

SPRING 2021

BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

UBC | UNION
OF THE BALTIC
CITIES

PUBLISHED BY THE
UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES

RESILIENT BALTIC SEA CITIES TACKLING THE CHALLENGES AND CREATING THE FUTURE(S)

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Dear UBC Friends and Colleagues,

During times of uncertainty, such as those we are living through now, resilience is crucial to overcoming challenges and quickly adapting to the current situation. For example, new city services are needed in order to address especially health matters and support citizens in dealing with a challenging reality. As collaboration and knowledge sharing are the strongest tools to fight the COVID-19 crisis, communication has taken a digital tone and shifted almost completely towards virtual spaces – also within the UBC.

However, local organisations are struggling to remain of service to their targets, as evidently security, health, planning, and financing are experiencing the extreme effects. The numbers of disadvantaged citizens, those temporarily unemployed and people experiencing both physical and mental health issues, among whom youth are particularly vulnerable, are increasing rapidly. Furthermore, many factors besides the pandemic influence the peacefulness and stability of societies, and climate change is one of them. The transition to low-carbon economy and sustainable living is the great task and opportunity of our time. European cities are acting together to make this happen and the Green Deal will be largely implemented in the cities.

All of this points to an undeniable necessity to provide better exchanges between cities in dealing with the new reality and challenges that cannot wait for the pandemic to pass. The UBC's role in supporting and facilitating the exchange of experiences and dissemination of knowledge in this matter needs to be continuously strengthened. It is more than needed to search for possibilities of practical activities to encourage member cities to be more active within the UBC network.

It can be said that the corona pandemic has made the central challenges for cities, regions and countries visible like in a burning glass. The modern city is globally connected and internationally dependent. In a complex and uncertain world, cities have now more than ever the responsibility to ensure the protection of people, to offer regional identity and enable the societal and economic transformation to a knowledge driven society. Equally, cities' challenge is working simultaneously on climate adaptation and climate resilience.

Resilience is top of the European priority list for 2021–27, as the EU is set to promote Europe's recovery, leveraged by the climate and digital transitions. UBC supports its Member Cities' work on sustainable growth, innovation, digitalization and cyber security as well as emergency and crisis response capacities. Priority is given to the support of health systems in tackling health issues as well as climate change and the regions ecological, but also economic and social problems. The ability to innovate is an essential feature of the BSR. Furthermore, the UBC proactively supports the implementation of the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea Region as a key strategy to build the cities' capacity for resilience and provide practical expertise.

Warm greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mantas Jurgutis'. The signature is stylized and fluid, written on a white background.

Mantas Jurgutis
President of UBC

I. RESILIENT BALTIC SEA CITIES

Identifying dangers	4-5
Urban climate change adaptation plan for Gdańsk	6
Pandemic has changed our world	7
2020 in Kaunas : Significant Changes and Innovations	8
Resilience is Key but Hard to Achieve	9
Liepāja Concert Hall is the first digital concert hall in Latvia	10
Real savings in Mielno	11
Keep on zooming	12
Residents of St. Petersburg unite to change the city	13
The cheapest and most environmental-friendly energy is saved energy	14-15
Green space passing through the city	16
Robots are joining the fight against the pandemic in Turku	17
Vaasa – creating the future and tackling current challenges	18

II. UBC NEWS & FACES

UBC 30 Years 1991–2021 and XVI UBC General Conference	19
“The Future of Europe” conference – UBC Brussels Antenna	20
CASCADE project aiming to increase local level resilience	21
CREST project – repurposing of educational buildings and spaces	22
Welcome new UBC members	23
Project “ReSit” is almost concluded	24
Resilient Cities Need to be Smart and Prospering	25
Shaping the future – the renewal of the UBC Strategy	26
The next 30 of the UBC: the Youth Dimension	27
Highlights in the Memory Lane	28
New Sustainability Action Programme on the way	29
Umbrella 2.0 held and Awareness Raising online event	30
Is your city in need of sustainable energy investments?	31
UBC Policy Position papers	32

III. CITY NEWS

Investment boom in Darłowo	34
In Gdynia ecological awareness is shaped effectively	35
Participatory Budgeting in Lithuania	36
Social housing in Mielno	37
Rostock to organize Webinars on sustainable and green cities	38
How To Organize Team Competitions in the Lockdown?	39
Tartu aims to become a trailblazer in the Baltics for the coolest and greenest public transportation solutions	40
Mayor of Turku elected as Vice-President in ICLEI	41
The most environmentally friendly car and passenger ferry in the world – Aurora Botnia	42

9

RESILIENCE IS KEY
BUT HARD TO ACHIEVE

12

KEEP ON ZOOMING

16

GREEN SPACE PASSING
THROUGH THE CITY

19

UBC 30 YEARS
– IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE

26

THE RENEWAL OF
THE UBC STRATEGY

35

NEW CHALLENGES
AND NEW FORMATS

38

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY
CAR PASSANGER FERRY

URBAN SECURITY AND

IDENTIFYING DANGERS

by Michael Allwardt, City of Rostock
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In the 5th century BC, the Greek statesman Perikles is said to have expressed: "It is not important to predict the future, it is important to be prepared for it". More than 2000 years later, these words can be applied to the architecture of urban security in our cities and regions.

What happens in the event of a comprehensive, long-lasting power failure with drinking water and wastewater, with the food supply or the state infrastructure? What are the effects of frequent heavy rain events or violent storms? What are the consequences of long periods of heat, such as those we have experienced in large parts of Europe in 2018 and 2019?

On the basis of many factors, a tendency to increase natural hazard risks can be determined – weather phenomena vs. climate change! Our networked world is also vulnerable, and cascade effects, such as a blackout, increase the risks and the extent of the damage caused by the consequences.

Are we prepared for the future? What have the last few months of the global corona pandemic already been teaching us? Were we really prepared for this, even though there were scientific studies that presented the course of the individual pandemic waves as well as the medical, economic, social and societal consequences, well described in theory?

If dangers cannot be identified, there cannot be any prevention against them. There are certain risks of unforeseenness of the probability of occurrence and the extent of damage. That is why it is not only about preparation, it is more about to adequately guarantee the life (or even the survival) of a modern society in an urban environment: it's about resilience. This resilience is all the more important as current processes such as globalization, digitization and networking of modern societies increase their vulnerability.

In addition, there is a phenomenon that increases vulnerability "The less a society has experienced a risk, the worse it is prepared for it". Who of us has ever known power outages that have lasted longer than half an hour and being also

widespread? Are you personally prepared? Do you have hand lamps, candles and matches, battery-operated radios and power-independent communication options ready at hand and ready to use?

The well-functioning everyday mechanisms of our social life and the persistent suggestion that the system that encompasses us is inviolable have weaned our populations from dealing with crisis situations, especially over a longer period of time.

In the end, the responsible actors only have two approaches to minimize possible dangers to society: One approach is to minimize and reduce risks and vulnerabilities. The other approach is to increase society's resilience.

It is particularly important to identify, sensitize and strengthen the administration and the critical infrastructures with their operators, taking into account modern economic cycles, globalization, effectiveness and efficiency, which also apply to possible investments in security. The critical infrastructures are of great importance for the functioning

If dangers cannot be identified, there cannot be any prevention against them.





of the community. Their failure or impairment can lead to significant supply bottlenecks or endanger public safety and order.

Critical infrastructures are indispensable lifelines of modern and efficient societies. Ensuring the protection and thus also the resilience of these infrastructures is a core task of government action, but also of corporate security precautions and responsible security policy.

The City of Rostock, completely independent of the corona pandemic, carried out a municipal impact analysis in 2020 for the urban security architecture and the security of supply for the population in the event of a blackout. With the results that have been available since January 2021, we are working specifically on the implementation to increase Rostock's resilience.

Let's get into a discourse. Share your process paths, your solutions and your resilience enhancement measures with all of us.

Enjoy reading the Spring edition of the UBC Bulletin 2021.



URBAN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PLAN FOR GDAŃSK

by Joanna Zbierska | joanna.zbierska@gdansk.gda.pl



The Urban Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Gdańsk until 2030 was adopted by the City Council in 2019 in response to the key environmental problem that have emerged in recent years, such as climate change and the need to adapt to its effects.

This plan includes a vision and scenarios of the future, the main goal and specific goals of the city's adaptation to climate change, which should be achieved through the implementation of selected adaptation measures in the six most sensitive areas of urban activity, which are: water management, preservation of biodiversity, transport, high-intensity residential development, public health and the needs of vulnerable groups, energy.

The basis for the development of the Urban Adaptation Plan were, among others: an agreement with the Ministry of the Environment and a ministerial adaptation manual for cities. This plan is linked to documents adopted at international, Community and national level, as well as regional and local legislation. The adaptation measures are consistent with the EU and national policies in the field of adaptation to climate change. They also fit into the development policy of Gdańsk expressed in strategic and planning documents.

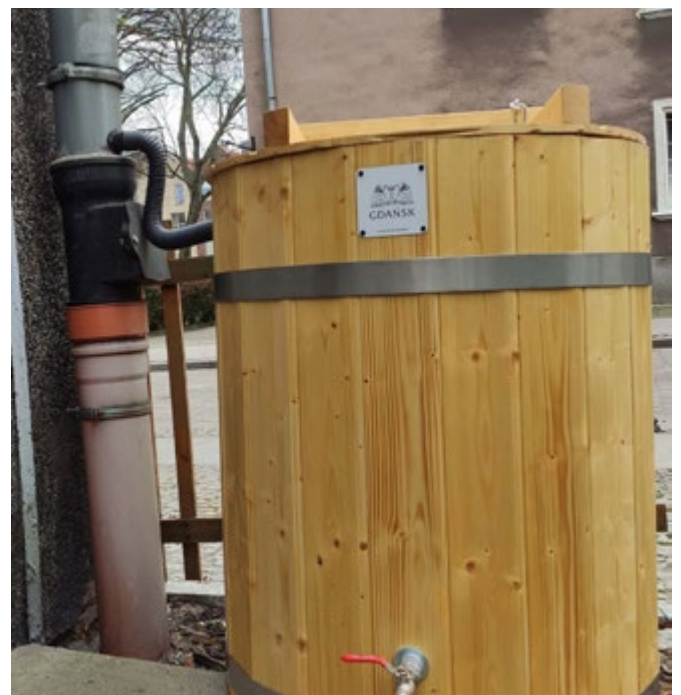
The adaptation plan is aimed at reducing the city's susceptibility to extreme phenomena and increasing the potential to counteract and combat their effects. It contains a diagnostic part in which the climatic phenomena and their derivatives affecting the city are described, and also the city's sensitivity to these phenomena and the ability to independently deal with the effects of climate change were assessed. For Gdańsk, a high level of risk resulting from climate change has been estimated for water management. In this sector, a very high-risk concerns flood protection infrastructure, especially in the face of such phenomena as: torrential rains, sudden urban floods.

In response to the risks identified in the diagnostic part of the document, adaptation measures necessary to be imple-

mented in order to increase the City's resilience to the current and predicted changes have been defined. The plan includes information, education, organizational and infrastructure activities.

The document also contains information on entities responsible for individual activities, financial framework, monitoring indicators and evaluation principles. The key tool for ensuring social acceptance of the Urban Climate Change Adaptation Plan is the Gdańsk Climate Change Forum established last year. Its first online edition took place on November 25, 2020.

The main goal of this initiative is to strengthen the process of open planning, which involves the widest possible participation of residents, representatives of the academic sector, and non-governmental organizations.



PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED OUR WORLD

by Grażyna Pilarczyk | g.pilarczyk@gdynia.pl

Pandemic has changed our world, most probably forever. Everyday we experience new difficulties and challenges in our way for "new tomorrow". But are they all bad? One whole year has passed and it is about time to indicate that pandemic has redefined cultural sector also in good part.

Culture has become tool for resilience, that's for sure! We have experienced closing down our institutions such as museums, theaters, cinemas. Audience reactions were always the same; first deep disappointment, next turning to the on-line performances. And after lockdowns they were ready to get back on live truck. We would never have a better confirmation, that culture is living substance of our cities.

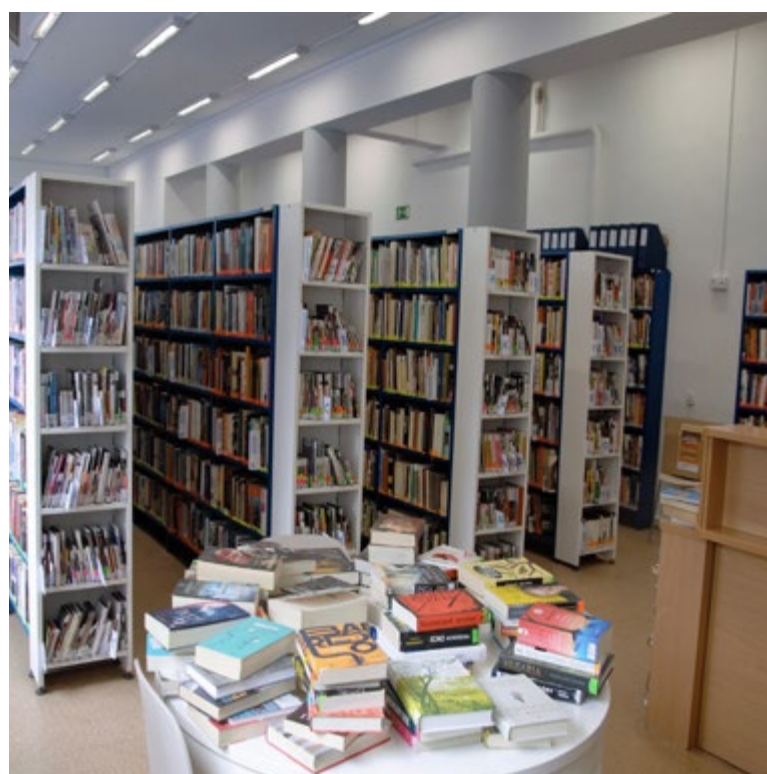
Another extremely good information is that people are ready to participate in cultural events on-line. This opened new possibilities and increased our competences in founding audience so far excluded. Pandemic has expanded our audience in many ways. It also improved reception qualities. It seems like recipients are more focused on performances or exhibitions. Temporary unavailability of culture caused a big hunger of it.

