

**MINUTES OF THE 86<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**  
**On-line, 28 October 2020**

**1. Opening of the meeting by UBC President and adoption of the agenda.**

Technical instructions. Election of two persons who, together with the President, will check the minutes.

UBC President Mantas Jurgutis welcomed all participants at the 86<sup>th</sup> UBC Executive Board meeting organized online due to the pandemic. The technical instructions were provided by Igor Jojkic, Out of the Box International.

The Board adopted the agenda, attached to the minutes. Maja Wagner, Gdynia, and Ramūnas Vyžintas, Panevėžys, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

**2. Information from the Commissions/WG/TF on latest and forthcoming activities.**

**Cultural Cities, Rūta Stepanovaitė, Chair of the Commission, Kaunas**

Rūta Stepanovaitė, Chair of the Commission, presented the activities held in 2020.

The objectives of the Commission were: regional identity, professionalization of the cultural and creative field, urban transformation through culture, culture accessibility, and audience development.

The Commission took part in several projects as a partner:

- Ars Baltica Creative Dialogue (ABCD) - project conclusion (July 2020)
- Culture 4 Climate (C4C) - seed money project start (December 2020)
- Baltic Sea Cultural Cities (BSCC) - seed money project development (all through 2020)

The activities of the CCC included participation in the meetings and workshops of other organisations, e.g. BSSSC Annual Conference 2020 Session on Culture and BSR Identity held in September 2020.

The Commission organized two webinars for the UBC member cities:

1. Culture and politics in the COVID-19/post COVID-19 times held on 9 June 2020
2. Pandemic and border closures - how to sustain cultural exchange? held on 4 August 2020

The recordings are available on the website.

Also, two newsletters and open calls were sent out.

Ms Stepanovaitė informed about planned Baltic conference UrbCulturalPlanning where presentation is to be delivered regarding the topic: 'Is active citizenship prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive development? A Baltic City Perspective'.

**Planning Cities, Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the Commission, Gdynia**

Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the Planning Cities Commission, reminded about the seminar planned in Turku in Spring 2020 and postponed due to the pandemic. The City of Pärnu was interested in organising a Spring seminar in 2021 but the discussions may start in January 2021 as the situation is still uncertain.

The Commission is planning to meet virtually. Paulina Szewczyk informed about the online seminar: "The impact of coronavirus on the city planning. Experiences of the Baltic Cities". It will be held on 19 November 2020, 12:00–14:00 CET using Zoom tele-conference platform. The speakers include

Alessandra Galletti, Director of Design Practice at the Project for Public Spaces, New York. Also, experiences from the Lake Victoria Region will be shared by Subuliba Mercy Stephen, LVLAC.

#### **Safe Cities, Kaspars Varpins, Chair of the Commission, Liepāja**

Kaspars Varpins, Chair of the Commission, informed the Commission held four online meetings regarding the COVID-19 pandemic (available on Youtube and UBC website).

A new online meeting is planned still in 2020, which will include discussions about actual situations of COVID-19, as well as youth safety (based on project "Youth for safer youth").

Mr Varpins summarized the project activities of the Commission. It has been involved in the following projects:

- ReSit - Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region (funded by Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland)
- Youth for safer youth (funded by CBSS Project support facility)
- CASCADE – Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation and Development (funded by DG ECHO)
- NEEDS - The Needs-based education and studies in societal security (funded by Erasmus+)

The Commission is to take part in the November meeting of the EUSBSR Priority Area Secure Steering group to discuss main findings of project Youth for safer youth. The youth questionnaire results about youth safety are being elaborated and the report will be available soon at the UBC website.

#### **Smart and Prospering Cities, Wolfgang Schmidt, Chair of the Commission, Kiel**

Wolfgang Schmidt, Chair of the Commission, reflected on the difficult time of pandemic, instability and rapid changes, interdependence and challenges that have to be tackled. He emphasized the important role the UBC played providing the frame for co-operation and exchange.

