



Final Report of the UBC Task Force on
Development of the Organization

25.2.2013

**Conclusions and Proposals
to the UBC Executive Board**

Summary of the Report

1. Task Force proposals on Working Methods concerning

Executive Board:

- General aim is to activate the work of the Executive Board, to better utilize the expertise and potential of this leading body representing the opinions of member Cities. This includes giving "homework" to Board members, invite their contributions also in meetings and between them.
- UBC Executive Board meeting agendas should include proposals for decision.
- Report on key developments should be included on the meeting agenda every time
- Follow-up of the decisions has to be organized.
- Timetable of the UBC Executive Board meeting need to be structured to allow more time for discussion, exchange of views.
- Open theme seminar/discussion is included basically in every Board meeting.

Presidium:

- President and Presidium are key actors in preparation of the UBC Executive Board meetings and Presidium members should be consulted when preparing proposals for decision.
- Presidium, together with General Secretary and Strategy Coordinator, could also have their own planning meetings, utilizing when necessary digital means.
- Division of labour between President and Vice Presidents should be considered

General Secretariat:

- New developments and opportunities such as EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region have enhanced status of the UBC, but also demand more from UBC and Secretariat (policy formulation capacity, new competences including communication skills as defined by UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy, project preparation and implementation etc).
- Current formula of financing the Secretariat (paid by host city) and financial situation of UBC set limits to enlargement of Secretariat, and innovative solutions must be sought.
- Present tasks of Secretariat have to be evaluated in light of UBC priorities. Priorities must be established and technical tasks could be outsourced.
- Appointing Communication manager of UBC an urgent task. Technical issues – funding, location (Gdansk or some other city which could co-fund costs?), recruitment must be solved without delay.
- Enhancing Gdansk secretariat by sending experts/trainees from member cities?
- Defining role of Strategy coordinator appointed by the Executive Board.
- Enhancing support and guidance vis-à-vis Commissions: Annual meeting between Commission representatives, Secretariat and Board representatives.
- Both strategy/policy work and effective day-to-day running of the organization need to be ensured.

Commissions:

- Every UBC Commission should have a contact person among the members of the Executive Board or Presidium.
- Commissions will report to the Board in written form. These reports can be complemented by the nominated contact person.
- Membership in commissions has to be clearer
- Reporting by Commissions has to be developed according to criteria established by the Executive Board.
- An annual meeting between Presidium/Executive Board, Secretariat and representatives of Commissions could be considered to ensure better communication and strategic coordination.

General Conference

- Member cities and their representatives should encourage stronger commitment of mayors and political decision makers.

- UBC and host city of GC should invite other BSR organizations and stakeholders to participate, in order to ensure that the GC becomes a key BSR highlight.
- General Secretariat and host city of GC should study possibilities of offering interpretation for main languages at least for key sessions of the meeting.
- Urban Forum concept should be developed and forum aimed specifically at politicians is recommended to be organized annually.
- Mariehamn GC should start preparing for new UBC Strategy 2015 -

Election procedures:

- Elections should be an open, transparent process, aiming at mobilizing interest from member cities towards participation in the leadership functions.
- All offices to be filled are genuinely open at the General Conference
- Rules for procedure for General Conference need to be prepared

UBC vision and added value

- UBC needs clearer objectives and goals which are implemented through UBC Strategy
- What is a future-orientated vision of the organization?
- UBC must, through discussions and soul-searching, establish what are its strongest assets and its main added value for the member cities, for the region – and then promote these.

UBC Communication:

- Developing and updating the contact information and collecting them into internal database
- Reducing the amount of e-mails
- Preferring the electronic publications instead of printing as recommended in the Communication and Marketing Strategy adopted by the Board (at least some cities support publishing of Baltic Cities Bulletin also in print version).
- Implementing recommendations of the Communication and Marketing Strategy as decided by the Executive Board.

2. Task Force proposals on UBC Statute

In general Task Force noted that all "shall be" and "will be" formulations should both in UBC Statute and UBC Internal Regulations be brought to present tense.

Article 1

Task Force proposes new point to be included as follows: Contribute to joint Baltic Identity, cohesion and common understanding in the region."

Article 2

Task Force proposes that prioritizing of issues would be done differently (maintaining the same issues than before, but changing the order). New point to be added: Implement relevant (macro) regional strategies."

Article 3

Task Force proposes that there could be three membership categories mentioned in Statute, as UBC already in fact has all these existing. These categories would be Member City, Associated Member City and Partner. Some cities prefer keep the original formulation.

Article 4

All relevant organs of the UBC should be mentioned in Statute in Article 4. Some members proposed that only the General Conference, President, Executive Board and Vice-Presidents should be mentioned in the Statute as it is at the moment. Task Force's proposal on wording in Article 4:

The Organs of the Union are:

- a. The General Conference of the delegates of the Member Cities.
- b. The President of the Union
- c. The Presidium consisting of the President and three Vice-Presidents of the Union
- d. The Executive Board consisting of one Member City representative from each country where UBC has Member Cities, the President and the three Vice-Presidents
- e. The Union Secretariat
- f. The Commissions of the Union
- g. The Board of Audit

Organs mentioned here should be the same also in the UBC Internal Regulations.

Article 5/ Point 2.

Concerning the rotation of the President and Vice-Presidents, Task Force decided to submit two alternative proposals:

- The President and Vice-President can be elected for a maximum of three consecutive periods.
- There is no need to modify the Article 5.2. in Statute

Article 6

Article 6 covers the General Conference. Task Force proposes that the role of the Executive Board should be covered in a separate, new Article 9A.