Next thing that is very important is how cities reacted on new situation in cultural sector. In our city, Gdynia, we prepared program "Culture joins forces" which, at the beginning, was supposed to be onetime aid for people working in cultural sector. Incredible positive reaction convinced us to redefine it into a longtime strategy. We are now focused on local artists and we managed to create a whole new environment for them to grow. We truly became stronger.

Last but not least result of new circumstances: cooperation! Yes, we can – as long as we stay together, learn about each other, support each other and care about each other. Our two big cities museums Museum of Gdynia and Emigration Museum decided that they would prepare more programs together: it has strengthened the merits essentialities and also balanced costs. Now we are in the middle of preparing

cultural summer cities events and we are more than happy to see so many different local organizations, institutions and individual artists working together.

Pandemic has changed everything and we have to learn how to strengthen our resilience. From cultural sector experience I would say, that the most important thing is to stay together. The more unbelievable it sounds, the more important this is.



2020 IN KAUNAS

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND INNOVATIONS

by Kaunas City Municipality Administration / Public Relations Department

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic and quarantine, Kaunas ended 2020 with a solid workload. Many of them have started or accelerated on an even larger scale this year. Kaunas City Mayor Mr. Visvaldas Matijošaitis says that the gained momentum cannot decrease even in this difficult period, but today it is especially important to notice and evaluate the efforts and initiatives of Kaunas residents, taking care of each other in order to stay safe and healthy.

Mr. Matijošaitis, who usually avoids forecasting, believes that 2021 will be meaningful for Kaunas. First of all, there is only a step left – only one year – until 2022, when Kaunas will become the European Capital of Culture. In addition, a number of important works for the city are planned to be completed in the coming years. In summing up the 2020, it is not difficult to make the top highlights. These are the events and works that Kaunas residents noticed the most.

Triple construction on the Nemunas Island

This year, two capsules marking the beginning of construction were buried on the Nemunas Island. Next to the Žalgiris Arena there will be a multifunctional water sports center with an Olympic-size swimming pool, a SPA area and a sports club. Nearby works are also underway at the construction site of the only science museum in the country, "Science Island", and a new bridge to the island.

Revived Unity Square

The unrecognizably changed space became one of the most visited places in Kaunas. This is no longer the place to pass through – now you want to stay here. After the reconstruction, the square was decorated with a fountain, an artificial stream, benches for a quiet rest, lighting and an underground parking lot. In 2021, it is planned to fundamentally reconstruct the Student Square on the other side of S. Donelaičio street.

Space for rowers

The old buildings on the shores of Lampėdžiai Lake have been replaced by a modern rowing base of the sports school "Bangpūrys" – a modern two-storey complex with two gyms, a seminar room, administrative premises and all amenities. In the yard – new sheds. The dredging of the 2 km long track will soon be completed.

"Today we need to see not only what the city is doing, but it is especially important to see those heroes who are doing their best for all of us. We must thank to the medics for their titanic work. Special services, teachers, social workers, various organizations and individual volunteers contribute in their own way to protect the city and its people.

I would also like to thank the Kaunas residents for staying conscious. Let us not lose our sense of responsibility on the New Year's Eve. We must stay healthy, because Kaunas is waiting for another year of positive changes," said Mayor of Kaunas City.



RESILIENCE IS KEY BUT HARD TO ACHIEVE

by Wolfgang Schmidt, City of Kiel, Head of International Affairs | wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de
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Photo: City of Kiel Facebook pages

Kiel is facing huge challenges due to the pandemic. In order to protect human lives, restrictions on fundamental rights were necessary. This was not only viewed with benevolence by the population. And we understand that well, because restrictions such as a lockdown threaten hard-earned livelihoods, restrict social life, limit culture and foster insecurity.

We as a municipality are addressing these concerns by implementing many initiatives to solve economic problems, make social life possible and emerge stronger from the crisis. The initiative "Kiel hilft Kiel" (Kiel helps Kiel) is a municipal program that provides pragmatic solutions to the consequences of Covid-19. We have funded the program with a sum of one million euro, enabling things such as open-air stages for Covid-compliant concerts by local artists, an online sales platform for local shops and a competition for ideas in which the citizens of Kiel can come up with their own projects to fight the consequences of the pandemic.

The pandemic has once again made it clear for us in Kiel: it is better to act than to react. Through far-sighted policy measures, we must become as resilient as possible when it comes to future crises. And this is not just about the pandemic, but above all about the global challenges of the future: the climate crisis and economic changes.

Resilience is the key, but resilience as such is hard to achieve

In Kiel, we try our best to become more resilient. We carry the idea of sustainability into almost all our decisions in the city administration. Kiel wants to become climate neutral by 2050. The milestones achieved so far fit in with this. To just give some examples, around 1/4 of Kiel's inhabitants use a bicycle instead of a car. We have received several awards for our safe crossings and good cycle routes.

Furthermore, we are committed to sustainable acquisition and procurement within the city administration, have

a zero-waste project team and much more. This year, we were awarded the German Sustainability Award for our efforts.

To strengthen the economy, we have implemented the concept of the business-friendly administration. This means that we always ask ourselves where we can support our economy (e.g. finding building sites, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles or through networking). Apart from that, we have an active start-up scene that is promoted by the city through various offers.

We still have a long way to go, but we already achieved some goals on the way to a resilient city. We are happy to share a more detailed version of our action plans in the upcoming events of the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission as well as on a panel at the General Conference.



Photo: Sascha Klahn

LIEPĀJA CONCERT HALL

THE FIRST DIGITAL CONCERT HALL IN LATVIA

by Natalja Vecvagare | natalja.vecvagare@liepaja.lv



2020 was undoubtedly challenging for almost all sectors. The world had to be creative and discover new ways to continue day-to-day business. How creative was the windy city Liepāja in this context? That's the topic of this article. It's the highlight story of the persistency and wilfulness of the cultural sector of Liepāja ja who throughout the year continued to adapt and create! Among the field leading figures is the Liepāja Concert Hall "Great Amber".

In spite of the pandemic, it has developed a way to bring culture to public in a digital manner and has even become the first digital Concert Hall in Latvia! The Hall have purchased robotic cameras and additional technical equipment which avails the opportunity for producers and public to get the highest standards in the industry with the possibility to broadcast or capture any event.

This is a big step forward in the development of the Concert Hall, allowing to perform under any circumstances. Targeted technological developments in the "Great Amber" already make it available not only in person, but also globally remotely. For several years, "Great Amber" has been gathering experience from Berlin, Gothenburg and Stockholm, following up to the current trends, and we are very pleased that the digital concert hall model has finally been introduced in Latvia. Digital concerts are today's necessity and reality.

The new digital equipment is available not only for video broadcasts and recordings; it delivers the additional opportunity for conference and seminar organizers, who now have the way to reach an audience worldwide online from Liepāja.

The tech equipment is discreet and does not interfere with the performers on stage or with the audience in the hall. One of the advantages of robotic cameras is the ability to easily move them and provide filming in both the Great Hall and the Chamber Hall.

Each of the four compact robotic cameras is able to maintain up to 100 different positions, or framings, of which 10 are available during live broadcasting. Having several cameramen with large cameras has become the technology of the past.

There are other advantages too. Cameras can show artists' close-ups and emotions during a concert, provide opportunities to follow the musical score, which was often impossible from the back of the hall.

There have already been a number of digital events providing new experience. Thanks to the innovative, remote-controlled devices, viewers can get frames and image angles that would not be possible to see in the hall, or through the use of classical filming capabilities.

By becoming a digital concert hall, "Great Amber" has greatly expanded its capabilities, deleting social, economic or geographical factors that can prevent or hinder audience from getting into a concert hall. The only thing you need, is an Internet connection and a smart device to watch a concert.

REAL SAVINGS IN MIELNO

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



The Mielno commune, as the first local government in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, started a large public-private partnership project with EU funding, i.e. hybrid project.

As part of the partnership with the Mielno Commune, the private partner (IZIM company belonging to the BaltCap Infrastructure Fund) will carry out renovation works and then will be responsible for the maintenance of the buildings.

The contract will run for 8 years. Co-financing in the amount of PLN 7.4 million from the Regional Operational Program of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship is the largest subsidy from the EU in the history of the Mielno Commune.

As part of the project, 4 public buildings will be rebuilt or modified, including two schools. The works will include insulation of walls, replacement of windows and modernization of heating installations.

The facilities will be equipped with energy-saving LED lighting and photovoltaic panels, which will significantly reduce electricity bills. Additionally, the project will implement a remote energy management system that will enable 24/7 management, control and monitoring of heat and electricity consumption in the facilities.

The investment is to reduce electricity consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by 70%.





KEEP ON ZOOMING

by Brigita Medne | bmedne3@edu.riga.lv

Initially portrayed as the “success story”, Latvia and Riga in particular has recently also experienced terrifying spread of infection, restrictions and struggles. Recognising the privileged position I am talking from, I have to admit that going remote, trying to find purpose and difference in oh-so-similar days has brought some conclusions and new initiatives in our youth work.

For us (Youth Division of the Riga City Council) inclusion and cooperation are not just guiding elements in our Riga City Youth Work Plan for 2019-2023, but also helpful daily principles.

We try to learn more about the needs of young people. Currently Riga Pupils’ council and the Department are working together with a researcher to create a survey for youth. The process itself is very involving – brainstorming ideas, learning how surveys are created – and we put big emphasis on reaching diverse young people.

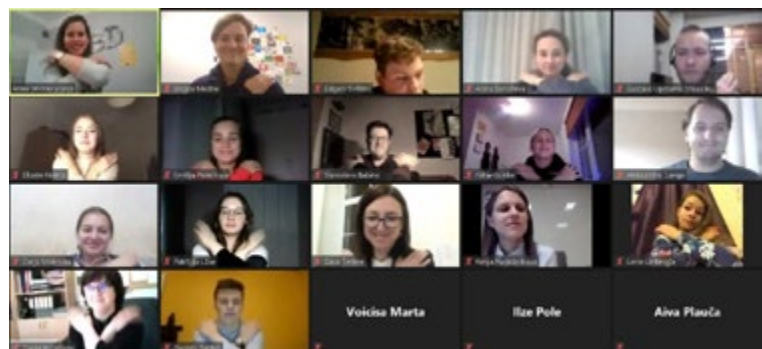
We create activities that might not have happened otherwise. To create something more meaningful and regular, we developed the “Lab of pupils’ councils” online where pupils and their consultants connect every 2 weeks for few hours to learn more about the functions and development of pupils’ councils. As homework they explore the opinion of other pupils and reflect on their learning (badgcraft.eu). In the end of the course, we will meet with the mayor to represent these ideas and challenges.

To support youth organisations during the pandemics Riga Youth centre “Kaņieris” organises a cycle of activities on digital youth work (and other crucial topics, such as mental health, financial management and teamwork).

We continue supporting and encouraging the initiatives of young people. Riga Pupils’ Council continues to work in amazing ways: offering online discussions on quality of education, creating Instagram LIVE sessions on diversity and stereotypes, offering remote school visits. They also participated in a parliamentary session on exam-related topics, commented the law proposal on remote learning in the future, and much more.

We cooperate internationally. In the beginning of the pandemic, we submitted a youth workers’ mobility together with Kolding and Kiel on diversity and representation - this autumn will bring us our first (probably remote) youth workers’ training. Check out the new Erasmus+ and ESC programmes for yourself also!

Let’s keep zooming in and out of our work to better evaluate and develop it - to support diversity, to encourage involvement and to try to support those who need it the most!



RESIDENTS OF SAINT PETERSBURG UNITE TO CHANGE THE CITY

by Anton Zaytsev | press@cleangames.ru



During the COVID-19 Pandemic people of Saint-Petersburg had to spend time within the apartments` walls. However, the city is awakening after the lockdown and the need for developing its territories becomes apparent. Often local activists take the reins and transform public places.

People of a Saint-Petersburg district noticed mysterious trucks driving past their windows. Initiative group "ZaBereg" has begun an investigation and found unauthorized dumps on the Krasnenkaya River's banks. 40 hectares are hidden under a six-meter mountain of waste despite the fact that endangered plants and nesting birds were found at the mouth of the river.

The activists came up with a shoreline development plan, which has received a grant. Not only were experts invited to work on the project but the "ZaBereg" group has even held sessions of participatory design, that is when ordinary people are engaged in discussions and share their views on the territories` future. The activists have started with cleaning up the banks and held Clean Games. In 2020 100 participants collected over a ton of waste!