The Commission held this year two online meetings:

1. The future of tourism, 16 June 2020
2. Successful webinar – How does it work? 29 September 2020

#### **Sustainable Cities, Björn Grönholm , Head of SCC Secretariat, Turku**

Björn Grönholm, Head of SCC Secretariat and Esther Kreutz, project coordinator, presented the activities of the Commission.

The Commission's work has been focused mainly on projects and the new UBC Sustainability Action programme 2022-2030. In autumn 2020 and winter 2021 the thematic working groups meetings are

planned and UBC member cities are to be involved. The programme will be launched at the General Conference in St. Petersburg.

The list of the ongoing projects includes:

- BSR WATER Platform for Integrated water cooperation
- Cities.multimodal – Changing your way(s) towards liveable cities in the Baltic Sea Region
- CIVITAS ECCENTRIC -sustainable mobility in suburban districts and innovative urban freight logistics
- CASCADE –Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation and Development

The Commission is also working on the next CDP report. SCC has been also a regional coordinator of the European City Facility (EUCF), an initiative to support local investments in sustainable energy. The Commission holds the UBC Talks webinars. The last two will be devoted to Water safety from hazardous substances (24 November 2020) and Low carbon energy solutions in cities (15 December 2020).

Jørgen Kristiansen and Piotr Grzelak, UBC Vice Presidents, expressed respect towards the Commission for its extensive work. Mr Grzelak asked for the projects' budget and suggested spreading this information to show how much UBC cities benefit from SCC project activities.

Mr Grönholm responded the mentioned projects value was about 30mln EUR in total. He will prepare the information how much the cities get from the projects.

#### **Youthful Cities, Dmitrijs Zverevs, Chair of the Commission, Riga**

Dmitrijs Zverevs, Chair of the Commission, informed the Commission had been working on some new ideas for its development. The questionnaire was sent out to its members to collect the opinions and two online workshops regarding the future of the Commission were held in October 2020. The open Commission's meeting is planned to be held online on 3 December 2020.

Also, the Commission has been active within the Baltic Sea Youth Platform project [www.bsyp.eu](http://www.bsyp.eu)

#### **Gender Equality, Ann-Sofie Lagercrantz, co-Chair, Kalmar**

Ann-Sofie Lagercrantz, co-Chair of the Working Group, informed they wanted to re-start the activity of the Group with the aim of mainstreaming the gender equality. An online meeting is planned for 14 December 2020.

#### **Youth Employment & Well-being, Matti Mäkelä, Chair, Turku**

Matti Mäkelä, Chair of the Task Force, reminded the TF concentrated on three major themes in 2020, which were as follows:

- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) Path for every child and youngster
- Basic Skills or Upgrading Pathways (youngsters with problems with basic skills, such as math, literacy and IT)
- Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training

The TF co-organized the STEAM workshop as a part of the EUSBSR Annual Forum, on 2 October 2020. The online event attracted 26 participants. Also, the School to Work seminar was held on 21 October 2020 virtually. 68 participants discussed the STEAM, basic skills, NEETs, Early School Leaving and attractiveness of VET.

**Inclusive and Healthy Cities** - no leadership at the moment

The Board took note of the reports. They are attached to the minutes.

### **3. XVI UBC General Conference in St.Petersburg, October 2021.**

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki presented the UBC Presidium's proposal of the head theme of the upcoming General Conference in St. Petersburg. It refers to resilience of cities dealing with climate change, the pandemic and other challenges of the changing world.

The theme could be: "Resilient Baltic Sea Cities. Tackling the challenges and creating the future(s)"  
Dmitrijs Zverevs, YCC, asked if the Youth Conference was discussed by the Presidium. President Jurgutis responded it would be taken up later by the GC Task Force. In his opinion it is crucial to engage youth in the General Conference like it was always done in the past.

Vyacheslav Kalganov, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations, St. Petersburg, Vice President of UBC, assured the Board members that they would make all efforts to organize the General Conference in a proper way. He expressed hope the pandemic situation would let hold the conference on-site.