New Article 9A (covering the Executive Board)

The new Article 9A should be started as follows: "In the time between General Conferences the Executive Board of the Union is the highest authority of the organization."

Task Force proposes that the main responsibilities of the Executive Board should be included in the new Article 9A.

3. Task Force proposals on Internal Regulations

Executive Board/ Point 2.2.

Task Force proposes following addition to the text: "The President is responsible of proposing the Executive Board meeting agenda and draft resolutions."

Executive Board/Point 2.3.

Task Force noted that Rules of Procedure for the General Conference (mentioned in the Internal Regulations) do not exist and therefore the Executive Board should prepare them for adoption in the next General Conference in 2013.

As already stated in the recommendations concerning the working methods and Statute, Article 5, Task Force proposes that UBC Executive Board should not make any recommendations concerning the candidates but to ensure their proper presentation to the members.

Executive Board/Point 2.8.

Task Force proposes that there would not be limitations to participate to the open sessions. Member Cities can send several representatives if they so wish, however taking into account technical restrictions. There should be a possibility for everybody to participate, but they may have to cover their own expenses.

Executive Board/Point 2.12.

Covering of expenses by UBC budget for certain countries should be discontinued. It should be replaced by an equal procedure for all members, indicating compensation based on justified request and only for specific reasons.

Task Force proposes **Executive Board/ new point 2.14.:**

“The Executive Board nominates contact persons for each UBC Commission, in order to ensure close cooperation between the Executive Board and the UBC Commissions. The contact person can be the President, one of the Vice-Presidents or any other Executive Board member.”

5. Union Secretariat

Task Force proposes that following clause should be included to the introduction: “The Union Secretariat works under the guidance of the Executive Board and the President.”

6. Board of Audit

Task Force proposes that last clause should be changed as follows: “The Board of Audit is invited to the Executive Board meeting at least once a year.” In addition, following clause should be included: “The Board of Audit has the right to attend to any Executive Board meeting, if they so wish.”

7. Finances

Task Force proposes that specific countries are no longer mentioned in this point. Covering of expenses should not be automatic for certain countries, but rather an equal procedure for all members and only based on justified request and only for specific reasons.

Foreword

The UBC Task Force on Development of the Organization was established by the UBC Executive Board in Karlstad 17.6.2012 upon initiative of Swedish member cities. Objective of the Task Force was to strengthen the organization by evaluating all relevant dimensions of the work and proposing changes when needed. The Task Force was invited to find ways and means to ensure that the UBC serves also in the future interests of its members in the best possible way.

The Task Force included one city representative from each member state, as nominated by these cities themselves. Members of the Task Force have been:

Annely Veevo (Kärdla, Estonia)
Stefan Windh (Oskarshamn, Sweden)
Jørgen H. Kristiansen (Kristiansand, Norway)
Søren Revsbæk (Næstved, Denmark)
Audrone Jaugelaviciene (Šiauliai, Lithuania)
Marketta Mäkinen (Jyväskylä, Finland)
Piotr Grzelak (Gdansk, Poland)
Vilnis Vitkovskis (Liepāja, Latvia)
Karin Wohlgemuth (Rostock, Germany)
Igor Lonskij (St. Petersburg, Russia)

The Board nominated Mr Mikko Lohikoski (UBC Strategy Coordinator) as the Chairman of the Task Force. The Task Force invited Ms Helinä Yli-Knuutila (Turku, Finland) to serve as an expert and secretary. The Task Force met four times during 2012: In addition, active work was done by exchange of written messages between meetings. Written Notes by the Chair were written about content of each meeting.

14.2.2012, Brussels

In the first Task Force meeting all participants presented their country's point of views based on previously submitted written papers. No conclusions were made; the idea was to identify issues to be raised in the future work of the Task Force.

20.4.2012, Turku

In the second meeting working methods of the organization were discussed. These were issues that don't require changes in UBC Statute or Internal Regulations, but rather new thinking on practical ways of working (e.g. how to organize meetings or how to organize connections).

4.9.2012, Rostock

In the third meeting Task Force went through UBC Statute and UBC Internal Regulations to identify possible needs for changes. However, Task Force members agreed that the most challenging issues aren't statutory changes, but the need to organize work more efficiently and in the way that it best serves member cities.

18.12.2012, Copenhagen

In the final meeting, the Task Force discussed and agreed upon open issues and finalized the work.

The work of the Task Force has been carried out in a very good, constructive atmosphere, where issues have been discussed in an open way, seeking always the best for the UBC. All Task Force members shared the common understanding that there is a lot of unused potential in the organization and through dialogue and joint initiatives it's possible to improve the organization and its effectiveness. Each organization has the need from time to time to evaluate its structures, policies and functions to respond to changes in the surrounding society and evolving needs of its members.

In this report the Task Force presents its conclusions and proposals to the UBC Executive Board. The first part of the report concentrates on the improvements needed in practical working methods. The second part gives recommendations for changes in UBC Statute and UBC Internal Regulations.

As the Chairman of the Task Force, I want to thank each and every member both individually and as a group for your great commitment and active participation, through meetings, e-mails or conversations. I extend special thanks to Ms Helinä Yli-Knuutila, who has done great part of the work by ensuring the preparation of the meetings and detailed protocols which have served as the basis of this final document.

It has been a very interesting and positive experience, which has opened eyes to understand the great work and potential of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Upon delivering our report to the Executive Board, we hope that it will seriously study our conclusions and recommendations and take action where it considers action should be taken.