Another story of transformation is happening on the Markarova Embankment: thanks to the Clean Games project an initiative group "Zarosli" appeared, and now it works on making the green zone cozy and safe. Activists say, "Now this part of the embankment looks abandoned, but we have held Clean Games twice and collected hundreds of bags full with garbage. The place does not look like a resting zone so far, and local authorities are going to build a highway through it. But we believe we can save the embankment and create a comfortable park here!"

The team of the volunteer corps of Saint-Petersburg Mining University managed to attract public attention to the shores of Smolenka. "The territory along the river could become a place for sports and recreation. Thanks to Clean Games we have already cleaned several points, and now the projects of building up Smolenka banks are slowed down", says **Victoria Kapustina**, the volunteer corps leader. Thanks to their dedicated work and desire to show how attractive former dumb can be, both locals and authorities changed their indifferent attitude.

The city is changing together with its people. Saint-Petersburg, so called "Northern Venezia", has suffered from dirty waters and shores for too long. But the start line of transformation has already been crossed.

THE CHEAPEST AND FRIENDLY ENERGY



Some inspiring stories on heading towards the energy-efficient urban areas of the future from the Baltic Sea Region's Area 21 plus project.

First of all, they identified the problem, which was important to all of them, regardless of the country they come from and the field of expertise, they represent. Then, they started discussing and brainstorming the potential solutions, which led to a transnational project, the results of which can easily contribute to increasing prosperity of the Baltic Sea Region member states and beyond.

The problem was the low rate of energy efficiency renovations and unused energy saving potentials in the buildings in the Baltic Sea Region, and in general in the EU countries. The project is AREA 21 + action.

United for a common goal to advance renovations or other energy efficiency measures for the existing buildings, ten different actors from six countries across the Baltic Sea Region teamed up to develop and test an instrument to facilitate energy efficiency actions at the district level. This is how the "Energy Improvement District (EID) concept" was born, the Project's great contribution to the EUBSR's Policy Area's Energy. The concept seems even more actual after the updated EUBSR Action Plan came into force in February 2021 and the PA Energy's action number one is all about „streamlining efforts on energy efficiency in the region by deepening regional cooperation“.

"With help of the EID concept, actors in EU cities can identify case-specific needs and potentials to increase energy efficiency at the district level, bringing together private and public actors, academia, public administration, SMEs, local energy providers and citizens to generate beneficial collaboration by creating context-specific strategies and actions

in the respective Energy Improvement Districts", Jonas Fisher from the Lead-Partner HafenCity University Hamburg explains.

But the project is also very much practice-oriented, with an emphasis on easily replicable solutions and concrete examples of actions that can demonstrate what implementation of its concept of Energy Improvement District really means.

Our transnational collaboration, involving partners from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland, Russia, and Sweden, allows us to commonly develop and test the EID instrument building on existent partners' expertise and institutions, share experiences and finally use the outcome to demonstrate a method to address commonly experienced challenges in the BSR countries', Jonas adds.

In the city of Tampere, Finland the partners from the local university and a city council have been responsible for developing and piloting new action models for helping and encouraging building owners to take energy actions. Today, after some years of dedicated work they are very proud to have helped building owners to reduce their emissions and energy bills and have a good tip to others that want to promote energy-efficient solutions: 'If building owners knew how profitable the actions are, they would all do them!'

It turned out that the challenges are very common, although identified across different groups of stakeholders. They covered issues like lack of knowledge, lack of economic motivation and engagement, or finally lack of good and clear communication.

In the Estonian town of Kõhla-Järve, it appeared that attracting and engaging inhabitants in raising awareness in

MOST ENVIRONMENTAL- IS SAVED ENERGY

by By Marta Czarnecka-Gallas, Let's Communicate! project | m.czarnecka-gallas@pomorskieregion.eu



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FUND

energy efficiency and energy consumption topics is a very challenging task. 'Our main role is to offer support and assistance to housing associations and property owners in the processes of planning and decision making. It was not so surprising, but rather recognizing that good and clear communication is the key in terms of successful results. Lack of clear communication leads quickly to loss of interest of property owners, even if they are presumably the most interested party in improving their living conditions. Finding joint points of interest and common language has to lead us to the phase of successful implementation of planned activities', Jana Viital from the city's urban development department explains.

In Peter the Great Saint-Petersburg Polytechnic University, which was another pilot area, the problems seemed even bigger. Because how can you convince students and teachers to save energy if they do not pay for consumed resources? Have they had there any success? Definitely, **Yury Nurulin** confirms and says what in particular he is proud of: We helped to bring various points of views together - students realized how much was being done by the University to provide comfortable conditions for education and living in the dormitory, the University services departments started considering students as an "active users" (stakeholders) which should be informed and involved in energy-saving activities even if they do not have direct economic motivation'.

Quite a similar approach was adopted in Helsingborg, Sweden, where the Project's partner - the local energy utility Öresundskraft supports the Region Skåne and its regional hospital with knowledge and strategic dialogues. 'We are very proud to have established the interest in energy at the hospital as well as the EID-concept in our organisations. We have talked about the importance of viewing energy from a holistic position for a long time, and thanks to the Area21 project we now have proof of a practical example as well'.

The partners were quite surprised by the great interest among the end-users (hospital departments) to be involved in the work and the benefits of working together as energy utility and property owner. 'It is great to see our organisations as partners, developing solutions together and sharing equally its generated profits. Just like the 17th UN's goal of sustainability!', concludes **Anna Sundberg** from Öresundskraft.

With a bunch of successful stories and concrete tools that can be used in our organizations/sectors and countries, the Area 21 + project's partners are convinced that their experiences can be followed by others, contributing to more energy-efficient urban areas of the future. 'Change of mindset requires continuous networking and well-coordinated cooperation between stakeholders'- they claim and still see a lot to do about that after finalization of the project.



GREEN SPACE PASSING THROUGH THE CITY

by Helle Tolmoff | Helle.Tolmoff@tartu.ee



Tartu will transform the former railway area into a green corridor of several kilometres in length running through the city, which will pass through several districts and end at the Emajõgi River.

The 3.3-kilometre-long branch of the Tartu port railway was built about a hundred years ago to serve the city's riverside businesses and river port. The railway branch ran through garden-like Tammelinn, the Ropka industrial district and the district of Karlova, ending at the Emajõgi River. The main users of the railway industry in recent decades were AS Tartu Keskkatlamaja, a scrap metal processing company, and a road construction company. Since the 2000s, the liquidation of a sparsely used railway branch and the construction of a street in its place have been considered on numerous occasions. The last freight train used the port railway in the summer of 2018, and the rails were removed in the autumn of 2019.

In previous comprehensive plans for the City of Tartu, the former railway area has been marked as a major road, the goal being to solve the city's traffic problems and reduce the car load in the city centre. During the course of updating the comprehensive plan, which began last year, many city residents proposed that the former port railway be used as a green area. A similar proposal – to build a green corridor through the city in place of the railway – has also been submitted by the people of Tartu on several occasions as part of the collecting of ideas for the city's participative budget.

In the proceedings for the new comprehensive plan, the city commissioned several studies on the port railway area – a green network analysis, an urban planning analysis, and a traffic analysis. As a result, the construction of a major road will not solve traffic problems, since the initially planned bridge across the Emajõgi River at the end of the major road cannot be built over the NATURA nature reserve. At the same

time, both the analysis of the green network and the urban planning analysis showed that the proposed green corridor for the port railway offers high added value for the urban space. In the summary of the works, it was found that the port railway corridor allows for the connecting of green areas along the river and green areas along the railway, both as an ecological corridor and as a recreation area for people.

Thus, the new comprehensive plan, which will soon be open to public discussion, envisages a green area along most of the length of the former railway area, with intra-quarter streets planned for only a few sections within residential areas. The plan includes transforming part of the railway corridor into a linear park, with the rest being left mainly as a green area extending all the way to the Emajõgi River. A cycle track is planned for the entire length of the port railway, which extends from the city's arterial road – from Riga Street to the recreation areas along the Emajõgi River.

As a city, Tartu is friendly towards cycle and pedestrian track users, with people here loving to walk and ride bicycles. In recent years, travel by bicycle has also been greatly boosted by the opening of Tartu's Smart Bike Share system. Thus, for many Tartu residents, the addition of a new cycle and pedestrian track in the former port railway area is very welcome.

The attractive green area passing through the city, in the form of a linear park and an excellent cycle and pedestrian track opportunity, is sure to find plenty of use and will become a popular place to spend time among Tartu's residents. Hopefully, this will also become an area of interest for tourists coming to the city as is the case with the High Line – a 2.33-kilometre former railway area built in a park, which is visited by an average of five million people a year – located in Manhattan, New York.

Fråga om corona på ditt eget språk. Åbot svarar ▶

sobre el corona-virus en su propia lengua. Åbot responde ▶

اسأل عن كورونا بلغتك. Åbot يجيب

用你自己的语言提问有关新冠病毒

ROBOTS

ARE JOINING THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC IN TURKU

Text: Matti Välimäki | Photos: Ilari Välimäki



Turku has implemented new technology which has significantly sped up the process of getting tested for COVID-19 and receiving the results. Artificial intelligence and robots are also useful for purposes such as counselling and organising vaccinations.

The first wave of the pandemic was relatively mild in Turku. However, when the second wave hit the city last August, the number of cases rose quickly. Health care services started receiving more and more enquiries related to COVID-19. The number of people getting tested for COVID-19 also increased.

According to Project Director **Tapio Järvenpää**, getting tested and receiving the results soon took an unreasonably long time due to the system being overwhelmed. Solving the problem began with examining whether the work related to counselling, booking appointments and sharing information, which was currently being performed by health care personnel, could be automated. The task at hand was further complicated by the fact that the various stages of the COVID-19 testing process were overseen by two different public administrative organisations – and that several different information systems were being used for it.

"However, through cooperation, we were able to quickly create a system in which the customer is able to book an appointment for testing directly through a digital symptom assessment service and a robot creates a referral for the laboratory. We also built a system in which the robot sends the customer an SMS message of the result as soon as it is received and enters it into the national patient data repository."

Before the new system was implemented, the time it took from assessing the symptoms to taking the sample and receiving the results was 3 to 10 days. Now it is only 24 to 36

hours. "The waiting time for the customers has been minimised. Quick tests and results help manage the pandemic. They have also freed up a lot of health care staff from mechanical work to actual health care related tasks."

Robotic advice in one hundred languages

Turku has also created an artificial intelligence application which shares basic information about the pandemic with the citizens in nearly one hundred languages. "We wanted to take into account the 10 per cent of citizens who speak something other than Finnish, Swedish or English as their mother tongue. This solution also helps keep counselling telephone services from getting too busy."

Customers can ask a question from the robot in their own native language and the robot recognises the language and provides an answer in the same language. The multilingual whizz fetches its data from reliable sources: The City of Turku website and the website of the national expert in fighting the pandemic, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

According to Järvenpää, the data and digital modelling are also constantly helpful in creating a situational picture of the pandemic and making decisions, for example. "When there was a notable cluster of COVID-19 infections among exchange students in Turku, we were able to react quickly with quarantine measures and more efficient supervision. This is thanks to modelling the spread of the virus, which demonstrated what would happen if we did not take these measures."

Turku has also utilised digital methods in organising vaccinations. "The robot has invited citizens to get vaccinated via SMS. So far it has sent invites to elderly people and other risk groups in particular."

CREATING THE FUTURE AND TACKLING CURRENT CHALLENGES

by Susanna Slotte-Kock | susanna.slotte-kock@vaasa.fi

According to the UN Happiness Report, Finland is once again the happiest country in the world. Vaasa, for its part, has set a goal of being the happiest city in the world's happiest country. Happiness is not only the responsibility of the individual – one's own living environment is particularly important.

The happiness of the residents in Vaasa is developed comprehensively. One central way is to guide residents on how to develop themselves into happiness experts of their own lives. In addition to intensive work with residents, various units within the city's organization are developing their own services from the perspective of happiness. The results of the recent Vaasa happiness survey were surprising with its positivity.

Many may wonder if now is the right time to talk about happiness, especially when the world is in a crisis and people are having to put restrictions on their lives in many ways. We believe that right now is actually the perfect time. Today, we can really show the world that happiness is still within the grasp of all of us and can be found surprisingly close by, such as in a nearby forest or in the arms of your dear ones.

Vaasa has digitalized many public services in order to stay close and encourage the inhabitants to be active. The city provides i.e. virtual PE-classes, childrens' theater and free virtual concerts by the city orchestra. The entire region is actively providing everyone with cultural experiences. Citizens have enjoyed streamed live theater performances, free concerts as well as locally produced talk shows. It is also crucial to support and encourage the youth as well as

university students, as some of them are suffering from loneliness right now.

Therefore engaging the youth through the outreach youth work and discussing students own development ideas is of great importance. Both cultural experiences and being engaged in something also increase the happiness of our citizens.

Vaasa built a very effective corona information channel in the form of a daily updated list, where possible places of exposure to the virus are listed with specific timeframes. The list includes places like schools or universities as well as stores, gyms, restaurants, specific bus routes etc.

The list states that if you have visited one of these sites within the mentioned timeframe you ought to be cautious in following your own healthcondition. This work is done in close cooperation with the entrepreneurship societies that coordinate the work of private places for exposure.





UBC 30 Years 1991–2021 and the XVI UBC General Conference 27–30 October in St. Petersburg

by Irene Pendolin | irene.pendolin@ubc.net

In September 2021, UBC turns 30 years. These thirty years of active international networking is an honorable achievement from the whole UBC community! The festive activities have started in spring 2021 and culminate in the special General Conference on 27–30 October in St. Petersburg.