Secretary General encouraged the Commissions and other UBC structures to get actively involved in the preparations of the event.

The Board confirmed the GC theme and decided to set up the Task Force to work out programme of the General Conference. The Presidium was authorised to appoint TF members.

### **4. UBC Positioning Road Map for Brussels. (UBC Antenna)**

According to questionnaire sent out to member cities, UBC as a representative regional organization should promote the interests of its members and the region in European decision-making. Furthermore, UBC members expect the organisation to work towards Agenda 2030 and to be a strong regional player and reliable body for European consultations.

The partnership between UBC and OTB, initiated at the 85<sup>th</sup> UBC Board meeting, offers the opportunity for more effective advocacy and lobbying of UBC cities' interests, increasing the visibility of UBC among European institutions, thus influencing EU policies that impact local member cities' authorities in the long term.

Marko Paunovic, Head of the UBC Brussels Antenna, presented the report of its activities. They included e.g. online event "Bridging citizens with SMART cooperation" during the European Week of Regions and Cities, participation in BSSSC and CBSS online meetings, and elaborating the UBC Positioning Road Map for Brussels.

The document is aimed to achieve the following results by the end of 2021:

-Improved visibility of UBC at the EU level

- Improved involvement of UBC in relevant EU policy dialogues
- Increased project financing with the current budget

The visibility and positioning strategy provides basic information about key stakeholders and the UBC approach working with them. The document will provide a roadmap with activities.

The Road map is attached to the minutes. Also, attached the calls to EU funding programmes compiled by UBC Antenna in Brussels.

Roger Kaliff, Kalmar, UBC Board of Audit, found the cooperation with Brussels offices important but stressed it would be necessary to avoid overlapping.

Marko Paunovic agreed and informed the networking was planned to exchange information and define responsibilities. President Jurgutis emphasized the Brussels Antenna initiative was to strengthen the links with the EU, not to duplicate the work.

Esther Kreutz suggested the document could also refer to the Commissions experiences and contacts established earlier and include this information in the roadmap.

Natalja Vecvagare, Liepāja, asked if the Latvian Association of Municipalities office in Brussels was contacted as it represents all Latvian cities. Marko Paunovic confirmed he was in touch with Latvian cities and got this information.

President Jurgutis stressed the roadmap was the guidelines to be used and it was an open document to be updated and improved.

Elina Rantanen, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Turku, commented on the relation between the two task forces on strategy and policy & projects and the UBC Brussels Antenna which shall serve as one of the tools to implement those papers.

Decision:

The Board adopted UBC Positioning Road Map for Brussels.

## **5. Task Force on Policy and Projects. Task Force on new Strategy.**

President Mantas Jurgutis informed that the Executive Board at the meeting held on 17 April 2020 authorized the Presidium to set up the Task Force on Policy & Projects (TFPP) and the Task Force on new Strategy (TFS).

Igor Jojic, Chair of TFPP, informed that the first meeting of the Task Force on Policy and Projects was held on 15 June 2020. At the meeting the following aims and objectives of the TF were set:

- Creating a comprehensive policy framework and position papers on relevant topics for UBC related on its core values and priorities of member cities
- Developing project concept notes
- Capacity strengthening of other UBC structures

-Creating reactive policy input within the regional and European policy debates

The road map for further activities was outlined and the timeline accepted.

The second meeting of the Task Force took place on 30 September 2020. It was decided to establish four working groups:

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

Mr Jojkic underlined that UBC needs policy first of all to position itself among relevant actors on the regional and European level. These policy papers will help present what are the UBC's opinions and proposals as a network on some priority areas. These policy briefs will be starting points for the future policy proposals on development and the project proposals will be then prepared. During November each working group around these four priority topics will develop at least one policy brief.

Mr Jojkic thanked all the people who have already applied to the working groups and invited the others to join. He added that according the plan, by the end of this year there should be developed policy briefs in all four priority areas.

