of such a huge tragedy, the UBC Executive Board had a Special Board meeting on 7th of March and found the cooperation impossible, so took these decisions until the Special General Assembly makes final decisions.

In the Special Board meeting the Board decided:

- 1) To suspend membership of the Russian cities
- 2) To terminate the cities' positions in the UBC organs/bodies
- 3) To change the location of the next UBC General Conference.

Proposal for the final decision in the Special General Assembly:

- 1) The General Conference to vote on suspension or termination of Russian cities membership.
- 2) To support the Board decision on terminating the Russian cities' positions in the UBC organs/bodies.
- 3) To approve the Board decision on changing place of the GC and by same decision to call for

The UBC member cities will cast their votes on these issues and scanned voting forms are sent to UBC Secretariat by 23 May 2022.

The issue of Russian member cities evoked much conversation among the representatives of UBC member cities:

– It is not a good position to be in – UBC is an organization based on friendship. And what we are seeing now in Ukraine is obviously not friendship so some action needs to be taken. (...) We are still in favor of the decision of the Board. The main reason for voting for suspension is that within the next months or 1–3 years we might see that it will be another regime in Russia, stated **Jørgen H. Kristiansen** from the City of Kristiansand.

– I am still in favor of this (suspension) because that is a decision many organisations have made, it is in accordance with others, for example the National Coordinator Group for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region made the decision about suspension with Russia. I think at this point after so many weeks it wouldn't make such a big difference in practice, stated **Elina Rantanen**, representing the City of Turku.

– I think we should also plan for the future. (...) So I hope we can have cooperation with all cities around the Baltic Sea. From my side, I support what Jorgen said before. I agree with him for suspension of the Russian cities, continued **Roger Kaliff** from the City of Kalmar.

– Our City Council decided to freeze all cooperation with out Russian twin cities and other collaborations we have with the Russian side, not to terminate. The reason is we believe that those kinds of collaborations are based on people-to-people relations. When we have collaboration with the Russian side it is not because we like the regime, it is because we want to have normal relations with the Russian people, which is completely different. And we have the same opinion here in the UBC. So we vote for the suspension of the Russian cities' membership from the organization, stated **Daniel Smirat**, representing the City of Luleå.

– On behalf of the Latvian cities who are members of the UBC network, we are in support of termination of these relationships. (...). To explain why we see it like that, also in the city governments those are political leaders who are in charge. And the political leadership on all the levels do support the existing political regime in the Russian Federation which has launched the war against Ukraine. (...) I can't imagine that in a week's, in a month's, in a year's time they will say "oh no, that was a mistake that we supported the war". Those must be different people. Those must be different personalities whom we will continue our dialogue and cooperation with. (...) We are in support of terminating the relations, said **Linda Ozola** from the City of Riga.

– There is no coming back to before 24th of February. We have to start this cooperation again, from the beginning, from the scratch, and based on new values because we have to build our cooperation on values. For me, suspension and waiting until the end of the war is not the direction we should go within the UBC. (...) If there will be common values within Russia then we should start from the beginning and start this cooperation based on values. (...) So we are of course for termination of membership of Russian cities, continued **Piotr Grzelak**, representing the City of Gdańsk.

UBC President Mantas Jurgutis closed the discussion with his words:

– As UBC President I respect all opinions and will follow the majority decision. (...) I believe the biggest value we have is the unity, the strength, and the experiences we share all together. (...) kindly ask all the General Assembly in any decision we make to stay together, and if we have more discussion needed I assure as the President that it will be as much as needed.

The voting results were: 25 for termination, 13 for suspension. As a result, the membership of St. Petersburg and Gatchina has been terminated.

"I am sure the decisions we are going to have will only strengthen us as a union, not separate us."

New UBC Commission on Education 'Learning Cities'

The UBC Executive Board was asked to establish a temporary UBC Commission on Education, the Learning Cities Commission. The task of the temporary commission was to carry out the work plan of the Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-being, and to prepare for the General Conference (Assembly) a proposal of a new commission along with its long-term objectives. The proposal is supported by six UBC member cities: Liepaja (Latvia), Naestved (Denmark), Riga (Latvia), Rostock (Germany), Turku (Finland) and Aarhus (Denmark).

– There is a need to continue and further develop the work of UBC Task Force on Supporting Youth Employment and Well-Being. Education is the best way to combat the social exclusion of children, young persons and adults, said **Matti Mäkelä**, Head of the Project Management Office at Education Division in the City of Turku.

Already 12 UBC cities are involved in the Learning Cities Commission. After hearing the presentation of Matti Mäkelä, the General Assembly decided to establish the new UBC Learning Cities Commission.