Jubilee year activities include:

- Publication about UBC's history, to be published in spring 2021
- Refreshing of UBC website and jubilee logo
- Social media and other campaigns, such as photo competition for the Commission and Member Cities – please see back cover of the Bulletin for more information!
- Webinars/seminars
- Jubilee podcasts
- Competition to involve the youth

We encourage all UBC commissions to participate in the jubilee year programme by creating events and campaigns of their own. **Please use the hashtag #UBC30 in all your posts!**

“UBC is a dynamic platform made 30 years ago, that will work on the better future of citizens and leaders in the cities. This year has brought with it not only the global pandemic but also changes within the UBC structure and organisation. During 2021, we strive to make these changes a concrete reality, so that we can even better serve the needs of our member cities. The cities are smart, but they become even smarter within UBC cooperation”, states UBC President **Mantas Jurgutis**.

The theme of the XVI UBC General Conference is “**Resilient Baltic Sea Cities. Tackling the challenges and creating the future(s)**”. The Conference is planned to be held in St. Petersburg, Russia, on 27–30 October 2021.

The conference will focus on the UBC cities' resilience. Today our cities and societies are facing COVID-19 pandemic and its long-term consequences. The pandemic is, however, just one of major risks posed on the cities. Financial and economic crises, population flows, environment and climate phenomena, natural and anthropogenic disasters, social conflicts and terrorism – all these challenges have to be tackled.

A resilient city would not just wait the crisis to pass. It would be able to maintain a continuity of its services and functions throughout any shocks and dangers, it would respond and react, while protecting and enhancing people's lives. How to design more equitable, liveable, resilient cities?

The conference presentations and discussions will hopefully provide us with some ideas on new ways of governance, cooperation, new services and funding. As a city is a complex system, our work will focus on various dimensions, e.g. economic, social, environmental.





“The Future of Europe” conference UBC Brussels Antenna

by Marko Paunovic | marko.paunovic@ubc.net

A part of the UBC Brussels Antenna is striving to connect UBC member cities with European stakeholders and increase involvement in EU policy dialogues where possible. I would like to bring to your attention a new opportunity for involving your cities in shaping the EU's future policies and ambitions through the “Conference on the Future of Europe”.

What is the “Conference on the Future of Europe”?

The presidents of the European Parliament, Council and Commission of the EU signed a joint declaration on the “Conference on the Future of Europe”. The ceremony was held on 10 March in the Parliament of Brussels plenary chamber.

The aim of the Conference was to **give people a bigger role in shaping EU's future policies and ambitions**. People will be able to take part in advance in debates across the EU and express themselves through a multilingual digital platform. Such Conference events, be those physical or digital gatherings, can be organised at different levels, including European, national, transnational and regional level and will involve civil society and stakeholders. Citizens' participation in these events should aim at mirroring Europe's diversity. A feedback mechanism will ensure that the ideas expressed during the Conference events result in concrete recommendations for EU action.

What are the key topics?

Reflecting the Strategic Agenda of the European Council, the 2019-2024 Political Guidelines of the European Commission and the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, discussions will cover, amongst others: building a healthy continent, the fight against climate change and environmental challenges, an economy that works for people, social fairness, equality and intergenerational solidarity, Europe's digital transformation, European rights and values including the Rule of Law, migration challenges, security, the EU's role in the world, the Union's democratic foundations, and how to strengthen democratic processes governing the EU.

Discussions can also cover cross-cutting issues related to the EU's ability to deliver on policy priorities, such as better regulation, application of subsidiarity and proportionality,

implementation and enforcement of the *acquis* and transparency.

How can the cities engage?

While, in light of social distancing measures and similar restrictions related to COVID-19, the use of **digital engagement** efforts and activities are of key importance, physical participation and face-to-face exchanges should still constitute an essential part of the Conference. At the European level, European institutions commit to organizing **European citizens' panels**.

These should be representative in terms of citizens' geographic origin, gender, age, socioeconomic background and/or level of education. Specific events should be dedicated to young people as their participation is essential for ensuring a long-lasting impact of the Conference. The panels should take on board contributions gathered in the framework of the Conference providing input to the Conference Plenary by formulating a set of **recommendations** for the Union to follow-up on.

Each Member State and institution can organise additional events, in line with their own national or institutional specificities, such as national citizens' panels, or thematic events bringing together input from different panels.

The European institutions will also reach out to citizens and promote broader, interactive and **creative forms of participation**. Input from all Conference-related events will be collected, analysed, and published throughout the Conference via a multilingual digital platform – also a place for citizens to share their ideas and send online submissions. A **feedback mechanism** will ensure that the ideas expressed during the Conference events result in concrete recommendations for EU action.

What are the next steps?

The Executive Board already met on 7 April in the European Parliament and the Digital Platform was launched on 19 April. UBC Antenna will follow the process and inform the UBC Member Cities about the possible ways to engage in national citizens' panels or thematic events and bring cities' perspective into the policy dialogue.

CASCADE project aiming to increase local level resilience in the Baltic Sea Region

by Jutta Mäkinen | jutta.makinen@turku.fi



Climate change is already here, and we have no other choice but to start preparing, adapting, and dealing with the consequences. The risks related to climate change are not only the concern for professionals engaged with sustainable development. It is becoming more evident each year that climate change is an emerging security threat, and a field in need of involvement from civil protection specialists as well as climate change experts.

The CASCADE project brought together civil protection professionals and climate change adaptation experts to build urban resilience in cities and towns, as well as the overall macroâ€œregional resilience. Among the nine partners of the CASCADE project, there are three UBC member cities and the Safe Cities Commission, and the Sustainable Cities Commission involved.

The project set to create improved capacity to understand, assess, and treat current and future climate change related risks on the local level, focusing on the Baltic Sea Region conditions. The project results aim to increase practical risk management capabilities of local authorities, creating positive cascading effects through easily customized training materials to enhance the capacity of urban communities.

All the CASCADE project results are collected to a Toolbox for Climate Risk Preparedness, consisting of simple, easy-to-use checklists, templates, and useful examples for cities to use. The toolbox will allow cities to:

- Assess climate change-related risks and threats in your community
- Carry out an integrated climate risk assessment, based on scientific methods and best practices

- Train personnel on this using the training materials on increasing capacity and preparedness
- Learn how others have approached climate change based on a selection of case studies and recommendations
- Browse a collection of other useful links on the topic

Final results and toolbox will be available soon! Follow news and updates from the project: cascade-bsr.eu

CASCADE is a Flagship project of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region under Policy Area Secure. Funding Programme: DG ECHO (European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid)

Contact: Jutta Mäkinen, Communications and Network Manager, Sustainable Cities Commission
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Insights and results from the project were also introduced to the UBC network through the first UBC TALKS webinar of 2021 co-hosted by the UBC Safe Cities and Sustainable Cities Commissions.

Summary, presentations, and full recording from UBC TALKS about climate hazards and how to build resilient cities can be accessed here: ubc-sustainable.net/news/ubc-talks-discussed-cascading-consequences-climate-hazards-and-how-make-cities-more-resilient

CASCADE
COMMUNITY SAFETY ACTION FOR
SUPPORTING CLIMATE ADAPTATION



CREST project – repurposing of educational buildings and spaces

by Anna Dargiewicz | anna.dargiewicz@ubc.net

The European project entitled Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments (CREST) has been launched in the end of 2020. It addresses the ways of how and where the learning and teaching processes take place. The aim of the project is to build a model for repurposing of educational buildings and spaces to accommodate student-centred learning through the perspective of learning environment. The UBC is a partner in this project.

An important part of the first phase is the identification of needs of different stakeholders involved in management and re-purposing of educational and public spaces. The UBC conducted a survey on repurposing of educational buildings and spaces to foster and promote student centred learning in UBC member cities. The results prove the municipal cooperation with the HE institutions is quite extensive and different stakeholders are involved in the planning and designing processes. The survey shows however, that collecting the needs of students and teachers concerning the educational spaces is not a common practice. The UBC member cities' input will be crucial for development of a model for repurposing of educational buildings and spaces based on collaboration and involvement of all relevant actors.

What is Student-centred learning (SCL)?

Up until the 20th century the teaching environment resembled the industrial economy, since the main purpose was to deliver a message to a large group, which sat in silence, listening and taking notes.

A definition of SCL, put forward by McCombs and Whisler, has been widely used and encompasses the major parts of the concept: "the perspective that couples a focus on individual learners (their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities and needs) with a focus on learning (the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs and about teaching practices that are most effective in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning and achievement for all learners)."

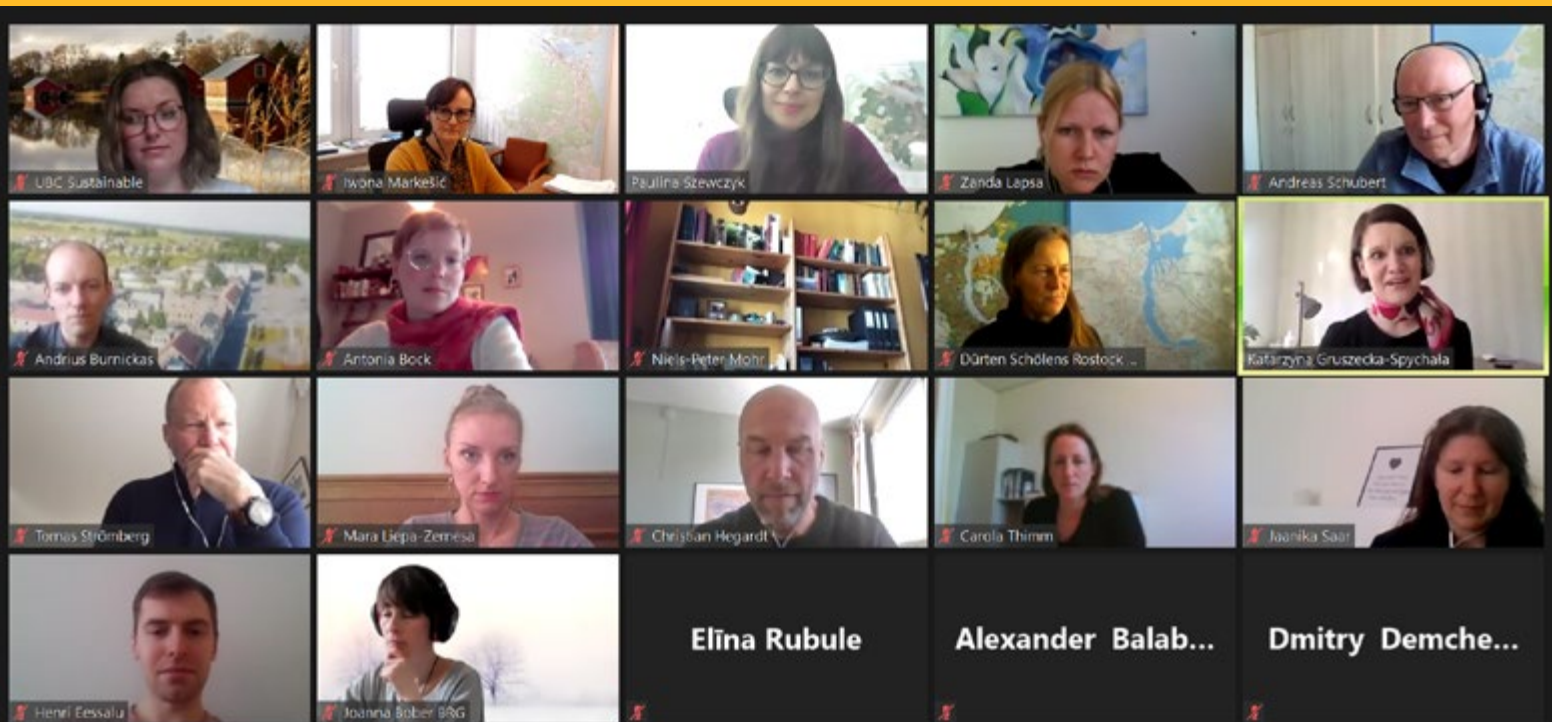
CREST project is financed by Erasmus+ programme. It will be implemented in 2020–2022 by 6 partners from 5 countries: Slovenia (University of Ljubljana), Lithuania (MB HOMO EMINENS, VDU), Croatia (Culture Hub), Belgium (Out of the Box International) and UBC.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

UBC Planning Cities Commission: Welcome new UBC members

by Paulina Szewczyk | p.szewczyk@gdynia.pl



Cities, which were once full of life, have become rather empty due to different kinds of restrictions affecting such areas of everyday life as commuting, gathering and travelling. This situation is tough for all of us, especially since none of us expected that it could last for more than one year.

The UBC Planning Cities Commission cannot work normally and organise its seminars in-person, like it has been done for more than 20 years in the 30 years of UBC's history.

Everything indicates that also we have to develop our resilience. The need of togetherness pushes the UBC Planning Cities Commission to adjust to current situation. Therefore, the Commission held its Virtual Meeting on 19 April 2021, using Zoom teleconference platform.

The meeting programme included presentations of current projects and urban challenges in the city of Hamburg, the city of Rokiškis and the city of Valmiera.

Tobias Goevert, Head of Department of Regional and Urban Development in the city of Hamburg gave an overview on the relevant topics of urban development. He presented the concepts, mission statements and guidelines that had been developed. The main topics were housing, the city centre, "Magistralen", inner development and the strategy of "City in New Area" .