Turku, 25 February 2013

Mikko Lohikoski
Chairman
UBC Task Force on Development

1. UBC Working methods

Executive Board

The Task Force noted in general, that at the moment the potential of the Executive Board and its members, representing the will of the member Cities, is underutilized. Members of the Executive Board have each a vast experience of leading local authorities, and this should be better mobilized for the benefit of the UBC and the member cities. Therefore, more effective ways of working – preparation of meetings, decision-making procedures, activation EB members between Board meetings giving them responsibilities or “homework” etc. should be actively promoted.

Decision-making

The Task Force noted that it is sometimes unclear even for Board members what was exactly decided by the UBC Executive Board. Also, too often the proposals for decision are coming too late for real consideration.

To avoid misunderstandings, the Task Force proposes that in the future the meeting agenda has always, when possible, to include concrete proposals for decision. Decisions should also include a proposal about practical implementation: who is responsible of the issues after the meeting. Follow-up of the decisions has to be organized systematically. It was noted that President or someone delegated by him/her could give report on major developments including strategy implementation and implementation of major decisions in every Board meeting.

The President, supported by the General Secretary and the Strategy Coordinator should organize a preparatory meeting or consultation (face-to-face or online meetings, e-mails, calls) of the Presidium to prepare the EB agenda so that it would include proposals for decision.

The Executive Board meeting agenda with draft proposals should be published well beforehand, so that the Board members are able to consider the issues and when needed ask advice from other city representatives. If the decision proposal is presented only in the meeting, it's difficult to take a stand on the issue immediately and often there is not enough room for discussion and consideration.

Content of the meetings

UBC Executive Board has to focus more on discussion, exchange of opinions political dialogue. Meetings have to be meaningful. Both the host city and the Board members should feel that they have spent their scarce time effectively, gained new knowledge and insight after every Board meeting and that they have made decisions which are promoting UBC's goals. UBC Board should act as a discussion and decision-making forum where information and experiences are effectively shared.

Task Force recommends following topics to be included in future meetings:

- Going through the general political situation – seen from the City perspective -in the Baltic Sea Region.
- The Task Force also proposes that the UBC Executive Board should have a serious discussion about the benefits that the organization is giving/could give to its members. Why have the newest members joined the organization? What are the member cities gaining through membership and participation? This is important for formulation of the future policies and as “selling points”.
- Other key organizations for the BSR (e.g. BaltMet, BDF, EU Commission, CBSS) could be invited to the Board meetings to present themselves and their work. However, it was stressed that these presentations have to be focused on potential areas of cooperation with UBC.

The Board meeting should be open in nature. Everybody would be welcomed to open sessions and virtual access could be organized. The host city doesn't need to cover everybody's expenses; general practical rules on this can be decided. There should be a possibility for all member cities to participate, but then they may have to cover their own expenses.

Board meetings should always include open thematic session /seminar/discussion which focuses on an issue which is of special interest to the host city. Also representatives of relevant UBC commissions are invited to participate as experts in such a discussion.

Issues for the decision-making are to be discussed in closed sessions of the Board. These sessions have to be well prepared. For practical reasons, it could be considered that closed parts of the Board meetings could have fewer participants, as this would increase its effectiveness. It is up to the Executive Board to decide who, in addition to the Board members and those who introduce issues, has the right to attend the closed sessions.

Practical issues

The Executive Board meeting is very time consuming, it normally takes 2-3 days including travel. This is often too much for Mayors or others. In addition, only a few hours of this long time goes to the actual meeting and discussion. A better system has to be developed. The work of the Board should be made more work-oriented and effective.

Communication between the UBC Board and other member cities has to be improved. The Task Force proposes that every Executive Board member starts to report – in short format - in national language about UBC developments to other Member Cities in their respective country after every Board meeting - as is done by the Danish representative. One additional possibility is a concise information letter after each Board meeting by the President to all member cities - it could serve as an appropriate news channel.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the Executive Board:

- General aim is to activate the work of the Executive Board, to better utilize the expertise and potential of this leading body representing the opinions of member Cities. This includes giving "homework" to Board members, invite their contributions also in meetings and between them.
- - UBC Executive Board meeting agendas should include decision proposals. Task Force recommends preparatory meetings of the Presidium for this purpose.
 - Draft proposals have to be sent well in advance (at least one week beforehand).
 - Report on key developments should be included in the meetings every time (responsibility of President)
 - Follow-up of the decisions has to be organized.
 - Timetable of the UBC Executive Board meeting has to be structured so that there is enough room for discussion and decision-making, while using the time more effectively.
 - Open theme seminar/discussion is included in every Board meeting. The host city will choose a theme and prepare the discussion (e.g. inviting UBC Commissions experts and other speakers) with Presidium and General Secretariat. Enough time for dialogue and knowledge exchange.
 - Board meetings should in general include open parts where all member cities, commissions etc. can take part. The meetings shall also include closed sessions for decision making.
 - UBC Executive Board meetings need to be re-structured so that they take maximum two days including travelling time.
 - UBC Executive Board members are recommended to report about the meeting issues to their home country representatives in national language after every meeting.
 - Dates for forthcoming Board meetings have to be decided for at least one year beforehand.
 - The open sessions of Board meetings could have virtual access also. The Secretariat is invited to study this issue.
 - Task Force recommends that the Board meeting protocols should concentrate on decisions rather than include summaries of discussion.

Presidium

The Presidium should be closely involved in Board meeting preparation. Division of labour between the President and Vice-Presidents could be developed in this respect – the Presidium could have specific responsibility areas (e.g. liaising with other organizations, communication, contacts with Commissions etc.)