Associated membership of the City of Vilnyansk (Ukraine)

On 4 April 2022, the Executive Board accepted City of Vilnyansk as an Associated City of UBC.

Vilnyansk is located in the northeastern part of the Zaporozhye region. It has 14,580 inhabitants. The main industries are machine, chemical and farming industries. Industrial potential is realised through a number of companies. Among the most recognized cultural sites, there are: St. Vladymyr Christian Orthodox Temple, Memorial for those who perished during WW2 and Afghanistan War (1979-1989), Chornobyl Memorial, Aaron Garden Monument to the Victims of Holocaust and Military captives. Vilnyansk offers many green areas to its inhabitants, e.g. the Jubilee Park (17 ha) with over 3.500 plant species.

– An outstanding event took place for our community when we became and Associated Member of the Union of the Baltic Cities. (...) Together with this community, we can reach our inmost desire to become much better and environmentally clean place and we invite you to be our guests, stated **Natalya Musienko**, Mayor of Vilnyansk.

– The citizen countries of the Baltic have given their friendly and reliable shoulder to our city and our whole country that showed who are really brotherly nations to us. (...) Let me say thank you to all of you, Mayor Musienko continued.

Loss of infrastructure in Ukrainian cities

Since the beginning of the war, Ukraine has suffered major losses in lives and infrastructure. Among them, the City of Mariupol has suffered the most. There are currently 94,3 billion dollar damages to physical infrastructure and 564–600 billion dollar overall economic losses due to the war – and the numbers are rising.

Many UBC cities are helping Ukrainian cities by sending e.g. buses, money, medicines, food, water and sewage equipment, building machines and many other supplies. The direct damage caused to Ukrainian infrastructure was presented by **Anatolii Komirnyi**, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure of Ukraine.

– Thank you for your everyday support, it is really needed, Deputy Minister Komirnyi stated.

– We will launch an initiative with the Presidium to those cities who focus on humanitarian aid or any help to Ukraine. We can make a task force on co-ordinational information so that we could strengthen the ties, responded UBC President Mantas Jurgutis.

Towards the future

UBC Special Online General Conference was held due to the circumstances that the whole Europe is facing since Russia's attack in Ukraine.

– I am sure the decisions we are going to have will only strengthen us as a union, not separate us. I trust that the 30 years of experience we have and our strong team will help us to get out of any crisis and I am sure that at the moment regional cooperation is more important than ever, because common voices and common shoulder-to-shoulder helps crucially every day. That is why we are here and no matter what happens, the UBC will be here, President Jurgutis stated in his closing words.



Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments (CREST) project meeting in Split

by Anna Sośnicka | anna.sosnicka@ubc.net

The aim of the project CREST is to build a model for repurposing of educational buildings and spaces to accommodate student-centred learning through the perspective of learning environment. UBC, as a project partner, conducted a survey among the member cities concerning their experiences in cooperation with HE institutions and on repurposing of educational buildings and spaces to foster and promote student centred learning.

The CREST project was launched already at the end of 2020, but due to the Covid19 pandemic restrictions, the first consortium live meeting was held only on 11-12 April 2022 in Split, Croatia.

The project partners, so far sharing their ideas at online meetings, had finally a chance to meet and work in person during two days.

Participants discussed the current state of the project. Activities already implemented by the stakeholders were presented. The plan for trainings and meetings in different cities, including multiplier event in October, prepared by UBC for its member cities, was accepted. There was also brainstorming on policy recommendations for the public authorities to support participatory processes.

The main topic of the meeting was the work on the manual for the implementation of the model. At first the participants got divided into three groups which worked separately on the structure of the manual. Later each group presented their ideas. Finally the main structure and content, includ-

ing e.g. key principles for successful implementation of the model for different stakeholders was agreed on.

The host of the meeting, Culture Hub Croatia organised two study visits. The first one was in the youth centre "Dom Mladih", a building owned by the city of Split, but administered in a hybrid model. Numerous initiatives implement their programs, use space and take responsibility for the centre or its parts. In the building there is a gallery space, amphitheatre, cinema and a number of workshops and gathering places for dance, drama, film, music, computer science and sports.

The participants had also a chance to visit Spinit - technological park of the University of Split. It's the incubator for new technologies which supports innovative companies through incubation programmes.

More about the CREST project: <https://cresteu.org/>



CREST



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PITCH project: It's all about inclusion

by Anna Dargiewicz | anna.dargiewicz@ubc.net



Project PITCH, a model for gender-sensitive, integration strategies based on personalized, participatory, local, and multi-stakeholder approaches, has been kicked-off in Palermo, on 28-29 March 2022. The UBC is a partner in this project.