Zanda Lapsa, Head of City Planning Section, Main Architect of the city of Valmiera, introduced the city and highlighted general key issues - housing, mobility with the focus on pedestrians and cyclists, and questions about how to become greener, environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Andrius Burnickas, Director of Rokiškis District Municipality Administration delivered a presentation "Towards sustainability: adapting public and green spaces to the needs of community, modernization of recreational infrastructure and landscaping".

The Steering Group of the Commission and a Chair will continue their work for the next two years. Also, **Christian Hegardt**, Visby, was elected a Vice Chair.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions the UBC Planning Cities Commission foresees two possible scenarios of its activities in 2021. As we all very much look forward to meeting in person, we are not ruling out a traditional seminar, especially in the year of UBC's 30th anniversary. But if this is not possible, we will find a way to meet in autumn 2021 and still exchange our experiences – during an online event.



Project “ReSit” is almost concluded

by Kaspars Vārpiņš | kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv

On 11 March 2021, in online format, took place the Final event of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland funded project “ReSit” – Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region – where partners from The Finnish National Rescue Association SPEK, Liepaja Municipal Police (who represented as well the UBC Safe Cities Commission), Frederiksborg Brand og Redning (Denmark) and Beredssabsforbundet (Danish Civil Protection League) aimed to create a knowledge base and recommendations to develop the cooperation and joint preparedness of authorities, volunteer organisations and citizens for man-made and natural disasters in the Baltic Sea region.

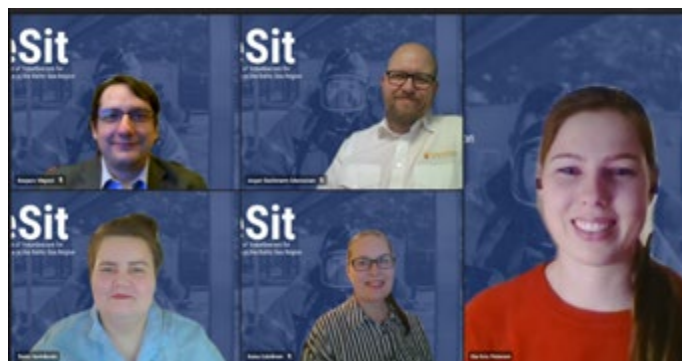
During the project a research was made and a report was prepared, which draws a situational picture of volunteerism in the field of civil protection in 10 Baltic Sea countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Russia. During the research a questionnaire was carried out where a total of 138 respondents (76 volunteer organisation leaders and 62 authorities) answered the prepared questions and altogether 13 authorities and 5 leaders of volunteer organisations were interviewed. The Final Report is now at its layout designing phase and as soon as it will be ready and published, information will be sent through UBC network.

Previously mentioned final event of the project which took place online was organized to highlight the three main results and recommendations of the project: Structures and coordination, Recruiting and motivating volunteers, International cooperation. After the presentations of each of the result, they were discussed by authorities and volunteer representatives. The recording of the Final event is available

in YouTube - <https://youtu.be/GfaCFXLLegs>

The main conclusions of the project where, that cooperation between volunteers and authorities is reported to be common in the region and that the volunteers participate in a wide range of tasks, the most common being firefighting and rescue tasks. There is education available for volunteers, still improvement is needed concerning major disasters and general guidance of citizens. One of the highlighted problem is challenges of recruiting volunteers and keeping them motivated.

Conclusions indicated, that the cooperation with spontaneous volunteers is a growing phenomena and the plans of the spontaneous volunteer involvement should be prepared in advance. There are clearly improvements needed to ensure that the financial resources are sufficient in organisations for tasks in civil protection. More about the research you'll be able to find out when the Final Report will be published.



UBC Smart & Prospering Cities Commission: Resilient Cities Need to be Smart and Prospering

by Wolfgang Schmidt | wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de
Christian Lausten Sørensen | cls@aarhus.dk



In times of Covid, the question of resilience in cities is once again becoming extremely important. For us, it is clear that cities wanting to become more resilient need to be smart and prospering.

There are so many innovative, forward-thinking approaches and successful concepts, especially among our UBC member cities. Therefore, we are optimistic that our constant exchange will make the Baltic Sea region a model region for resilient cities.

We as UBC-Commission are looking forward to fulfilling our responsibility and will go the extra mile in 2021: in the coming months we will put even more energy into the work of the Commission to give our member cities more inspiration.

We want to lift the currently partly unused potential: the huge knowledge of our member states. With more exchange of experience and very concrete examples, we want to specifically get more out of our cooperation within the UBC.

Under the main topic “Resilient Cities”, we are planning four virtual seminars for 2021 in which we will exchange concrete experiences regarding Corona, digitalisation, sustainability and tourism. We will evaluate the experiences from these seminars and use them as a basis for further initiatives. Of course, like always, input by other UBC members is highly appreciated.

Our first event took place on 23 April 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.

We are very much looking forward to the upcoming months. Stay safe and healthy!



Shaping the future – the renewal of the UBC Strategy 2022–2030

by Esther Kreutz | esther.kreutz@ubc.net



As we all know, 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of our network. The world has changed immensely in the past 30 years and even more, it seems, in the past 12 months of the current global pandemic. A good time to look back, reflect and build on our experiences to continue developing an active and agile organization, meeting the needs of our member cities in the future.

In the end of 2021 also our current UBC strategy expires and calls for an update and renewal in the light of the current situation in this world, reflecting the reality for our member cities and our region and to look ahead to the next years to come: what kind of network do we want to be in 2030? What is our purpose today and in the future? How can we work together more efficiently – inside and outside of the organization? And how can we be flexible, adaptive and yes, also resilient in times of change as an organization?

To answer these questions and to work on a renewal of the strategy, the Executive Board decided in October 2020 to install a task force, including representatives from all commissions, task forces and working groups, the General Secretariat, the presidium as well as some national coordinators, representing member cities.

The task force works with and follows closely the development of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme and the UBC Gender Equality strategy, to ensure the streamlining of our efforts for the whole organization.

After benchmarking other city networks in Europe and creating a basis through existing documents and surveys, we have so far been carrying out two interactive online workshops. With the use of collaborative tools, we discussed and

developed an updated vision and mission for the network and discussed focus and directions, proposed new ways of working and cooperation – internally and externally. The work is ongoing still and there will be an open consultation process for all member cities of the network before the strategy will be presented and adopted at the XVI General conference in October this year.

With any questions or remarks to the strategy work, please get in touch!





UBC Youthful Cities Commission: The next 30 of the UBC: The Youth Dimension

by Dmitrijs Zverevs | dmitrijs.zverevs@riga.lv

Even though those involved in the work of the Youthful Cities Commission since its very foundation in 2003 (back then as the Commission on Youth Issues) have been quite sure that we stand for the best interests of young people and their participation opportunities in the cities and wider region, quite often we have been in two minds about who the Commission actually represents (the city officials, the youth workers or the young people themselves) and how our ultimate goal can be achieved.

It's just a coincidence timewise, yet the Commission enters the next 30 years of the UBC with a new vision about how to proceed. We dedicated the summer and autumn of 2020 to evaluate cities' previous experience in the Commission and to mark the new priorities and working models for the upcoming years.

Youth workers were identified as our main stakeholders and it was agreed that meaningful involvement of young people can be achieved only through them. Therefore one of the things we plan to focus on is creating space for the youth workers to exchange experiences and develop joint project ideas. Luckily, a lot can be done in this field also online.

At the same time, youth participation remains at the very core of the Commission. Therefore, we stick with the tradition of organizing a Youth Conference next to the General

Conference of the UBC this autumn. Even if it might not be possible for almost 100 young people from the UBC cities to meet in person this time, we will definitely host an online event for them to make sure the voices of young people are loud enough during the General Conference.

As youth dimension becomes more visible on global and EU agenda, here in the Baltic Sea Region we are lucky enough to have international partners who believe in youth participation to cooperate with (CBSS, BSSSC - to mention just few). Baltic Sea Youth Platform (BSYP) is a well-seen result of such cooperation (for example, Baltic Sea Youth Declaration – a statement by the region's young people – made its whole way up to the EUSBSR annual Forum).

However, what makes the Commission a living body are the active member cities. As long as there's true interest, there's something for the Commission to do and needs to address. Therefore, we stay open for more cities to join the work of the Youthful Cities Commission. Don't hesitate to contact us and surprise with your ambition!

UBC Task Force Supporting Youth Employment and Well-Being: Highlights in the Memory Lane

by Matti Mäkelä | matti.makela@turku.fi



The first seven years of the Task Force Supporting Youth Employment and Well-Being have been very active and successful. We have arranged over 30 study visits, conferences, seminars and workshops, created a web-site, collected the best practices and implemented new projects. Join us in walking down the memory lane.

The theme of the UBC 2013 general conference was combating youth unemployment and marginalisation. Because of this, Finnish member cities had appointed their own experts to a working group, which was tasked with preparing a programme to promote youth employment and well-being.

City of Turku took the leading role in this work and the UBC Programme to Promote Youth Employment and Well-Being was introduced in Mariehamn general conference. Discussions in Mariehamn clearly indicated that UBC Member Cities were interested in working together to tackle youth unemployment and marginalization. Therefore, the UBC General Conference decided to establish a Task Force on youth employment and well-being.

The next big step was in 2015 when TF published The Good, the Bad and the Next Practices report about the current state of the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in BSR. Report also included the best Youth Guarantee practices from the region.

During the following years TF strengthened cooperation with other actors and networks, such as School to work and StartNet, working to tackle the same challenges. In May 2019 TF held a long planned Youth Guarantee Conference in Brussels in close cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions.

In 2020 and 2021 TF has concentrated on three themes: STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math), attractiveness of the vocational education and basic skills. The idea behind the theme-based approach is that concentrating on certain issues would make cooperation and creation of common goals and projects easier, as we have already seen during these two years.

We have, like everyone else, been affected by Covid-19 and during the last year all our activities (seminars, workshops, meetings) have been held on-line (last live event was STEAM study visit to Tallinn on February 2020). However, we are already planning our post-corona activities and hopefully we will have live gatherings starting early 2022, if not already during the next autumn.



UBC Sustainable Cities Commission:

New Sustainability Action Programme on the way

by Jutta Mäkinen | jutta.makinen@turku.fi

The Sustainable Cities Commission is coordinating the process of preparing the 6th UBC Sustainability Action Programme. The Commission's Advisory Board has lead discussions in thematical working groups around eight sustainability topics involving experts from our UBC member cities to identify trends, challenges, and visions for the next decade for our region.

An information and consultation event will be organized on 7 May open for all UBC members. Join us to learn more about the preparations of the Sustainability Action Programme and share your ideas on how to work together to foster a sustainable future for our Baltic Sea Region.

In addition, there will be an open consultation for the member cities on the draft version of the next Sustainability Action Programme in early Autumn.

The next UBC Sustainable Development Action Programme will be presented at the UBC XVI General Conference in St. Petersburg in October 2021 and will cover the period of 2022-2030.

Sharing best practices with the network through UBC TALKS
The UBC TALKS webinar series is back – offering insights, best practices, and peer-learning opportunities for the UBC

network. The first webinar of 2021 took place in March and was successfully organized together with the Safe Cities Commission. The topic was "Cascading consequences of climate hazards – How to make cities more resilient", and we got to hear about the experiences from the CASCADE project.

The next UBC TALKS webinar will take place on 25 May and discusses "Water management and climate adaptation: Water as a resource in a climate-resilient city". Previous UBC TALKS webinars from 2020 can be accessed in our website.

Stay up to date with Sustainable Cities Commission news and events!

We share news from the UBC member cities, updates, and results from projects we work with and information on upcoming events in our communication channels and in the Sustainable Cities Bulletin published four times a year. The next bulletin is scheduled for early summer, and the call for stories will be launched in May.

Subscribe to our newsletter, follow us on social media and visit our website ubc-sustainable.net to learn more about the Sustainable Cities Commission!