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the Presidium:

- Presidium is the key actor in preparation of the UBC Executive Board and proposals for decision
- Division of labour between President and Vice Presidents should be considered

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat is the nerve centre of the organization, consisting of employed civil servants. It organizes the day-to-day activities of the Union, prepares meetings and events, ensures the implementation of decisions, represents the UBC and keeps contact with the Commissions. It is in constant contact with the President/Presidium as well as the Strategy Coordinator between the Executive Board meetings.

The Secretariat has an important task to actively communicate with members and to know the big picture and the players. It also channels the voices of members to UBC Executive Board, when needed.

The Task Force notes that the General Secretariat is a great asset for the organization. However, taking into account the way the Secretariat is established (paid by the host City), and the Union finances, its human resources are small compared to needs.

As the tasks are growing and evolving in the future, it is important that the Secretariat is functioning well and concentrates on the priorities established by the General Conference and the Executive Board, which has to guide the work of the Secretariat.

Implementation of the UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy brings new important work to the General Secretariat. Its work load needs to be evaluated so that the Board knows what issues are to be prioritized and what kind of new resources/capacities the Secretariat may need. Based on the Communication Strategy, at least editorial capacity has to be increased, in the form of a Communications Manager. Also technical capacity and possible need for further training need to be evaluated.

It would be very important for UBC to communicate more and to implement properly the new Strategy. However, the UBC financial resources are limited. Therefore, also the possibility of a decentralized working method – using modern IT technology - was discussed, meaning that in addition to the General Secretariat, some functions may be carried out in other cities, if appropriate. If there is a need to expand the number of employees, external funding or reallocation of Union finances should be used for this purpose rather than raising the membership fees.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the General Secretariat:

- New developments and opportunities such as EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region have enhanced status of the UBC, but also demand more from UBC and Secretariat (policy formulation capacity, new competences including communication skills as defined by UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy, project preparation and implementation etc).
- Current formula of financing the Secretariat (paid by host city) and financial situation of UBC set limits to enlargement of Secretariat, and innovative solutions must be sought.
- Present tasks of Secretariat have to be evaluated in light of UBC priorities. Priorities must be established and technical tasks could be outsourced.
- Appointing Communication manager of UBC an urgent task. Technical issues – funding, location (Gdansk or some other city which could co-fund costs?), recruitment must be solved without delay.
- Enhancing Gdansk secretariat by sending experts/trainees from member cities?
- Defining role of Strategy coordinator appointed by the Executive Board.
- Enhancing support and guidance vis-à-vis Commissions: Annual meeting between Commission representatives, Secretariat and Board representatives.
- Both strategy/policy work and effective day-to-day running of the organization need to be ensured.

Commissions

The Task Force proposes that UBC Commissions should have a contact person among the members of the Executive Board or Presidium. These contact persons don't have to participate in every Commission meeting, but should follow the issues and support and communicate with the Commission when needed, as well as to bring its greetings to the Board. It was also proposed that the heads/leaders of the commissions should meet at least once a year with the political leadership and the General Secretariat to discuss strategy and policy issues, among others.

The Task Force notes that the current procedure, where a Commission representative travels to UBC Executive Board meeting and gives a short oral presentation on activities, doesn't work and requires unreasonable travelling time. The Task proposes that the Commissions should report in written form. Task Force also proposes that every now and then the UBC Executive Board could have work of the Commissions as the main theme in its meetings. The most important is to have more dialogue and cooperation between the Board/Secretariat and the Commissions, so the UBC acts as one organization according to the established strategic goals.

Each UBC Commission should present their future plans for action and budget proposal for two years period to the Board in the first meeting after the General Conference. Evaluation of the Commissions is under way and hence the Task Force didn't discuss deeply the performance and results of the Commissions. It was however noted, that coordination and management of Commissions could be more structured. Work of the Commissions has to be goal-orientated and follow chosen priorities.

The Task Force discussed about the present state of the Commissions and member city participation in them. It was noted that currently all cities don't even know to which commission they belong to. The Task Force agreed that some clear system has to be created to achieve clarity on this issue without creating too much bureaucracy. At the moment this is a complication for both the member Cities as well as commissions. The Task Force noted that clarity of membership in commissions is essential also because it is one criteria for the funding of commissions in new evaluation procedure. The Task Force further noted that defining Commission membership is a valid and important issue and must be better organized. It was proposed to make a list of member cities and their contact persons always after the General Conference and keep it updated and available in UBC web site.

The Task Force also discussed about a possible future structure of commissions. It was suggested, that the commissions could form bigger clusters of commissions. This would enable more funding for joint secretariats serving them.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the Commissions:

- Every UBC Commission should have a contact person among the members of the Executive Board or Presidium.
- Commissions will report to the Board in written form, supported by the nominated contact person among the Board members.
- Commissions are more regularly invited to the discussions in Board as experts (see also proposals in point “Executive Board”)
- Result and performance of the Commissions has to be regularly evaluated. Financial support is based on the evaluation.
- Membership in commissions has to be better structured – list of member cities and their representatives to be made after each General Conference for a two year period.
- Task Force encourages closer cooperation between commissions to form bigger clusters or to merge.
- Task Force recommends to the commissions to apply for external EU funding. Training and advice for this purpose could be organized.

General Conference

Task Force states that the General Conference should be an inspiring event, including interesting and relevant content for political decision makers from the cities and partner organisations. The General Conference should be the highlight of the organization. It was noted that the title of the General Conference should be attractive and dynamic. One proposal for 2013 Conference was “Welcome to Work!” as the main subject is youth marginalization and unemployment. Another good overall theme could be “Investing in Young People”.

General Conference agenda should be relevant and focus on cities’ challenges. Selected topics need to be chosen well advance and they need to be carefully planned. Cities want to exchange views and discuss rather than focus on administration side of the organization.