Project PITCH, a model for gender-sensitive, integration strategies based on personalized, participatory, local, and mulPITCH aims to establish a common European ground to support the design and implementation of local integration strategies specifically targeted to women, based on a personalised, participatory, and multi-stakeholder approach. The project activities include co-designing a model, translating it into 7 local strategies, and pilot-testing with migrant women in Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Spain, Cyprus, Lithuania, and Sweden. The PITCH model will provide a flexible example for the development of integration strategies able to fit the specificities of different local contexts.

In the long term, its adoption is expected to contribute to a better socio-economic integration of migrant women in the involved countries: by offering personalised roadmaps to integration combining upskilling, awareness-raising and social activities tailored to each woman's specific needs.

The process will address different aspects of the integration and inclusion, women's autonomy, awareness of existing services, and access to the labour market will be enhanced. Through social activities, migrant women will be offered a safe space to interact with the local community, thus

strengthening their sense of belonging to the host society, and bringing a cascade effect on other migrant women, not directly involved in the project.

UBC will contribute to the development of the model by providing an institutional point of view based on the experiences existing within the network of municipalities related to integration of migrants, and especially women. Also, a webinar presenting the PITCH model and a final conference will be organised by the UBC.

PITCH is a 36-month project, co-financed by EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. Total project budget is 1,488,467.37 EUR. Apart from UBC, the partnership include: City of Palermo (Italy), SYMPLEXIS (Greece), Dimos Neapolis Sykeon (Greece), Municipality of Koper (Slovenia), Science and Research Centre Koper (Slovenia), INCOMA (Spain), City of Sevilla (Spain), CSI Center for Social Innovation (Cyprus), Municipality of Ipsonas (Cyprus), Diversity Development Group (Lithuania), SWIDEAS (Sweden).



Funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union



YUPAD project continues to advance

by Igor Jojkic | igor.jojkic@gmail.com

UBC is a part of project consortium for the YUPAD project (YoUth Participatory budgets empowering young people using big Data). The project aims to enable young people to understand, practice, and influence participatory budgets across European cities. The project will build the capacity of educators and local authorities to implement participatory budgeting and increase civic participation among the youth.

The first **transnational partner meeting** was held in Brussels on 30-31 May 2022. All ten partners from nine countries (Belgium, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Austria) met together to discuss further steps in the project implementation. The meeting also served to present "YUPAD recipes" a series of collected examples of good practices regarding participatory budgeting.

These examples aimed to present the bad, the good, and the great examples of youth participatory budgets. During the event in Brussels, YUPAD Fair was organized to showcase these examples and created videos on a set of promising practices from the "recipes". The examples of participatory budgeting from UBC Member Cities were presented on YUPAD Fair including concrete mechanisms for youth people engagement in shaping city budgets particularly from Gdynia, Helsinki, Turku, Gdansk, Jyväskylä.

UBC also has been in charge for project communication both internal and external. For that purpose the **Communication and Dissemination Plan** was developed and shared with partners. The aim of this document is to establish and

run the visibility and communication infrastructure of the project, so that all activities carried out during the project lifetime are widely communicated with the highest possible visibility in the partners' countries and beyond – across the EU.

Regarding the **dissemination aspect**, the project is embedded in a strong partnership of organisations with wide networks and "circuits of influence", that can guarantee a wide system of contacts for a successful dissemination of project news, events and results. Concerning the exploitation aspect, when the project comes to its end, specific measures will ensure that results are still available for usage by different groups.

Next steps in the project implementation are related to development of YUPAD Calculator, a tailored platform that gathers input from young people on policy priorities, expected outcomes and their preferences for concrete projects in a city. This phase envisages communication related to newly created YUPAD curricula for educators and policy makers that aim to provide an essential guide to understanding of youth participatory budgets including promising practices and new tools. Once the educators and policy makers get on board, YUPAD bees methodology will be the second step in creation of the system that provides the methodology for development of concrete projects or initiatives suggested within the calculator.

We trust in our work, working together!



**Co-funded by
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UBC Cultural Cities Commission met in Kaunas

by Inga Zinkevičiūtė | inga.zinkeviciute@kaunas.mvb.lt



May 19-20 the meeting of the UBC Cultural Cities Commission took place in Kaunas, the European Capital of Culture. The members of the Commission from Riga, Valmiera, Liepāja and Kaunas participated in a roundtable discussion to share current issues in the field of culture and to express their suggestions and expectations regarding the future activities of the Commission.

