



The UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs

Activity Report 2012- March 2013

According to the agreement of the UBC Board, the City of Elbląg presides the works of the UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs from 2011. Hereby we would like to present the UBC Board activity report for 2012 - March 2013.

Comparing to our action plan for previous 2012 year we managed to accomplish it only partially. On 5 - 6 June 2012 in collaboration with City of Vaasa we organized open commission meeting in this city. This event turned out respectable success gathering representatives of 16 UBC member cities from 7 countries, comparing to 13 cities and 4 countries in 2011 (first meeting of the renewed commission in Elbląg). This meeting has gained printed coverage in local newspapers published in Finnish and Swedish languages likewise. There were also more speakers, not forgetting representative of UBC Commission on Gender Equality and NDPHS experts among them.

On 7 June 2012 representatives of the commission took part in the meeting in Turku organized by Centrum Balticum Centre (Mr Mikko Lohikoski) dedicated to the preparation of the project "Smart Cities". During this meeting thanks to the presence of the representative of the UBC Commission on Education (Ms Anneli Veevo), possibility of cooperation between our both commissions was considered and discussed too.

In autumn 2012 we intended to organize next commission meeting in Elbląg. This seminar was meant as collaboration with local NGO and devoted to the issue of cooperation between municipalities and NGOs in order to increase social inclusion of the elderly citizens. This event was planned since 2011 and implemented in our yearly action plan. Preliminary program was arranged and invitation published on UBC website and sent to member cities. However it occurred that almost the same date was set for another UBC event in our city (Elbląg), namely the meeting under the auspices of the Commission on Urban Planning. City of Elbląg has decided to engage more actively in the second initiative so Commission on Health and Social Affairs has determined to cancel own meeting.

There were two groups of purposes of this failure. First was inadequate communication in our own city and UBC network alike. The second however should be considered in the core idea of this meeting, connected with:

- the range of proposed topics might be too narrow,
- main subject was not interesting enough (main title was our idea),
- participating in the meetings abroad so often (twice a year) may be too expensive for the cities even if we cover some costs.

Our conclusions from this experience are:

- meetings' topics should be if possible consulted with interested cities and more broad,
- one annual open commission meeting every year for now is sufficient and maybe it should serve rather establishing personal working contacts between dedicated specialists in the field of health and social issues, and more informal discussion than official contributions,

- new ways of communication between cities interested in collaboration on the platform of our commission should be considered (newsletter? online magazine?)
- compilation of the possible and planned UBC events should be available early enough to avoid such circumstances in the future.

In 2013 our commission is organizing the annual open Commission on Health and Social Affairs meeting in collaboration of City of Tartu, Estonia. The event will take place on 30-31 May. The main title of the meeting is:

"How to build up community based social services for vulnerable groups? Welfare of vulnerable groups in Baltic Sea Region - good practices and experiences."

We would like to discuss following topics:

- community work with vulnerable groups: young parents, immigrants, families with low social skills, drug and alcohol abusers, homeless,
- community based opportunities and alternatives of social services,
- co-operation or competition between institutional and community care,
- practices in welfare provision related to cultural differences.

The invitation to the meeting was already sent to all members cities and provisional agenda with registration form are already available on-line (link on UBC website).

On the basis of internal UBC regulations, since this are two years the City of Elbląg has been leading the work of the commission during meeting in Tartu the new chairperson of the Commission on Health and Social Affairs and city hosting the commission's secretariat should be elected.

- Meeting in Tartu.

On 29-31 May in Tartu, Estonia was held annual meeting of the UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs under leading title: Ways to a community based system of social services for vulnerable groups. Social welfare of vulnerable groups in the Baltic Sea Region."

On Wednesday 29.05 during welcome dinner participants were welcomed by Deputy Mayor of Tartu Mr Juri Kore and Chairman of the Commission Mr Wojciech Drozd.

On 30.05 was held seminar - the main part of the event. The participants were welcomed by Mayor of Tartu Mr Urmas Kruise. City of Tartu has invited many speakers covering plenty of aspects of social welfare development. Among speakers we had a pleasure and honor to welcome former first Estonian Minister of Social Affairs, Ms Marju Lauristin. As in the past we also invited representatives of external organizations, namely NDPHS which gradually becomes our tradition, and European Social Network. Second part of the seminar was filled with the presentations of the participating cities with short panel discussion at the end.

Last day of meeting the participants had possibility to visit and compare institutions called for people with mental disabilities care administered by NGO and the municipality.

During this meeting we managed to beat last year records regarding number of cities and participants present. There were 51 participants from 19 cities present at our conference. Among them: Tallinn, Rakvere, Sopot, Tukums, Klaipeda, Elbląg, Jyvaskyla, Maardu, Narva, Naestved, Jogeva, Vilnius, Elva, Kaunas, Malmo, Helsinki, Gdańsk, Tampere and very hospitable city of Tartu.

At the end of the meeting Mr Wojciech Drozd has invited interested cities to organize next meeting and informed that according to UBC charter there is possibility after two years to elect new city leading the commission work. Actually City of Tallinn is considering the proposal.

Due to professional purposes Mr Wojciech Drozd will not be able to officiate as the chairman of the commission. Actually as a result of peculiar situation in City of Elbląg (untimely local election for mayor and city council) if City of Tallinn will not decide to accept position of the leader of the commission, next chair will be appointed by new mayor of Elbląg.

Wojciech Drozd
Chairman, UBC Commission on Health and Social Affairs