Some possible key speakers were discussed by the Task Force:

- Mona Sahlin, Swedish politician
- Kåre Willoch, former Norwegian PM
- President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö
- Prince Daniel of Sweden
- Mayor of Vilnius, Artūras Zuokas
- Jacob Wallenberg, Board member e.g. in Coca-Cola, SAS, ABB
- High-level key-note speaker from EU organizations (Commissioner Hahn or General Director Deffaa/DG REGIO)
- Mayors! (“local policy heavy weights”)

Big names can help to attract more participants. However, the main speakers are the mayors and representatives of member cities. The Task Force also noted that both women and men speakers are needed (e.g. in Denmark and other Nordic countries there are lots of women in key political positions that could be considered as speakers). Also geographical representation has to be ensured. Speakers need to come from all levels: local, regional and international. When planning the program, active cities in youth issues could have a priority, for example Söderhamn was mentioned. All cities are welcomed to send proposals about themes and speakers. The General Conference could also offer possibility for less active cities to take part and get involved.

The Task Force proposes more time and space must be reserved for free discussion and evaluation of the work done and for networking. Cultural performances are welcome, but appropriate time and place need to be carefully considered. The Task Force also noted that UBC Commissions need to be involved in planning of the event.

General Conference offers opportunity for visibility and branding. It could be a meeting point for other BSR organizations - UBC should invite other stakeholders to attend the open parts of the meeting.

One of the problems is that for many participants there is the language barrier – and especially for political decision makers. The meeting has to be organized so that it allows broad participation. Basically everybody wants to contribute. Therefore, interpretation is proposed for at least part of the main sessions.

The Task Force noted that it is difficult to ensure participation of political decision-makers only every second year in General Conference, there should be annual regularity. Therefore it could be useful to ensure, that there is such a Forum annually – called the Urban Forum – which would every second year meet in connection of the GC, every second year separately, possibly linked to another major BSR event like the Baltic Development Forum. It has actually been decided that these two organizations UBC and BDF - could develop a special forum for senior politicians and business representatives, where smart and sustainable solutions for cities are discussed. Also cooperation with BaltMet and BSSSC could be intensified.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the General Conference:

- Member cities should look after strong commitment of mayors (mayors from each active city are invited to speak/participate). Letter to all members by the President should be sent asap.
- General Secretariat could ask member cities' and commissions' ideas for speakers and content of the General Conference
- UBC and host city of GC should invite other BSR organizations and stakeholders to participate
- General Secretariat and host city of GC should study possibilities of offering interpretation for main languages at least for main parts of the meeting.
- Urban Forum concept should be developed and forum for politicians is recommended to be organized annually.
- The Mariehamn GC should start the preparatory process for the new UBC Strategy 2015 -

Election procedures

The Task Force noted that elections are very important process for the whole organization. The Task Force noted that in general, current UBC election procedures could be developed to emphasize this. UBC Member Cities must be sure that the elections are transparent, open and that they are invited to put forward candidates. It was noted that for the general good of the organization, it is important that the posts in the UBC organs attract keen interest and also candidatures.

The President, Vice-Presidents and Members of Board of Audit are elected in their personal capacity while the Executive Board members are Member Cities. The host City of the Secretariat is decided every four years, after which the President and the Mayor of the host City make a proposal to the Board about the person of the Secretary General.

The Task Force proposes that UBC Executive Board would not make recommendations to the General Conference concerning any candidates, since this can be felt as an undemocratic measure. The Executive Board should decide on the election procedure in its March 2013 meeting.

The Task Force proposes that Member Cities are informed about the General Conference, including the elections, in early spring 2013, possible through a letter from the President. The Task Force recommends that all candidates should officially register by 6th of September 2013 to the Secretariat in Gdansk. Nominations can only be made by Member Cities, in written form and with authorized signatures.

The Task Force also proposes that every candidate should have same possibility in General Conference (and possible other forums, like UBC media) to present themselves and their strengths and policies before elections.

In general discussion, the Task Force members also noted that standing as a candidate can be a sensitive question for many politicians. Nobody wants to lose an election, if there are more candidates than posts. Due to this there are often only few candidates in UBC elections. It has to be understood that we are dealing with a delicate political procedure. Keen interest towards open posts is to be welcomed, at the same time ensuring the unity and functioning of the organization.

The Task Force discussed widely also about pros and cons of appointing a Nominating Committee for elections as proposed by some Task Force members. A Nominating Committee is a common procedure in Sweden and Norway, but hardly known in other states, except in business companies. This creates difficulties to understand the system and its function. As told by a Task Force member, a Nominating Committee is a group formed usually from inside the membership of an organization for the purpose of nominating candidates for the main positions. A Nominating Committee will gather information about all available candidates and discuss with all of them. The intention is to find qualified and knowledgeable people representing the best interests of the organization. A Nominating Committee will also discuss with members about their views and preferences. Finally Nominating Committee will give their proposal of suitable candidates for election.

In the end, a proposal to appoint a specific Nominating Committee did not gain enough support, so the Task Force decided not to propose it to the Executive Board.