The role and opportunities of CCC in promoting creative co-operation between Baltic cities and cross-sectoral work in cities and communities were also discussed. The experience of Kaunas city cultural organizations in implementing the Kaunas Capital of Culture 2022 program and initiating changes in the city and the region received special attention from the members.

During the first day of the meeting, members of the Commission participated in the fifth European Capital of Culture Forum, which took place alongside the major events of Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022. European Capital of Culture Forum invited to discuss how Kaunas will live beyond 2022 and hear inspiring and thought-provoking international examples. The rich program of the Forum involved participants, developers, partners and researchers from the Capital of Culture program. A special session was dedicated to the topic of war in Ukraine.

The meeting was extended by a cycle of more than 60 events dedicated to Kaunas' birthday, the most impressive event of which was observed by the participants of UBC Cultural Cities Commission.



UBC Smart and Prospering Cities & Planning Cities Commissions met in Kiel on 14–17 June 2022

by Paulina Szewczyk | p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl



The UBC Smart and Prospering & Planning Cities Commissions held the Seminar District of the Future on 14–17 June 2022 in Kiel.

25 city planners and project developers from UBC member cities: Aarhus, Gdańsk, Gdynia, Hamburg, Kaunas, Kiel, Liepāja, Pärnu, Riga, Rostock, Söderhamn, Turku and Vaasa were discussing keys to success for the development of a ninety-two hectare former military site Holtenau Ost, where the City of Kiel is planning the District of the Future.

The Seminar was opened at the Waterkant Festival venue at Kiel Holtenau Ost on Wednesday morning. The participants were welcome by **Wolfgang Schmidt** (UBC Smart & Prospering Commission), **Paulina Szewczyk** (UBC Planning Cities Commission) and **Tim Logan**, (Waterkant Festival). They were introduced to the planning actualities by **Fabian Kumkar** (Urban Planning Department City of Kiel). **Konstanze Meißner** (Urban Planning Department City of Kiel) told about workshop area challenges. **Mario Abel**, (Yellow Z, Berlin) gave the Holtenau-Ost Masterplan overview. Later, all colleagues took the bike ride across the Holtenau-Ost area. By the end of the day all listened with great interest to very inspiring keynote speech given by **Søren Leth** and **Lars Jensen** (SLETH Office for architecture and planning, Aarhus/Copenhagen).

On Thursday, right after an input from SMACKER Interreg Project by **Karolina Marszałkowska** (City of Gdynia), participants took part in the Workshop. Three groups were brainstorming, discussing and working on the ideas, making drafts of the urban concepts. Common work was a great opportunity to exchange and learn from each other. In the evening participants experienced new ideas and amazing people at Waterkant Startup Festival.

On Friday, the results of the Workshop were presented to invited guests including politicians, media representatives

and the residents of Kiel, that took part in lively discussion. The dominating ideas were that the identity of Holtenau-Ost could be built on existing buildings, details and urban structures. Connections could be created in sustainable and smart way, including water taxis/ferries. The area has a potential to become a new urban centre, a destination, 5-min city with mix-use, nice public spaces and greenery. The life is already there - activities like Waterkant Festival could remain and even be extended to bring more interest to that area. There is a chance to build sustainable, all age community with smart technologies in Holtenau-Ost.

Thanks a lot Landeshauptstadt Kiel for hosting the UBC workshop and sharing your insights with us!



Taking part in the Erasmus+ project NEEDS

by Kaspars Vārpiņš | kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv



UBC Safe Cities Commission is taking part in the Erasmus+ project NEEDS (Needs-based education and studies in societal security) through the Liepāja Municipal Police. The NEEDS 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.

Part of the project are Intensive Study Programmes (ISP) for the students of the participating higher education institution establishments. At these ISPs added value is provided by the practitioners of the societal security field. First ISP took place online in the Autumn 2021, but in May 2022 there was the first physical ISP that took place in the forests of Finland. Topic of the ISP was youth safety in virtual and physical worlds.

20 societal security field students from five universities (Poland, Latvia, Finland, Sweden and Norway) came to Porkkala in Finland to stay for a week in their own bubble and to get new knowledge about the societal security issues. Teachers of their universities and six practitioners from the UBC Safe Cities Commission – Liepāja, Tallinn, Gdańsk and Hamburg, joined the students to share their practical knowledge.

Through the week students gained new knowledge about crisis, crisis management, societal security glossary, communication and so on. With the participation of the practitioners, they could ask various questions about the practical life. At the end of the week students developed concrete suggestions on how to involve more youth in the awareness of safety and how to make a safer life for youth.

