



Union of the Baltic Cities

Communications and Marketing 2014–2015

Plan of Action, DRAFT 14.10.2014

Irene Pendolin, Communications Manager, irene.pendolin@ubc.net / Irene.pendolin@turku.fi / +358 40 848 6242

1 Preface

During this autumn I have been orientating myself to UBC's organisation, website, strategy (especially Communications and Marketing Strategy) and other key UBC documents and practices. Additionally, I have been getting acquainted with and consulted some key actors in the UBC organization regarding communications, including UBC's Secretary General **Paweł Żaboklicki** and members of the Secretariat **Anna Sosnicka**, **Anna Dargiewicz** and **Kornelia Bednarczyk**. I have also consulted UBC's Strategy Coordinator **Mikko Lohikoski** on the communications and marketing issues.

During my visit at the Secretariat, I also had the opportunity to discuss with City of Gdansk IT personnel about the options concerning the development of UBC website and web communications in general.

Based on my discussions with these key actors and my own desk research, I have created this plan of action for UBC communications and marketing for the years 2014–2015, to be refined as we progress and according to changes suggested by the UBC Executive Board and the UBC General Conference. The purpose of this plan of action is to serve as a basis from which we start to develop practices in UBC communications and marketing, taking into special consideration the new structure of the commissions (January 2015). It has been formulated to involve solely years 2014–2015 since the UBC strategy will also be renewed starting from 2016, which will also influence overall communications and marketing. It is important that communications and marketing are an integral part of the new UBC overall strategy, starting from the preparation phase.

This plan of action is based on the UBC Communications and Marketing Strategy and it consists of five parts: Preface, General guidelines, Long term priorities and means, Mid-term priorities and means, Timeframe.

2 General guidelines

as stated in the Communications and Marketing Strategy

2.1 Goals of UBC communications and marketing

- ✓ **Internal communications:** Support the internal exchange and diffusion of ideas, inspiration and best practice within the UBC network of cities.
- ✓ **Brand building:** Establish UBC as a credible, future-oriented and relevant, leading Baltic Sea Region network, and a preferred partner in thematic issues



that relate to e.g. urban development and city planning, sustainable cities, competitiveness of cities, social cohesiveness and integration etc.

- ✓ **Lobbying:** Help the UBC member cities to further their policy-advocacy goals vis-à-vis national government and the EU by leveraging its role as a major northern European network of more than 100 member cities.
- ✓ **Marketing the BSR:** Promote and market the Baltic Sea Region as a dynamic, competitive, prosperous and safe region.

2.2 UBC's brand promise and core message

"Union of the Baltic Cities is the leading network in Northern Europe, working to foster sustainable, smart and safe cities"

- Positioning to trends of urbanisation and macro-regional development

2.3 Target audiences

- ✓ Stakeholders: politicians, civil servants, youth groups
- ✓ Actors: EU, national government officials
- ✓ Strategic partners: e.g. BaltMet, BDF, CBSS, city networks

2.4 Core values and themes

- ✓ Values: UBC is reliable, friendly, professional, future oriented
- ✓ Themes, to be prioritized and used in all communications and marketing:
The Sustainable City – The Smart City – The Safe City
- How are these portrayed, e.g. in the results the commissions achieve?

2.5 Guiding principles of the UBC communications and marketing

- ✓ Interactivity and dialogue: e.g. social media, portals/cloud services, databases – the ability to involve internal and external stakeholders is central.
- ✓ Modern, timely communication: up-to-date and easy-access contact information, web-based digital and social media
- ✓ Accessibility: e.g. shared databases and cloud services
- ✓ Editorial capacity: UBC as a network processes information and news and presents cohesive, refined and forceful messages and stories that relate to UBC's mission and a few strategically chosen themes – network of content creators/reporters, a proactive communication team, including representatives from the member cities.
- ✓ Focus and prioritization (see 2.4 Core values and themes), communication to specific target groups (see 2.3 Target audiences)

3 Long term priorities and means

What are the most important things we need to achieve and in which timeframe?

3.1 ubc.net – public website

Present situation: Development must start from defining anew the content: what do we (the member cities, commissions) want and need from the UBC website – as well as from the overall communications.