As there are at the present no rules of procedure for the General Conference (Statute of UBC, article 5, para 1), these shall be prepared and presented to the Executive Board, for adoption in the forthcoming General Conference. Election procedures will be included in these Rules of Procedure.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning the election procedures:

- UBC elections need to be transparent, open and democratic
- All member cities are invited to put forward candidates
- UBC Executive Board will not make recommendations to the General Conference concerning any candidates. Member cities need to have real voting possibility.
- Executive Board should decide on the 2013 election procedure in its March or June 2013 meeting.
- Member Cities are informed about the General Conference, including the elections, already in early spring through a letter from the President
- Every candidate should have same possibility to present themselves and their policies
- Rules for procedure for General Conference have to be prepared

Vision and objectives of the organization

Cities and states have developed greatly during the past 20 years. This means also UBC needs to be updated to today's world. On the other hand past years achievements bring value and credibility to the work in the future. UBC is basically a volunteer association of cities working together to exchange know-how and to promote integration. Cities are facing common challenges, so integration and exchange is definitely needed.

UBC needs to have clear objectives and goals to be able to stand out from other actors. Clear objectives and vision would also help member cities to speak on the behalf of the whole organization while meeting e.g. EU representatives.

UBC Strategy should guide all UBC activities and key messages should be formulated on that basis. The Strategy has to be updated regularly to answer the changing needs. Political orientation and guidance is also needed from the local decision makers.

The Task Force sees that at the moment the focus should rather be on deepening participation of current members instead of looking after new cities, which can be done later.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning UBC vision:

- UBC needs clear objective and goal which are implemented through Strategy
- Questions to be discussed in the future:
 - What is a future-orientated vision of the organization?
 - What should the organization offer to member cities that it is not available at the moment?
 - What is the unique value of UBC?

UBC Communication

In internal communication, the flow of information (especially e-mails) is huge. The Task Force requests the General Secretariat to study possibilities to use diverse communication channels to reach the right target groups. Developing and updating the contact information and collecting them into internal database would be of great importance. Information flow inside the member cities is also challenging. E-mails sent to UBC contact persons need to clearly indicate to whom they are meant (e.g. which expertise field etc.)

UBC has to be more visible in media. The General Secretariat could have more active role in external communication efforts. Organization also to be able to form opinions and bring them out to the public and towards EU institutions/member states etc.. This should be done in cooperation between secretariat and other organs of the UBC. Task Force proposes that electronic publications should be preferred instead of paper printing.

UBC should also consider in which languages, besides English, the materials are published. Communication should be tailored for politicians and key information should be available also in national languages. It's important that the benefits of regional city-cooperation in BSR are well presented. Language challenges lead to situation where mostly civil servants are attending UBC meetings and activities. At least in General Conference every second year interpretation should be offered in key languages to enable broader participation of political decision-makers. This is of course also a financial issue.

Task Force noted, that there are only very few other BSR structures that are organizationally stable (clear membership based on membership fee, statutes and internal regulations, elected leading organs, functioning commissions etc.) and representative. Most of the BSR structures are loose cooperative networks or nationally-based organizations with international links. There, and in our proven achievements, is the UBC's opportunity to make itself visible compared to others. We are not only a talk-shop but can deliver.

UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy and its implementation mechanism has to be discussed in UBC Executive Board. The challenge is to ensure that UBC will find necessary resources for this important work, for example by limiting the amount of printed publications. It was also noted that Board members could contribute to communication actions, and for example write interesting news. UBC is not a well-known organization so there is constant need to sharpen the messages.

Proposals of the Task Force concerning communication:

- Developing and updating the contact information and collecting them into internal database
- Reducing the amount of e-mails
- Preferring the electronic publications instead of printing
- Key information to be produced in national languages
- UBC's profile and actions more visible
- Implementation of UBC Communication and Marketing Strategy

2. Recommendations for changes in UBC Statute

(Headings and numbers refer to the UBC Statute and its articles)

In general, the Task Force noted that all "*shall be*" and "*will be*" formulations should both in UBC Statute and UBC Internal Regulations should be brought to present tense. It enhances the impression that the organization is looking to the future instead of the past.

Introduction

Introduction part of the UBC Statute is bit old-fashioned language and Task Force proposes that modern formulations could be developed. The Task Force also proposes that reference to (macro) regional strategies could be included. There aren't any mistakes or wrong issues as such in the Introduction, but some update, refreshing of words and expressions should to be done.

Article 1

Task Force proposes the addition of the word "*develop*" to the first sentence and formulation of the Article with number points 1-5 (maintaining the same issues and wording as before, but making the Article clearer). The Task Force proposes new point 5 to be included as follows:

"The Union's aim is to

1. Promote, *develop* and strengthen cooperation and exchange of experience among the cities in the Baltic Sea Region,
2. Advocate for common interests of the local authorities in the region,
3. Act on behalf of the cities and local authorities in common matters towards regional, national, European and international bodies,
4. Strive to achieve sustainable development *and optimal economic and social development* in the Baltic Sea Region with full respect to European principles of local and regional self-governance and subsidiarity.
5. *Contribute to joint Baltic Identity, cohesion and common understanding in the region.*"

Article 2

Task Force proposes that prioritizing of issues would be done differently, please see proposal below (maintaining the same issues than before, but changing the order). Task Force also proposes following changes to wording:

In point **a.** changing the word "*seek*" to word "*develop*".

In point **b.** adding of word "*European*".

In point **f.** adding the words "*and international city networks*".

New point **m.** to be added: "*Implement relevant macro-regional strategies.*"

To attain the above objectives the Union:

- a. *Develop* a systematic exchange of experience between member Cities in their common fields of interest, and organize meetings, exhibitions, scientific and popular sessions, as well as other events to popularize achievements of the individual member Cities.
- b. Foster communication ties and develop respective networks and links with other regional *and European actors.*
- c. Support and assist the member Cities in carrying out research work and publish their efforts to tackle the problems of the Baltic Sea and the adjacent land areas.
- d. Assist in and support the cooperation of professional groups in the member Cities as well as that between individual Cities, for example, Twin Cities.