Next ISP is planned in autumn 2022 in Riga, where new students will learn about societal security issues. The ISP is supplementing the development of the online course for students and practitioners about the societal security. In addition during the NEEDS project a network and an interface for Societal security professionals collaboration will be developed to create a community in the Baltic Sea Regions.

Students as well will be involved in the network, because already during the study process societal security students may be a good support and addition to practitioners and the other way around.

Stay safe and secure!



NEEDS



UBC Safe Cities Commission met in Tartu

by Kaspars Vārpiņš | kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv

June 1–3, 2022, UBC Safe Cities Commission met in Estonian city Tartu to discuss the civil protection challenges for cities concerning the war in Ukraine. This was the first physical UBC Safe Cities Commission meeting since the Covid-19 pandemic. Probably because of that, this time the Baltic Sea region cities were not so widely represented, however the discussions and information shared in the UBC Safe Cities Commission meeting was wide enough.

On the afternoon of arrival day, the commission participants met in the European Capital of Culture 2024 office "Tartu 2024" to meet with the Tartu mayor Urmas Klaas, as well with the Tartu city department of Urban design representatives **Tõnis Arjus** and **Kaspar Alev** who presented the Smart Tartu concept.

In the second working day meeting participants were introduced with a key-presentation from the Head of South-Estonian Rescue Center – **Margo Klaos** about Civil protection challenges and new activities in Estonia.

That was followed by presentations of the UBC Safe Cities Commission meeting participants from Finland (Lahti), Estonia (Tallinn and Tartu), Latvia (Liepāja and Jelgava) and with a remote connection from Poland (Gdańsk). After each of the presentations discussions were held to learn about good and improvable practices from each city. Even though the main activities were similar, there were some major differences on the solutions, tasks and activities done during the incoming refugees wave. Mainly all cities recognized the great impact and help of volunteers.

On the last meeting day two study visits were organized, one to the Humanitarian aid center for Ukrainian refugees in Tartu, where meeting participants had the possibility to discuss about the humanitarian help processes in Tartu. The second study visit brought the participants to AS Tartu Veevõrk, which is drinking water and wastewater mana-

gement company in Tartu, to see the company as the vital service provider. After getting an insight on how the work is organized, the meeting participants said goodbye to each other and returned home to work further on their gained knowledge.

Stay safe and secure!





UBC Sustainable Cities Commission: Global cooperation in climate actions

by Mariia Andreeva | mariia.andreeva@turku.fi
photo: Press office of the City of Greifswald

In spring 2022, UBC Sustainable Cities Commission dived into the long-awaited revival of physical meetings, global climate disclosure activities, and expanding the communication of the cities' sustainability actions. With the renewed website (www.ubc-sustainable.net), now bringing even more highlights for member cities, it's easier to follow events and activities!

Sustainable Cities Commission meeting in Greifswald

Our first offline Commission meeting in almost three years took place on 27-28 April 2022 in the City of Greifswald, Germany. The city, equipped with the ambitious strategic sustainability goals and tools for achieving them, hosted representatives of over 15 BSR cities for extensive discussions and exciting site visits.

The topics of the meeting included climate adaptation, mobility, and energy-efficient construction, together with strategic local goals and global-scale monitoring of their progress. The rich variety of presented views on climate protection and action offered both the global prism brought by the co-writers of the latest IPCC report, and the innovative local solutions shared by city experts.

UBC network provides local governments with opportunities for dynamic development based on shared experiences and best practices. To make the cooperation even more efficient, UBC Sustainable Cities Commission directly cooperates with key regional and global actors providing unified tools for monitoring the climate performance.

Representatives from two city-oriented initiatives joined the Commission meeting in Greifswald to inspire our member

cities to monitor their sustainability-related progress: **CDP Cities**, within which UBC cities are annually invited to disclose their climate actions for further benchmarking in the region, and **Green City Accord**, launched by the European Commission to showcase local leadership in accelerating environmental performance.

Reporting climate actions in UBC-CDP cooperation

The cooperation between UBC and CDP started back in 2016, and every year our cities are encouraged and provided support in filling questionnaires into the unified reporting system **CDP-ICLEI Track**. When the disclosing period finishes, Sustainable Cities Commission prepares an annual report on UBC members' climate achievements.

In the **UBC-CDP report 2021**, we looked into the cities' path to ambitious goals for the EU becoming climate-neutral by 2050, and the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030 pinpointing the core topics in this process identified for our cities. The report and information how to join the climate disclosure process is available on the UBC SCC website.