Proposal for the future: Review anew the answers to the surveys and questionnaires made to the commissions and member cities. If needed, conduct a new questionnaire where the focus would be on what kind of content, changes etc. is needed. After completing the content analyses and assessing the future needs, we need to decide whether to hire an advertising agency to make suggestions for the new layout and visualities – or to go ahead with the current layout and/or the options given by the City of Gdansk IT unit.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

3.2 Creating UBC intranet – internal website

Present situation: In addition to external communications, internal communications requires updating. In general, it is quite often beneficial to start developing communications from the internal point of view, since this enables a better use of the resources already at hand in the organisation. Furthermore, creating an intranet would lessen email traffic.

Proposal for the future: Re-organising/developing abc.net while at the same time being prepared that an internal website might also need to be developed – preferably with the same platform as the public website. Developing and creating intranet contents and technical platform in case the means of re-organising contact information systems, creating cloud services, and organising training of internal communications are not sufficient. Also, need for working group domains should be taken into account while creating the intranet. Possibilities of organising intranet: SharePoint, Drupal, WordPress, Yammer.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

3.3 Strengthening the UBC brand among internal and external stakeholders

Why is it worthwhile for a city to become and remain as a member of the UBC – what do we offer? Why is it worthwhile for other stakeholders to have UBC as a partner?

- ✓ Key themes: a) urbanization and b) increase in the influence of cities in decision-making and macro-regions (especially EUSBSR).
- ✓ Includes: logo, visualities, typography etc.

Internal strengthening of the UBC brand

Present situation: UBC as organisation and its achievements are not very well known in the member cities – not as well as there are possibilities for them to be.

Proposal for the future:

- ✓ Making UBC's services and know-how known to the member cities, communicating to them about the possibilities of getting involved and benefitting of the UBC activities and work. Getting the member cities to act as UBC ambassadors (print, online, face-to-face communications etc.).
- ✓ In addition, it is important to communicate to cities what specific roles are available for them in the UBC organisation, such as hosting a secretariat (Commission), chair or co-chair of commission, member of board of commission and advisory board member. A formal role functions as a committing element and is also the prerequisite for some cities to become or remain members of the UBC (or any organisation).
- ✓ Organise workshops in February/March 2015 for the (communications) representatives of the new commissions and city (communications) representatives. It is also possible to extend the invitation to other partners, e.g. CBSS, BDF: their representa-



tives would participate in the workshops with two roles as both speakers and participants: they are able to give insight into communications and marketing practices in organisations similar to UBC.

- ✓ Content of the seminar needs to be prepared carefully in order to get participants – a boost campaign for the member cities.
- ✓ Possibility to create an internal digital newsletter.
- ✓ Note: communication needs to be in dialogue; the member cities also need to have a wish to be actively contacting and communicating with the secretariat – it cannot be forced.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

External strengthening of the UBC brand

Present situation: At the moment, the main mediums are ubc.net and the printed Baltic Cities Bulletin. Coordinated promotional activities have not been carried out for some time, although some commissions have been active on their own fields. Plans have been made to organise a coordination group from the member cities, with the help of Ms. Krista Taipale from Turku-Southwest Finland European office, but so far this has not been possible due to lack of man-year resources.

Proposal for the future:

- ✓ Getting new cities to become members – active contacting – while at the same time maintaining and involving the current members.
- ✓ Lobbying/influencing decision-making – needs to be coordinated by Presidium/Executive Board.
- ✓ Creating and updating contacts on city and EU levels both as well as with the (BSR) media, and creating specific contact lists for different target groups, especially EU policy-makers and national policy-makers.
- ✓ Urban Forum and Urban Award – organising and eventually institutionalising these events.
- ✓ Events/hearings with EU institutions and/or other partners, EUSBSR as a theme
- ✓ Possibility for an external digital newsletter

Person(s) in charge: Executive Board, Communications Manager, Secretariat. External strengthening of the brand requires guidelines and commenting from the UBC Executive Board.

3.4 Social media

Present situation: Social media coverage consists at the moment of Facebook. In the future other options are worthwhile considering as well but they are not to be prioritised at the moment: Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and blogs.

Proposal for the future: Start charting possibilities for the use of videos (YouTube) and Twitter while keeping developing of Facebook communications as a priority in the social media sector.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat



4 Mid-term priorities and means

What are the most important things we need to achieve and in which timeframe?

4.1 Plan of action for Communications and Marketing 2015

Present situation: There is no yearly operative plan for communications and marketing.

Proposal for the future: Formulating a detailed plan and timeframe for 2015 – taking into consideration the new commissions etc.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager

4.2 UBC logo, visualities, typography etc.

- part of strengthening the UBC brand

Present situation: the original UBC logo is functional but in need of updating into a more modern look. In addition, unified graphical guidelines throughout the organisation and its mediums should be created.