- e. Service its member cities in terms of information flow and help generate projects co-financed by European Union, and from other sources, offering cities project quality consulting.
- f. Maintain ties with the European Union structures, the Council of Europe and international city networks.
- g. Stage on public forums common motions, opinions and positions on the cities' and the Baltic Sea Region's interests.
- h. Launch initiatives and cooperate with the Baltic Sea Region governments and international organizations in resolving problems posed by economic development of the Baltic Sea Region and protection of its natural environment, thus enhancing its integration.
- i. Collaborate in the process of European Union enlargement, bearing in mind the existence of the European dimension to the future of the cities.
- j. Promote interest in the history of the Baltic Region, its ecological and cultural heritage and work together to protect the Region's landscape as well as its cultural and historical monuments.
- k. Support any endeavor to enhance inter-human contacts, in particular, among the youth of the member Cities by organising meetings, sport competitions, festivals, and other events.
- l. Develop its own public relations program in order to display properly the aims, the activities and the tools of the Union.”
- m. Implement relevant (macro) regional strategies.

Article 3

Task Force noted that membership issues are little bit unclearly stated in the Statute at the moment. Task Force proposes that there could be three membership categories mentioned in Statute, as UBC already in fact has all these existing, new categories would be Member City, Associated Member City and Partner. The Statute has to define what rights and obligations different categories have.

Majority of the Task Force members felt that paragraph quoting on founding members could be left out as it has no relevance in the Statute, as all full members have equal rights. Some Task Force members, however, would prefer to maintain the original text. It was noted that the history of the organization will not disappear even if there is no differentiation between full members in the Statute. Task Force therefore proposes the following wording:

“Any city located in the states bordering the Baltic Sea and in Norway may become a Member City of the Union. Other interested cities may become an Associated Member City of the Union. Interested organizations, businesses and institutions may become a Partner of the Union.

Cities, organizations, businesses and institutions may join the Union by making a written declaration of their will to enter it. The Union membership will expire upon a voluntary resignation from the Union, thereby terminating all mutual obligations of the parties thus involved.

The Executive Board is authorized to decide upon the acceptance and fees for Members, Associated Members and Partners of the Union. If a Member City, an Associated Member City or a Partner of the Union is not fulfilling the membership obligations, the Executive Board has the right to expel it from the Union.”

Open question: What should UBC's approach to cities in Belarus – they are part of the BSR especially in environmental terms. Could we extend full membership to Belarus or limit it to Associated Member City status? The Task Force also noted that the regional context could be more emphasized in the text proposed above.

Some members preferred to keep the original wording concerning membership.

Article 4

Majority of the Task Force noted that all relevant organs of the UBC should be mentioned in Statute in Article 4. Some members proposed that only the General Conference, President, Executive Board and Vice-Presidents should be mentioned in the Statute as is at the moment. However, the majority considered that all UBC organs should for clarity be listed identically in the Statute and the Internal Regulations.

The Task Force's proposal on wording in Article 4:

The Organs of the Union are:

- h. The General Conference of the delegates of the Member Cities.
- i. The President of the Union
- j. *The Presidium consisting of the President and three Vice-Presidents of the Union*
- k. The Executive Board consisting of one Member City representative from each country *where UBC has Member Cities*, the President and the three Vice-Presidents
- l. *The Union Secretariat*
- m. *The Commissions of the Union*
- n. *The Board of Audit*

Organs mentioned here should be the same also in the UBC Internal Regulations.

Article 5

Point 1.

Task Force noted that the Rules of Procedure for the General Conference (mentioned in the Statute) do not exist and therefore the Executive Board should prepare them for adoption in the next General Conference in 2013.

A member proposed that the Executive Board should present a revision of the Internal Regulations for the upcoming period after every General Conference. Other members of the Task Force argued that the current procedure, where the Executive Board can decide on Internal Regulations, is fine - they didn't see the need of revising the Internal Regulations every second year, but only when needed.

As already stated in the recommendations concerning the working methods, the Task Force proposes that UBC Executive Board should not make any recommendations concerning the candidates.

Point 2.

There was lot of discussion about rotation for President and Vice-Presidents in Task Force meetings. The Task Force members had differing opinions about possible statutory limits for the maximum time in the same office. Some members are supporting the idea of setting a maximum limit of three consecutive periods in the same office for the President and the Vice-Presidents (3x2 years max). It was noted that if this would be agreed upon, it would be implemented from now on, and not apply to the past periods.

Some noted that six years is long enough to make an input into the work of UBC, and that rotation would give more cities and persons the possibility to participate in decision making and thus activate members and widen responsibility to new cities. Some others noted that it is important to have experienced persons in the leadership and that member Cities have possibility in each general Conference to change leadership if they so feel.

It was also argued that in some other organizations like Eurocities, BSSSC and CBSS there is a troika system, where incoming, current and outgoing presidents work together. An established rotation is used in some of these organizations or platforms.

There was also discussion, whether there should be fixed rotation of the office of President moving in agreed order between countries. While this may have its advantages, it was stated that perhaps this is not suitable for UBC, as the situation in various countries and cities may not allow such a rotation. Furthermore, the Presidents are serving in their personal capacity although they are leaders in their cities.

After discussion, the Task Force decided to submit two alternative proposals to Executive Board on this issue:

- The President and Vice-President can be elected for a maximum of three consecutive periods; or
- There is no need to modify the Article 5.2. in Statute

Article 6

Instead of the word “*member-town*” the word “*Member City*” should be used for clarity:
“The delegation of every *Member City* shall have one vote at the General Conference.”