UBC TALKS

UBC Sustainability Action Programme information and consultation event for UBC cities

Date: Friday, May 7th, 2021

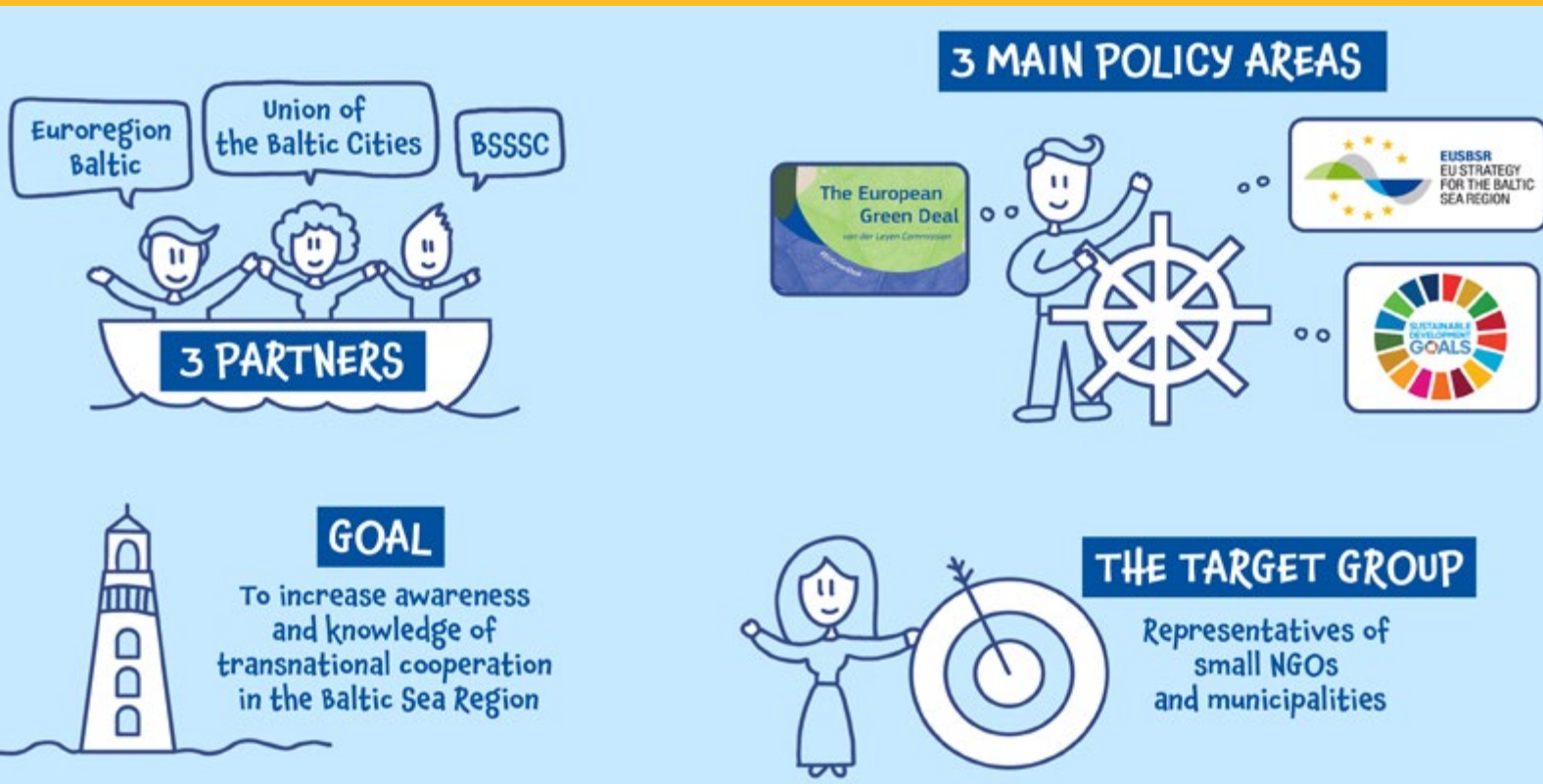
Time: 09.00-11.30 CET

Registration deadline: May 4th, 2021

Registration: <https://bit.ly/3eyvIGu>

Umbrella 2.0 held and Awareness Raising online event

by UBC Secretariat | info@ubc.net



Umbrella 2.0 launched its first event to raise awareness on the current “hot topics in the Baltic Sea Region” on 27 April 2021.

UMBRELLA 2.0- Boosting transnational cooperation capacities for multilevel actors in the Baltic Sea Region goal is to increase awareness and knowledge of transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.

More specifically, the project aims at initiating a process for the development of strong multi-actor and multilevel governance partnerships that can undertake cross-sectoral sustainable solutions while following the principles and objectives of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, EU Green Deal and UN SDG.

The aims concerning the Baltic Region are:

- To raise awareness of opportunities and benefits of transnational and cross-border cooperation and increase regional stakeholders' interest in it;
- To empower stakeholders to build strategic and long term-partnerships, support networking, and straighten community of practitioners in different sectors;
- To improve knowledge of the EU, its financial instruments and relevant strategies, with particular focus on the EUSBSR;
- To explore the opportunities and benefits of being part of EUSBSR and offer practical guidelines on how to engage in long-term;
- To help build competencies, i.e. knowledge and skills necessary to run projects with benefit to the Policy areas, and build specific networks of interest in different sectors in a

cross-sectorial manner focusing on a shift and transformation by our beneficiaries (activating them for a sustainable transnational cooperation).

The aims concerning the EU:

- To create an understanding of the strategic importance, long-term goals, action plans and interrelations between the EUSBSR, EU Green Deal and UN SDGs;
- to initiate a process that will establish cross-sectoral partnerships which in turn will commit to the implementation of the EUSBSR, EU Green Deal and UN SDGs.

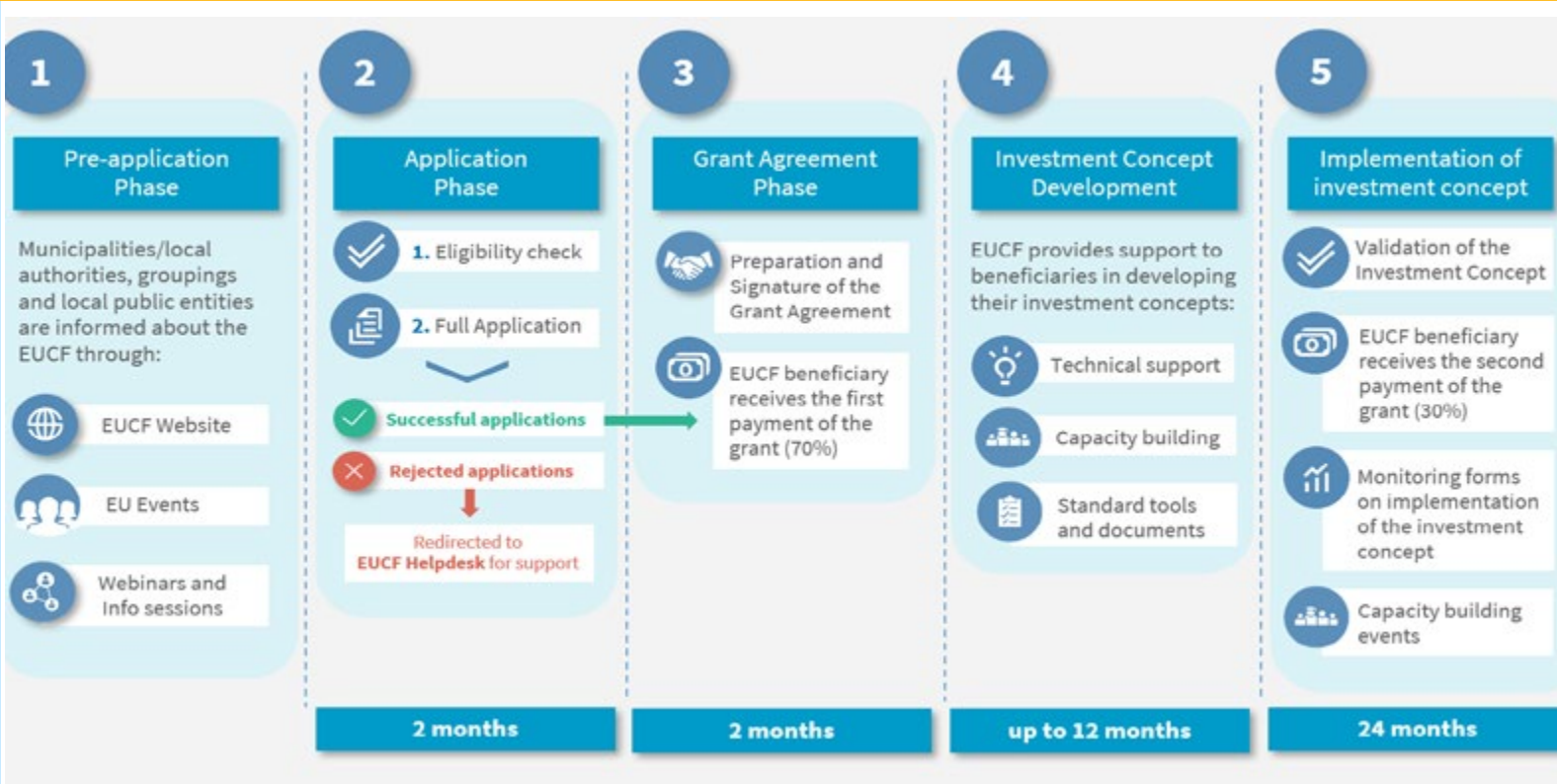
Are you curious? Would you like to know how to get engaged and/or start a learning process involving your staff?

More information on ERB website:
<http://www.eurobalt.org>



Is your city in need of sustainable energy investments?

by Sini Lamoureux | sini.lamoureux@turku.fi



In line with the Paris Agreement and the 2030 goals for climate and energy set by the European Commission, there is a great need for cities, municipalities and local authorities to invest in sustainable energy and climate solutions. However, many public stakeholders struggle with limited human resources and capacity and overcoming financial barriers. A lack of experience in developing sound investment packages can be a significant barrier especially for smaller and medium sized cities and municipalities.

The European City Facility (EUCF) is an initiative to support local investments in sustainable energy. The objective of the EUCF is to facilitate access to private and EU financing along with access to technical, legal and financial expertise. Successful applicants will receive a grant of 60 000 euros that is to be used for developing an energy investment program. The grant is not meant for directly financing investments but rather to access services and develop an investment concept.

Investment concept examples:

- Identification of potential project pipeline
- Analysis of local stakeholders controlling the pipeline
- Legal Analysis (regional, national, international)
- Pre-feasibility analysis of available financing solutions
- Roadmap: basic process to launch investments

How and when can UBC cities apply?

Eligible for applying for a grant are cities, municipalities and local authorities that can answer YES to the following questions:

1. Are you a municipality/local authority or grouping of municipalities/local authorities?

2. Is your municipality/local authority or grouping located entirely in the EU-27 Member States or Norway?

3. Will you be able to provide a proof of political commitment to develop the investment concept by your mayor or other political representatives?

4. Does your municipality/local authority have a politically approved SEAP, SECAP or plan of similar ambition?

5. Can you commit to the EUCF monitoring period of two years?

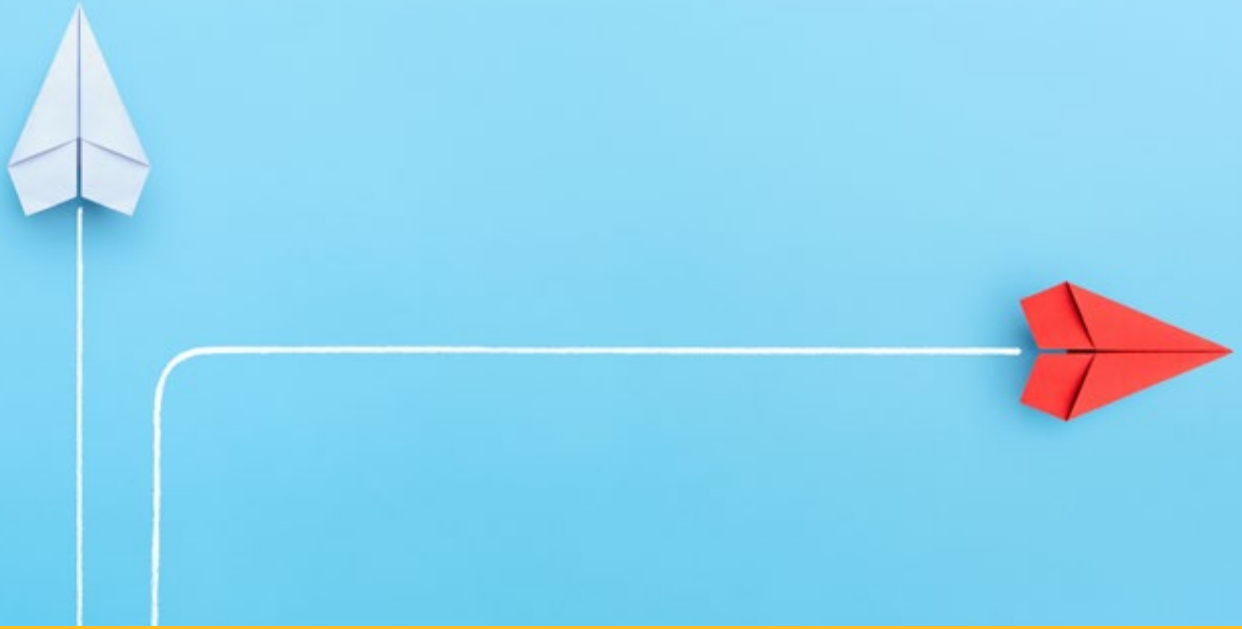
From the start in 2020 to 2022 there will be in total four calls of which the second is currently on-going:

- 1st call Spring 2020
- 2nd call 29 March 2021–31 May 2021
- 3rd call October–November 2021
- 4th call May–June 2022

More detailed information about eligibility and the second call can be found in the Guidelines for Applicants. During spring 2021 webinars about the second call are being organized in local languages for eligible countries. Follow the EUCF event list to see when your country's webinar is being organized.

More information can be found on the EUCF website. For any further questions, contact Sini Lamoureux (sini.lamoureux@turku.fi), EUCF contact person at the UBC SCC.





UBC Policy Position papers – road to more efficient advocacy and lobby work in the future

by Anna Sośnicka | anna.sosnicka@ubc.net

In 2020, the Executive Board at its 85th meeting authorised the Presidium to set up a new Task Force on Policy & Projects, with Brussels Antenna as a leader, and Chairs of the UBC Commissions, some city representatives and the UBC Secretariat as members.

Among the goals of this Task Force there was creating a comprehensive policy framework and position papers on topics relevant for UBC, related to its core values and priorities of member cities. Another step will be developing project concept notes.