Marko Paunovic said that the Task Force on Policy and Projects should be developed in parallel to the process of preparing the new Strategy. The new Strategy should be a framework.

Elna Rantanen stressed that policy papers should derive from the strategic points.

Mantas Jurgutis reminded that in the last few years UBC has prepared not many policy papers, so now it's time to deal with it, especially if we want to lobby in Brussels. He also reminded that the final deadline for both: the policy papers and the new strategy is the next General Conference in 2021. That's why the new leadership of UBC decided to set up both Task Forces this spring, at its first meeting. There is no much time till the next General Conference, so both Task Forces should work in parallel. President Jurgutis invited to participate in the Task Forces.

Esther Kreutz made a presentation on the Task Force on new Strategy. The presentation is attached. Mrs Kreutz stressed that the strategic documents and processes of both Task Forces should be connected. The Task Force will involve various UBC bodies. The aim is to develop an outlook for the next 10 years. The TFS use the UBC survey 2020 results, other questionnaires and interviews may be carried out. The TFS may also look for inspiration from some other networks. Three meetings / webinar workshops are planned, a report to the UBC Executive Board will be prepared.

Ms Kreutz underlined that the main issue is to lay the base for linking all strategy processes together.

She added that the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UBC is a good opportunity to look back, draw conclusions, decide where UBC wants to be in 10 years and how to achieve it. What projects to implement, what relation to the EU Strategy for BSR, how to get new members, how to make or strengthen strategic partnerships, etc.

President Jurgutis encouraged all UBC structures to actively participate in the Task Force on Strategy work. He informed that the work of this Task Force would cost UBC 10.000 EUR.

## **6. EUSBSR Horizontal Action Capacity. (HAC Coordinator)**

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki presented the background information and latest developments on HA Capacity.

UBC is one of three coordinators, together with the Swedish Institute and Norden Association representing the Baltic Sea NGO Network, of Horizontal Action 'HA Capacity' of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

The overall coordination of the Strategy lies on 13 Policy Areas (PAs) and 4 Horizontal Actions (HAs). They are responsible for the application of the necessary measures to guarantee the success and visibility of the Strategy.

HA Capacity task is to increase the project capacity, skills and competence of all stakeholders involved in the Strategy, through the training programs. The other dimension of the Horizontal Action Capacity is to ensure broad participation of local and regional authorities as well as all other stakeholders.

Capacity building activities of HA CAP include among others, workshops for PAs/HAs, annual meetings of EUSBSR stakeholders, as well as support to other stakeholders.

The objectives of HA Capacity have been implemented within the project PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP - implementing three work programmes 2018 – 2020, co-funded from the BSR INTERREG Programme. Marko Paunovic, Out of the Box International, has been hired as a HAC project coordinator. The project was supposed to be carried out until June 2021, however the EUSBSR National Coordinators' Group decided that in the next Action Plan Horizontal Actions Capacity, Climate and Neighbours would be mainstreamed in all Policy Areas. As a result, the INTERREG project PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP has to be concluded by the end of 2020.

According to NC Group decision, communications and capacity building will be consolidated with support from the Baltic Sea Strategy Point, expected to start out in January 2022. The NC Group will prepare an open call for proposals for the BSP. The Point will provide administrative and technical support for EUSBSR management, development and communication. In the interim period *Let's Communicate!* project is to ensure the most essential support for EUSBSR stakeholders.

### **Online workshops**

Marko Paunovic introduced the concept of seven online workshops to be organized within the PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP project.

The online workshops are planned to be held this year using Zoom platform, covering almost 600 new stakeholders from the following EU countries: Denmark, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland. Sweden has been already covered by the Norden Association.

The objectives of each session:

- Promoting stakeholders and their involvement in each country
- Increasing the level of knowledge of macro-regional strategies
- Introducing concrete benefits for the stakeholders
- Brainstorming and suggesting potential follow-up actions within EUSBSR

The participants, including the stakeholders representing municipalities and regions, different institutions and organisations, business and academia, will have an opportunity to discuss the biggest challenges of the regional cooperation and ideas on how to face them.