Article 6 covers the General Conference. Task Force proposes that the Executive Board should have its own, new Article 9A. Two last clauses quoting to Executive Board should be taken away from Article 6 and moved to new Article 9A.

Article 9

Task Force proposes minor change in wording in last clause:

“The President of the Union *or whom s/he nominates on her/his behalf* is the external representative of the Union.”

Article 9A (proposed new article covering the Executive Board)

The new Article 9A should be started as follows: *“In the time between General Conferences the Executive Board of the Union is the highest authority of the organization. The Executive Board has the right to formulate and adopt the UBC internal regulations. The Executive Board approves the budget of the Union.”*

Task Force proposes that the Executive Board responsibilities should be stated in the Statute, because it is the highest authority of the organization after the General Conference. Responsibilities can’t be described only in Internal Regulations, because they are accepted by Executive Board themselves. In this procedure Executive Board would create its own rules and responsibilities, which is not a transparent or democratic procedure.

Task Force proposes that the main responsibilities of the Executive Board including following issues should be included in the new Article 9A:

- *Liaising with, coordinating and guiding the work of UBC Commissions and deciding on the allocation of resources on basis of agreed criteria.*
- *Guiding the work of the Union Secretariat and possible other office holders of the Union*
- *Decisions on new Member Cities, Associated Member Cities and Partners*
- *Creating rules of procedure for the General Conference*
- *Ensuring the implementation of the UBC Strategy and decisions*

This list should be further completed and checked according to UBC Statute and Internal Regulations and their possible modifications.

2. Recommendations for changes in UBC Internal Regulations

(Headings and numbers refer to the UBC Internal Regulations and its articles)

As a general note: all “*shall*” word should be turned to present tense.

Introduction

The Task Force proposes that organs mentioned in the Introduction of the Internal Regulations should be the same as in the Statute, Article 4, preferably in the same order and with same exact expressions.

Executive Board

Point 2.1.

Task Force noted that the personal participation of mayors in UBC Executive Board would be good and raise the status of the organization. Therefore, the EB work has to be made more time-effective. However, it was

also noted that member cities have the right to appoint whoever they want to the Board to present themselves, and in many cases this has not been the mayor.

Therefore, the present formulation may be kept as it is or be replaced by a wording as follows:

Member City elected to the Executive Board nominates its mayor or his/her representative to the Executive Board. Additionally, each Member City appoints a substitute – preferably from the city board or city council – to serve as an alternative representative in case the ordinary representative is not able to attend.”

Task Force also proposes following addition to last clause: “Attendance of seven Board members and President, or in his absence, a Vice-President, of the Union constitutes a quorum. “

Point 2.2.

The Task Force proposes following addition to the text: “The President is responsible of proposing the Executive Board meeting agenda and draft resolutions.”

Point 2.3.

Task Force noted that Rules of Procedure for the General Conference do not exist and therefore the Executive Board should prepare them for adoption in the next General Conference in 2013.

As already stated in the recommendations concerning the working methods and Statute, Article 5, Task Force proposes that UBC Executive Board should not make any recommendations concerning the candidates.

Point 2.4.

As it says in the Statute that General Conference approves the creation of the UBC Commissions, the wording in this point could be as follows:

“The Executive Board may nominate an ad hoc UBC Commission after application from at least three Member Cities. The final approval of the creation of the new Commission is taken by the General Conference. Also the termination of any Commission is decided by the General Conference.”

Point 2.8.

The Task Force proposes that there wouldn't be any limitations to participate in the open sessions, except for practical reasons. There should be a possibility for everybody to participate, but then they may have to cover their own expenses, as the host city may not be able to pay meals etc. for everyone.

Points 2.9.-2.11.

The Task Force proposes that the Executive Board meeting agendas should be accompanied with draft resolutions always when possible.

Point 2.12.

The Task Force proposes that countries are no longer mentioned in this point. An equal procedure for all member cities concerning covering of expenses should be established and such decisions should be based on individual justified request and only for specific reasons. The Task Force proposes that the wording is changed to read as follows:

“In well justified cases and for specific reasons, the Union may cover, in the most cost-effective manner, the accommodation and transportation costs of a Member City representative to the Executive Board meeting or other Union activities.”

Task Force proposes **new point 2.14.:**

“The Executive Board nominates contact persons for each UBC Commission, in order to ensure close cooperation between the Executive Board and the UBC Commissions. The contact person can be the President, one of the Vice-Presidents or any Executive Board member.”

4. Commissions

The Task Force proposes addition to introduction: “The UBC Commissions are established by the General Conference. The Executive Board carries out regularly an evaluation of the work of the UBC Commissions. The amount of financial support to UBC Commissions will be based on this evaluation.”

Point 4.4.

Task Force proposes a small clarification: Major issues should be approved by the Executive Board.

Point 4.7.

Instead of “municipalities” word “cities” should be used.

Point 4.8.

Content is ok, but paragraph needs re-formulation. The Task Force proposes that this paragraph should be updated and clarified.

5. Secretariat

The Task Force proposes that following clause should be included to the introduction: “The Union Secretariat works under the guidance of the Executive Board and the President.”

6. Board of Audit

Task Force proposes that last clause should be changed as follows: “The Board of Audit is invited to the Executive Board meeting at least once a year.” In addition, following clause should be included: “The Board of Audit has the right to attend any Executive Board meeting, if they so wish.”

7. Finances

The Task Force proposes that countries are no longer mentioned in this point. See point 2.12. The Task Force proposes that the wording is changed as follows:

“In well justified cases and for specific reasons, the Union may cover, in the most cost-effective manner, the accommodation and transportation costs of a Member City representative to the Executive Board meeting or other Union activities.”