In 2020 a couple of meetings were held. Four working groups were working on the main topics:

- Urban Agenda for EU
- Cohesion policies beyond 2020
- Climate Change and Sustainable Development
- Resilient UBC Cities

As a result of the work, four policy position papers were prepared.

“Climate Change and Sustainable Development Until 2030”

“UBC cities will be climate-smart, providing a good ground for the green economy to grow (...). They will increasingly be known as global forerunners to create a high-quality living environment for their inhabitants.” This ambitious vision of the UBC cities, as well as historic background of 30 years’ UBC battle towards sustainable Baltic Sea Region is included in this paper.

The paper highlights the importance of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, with indicating all international initiatives and organisation in which UBC is partaking.

The core part of the paper includes positions of UBC, like the UBC support to the European Green Deal.

“Resilient Cities” beyond 2020”

The paper indicates that Post Covid-19 times will require increasing the resilience capacities of cities. Local authorities need to face challenges like health problems, growing number of disadvantaged citizens among whom young people are especially vulnerable, temporary unemployment. But there are also other questions that have to be tackled: digitalisation and cyber-security, climate change and threats to environmental sustainability.

In the UBC positions the emphasis is put especially on New City Planning, New Partnerships, Funding and Innovative, New City Services.

“Social Cohesion in Cities – beyond 2020”

One of the EU priorities for 2022–2027 is mainstreaming social cohesion perspective in different activities.

The UBC positions in this policy paper reflect on four different aspects in building cohesive cities: Vulnerable groups, Youth, that require support in health problems, risk of early school leaving, finding jobs and participation in decision making process, Education and Culture.

“Urban Agenda for the EU”

The paper presents key objectives of the Urban Agenda for the EU, like reducing the socioeconomic gaps observed in urban areas and regions.

The main UBC positions in the framework of the Urban Agenda concern integrated urban development, innovative and resilient cities, inclusive communities and inclusion of migrants and refugees.

The process was facilitated by the Chair **Igor Jojkic** and supported by UBC Antenna from Brussels.



CITY NEWS



INVESTMENT BOOM IN DARŁOWO

In order to best illustrate this transformation, we would like to take you on a quick drone journey over Darłowo. It is easiest to spot all the changes from a bird's eye view.

We start on the west side, where a huge construction site can be seen right next to the port entrance and the first existing apartment building by the Belgian developer POC Partners. This is where an apartment building called Vista Mar is being built. It is the central structure of a complex, which will ultimately consist of three buildings. The works are progressing as planned, even slightly ahead of time. Concrete is currently being poured in the underground car park, and the investor emphasizes that the residence will feature 105 apartments ranging from 25 to 88 square meters. They were designed so that you can not only enjoy the seaside view, but also live comfortably. According to the announcements, the building is to house a swimming pool, saunas, a spa, a toddler's club, a fitness studio, a cafe with a bakery, and conference and banquet rooms overlooking the sea.

It is worth remembering that the Marina Royale complex is being built on the outer port quay, i.e. the part of the Darłowo port located farthest towards the sea. One of a kind in the entire country. For the residents it is an assurance that in the future nothing will disturb the view from their windows and that they will always be able to enjoy the sight of the sea stretching to the horizon. The Vista Mar residence will be located on the public promenade.

We continue our flight to the east and fly over the port canal and the Kropla Bałtyku apartment building next to the lighthouse. This is where the construction of a new building, located approximately 20 meters from the sea, will soon begin. Then we fly over the well-known Apollo hotel located on the beach. It is worth noting that the town is changing its spatial development plan to enable the expansion of this unique building.

More and more plots between ul. Słowiańska and the eastern beach are finding their owners, so it is only a matter of time before the construction begins. The city estimates that over a dozen luxury apartment buildings, most with full sea views, will be built on this 700-meter-long section.

At the end of this area, near Hotel Jan, three completely new buildings are already being built. Nautic Park (investor: Proxin Investment) is a seven-floor building right next to the beach. The investment offers 2 and 3-room turnkey apartments with gardens, balconies, or terraces (up to 28 sq m). The facility also features a relaxation area (Finnish sauna and steam bath), a fitness area, an outdoor swimming pool, a comfortable lobby, and an underground garage and bicycle lockers. The Natural Baltic aparthotel (investor: Aton Prestige), already operational, also has seven floors. Solaris (investor: EuroNieruchomości) is an 8-floor residential building with 102 apartments surrounded from each side with balconies and wide, spacious windows. It was designed so that the owners of many apartments, from the third floor up, can enjoy the view of the Baltic Sea.

Further to the east there is the so-called "Pan" ("Patelnia"), well known to the fans of the military vehicle rallies that were taking place here until recently. It may seem that nothing is going on there. In reality, some of the plots on the hill have already found their private buyers. This place has a beautiful view of the sea. This is where the largest five-star hotel in this part of the coast is to be built. Literally a few days ago the town sold another two plots located on this hill.

At this point it is important to mention that the "Pan" is not only an area for tourism development. There are also plans for a public viewing boulevard. Everyone will be able to enjoy the beautiful view of the Baltic Sea from this spot. The goal is to create a tiny seaside town on the hill. In Darłówek, construction is not only taking place on the seafront. The Kropla Bałtyku complex on ul. Północna, with several hundred apartments, is nearing completion. The second stage of the Baltic Korona project is also being expanded near the yacht marina.

by Artur Wejnerowski | promocja@darlowo.pl



IN GDYNIA ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS IS SHAPED EFFECTIVELY

Gdynia, a city of the sea and dreams, perfectly developed in terms of urban planning, with plenty of green areas, with a very high quality of life, whose greatest potential are its creative inhabitants that consciously act in response to current and future global challenges.

It all started with the educational policy consistently implemented by the local government of Gdynia, aimed at increasing the level of knowledge and awareness of environmental issues as well as encouraging residents to change their attitudes and habits. The effects of this policy have already been visible for many years – students of Gdynia schools are actively involved in the implementation of innovative activities focusing on ecology and climate, which they often initiate themselves.

“Today no one in Gdynia has any doubts that the environment requires special care and attention of all inhabitants of our city. I am glad that there are many possibilities for the inhabitants to actively participate in activities or projects for the benefit of the environment and shaping the ecological awareness. It would be impossible to describe here all such initiatives. We are currently developing an interesting vertical garden inside the building of the Refrigeration Engineering and Electronics School Complex, and we are also waiting for the outcome of the competition for co-financing the climate neutrality project within the EEA & Norway Grants. These are the next innovative undertakings on the city level, which are the answer to pressing ecological needs” says **Bartosz Bartoszewicz**, Deputy Mayor of Gdynia for Life Quality.

The School Complex students themselves are deeply involved in the creation of the vertical garden inside the school building. They will design it from scratch and then build it with the support of specialists. The school corridor, where the garden will be created, will be painted with an innovative air-purifying paint. Outside the school building, a secret garden will be created with a unique relaxation area filled with blooming flowers, bushes and various trees. Other elements of this space, such as benches, will also be partly prepared by the students during school workshops.

And this is not all, because as part of the project, a series of interesting classes will also be held to introduce the idea of sustainable development in schools, promoting pro-ecological attitudes. The whole school community and pupils from neighbouring primary schools will take part in those. Among other things, there will be talks about photovoltaic panels, wind generators and the effects of thermal insulation and, what is important, the workshops for the youth will be run by the youth. The project will continue until the end of 2021, and the City of Gdynia has been implementing it in cooperation with the Knowledge and Competence Institute.

Moreover, students and teachers of Primary School No. 34 are preparing to start a new project, thanks to which they will be widely informing about climate changes and their consequences. They have planned some very interesting activities for pupils, including field lessons, competitions and climate conferences. The local community will also be educated – seminars, discussion panels and a festival will be organised for the public.

Meanwhile, mitigation and adaptation investments will take place on the school grounds, thanks to which the green areas will increase and small retention will develop. The icing on the cake will be the creation of an e-book – a material with lots of educational and informational advice for residents on how to mitigate the effects of climate changes.

by Aneta Grygiel-Dorszewska | a.grygiel-dorszewska@gdynia.pl



DEVELOPMENT OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN LITHUANIA: MAYORS PERSPECTIVE

Alytus City Municipality became the first municipality in Lithuania to implement participatory budgeting (PB) in 2018. It was followed by a number of municipalities that implemented PB in 2019–2020 (e.g. Panevėžys city and district, Kretinga district, Telšiai district, etc.) or starts to implement in 2021 (in Klaipėda city and Klaipėda district, Rietavas, etc.).

Taking into account that the beginning of the PB was associated with left-wing political forces and the fact that today the PB becomes, according to Baiocchi and Ganuza (2014), politically polyvalent, we decided to examine the case of Lithuania. Since in practice the idea of PB requires active personal leadership, we chose to analyze the political (party) dependence of mayors participating and not participating in PB in this term of municipal councils (i.e. from 2019) and to check the statistical significance of political (party) dependence for PB implementation.

After collecting data on all 60 Lithuanian municipalities and their mayors, it became clear that we have 8 municipalities that have implemented DB by 2021 and 7 municipalities that have prepared all the tools and mechanisms for PB implementation in 2021. At the same time, we name them as municipalities applying PB. It also turned out that as many as 6 municipalities are already considering the implementati-

on of PB. The remaining 39 are a kind of “gray area” where either no PB is considered at all or no data (they are not made public) to have such intentions. Municipal mayors, according to their political (party) affiliation, are either fairly clear right (e.g. representatives of the Liberal Movement or Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats), clear left (e.g. Lithuanian Social Democrats party representatives), rather vague about the center (representatives of the Farmers and Greens Union) or completely unclear on the usual political scale, those elected from the lists of the Public Electoral Committee.

Analyzing more deeply, in the context of DB, we nevertheless found that all the forces represented by mayors can be divided into two groups: those to the right of the center and those to the left of the center. Public election committees also submit to this identification.

Thus, applying the Mann-Whitney U test to test non-parametric hypotheses (significance level $p < 0.05$), we found statistically significant differences ($p = 0.018$) between the political (party) dependence of mayors of municipalities with and without DB. Analyzing the municipalities themselves, it was found that out of 8 municipalities that started with DB, even 6 mayors belong to the center-left political orientation, the remaining 2 – more to the center-right political orientation.

Of the 7 municipalities that followed the DB, 4 mayors belong to center-left political forces, 3 are right-wing. Of the 6 planning municipalities, 3 mayors are center-left, 3 mayors are center-right. Of the 39 gray areas, the majority of mayors (i.e. 19) belong to center-right political forces.

In summary, it can be stated that in Lithuania, DB started as a project of municipalities managed by mayors representing “left-to-center” political forces.

by Jaroslav Dvorak | Jaroslav.dvorak@ku.lt



SOCIAL HOUSING IN MIELNO

On 25 March in Gąski town, Olga Roszak-Peżala, the mayor of Mielno, officially handed over the keys to social housing to another four happy families. In this way, the second, i.e. the final stage of the investment of the Mielno Commune, consisting in the reconstruction of two buildings of the former nursing home, was completed.

A total of 76 people will live in the new place, because as many as 19 flats have been created: 17 flats, a sheltered unit and a day support facility (PWD), operating within the structures of the Municipal Social Welfare Center in Mielno. The facility with an area of almost 150 sq m includes two modern classrooms, an internet café, a fitness room, offices and 3 bathrooms – all of this is at the disposal of the charges from Gąski town.

The rebuilt facilities are two 4-story, single-staircase buildings adapted, among others, to the needs of people with disabilities. The project also included the reclamation of the plot in the form of the construction of a car park, playground, etc. The value of the investment was almost PLN 5 million, of which PLN 1.8 million was the amount of co-financing from the Subsidy Fund of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego.

The implementation of the project is a huge technological and financial challenge, but as Olga Roszak-Peżala says, the investment was long awaited by the local community. "We know perfectly well that the housing situation in Poland is not the best and for many years we have been trying to help the most needy in gaining the desired four angles", assures the Mayor of Mielno.

In the last two years, the Mielno Commune, with a population of less than 5,000, has already provided 20 modern premises to the needy representatives of the local community.

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





ROSTOCK TO ORGANIZE WEBINARS ON SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN CITIES

The City of Rostock has recently been launching new projects with the goal of becoming a greener and smarter city. One of the key components in reaching this goal is the development of green and sustainable mobility.

For that purpose, the City of Rostock established its Mobility Department last year in the middle of the pandemic and together with local companies and stakeholders started launching projects on active mobility, cycling, smart mobility and public transport.

However, it was important to reach out to international partners in order to learn about best sustainable solutions which could significantly contribute to the development of green projects in Rostock and to bringing new ideas to mobility experts. In the pre-corona era, colleagues would travel and meet each other at conferences or on official visits and learn from each other. The pandemic, on the other way, has put many challenges when it comes to traveling and gathering, but modern technologies have made it possible to meet and exchange best practices worldwide in form of webinars.

The Department of International Relations of the City of Rostock has therefore planned four such webinars on sustainable mobility to take place from February to May

2021. The online meetings are aimed at establishing a wide network of experts on smart and sustainable mobility for the knowledge exchange online and on site, developing joint international projects on mobility and searching for new and fresh ideas in the field.

The first webinar, which took place in February 2021 with the support of the partners from Lahti (Finland), Copenhagen and Guldborgsund Municipality (Denmark) focused on the question: How to become a bicycle city? Mobility experts from Rostock introduced projects on developing biking roads in Rostock and actively participated in the exchange of ideas with their international colleagues in online chat-rooms.

