

COMMISSION ON CULTURE

ACTIVITY REPORT OCTOBER 2007 – SEPTEMBER 2009

The Commission on Culture elected a new board for the years 2008-2011 during the IX UBC General conference in Pärnu. The new board consists of the following members: Ms. Tarja Hautamäki (chairman, Vaasa, Finland), Ms. Agrita Ozola (vice-chairman, Tukums, Latvia), Ms. Olga Cherkasova (St. Petersburg, Russia), Mr. Kim Dawartz (Naestved, Denmark), Mr. Björn Freidar Holmvik (Bergen, Norway) and Ms. Charlotte Lundkvist (Umeå, Sweden).

The old and the new board had a joint meeting in Cesis, Latvia, 29th November - 1st December 2007. The commission was decided to be chaired by Vaasa and Turku, Finland, and Ms. Maarit Keto-Seppälä (Turku, Finland) was chosen to the secretary of the commission.

The new board had its first meeting in Rostock, Germany, 13-15 March 2008. One of the tasks of the meeting was to activate more German UBC cities in the work of the commission on culture.

The second board meeting of the year 2008 was held in Bergen 26-27 November. Ms. Magdalena Zakrzewska from Ars Baltica network participated also the meeting and some plans for joint meetings and changing information were made.

The city of Rezekne, Latvia hosted the board meeting 16-18 April 2009. The city of Rezekne gave a presentation on regional multifunctional centre and development possibilities of creative industries in eastern Latvia. On the way to Rezekne the board visited the department of culture in Riga. Among other things Rigas plans to get the nomination to the European capital of culture and their wishes and hopes of the activities of UBC CoC were discussed about. Kristiansand, Norway hosted the board meeting 23rd September 2009.

The UBC Executive Board had a meeting in Jyväskylä, Finland 12-14 March. The chairperson of CoC participated the meeting. The chairmen of the Commission on Culture, Commission on Tourism and the Commission on Urban Planning met during the meeting and planned the content of the Workshop III How to make the Baltic Sea Region a more accessible and attractive realized in Kristiansand, Norway 24th September 2009.

The theme of the third Cultural Prize 2008 was "New Footsteps of Youth Culture", which was announced in January 2008. The last application date was 31st August 2008. The decision was announced during the Annual Working Session in Bergen 27-29 November. The prize was awarded to Jyväskylä Live Music Association JELMU ry with a following motivation: Jyväskylä Live Music Association JELMU ry has influenced the cultural life of the city in a remarkable way and strengthened its identity and raised the awareness of cultural values of life. The activities of JELMU ry were considered as an example of good practice. A small award ceremony was organized in 18th December in Jyväskylä.

The theme of the Cultural Prize 2009 was changed to “Creative use of information”, which was announced in January 2009. The last application date was 31st August 2009. The board decided to give to the winner of the Cultural Prize also 300 euros to cover the travelling expenses, if the winner is taking part of the award ceremony in Kristiansand 25th September 2009.

The Vaasa Choir Festival was organized 14-18 May 2008 in cooperation with the commission on culture. The theme of the festival was Baltic choir music.

CoC supported FiSH 08 – Festival Im Stadhafen 18-20 April 2008 in Rostock by giving the festival the right to use the name of UBC Commission on Culture in this connection.

The Festival of the Baltic Cities was held for the third time in St. Petersburg 20-22 June 2008 in cooperation with the commission on culture. The chairperson of the Commission on Culture was invited as a speaker to the opening round-table discussion “Culture as a Universal Language in the Dialogue of Baltic Countries”. The fourth Festival of the Baltic Cities was organized 22-24 May 2009 in Daugavpils, Latvia. The representative of CoC was invited to participate the festival.

The Catalogue of the Cultural Institutions is available at www.ubc.net. The database of the Catalogue of the Cultural Institutions has been transferred from the server of the municipality of Gotland to the server of the city of Turku.