Proposal for the future: reserve funds for development of UBC visualities (at least approx. 15 000 €, most likely more). Ask for propositions on the **renewal of the entire UBC look** via City of Turku advertising agencies: **web, print, newsletter, PowerPoints, typography etc.** At the same time, we should take into account the proposals made by City of Gdansk IT personnel (logo, newsletter, website layout). There is also a possibility to organise a Young Designers' Competition: the purpose of the competition would be to invite young designers from at least 4–5 UBC cities into a competition of ideas where they can leave in suggestions for refreshing the UBC logo and visualities. A prize, such as 2000 €, would need to be defined.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager/Secretariat

4.3 Monthly digital newsletter (possibility for both internal and external)

Present situation: City of Gdansk IT people have already started building up a newsletter system, with the Gdansk technical platform as a basis and with UBC visualities they've developed. Note: It would most likely also be possible to utilise the City of Turku newsletter system until June 2015 when the City of Turku technical platform changes.

Proposal for the future: Take into review the work done by Gdansk IT team and after that consider the possibility of combining the design of newsletter (at least visualities) to the work done by a possible advertising agency (see 3.1 [ubc.net](#) and 4.2. UBC logo).

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

4.4 Contact lists, cloud services, video conferences and webinars / internal communications

Present situation: UBC contact lists need to be developed to meet the more ambitious goals of the communications and marketing strategy. In addition, web services need to be used efficiently.



Proposal for the future: Develop UBC contact list management and updating by enabling also segmented approach to target audiences as well as by allowing all members the possibility to update information online – possibilities for cloud services need to be looked into, as well as possibilities for online meetings and webinars, e.g. Adobe Connect Pro.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

4.5 Communications team / internal communications

Secretariat + Network of reporters + Member cities' contacts on communications

Present situation: At the moment, content management is mainly centralized (Secretariat).

Proposal for the future: Selecting those responsible for communications from the commissions and the member cities. They can, if they wish, recruit others to join the communications team – but one individual needs to be the main communications person.

The key communications people in the commissions and member cities need to have an outlook and the capability to communicate the issues of their commission/city in an interesting and thematised way and be responsible for updating of contacts and other information. City contact persons need to make sure that communication between their city and the UBC network (Secretariat, Executive Board, Presidium) and the communication between their city and the commissions it participates in is functional.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

4.6 Baltic Cities Bulletin

Present situation: The Bulletin has been published in its current form for quite some time and, despite the thematisation, content of the Bulletin is slightly fragmented and overly broad. The visual look of the Bulletin needs modernisation – this would be included in the updating process of UBC logo etc.

Proposal for the future: Content must be re-evaluated critically – what kind of bulletin do the members and other target groups want and need? Circulation needs to be evaluated (lower costs). Considering taking up a newsletter to support the Bulletin contents in which case the content of the newsletter(s) must be considered in reference to the Bulletin. The editorial board would need to have a meeting about the future of the Bulletin – ideal would be to get also participants from the new commissions. In addition, an inquiry should be made to the commissions/member cities regarding the needs and suggestions they have on the Bulletin. This could be done together with the inquiry on UBC website (see 3.1 ubc.net).

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Editorial Board, Secretariat

4.7 Plan of action for social media 2015

Present situation: At the moment there is no commonly adapted operational UBC plan for communications in the social media.

Proposal for the future: Creating a plan according to the overall communications and marketing plan of action. Prior to this, an analysis needs to be made of the existing UBC social me-



dia contents and practises and their effectiveness/success. Reflecting on new types of content (reporting captivatingly on results, success stories etc.) and means and adding the amount of visual content – photos, videos, etc.

Person(s) in charge: Communications Manager, Secretariat

5 Timeframe

Some key initial dates:

- ✓ November 2014: Sending the plan of action for communications and marketing to the member cities and potential members of new commissions, together with an enquiry on communications asking for ideas and propositions on e.g. ubc.net and Baltic Cities Bulletin. At the same time, enquiring them about their interest to attend the communications workshops in February/March 2015 and their ideas on the content of the workshops.
- ✓ November 2014: Initial propositions from the advertising agencies regarding the re-shaping of UBC visual look.
- ✓ February/March 2015: workshops for representatives of the new commissions, city representatives and other stakeholders, possibly in Turku.
- ✓ October 2015: First evaluation of the communications and marketing implementation period.
- ✓ October 2016: second evaluation of the communications and marketing implementation period.