Expected results of the workshops:

- The visibility of EUSBSR and its benefits is increased in member states
- The support for shaping the national implementation of the strategy is increased within the pool of new stakeholders
- The higher commitment of new stakeholders to integrate the strategy in their strategic decisions or initiatives

The workshops are scheduled for:

- Poland 23 November
- Lithuania 24 November
- Denmark 26 November
- Finland 27 November
- Latvia 1 December
- Estonia 2 December
- Germany 7 December

A short Mentimeter survey was conducted with questions: *Should UBC be a part of the EUSBSR? And How can UBC be involved in EUSBSR?* The results are attached to the minutes.

## **7. Information from the 11<sup>th</sup> EUSBSR Annual Forum in Turku, 20 October 2020. (Turku)**

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum “Our Region, Our Future – Towards a Decade of Innovation and Sustainability” was organized online as a virtual event, broadcasted from Turku, Finland on 20 October 2020. The main organizers of the forum were the City of Turku and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The themes of this year’s Forum was sustainability and innovations. The aim of the Forum was to form innovative constellations to find common approaches, which would contribute to the three objectives of the EUSBSR: Save the Sea, Connect the Region, and Increase Prosperity.

The first section of the programme was exploring the cooperation for Innovation and Sustainability. The second part of the programme presented concrete examples of cooperation within the EUSBSR. The third part concentrated on the future: what will the EUSBSR cooperation look like in the next 10 years.



In September-October 2020, as a part of the EUSBSR Annual Forum, 13 online workshops were held covering the areas related to the Forum's main theme.

Sustainable Cities Commission co-organized two workshops: "Reducing security risks related to the climate change and mainstreaming climate agenda in EUSBSR after 2020" and "Unlocking the nutrient recycling potential in the Baltic Sea Region."

The traditional youth event - the Baltic Sea Youth Camp - was co-organized by Youthful Cities Commission within the frame of Baltic Sea Youth Platform on 17 October 2020.

Task Force on Youth Development and Well-being was a co-organizer of the STEAM –Science and Technology Path for Every Child and Youngster virtual workshop.

Esther Kreutz informed that over 800 people registered and 583 participated. It was a big challenge to change a physical meeting into online one with preserving possibilities of networking. There was a studio built for the moderator and the panelists. It was possible to chat with the participants, send messages, ask for meetings.

Irene Pendolin, UBC communications manager, stressed the organizers tried to make the Forum as interactive and normal event as possible. There was an interaction between participants, they participated in the discussion, message wall, live event page and also through twitter. Soon a newsletter with links to the recording of the panel sessions and workshops will be sent out to all registered participants.

#### **8. 2<sup>nd</sup> BRICS International Municipal Forum in St. Petersburg, on-line, 5-6 November 2020. (St.Petersburg)**

Mikhail Sverdlov, Head of the Department of foreign economic development, made a presentation about 2<sup>nd</sup> BRICS International Municipal Forum. The presentation is attached.

International Municipal Forum of the BRICS countries is the most important annual business event in the framework of the BRICS International Municipal Cooperation Project.

IMBRICS is an annual platform that brings together the municipalities of the five countries: Brasilia, Russia, China, India, South Africa to build political, economic and humanitarian cooperation. The cities of BRICS and other countries will present their socio-economic opportunities and municipal achievements in scientific and engineering efforts. They will also exchange the best practices aimed at the development of mutually beneficial integration processes.

The Forum's program is focused on discussing key issues in the field of economic and industrial development, investment, construction and modernization of urban infrastructure, urban studies, digitalization and innovative technologies, ecology, waste management and recycling, agriculture, tourism, culture, education, sports, humanitarian cooperation and social designing.

Mikhail Sverdlov and Vyacheslav Kalganov cordially invited UBC member cities to participate in the online Forum this year, with twenty sessions devoted to different areas.