There is a flow of information about cultural events that take place around the Baltic Sea. The Ars Baltica Organising Committee has accepted the idea that the Ars Baltica website (www.ars-baltika.net) can be used for co-operation in this matter. Ars Baltica Secretariat has launched a section consisting of a database of cultural events in the sub-site called Cultural Map located in the section Around the Baltic to help you find out where to look for the detailed information on cultural events in particular countries around the Baltic Sea as well as in the member cities of UBC. Information to be put at the site is asked to be sent to Ms. Magdalena Zakrzewska-Duda (magdalena.zakrzewska@nck.org.pl).

The Day of Culture is on 15th April in Lithuania and has been legalized 19th July 2006 by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. It is deeply related to the Pact of Peace established by Nicholas Roerich in 1929. The Commission on Culture has presented information about the Day of Culture to the UBC member cities. On behalf of the CoC Björn Holmviik gave a speech in a culture seminar organized by the Day of Culture initiative group in Vilnius 15th April 2009.

The 12th Annual Working Session was hosted by the city of Bergen 28-29 November 2008. The theme of the session was Art for Children – practice and theory. The session gathered together 46 participants.

National culture seminar of the UBC member cities of Latvia was organized in Durbe manor house, Tukums, 25th January 2008. The theme of the seminar was Culture cooperation and development: local and regional aspects. All together 35 participants from four cities assisted the seminar. The board members have been trying to invite the CoC contact persons of the UBC cities of their countries to national meetings with a little success.

UBC joined the ARCADE 2 -project (Awareness Raising on Culture and Education in Europe) as an associate which means that UBC would not have been requested any financial contribution to the project. The project was built around three pillars: research, awareness raising and training. Unfortunately the evaluation committee of the European Commission rejected the application on the second round.

Directrice Communication et Partenariats Mrs Katia Serres from Brussels welcomed guest(s) of honour from the Baltic Sea region at their Brussels Summer Festival. CoC informed the UBC cities about this possibility and warmly encouraged cities to propose Mrs. Serres some groups to perform during the festival.

CoC is looking for different ways to start cooperation with AER (Assembly of European Regions) Culture for health working group. Some preliminary thoughts of collaboration around the conference about culture and health in 2010 have been changed.

The Action Plan of the EU Baltic Sea Strategy contains a list of flagship projects. One of them is called Promote the cultural heritage and the unique landscapes. CoC has informed the UBC secretariat that CoC is interested in getting more information about the project and probably would like to join the project but not as a leader.

A presenting leaflet has been produced to make the Commission on Culture more well-known.

ACTION PLAN 2010 - 2011

1. The UBC Cultural Prize will recognize extraordinary achievement by artistic groups or associations working in the field of cultural activity in UBC member cities. The idea is that the Board invites the cities to candidate for that prize once a year and that the prize has a special theme each year. The theme of the Cultural Prize of the year 2010 is "Multicultural dialog". The theme of the year 2011 is open.

2. The traditional Annual Working Sessions initiated by the board or by the member cities will continue with focus on a special cultural field each year. The following cities are going to host the working session: Turku 22-25 October 2009, Umeå 2010 and Naestved 2011. The theme of the session in Turku will be "The Cultural Dimension of Baltic Cooperation – Developing Creative Industries". In Umeå the topic will be related how to use culture for urban planning. The theme of the session in Naestved is still open.

3. The Festival of Baltic Cities will be developed and better marketed. The Festival of Baltic Cities will be held in St Petersburg 2010 and 2011 in Turku. The main focus of the festival is drama.

4. The initiative of Kuntsi modern art museum of an art exhibition together with 5 other UBC cities will be examined.

5. CoC is supporting “The Day of Culture”, which is deeply related to the Pact of Peace established by Nicholas Roerich in 1929 and held every year 15th April, by giving the right to use the name of UBC Commission on Culture in this connection.
6. Contacts with Les Rencontres, AER (Assembly of European Regions) Culture for health working group and other international networks on culture will be developed and kept alive.
7. CoC will take part in the conference of culture and health organized by AER.
8. The board will meet 2-3 times every year in different UBC cities and the local contact persons of UBC will be invited to the meetings. The first meeting in 2010 will be in Tallinn.
9. The present board is preparing the rules for the election of a new board in 2011.
10. The Catalogue of Cultural Institutions will be available at www.ubc.net.

Tarja Hautamäki
Chairperson of the Commission
Vaasa