The reporting period for 2022 has already started! Fill your cities' questionnaires by July 2022 and get to know your progress in connection to the peer cities in the world!

Reunion of the Youthful Cities Commission

by Dmitrijs Zverevs | Dmitrijs.Zverevs@riga.lv



After two long years of Covid-19, UBC Youthful Cities Commission has met for its reunion this May in Rīga (Latvia). Even though there were just five cities present, the group was a well-balanced mix of civil servants, youth workers and, of course, young people themselves. So, the three days of the programme were filled with learning, exploring, dreaming and, most certainly, having fun.

The event was structured around 2 key topics:

- mutual learning and exchange of good practices in the field of youth work;
- discussion about the future of the Commission.

On the first day the participants were taken to Lastādija quarter to learn more about initiatives of NGO "Free Riga" that strived to create opportunities for purposeful temporary use of deprived buildings and areas. Since Lastādija has become home for several youth NGOs, participants had a great opportunity to learn about things these organisations do in the areas of personal development, outdoor education, intercultural learning and more. Street youth work and support activities for young people at risk were also on the agenda.

On the second day, representatives of the city of Klaipėda surprised everyone with astonishing results they have achieved throughout the 2021 when Klaipėda was proudly holding the title of European Youth Capital. We do encourage you, too, to have a n insight into their work while scrolling through chooseklaipeda.eu or Facebook page "Klaipėda – European Youth Capital 2021".

However, arguably the most important part of the meeting was to agree about future development of the Commission's work. The discussion was built on top of the ideas designed during the online Future Workshops held in previous two years.

Among the structural changes we have to-be-established thematic clusters that will operate, mostly online, between the official meeting of the Commission. Youth participation, spaces for youth and international youth work (incl. organization of youth exchanges) were the first possible clusters to be named. At the same time, participants agreed cities' youth workers need a clearer and more responsible role within the Commission.

So, in the upcoming weeks the UBC cities will receive a summary with the decisions from the meeting and invitation to get involved into the work of the revitalized Commission, as we are heading towards approval of its action plan and election of vice-chair this autumn.



Ideas, partners, and results from the Central Baltic 2014–2020 Programme

by Ari Brozinski | ari.brozinski@centralbaltic.eu

Even if the new 2021-2027 programme has already started, our 2014-2020 programme is still going strong; the last 2014-2020 projects are implementing until end of 2022 and in total we have co-funded 137 cross-border projects. As the term hints, cross-border means that challenges are solved together and across borders within the programme region. The region includes Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Sweden and Åland.

The four main funding priorities of the programme consider economy, environment, logistics and the well-being of people. The main priorities are further divided into 11 Specific Objectives (SO). This means that you can find excellent projects e.g. aiming to increase the entrepreneurship of the youth, to develop sustainable tourism destinations, reduce the nutrient load into the Baltic Sea or to improve vocational education.

We have a great number of concrete activities and tangible results to show for the 2014-2020 programme. Thus, we encourage you to have a look in our project database. You can easily filter projects of interest using the funding Priority and Specific Objective filters.

Furthermore, when scrolling down, you can select those countries and a programme region that you have interest in. For example, if you want to find Swedish partners from projects that have aimed to reduce the nutrient load into the Baltic, you would select Priority 2 Sustainable use of common resources, then SO 2.4. Reduced nutrients... and finally apply a filter to show those projects with Swedish partners. Upon clicking a resulting project, you are not only able to view the partners but also read the summary and review planned or achieved results.

You can access the database here: <http://database.centralbaltic.eu/>

What is Central Baltic? The Central Baltic programme, belongs to the European Territorial Cooperation framework (ETC). The ETC, or Interreg, represents one of the two goals of cohesion policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and

local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole.



*SEABASED – Pilot Marl: The SEABASED Project (2018-2021) piloted and assessed measures that seek to improve the status of the marine area by reducing the internal load of the sea. One of the piloted measures was spreading activated limestone to anoxic seabeds. This project among other similar are available in the project database.
Photo: Tara Jaakkola.*



SACRIFICE, HELP, SUPPORT – TRUE BROTHERHOOD IN THE MIELNO COMMUNE

The Mielno commune shares its goods by hosting over 800 war refugees from Ukraine. Half of them are children.

We are part of a great cause and great humanitarian aid. I have never doubted the good hearts of the inhabitants of my commune, nor their selfless help. They always took their lesson in humanity for "six". Aid for war refugees from Ukraine will be long-term and will require all of us to be constantly active and warm to Ukrainian families. Such a large number of guests from across the eastern border is a huge challenge for the local government and our services. It is the work of all of us for the benefit of another man plagued by the nightmare of war. Let us especially remember this when opening the doors of our homes and hearts – said Olga Roszak-Pezala, Mayor of the Mielno commune.