## **9. Severe waste water treatment problem in Guatemala–update. (Karin Wohlgemuth, Rostock)**

At the 85<sup>th</sup> UBC Executive Board meeting on 17 April 2020, city of Rostock asked for UBC support in the activities to save the Lake Atitlán in Guatemala from biological collapse using UBC experience and the cooperation with LVRLAC (Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Cooperation, [www.lvrlac.org](http://www.lvrlac.org)). Rostock holds a friendship with the City of Panajachel ([www.municipalidaddepanajachel.gob.gt](http://www.municipalidaddepanajachel.gob.gt)) which is situated at the shore of that lake. The responsible entity is the Guatemalan Governmental Environmental Office AMSCLAE (Autoridad para el Manejo Sustentable de la Cuenca del Lago de Atitlán y su Entorno, English: Authority for the Sustainable Management of Lake Atitlan Basin and Its Environment, [www.amsclae.gob.gt](http://www.amsclae.gob.gt)).

Karin Wohlgemuth informed about the latest developments.

Since April, first contacts have been established thanks to UBC, e.g. with the LVRLAC. Participation in the World Water Congress & Exhibition to be held on 9–14 May 2021 was suggested by Sustainable Cities Commission.

For 2021 it is planned to have the Guatemalan specialists in Europe. During this visit Rostock would like to establish a personal connection with UBC experts. Also, it would be recommended by the city of Rostock to invite the Mayor of Panajachel and some experts to the XVI UBC General Conference in St. Petersburg.

Esther Kreutz added that the Sustainable Cities Commission can share expertise with the Guatemalan colleagues in terms of waste water treatment issues and water management.

## **10. Commissions project applications.**

Secretary General informed about a proposal from the Presidium concerning a new regulation.

UBC Commissions and other bodies apply for funding from external sources ie. EU programmes etc. on behalf of the UBC. There is a proposal that the Presidium should be informed about it and approve each application before it has been submitted.

*4.12 Commissions and other bodies apply for funding from external sources ie. EU programmes etc. The Presidium approves each application before it has been submitted.*

President Jurgutis assured the new regulation would not slow down the processes as the Presidium would be able to make fast decisions.

Decision:

The Board approved the new regulation 4.12.

## **11. Application from New Horizons Social Cooperative to become UBC partner.**

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki informed that UBC received an application from the New Horizons Social Cooperative (Poland) to become a UBC partner.

New Horizons Social Cooperative was founded in 2015 in northern Wielkopolska region by six municipalities. Since then, the Cooperative has been working for the benefit of excluded, disabled and elderly people. The profile of the Cooperative's activities is based on social services (care and specialist), but also on rehabilitation, education, training and cultural activities. The Cooperative employs several dozens of people, a multidisciplinary team of experts including physiotherapists, speech therapists, nurses, psychologists, sociologists and gerontologists. The President is Małgorzata Modrak, a gerontologist and health promoter.

<https://translate.google.pl/translate?hl=pl&sl=pl&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fnowehoryzonty.info%2F>

The application is attached to the minutes.

Decision:

The Board accepted the new partner and authorised the Presidium to determine the annual fees for UBC partners.

## **12. Next Executive Board meeting, spring 2021.**

Due to uncertain situation with the pandemic, the decision about the location and date of the next Board meeting will be taken later on.

## **13. Any other business.**

### **Invitation to the Green and Sustainable Cities webinars by Rostock.**

Karin Wohlgemuth invited all the cities to the series of webinars which will be organized by the City of Rostock:

1.24.02.2021 – Let's share biking experience!

2.24.03.2021 – Free public transport: pro and contra

3.21.04.2021 – Car-free city centre

The invitation is attached to the minutes.

## **14. Closing of the meeting.**

President Mantas Jurgutis thanked all participants for a very fruitful meeting and closed the 86<sup>th</sup> online Executive Board meeting.

Mantas Jurgutis  
Chair

Paweł Żaboklicki  
Secretary General

Maja Wagner  
Adjuster

Ramūnas Vyžintas  
Adjuster