In March 2021, the topic of free and digitized public transport was tackled. The experts from local public transport companies from Rostock, Tallinn (Estonia), Dunkirk (France), Turku (Finland) and Vilnius (Lithuania) successfully shared their experiences in both fields.

The third on-line meeting will take place in April. This time the experts from Wuppertal (Germany), Riga (Latvia), and Tartu (Estonia) will meet their colleagues from Rostock to discuss challenges in achieving car - free city centres. And finally, the last webinar from these series will take place in May, and it will concentrate on the implementation of electric mobility in cities, from electric vehicles to electric ferries. The City of Rostock is happy to report that the international mobility network already consists of about 200 mobility experts from Europe and beyond. The organizers of the webinars and the mobility experts from Rostock would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to the international colleagues for sharing their experiences and knowledge. They look forward to another two successful webinars to come, as well as to new contacts and ideas!

by Ivana Stijelja | Ivana.stijelja@rostock.de



NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW FORMATS: HOW TO ORGANIZE TEAM COMPETITIONS IN THE LOCKDOWN?

In 2020 we started to value simple things: offline shopping, hanging out with friends, morning jogging in the park. Self-isolation even challenged doing clean-ups. It is funny to collect waste together with neighbors but doing this alone is far from being entertaining.

Clean Games have been organizing gamified team competitions in waste collecting and sorting since 2014. But due to the Pandemic the 7th season of clean-ups in Saint-Petersburg was not started traditionally with the Spring Clean Games Cup. Activists and volunteers had to fight with garbage solely or with their families. Clean Games could not have left them completely alone and have developed completely new formats.

People were welcomed to take part in the decentralized games. They were held in several places, started not simultaneously and the players competed in groups of one or together with close people. On the first day of August about 6 tons of waste were collected on 11 territories.

Lockdown has proved to be a great time for self-education and taking up courses or webinar sessions. Here in St. Petersburg people could learn more about eco-friendly lifestyle and get new conscious behavioral patterns. Clean Challenges and their version for schools encouraged more than 1000 participants to complete ecological tasks. They were published online, and people took photos and videos of the results. They found out what Reduce, Reuse, Recycle concept stands for, tried waste sorting at home and even organized an eco-picnic!

In autumn the restrictions were eased, and more than 1500 competitive, active and tired from lockdown residents of St. Petersburg did their best to clean the city. Garbage had not disappeared during the COVID-19 Pandemic nor was it collected. So, all of the records were beaten with 20 tons of disposed and partly recycled waste.

New formats can keep us engaged or help to overcome problems that suddenly appear. But this difficult and strange year has shown that we are still waiting for festivals and offline city events. Even a clean-up turns into an entertaining experience when it can be shared with nearest and dearest. St. Petersburg is already waiting for the new Clean Games to take place!

by Anton Zaytsev | press@cleangames.ru



TARTU AIMS TO BECOME A TRAILBLAZER IN THE BALTICS FOR THE COOLEST AND GREENEST PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Did you know that Tartu has one of the best living environments in the world?

In 2019, the jury for the LivCom Awards (International Awards for Liveable Communities) presented Tartu with a silver medal for its high-quality and innovative developments in all walks of life and for its bold decisions in designing a sustainable urban space. While improving the quality of life for locals, Tartu is also turning into a valuable sustainable tourism destination for travellers.

In 2020, Tartu was selected as one of the Sustainable Top 100 Destinations by Green Destinations. In 2021, the city's good practice story of innovative public transportation was placed second in the Environment and Climate category of the Green Destinations Story Awards.

What makes Tartu stand out?

One of the biggest goals of Tartu is to reduce private car use and eventually become a completely climate-neutral city by 2050. Launching Tartu Smart Bike Share, updating the entire bus route system and replacing all diesel-powered buses with the ones that use carbon neutral fuel, produced from local agricultural waste, make Tartu the first city in Estonia to turn public transportation fully green.

Why has Tartu Smart Bike Share been so successful?

Tartu Smart Bike Share is a public self-service bike share system for environmentally friendly way to take short trips in the city as well as its neighbouring areas. Compared to similar bike share systems around the world, Tartu's success lies in the ever-growing number of parking stations in the area that is only about 154 km² in size. This means that in the light of urban sprawl, the citizens are able to use soft mobility options instead of their private cars. Since its launch in June 2019, Smart Bike Share users have travelled more than 4.3 million kilometres around Tartu.

What are the benefits of supporting a sustainable lifestyle for Tartu?

Tartu's aim is to become better each day while always remaining true to itself. The statistics and recognition show that Tartu is on the right track to support the sustainable lifestyle and increase the connection between the people and their surroundings.

by Dana Neemre | dana.neemre@visittartu.com



MAYOR OF TURKU ELECTED AS VICE-PRESIDENT IN ICLEI – A GLOBAL ORGANISATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Mayor of Turku Minna Arve has been elected as Vice-President in the Presidium of the global ICLEI organisation. The Presidium consist of President and three Vice-Presidents. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is a global network committed to sustainable urban development.

The other elected Presidium members are President Mr. **Frank Cownie** – Mayor, City of Des Moines, USA; First Vice-President Ms. **Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh** – Mayor, City of Malmö, Sweden; and Ms. **Atishi Marlana** – Member of Legislative Assembly, National Capital Territory of Delhi, India.

The ICLEI global Executive Committee online meeting in April discussed the cities significance in climate work as well as the forthcoming UN COP26 Climate Summit to be held in November in Glasgow. In addition, the newly signed agreements with UN Environment Programme UNEP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD was discussed.

The 1.5 degree life is possible for all

Turku is implementing a strong climate policy and aims to become a carbon neutral region by 2029. In addition, Turku is working towards a 1.5 degree lifestyle which refers to Paris agreement to limit climate warming in 1.5 degrees. In practice, it means a climate-friendly and sustainable way of living as well as reducing the carbon footprint.

“In Turku, we offer solutions for leading a sustainable life to all inhabitants and communities because we believe that each one of us can lead a 1.5 degree life and be part of significant environmental work by making daily sustainable choices”, says Mayor of Turku Minna Arve.

Turku is currently working on a roadmap of circular economy together with the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra and the local operators. ICLEI has provided the City of Turku with examples and lessons on circular economy, in particular from cities in East Asia and global expert networks.

“Turku benefits from the cooperation with ICLEI especially in implementing the city’s Climate Plan and developing the circular economy. Turku has already halved its GHG emission levels since 1990. Simultaneously, the regional economy has grown, and new low-carbon solutions and circular economy have generated new competence, competitiveness and jobs. Our strong participation in the work of ICLEI further supports our common goals”, Mayor Arve continues.

The ICLEI global network emphasises the cities’ responsibility in developing sustainable solutions and challenges states and other global organisations to participate in setting common targets. ICLEI represents cities and regions in the UN’s climate, environment and sustainable development processes and develops sustainable solutions in cooperation with its members and partners on all continents.

by City of Turku Communications | irene.pendolin@turku.fi



THE MOST ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY CAR AND PASSENGER FERRY IN THE WORLD – AURORA BOTNIA

The cities, Vaasa in Finland and Umeå in Sweden, on both sides of the Kvarken straight have set clear environmental targets: Umeå with the local Agenda 2030 programme, and the ambition of the city of Vaasa to become climate neutral by 2035.

The ferry company Wasaline, owned by the two cities, has set its own targets for environmental contribution to complement these strategies. Therefore, a brand new ferry Aurora Botnia is being built by RMC in Rauma, Finland, commissioned by Kvarken Link. It is a modern ship with 2 cargo decks that will accommodate around 800 passengers and has a freight capacity of 1,500 lane meters for trucks and cars.

The vessel will be designed to be environmentally friendly, with a machinery running on a dual fuel and battery solution. The main source of fuel is liquefied natural gas, LNG. The vessel will also be able to utilise biogas. Instead of lifeboats, Aurora Botnia will utilise two evacuation systems as safety equipment, that can be launched from the deck of the ship.

The systems are based on an evacuation chute and an automatically inflatable liferaft. Aurora Botnia, which will be completed this spring, will daily operate a route between Vaasa and Umeå. This is the first new build ship for this route ever, even though there have been ferries operating this route since the 1940's. The ship will be the most environmentally friendly car and passenger ferry in the world. It will also be a great showroom for the innovations and world class knowledge that can be found within the Vaasa energy cluster. For more details see: Home – Kvarken Link (wasaline.com)

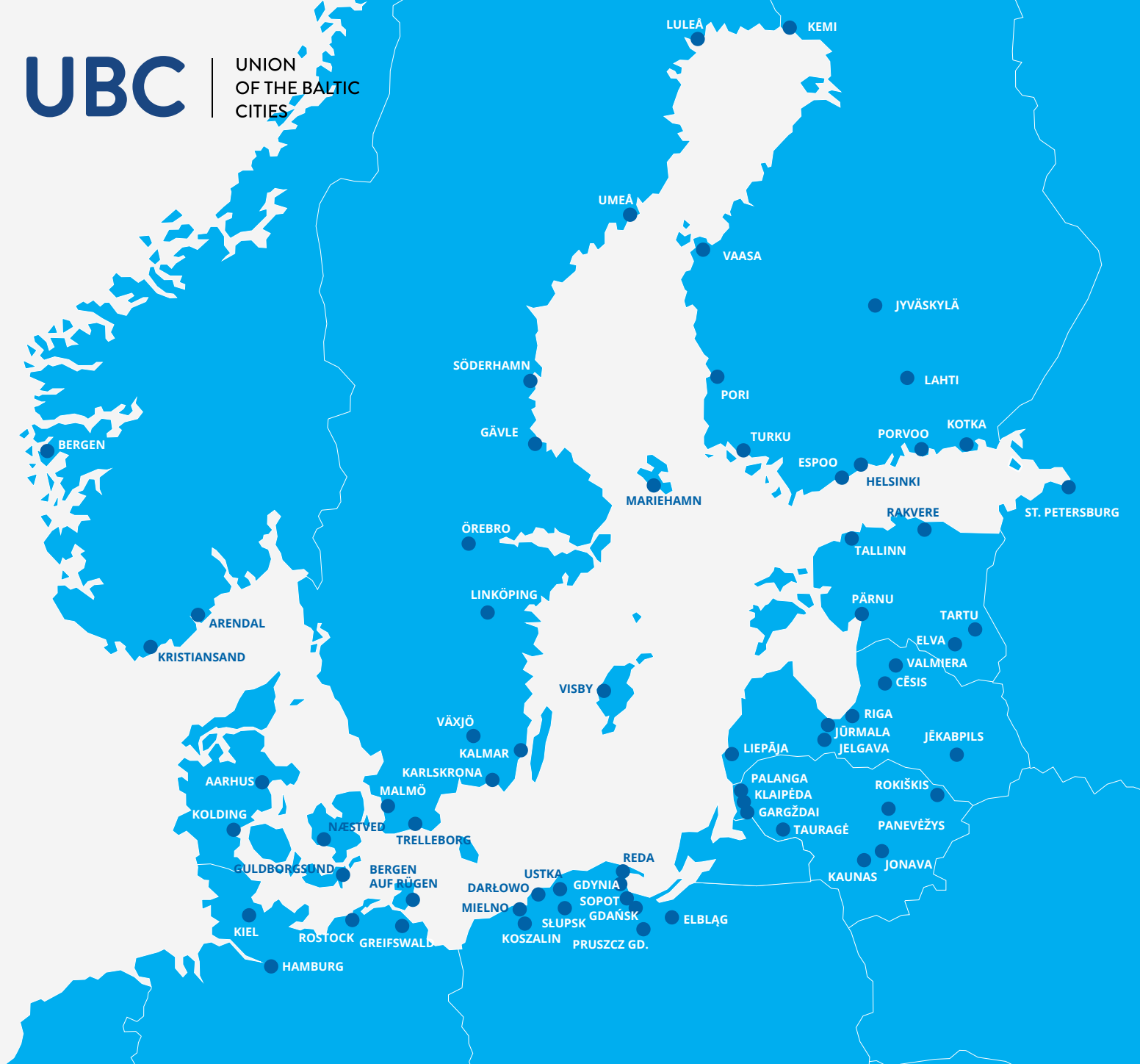
The tourism industry, as part of the global economy, will grow once travelling is back to normal again. Sustainable travel options will be needed and therefore, Finland and Vaasa as a destination are taking steps towards pursuing a more sustainable way of providing travel services. This includes integrating future trends and sustainable modes of travelling, sustainable accommodation and other services.

The Vaasa region has every possibility to be a forerunner in this work with the brand new ferry as well as our regional interest in innovative projects involving electrical aviation solutions. Visit Finland and Visit Vaasa will together provide concrete tools for this job to all our interested businesses within the tourism sector.

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UBC

UNION
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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 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.

www.ubc.net



UBC TURNS 30 THIS YEAR – TAKE PART IN A PHOTO COMPETITION

As part of the jubilee year, UBC member cities and commissions are invited to join a **photo contest** with the topic **“Our member Cities and Citizens”**.

The photos should be of good quality (resolution 300 pixels) and sent by **30 September** to: irene.pendolin@ubc.net.

When sending the photo, please inform:

- The name or theme of the photo
- Person(s) in the photo – please remember to ask for consent from the person(s) due to GDPR regulations
- Photographer's name
- Your city's name

The four finalist photos, chosen by the UBC Presidium, will be presented at the UBC XVI General Conference, to be organised 27–30 October in St. Petersburg.

Let's celebrate together!

#UBC30