Behind them the trauma, the great unknown in front of them. Their orderly and safe world collapsed within moments. In Poland, war refugees found shelter and peace, but with their hearts and thoughts they are still in their homeland, which today is strong heroes. There are people from all over Ukraine in our commune. They came here from registration points in Poland, from private transports, from cooperation with the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, from the pool of applications from the West Pomeranian voivode, on the orders of people supporting the Polish Humanitarian Action.

Many women with very young children and children of early school age came here. They are hosted by private persons, centers, hotels, guesthouses, and accommodation facilities

throughout the commune. The crisis team operating at the Mayor of Mielno supports and controls the entire refugee allocation process. Several social activists constantly monitor the influx of people fleeing the fighting Ukraine. A helpline was created, as well as a database of guests and donors. The local community - from the first days of the war - was actively involved in humanitarian support. Numerous campaigns were organized, including the collection of clothes, food, chemicals, cosmetics, integration meetings, and bonfires. The Cultural Center in Mielno is leading a series of painting and dance workshops for children, as well as Polish language lessons for adults. There are also plans for a job fair, as Ukrainian women want to take up employment. The needs are growing every day, as the number of war refugees has reached 800 people, 400 of whom are minors. For a commune with a population of less than five thousand, it is a very big challenge - organizational, financial and logistic. In the "Eco-enterprises" hall, a temporary warehouse was created, from where the help was delivered to specific people, to specific places - right to the door.

There are over 110 children in both municipal schools. They sit at the desks and learn together with Polish students. They are provided with lunches, and lunch from donors - entrepreneurs. - Ukrainian children and youth were greatly supported by our teachers, Polish students and their parents - says Barbara Ożga, director of the Primary School in Mielno. - Polish parents gave our new students basic things to learn (notebooks, crayons, backpacks). We were the first in the region to "readily" welcome children fleeing - mostly with their mother or grandmother - from the nightmare of war.

The crisis management team is supported by volunteers, translators - social activists, our units, schools and local non-governmental organizations. There is also a reliable PCK Koszalin Rescue Group responsible for medical care and support. The core of the staff appeals for dedicated help, but also for common sense so that this help has quality. It's not about breaking records. We should also think in the long term, because government support also has an end: "Be responsible for our guests from beyond the eastern border. Let us create conditions for them to develop, work, educate and become independent" - they conclude.

by Radosław Sobko | r.sobko@gmina.mielno.pl



TURKU WAS SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EU MISSION “100 CLIMATE-NEUTRAL AND SMART CITIES”

European union Mission on 100 Climate-neutral and Smart Cities in Europe by 2030 aims to support at least 100 cities to become carbon-neutral by the end of the decade. The City of Turku was selected as one of the 100 frontrunner cities.

100 cities selected to the Mission program should act as experimentation hubs and pave the way to enable all cities in Europe to reach climate-neutrality by 2050.

Turku's City Council decided 7 December 2021 that Turku will apply to join the Mission, and the city submitted its application with the support of local, regional and national stakeholders at the end of January. The European Commission published the selection result 28 April.

- We are very proud of the selection result! Turku wants to be one of the world's leading climate and nature cities, and at the same time bring wellbeing to citizens and new opportunities for businesses, says Mayor of Turku Minna Arve.

Turku has just updated its climate plan to strengthen the actions to reach climate neutrality by 2029, when the city celebrates its 800th anniversary. From thereon Turku intends to become increasingly climate positive city area, with net negative emissions. The updated climate plan also engages citizens and stakeholders stronger in the climate work and puts emphasis on co-creating new climate solutions. The Mission is expected to support Turku in implementing the plan.

Next the selected cities will, together with their stakeholders, draw up Climate City Contracts which will include the political commitment, climate and investment plans and innovative models for governance and citizens and stakeholder engagement.

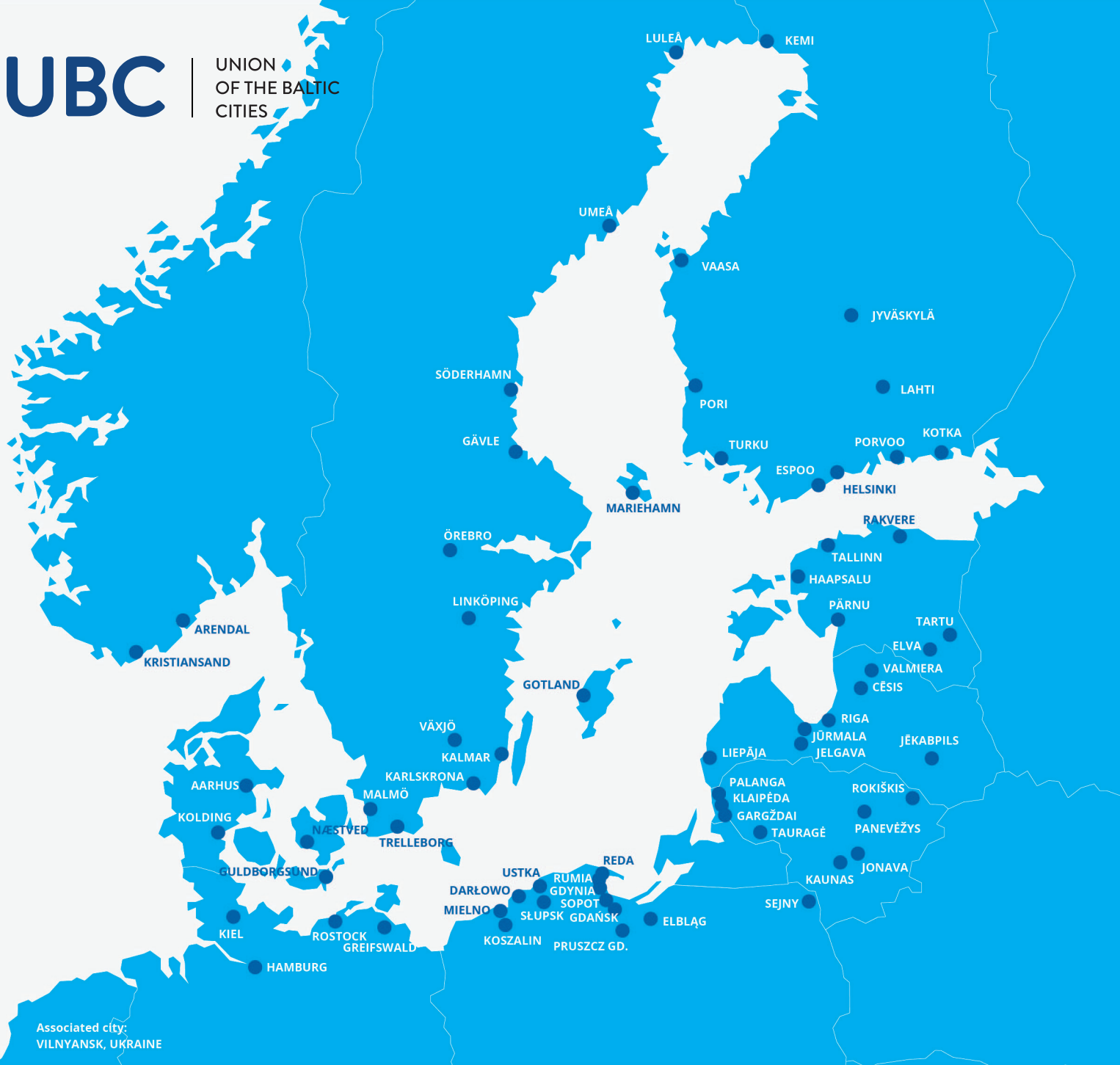
The EU will fund the first phase of the Mission 2022-23 with 360 M€ through the Horizon Europe program. The Mission platform NetZeroCities will provide necessary tailor-made technical, regulatory and financial assistance to cities.

- The selection as part of the EU Mission will further strengthen Turku's climate work and will provide new opportunities for the stakeholders in the Turku region to participate in European projects. The Mission will also support citizens' and stakeholders' opportunities to participate and influence, concludes Turku's Climate Director Risto Veivo.

Turku is also actively giving input for the development of the Mission platform services. Mayor of Turku Minna Arve was selected to the high-level strategic panel, which advises the Mission platform work and the Climate City Contract process. Turku's Climate Team's Senior Specialist Miika Meretoja is a member of the Mission platform expert panel.

From Finland also Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Lahti and Lappeenranta were selected to the Cities Mission program. The Finnish national mission expert group, led by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Transport and Communications, will be coordinating the establishment of the national mission network.

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

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with the members from nine 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 eight thematic Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Learning 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 UBC Working Group on Gender Equality and UBC Communications Network.

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

www.ubc.net

UBC

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CITIES

Wishing you a good summer

From UBC Secretariat

