

MINUTES OF THE 85TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

On-line, 17 April 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 85th UBC Executive Board meeting organized online due to the pandemic. The technical instructions were provided by Igor Jojkić, Out of the Box International.

The Board adopted the agenda, attached to the minutes. Lina Duobaite, Kaunas, and Jørgen Kristiansen, Kristiansand, were elected to check the minutes together with the President.

2. Action plans and budgets of the Commissions/WG/TF.

Cultural Cities Commission (CCC), Rūta Stepanovaitė, Chair of the Commission, Kaunas

Rūta Stepanovaitė, Chair of the Commission, presented the action plan and budget of the Commission for 2020. She informed about the main directions of CCC activities: Regional identity; Professionalization of the cultural and creative field; Urban transformation through culture; Audience development; Culture accessibility. Ms Stepanovaitė listed the main projects the CCC is engaged in: Baltic Sea Cultural City, ABCD, UrbCultural Planning, CULTURE4CLIMATE.

Ms Stepanovaitė informed that the Commission was invited to attend an annual Culture Forum in Kaunas in May and to get acquainted with the Kaunas 2022 Mythical Beast program, its developers and possible directions of partnership in 2022. The event will be held online due to the pandemic.

In the period April-October 2020, the UBC CCC together with partners from Kaunas 2022 Designing Happiness platform has been collaborating in the development of the online culture accessibility guide. The UBC CCC is co-developing an English version of the guide, that would feature the best culture accessibility cases from the Baltic Sea Region (UBC cities). The UBC CCC will announce an open call for the well-known, influencing designers, artists, thinkers from 10 countries of the UBC to be a part of the Design event in Kaunas as keynote speakers. The event is to be held in October 2020.

The reserve budget is planned to be spent on CULTURE4CLIMATE (C4C) project if approved. The C4C project will integrate all BSR countries to co-design and implement long-lasting certification methods that allow the chosen sectors to not only measure their climate impact, but also to reduce their footprint and at the same time create a large outreach.

Budget application: 9500 EUR (+9000 EUR)

Piotr Grzelak, Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk, UBC Vice President, raised the question of the pandemic influence on culture. He asked if the Commission would plan any discussion about the present situation. He would find a possibility to exchange experiences and ideas on how to support the cultural institutions very useful these days.

Ms Stepanovaitė appreciated the proposal and supported the idea to organize the online discussion with UBC CCC representatives from different cities. She admitted, however, the situation, due to pandemic, was very dynamic and all could reflect upon it more effectively from a time perspective. Ms Stepanovaitė's suggestion was to hold an online meeting/discussion in the beginning of May to discuss the measures that were taken in different countries and how they affected the cultural sector in each case.

President Jurgutis supported Mr Grzelak's idea. In his opinion it would be especially important to get to know how to support the cultural institutions now. He reminded Kaunas will be the European Capital of Culture in 2022.

Maja Wagner, Gdynia, stated that there was a huge urge to share experience, to find a kind of model or guideline showing the expectations of the people of culture. As the attitudes and budgets differ from city to city, it would be of highest importance to exchange the experiences, worries, and expectations among the UBC members.

Planning Cities Commission (PCC), Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the Commission, Gdynia

Paulina Szewczyk, Chair of the Commission, introduced the PCC steering group and reminded the activities of the Commission held in 2019, e.g. a seminar in Gdynia about green areas that gathered 50 participants. She presented the action plan for 2020. The seminar that was planned to be held in May in Turku had to be postponed due to the pandemic. New date will be set in June. The Commission also plans to organize a seminar in Pärnu, Estonia in spring 2021, so the steering group meeting in connection with that event is scheduled this autumn.

Budget application: 10418,80 EUR

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

Kaspars Varpins, Chair of the Commission, reminded the activities run in 2019, e.g. meeting in Tartu, project Youth for safer youth, CASCADE project meeting, workshops at the UBC GC in Kaunas.

Mr Varpins informed about two video-meetings on coronavirus pandemic held in March and April 2020. The recordings are available on the UBC website. There is a need to organize a third meeting, so it will be held on 7 May at 12.00 CET.

Mr Varpins informed the Commission was involved in three projects: CASCADE –Community Safety Action for Supporting Climate Adaptation and Development (DG ECHO); Youth for safer youth (CBSS PSF); ReSit–Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland). The questionnaire Youth for safer youth is now being translated. Also, two new projects in preparation were mentioned: NEEDS -Needs-based education and studies in societal security(Erasmus+); Youth safety education.

Budget application: 10000 EUR

Piotr Grzelak stressed that there were many challenges connected to safety and security during pandemic. He was wondering how to execute the rules imposed by the national law, e.g. concerning the social distance and to ensure some freedom at the same time. Mr Grzelak would be interested to know how it looks like in other cities, as the approaches are different.

Mr Varpins responded that the Commission held two meetings online about experiences gathered during the pandemic. The participants could compare different ideas and solutions, e.g. in Sweden there are only recommendations given to society, and people follow them as rules. Mr Varpins encouraged other UBC Commissions to held similar meetings, as this seemed to be needed.

President Jurgutis also supported this kind of experience exchange. He asked for possible recommendations that show up after such meetings to be followed by the cities. Mr Varpins said the meetings were just a forum for exchanging views and ideas, it would be difficult to prepare any action proposals or recommendations.

Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, Kiel, paper only

No representative of the Commission could be present at the Board meeting.
President Jurgutis said if there were no objections, the Presidium would discuss the application.

Sustainable Cities Commission, Björn Grönholm , Head of SCC Secretariat, Turku

Björn Grönholm , Head of SCC Secretariat, presented the activities and plans of the Commission.

UBC SCC is coordinating the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2016–2021 together with the Executive Board and other Commissions and the works on the next Programme for the years 2021-2030 have already started. The Commission offers expertise and support in many different areas, it is involved in many projects, organizes webinars, trainings, etc. Also, it develops communication and networking (bulletins, newsletters, website).

The meeting co-organized with the Planning Cities Commission that was planned to be held in May in Turku, was postponed. In the autumn the Commission plans to have its own meeting, too. The cooperation with CDP is planned to be continued.

Mr Grönholm informed the EUSBSR Annual Forum programme is now being prepared. He encouraged other Commissions to come up with the ideas for workshops, etc.

Paulina Szewczyk, PCC, underlined the cooperation between the Commissions is important.

Budget application: 10000 EUR

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

Dmitrijs Zverevs, Chair of the Commission, reminded that Riga took over the chairmanship in the Commission in February 2020. The action plan included two meetings (April in Riga, and one in the autumn). In June the Baltic Region Youth Camp in connection with the EUSBSR Annual Forum was supposed to be organized but the events were postponed.

Mr Zverevs introduced the Baltic Sea Youth Platform project financed from ERASMUS+ programme.

Budget application: 12500 EUR

President Jurgutis thanked the city of Riga for taking up the youth issues and wished them good luck.

Gender Equality WG, Ann-Sofie Lagercrantz, co-Chair, Kalmar

Ann-Sofie Lagercrantz, co-Chair, presented the goals of the WG and its action plan that included the project planning meetings, meeting with CEMR to find ways for support member cities that has signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, initiating the co-operation with UBC Commissions: Inclusive and Healthy Cities and Youthful Cities.

Budget application: 10000 EUR

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

Matti Mäkelä, Chair of the Task Force, informed the UBC Task Force on Youth Employment and Well-Being would concentrate on three major themes in 2020:

- 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.

STEAM study visit took place in February 2020 in Tallinn. Other activities of the year 2020 include 3-4 study visits and workshops, one Task Force seminar, implementation of new transnational projects, continuing the dissemination of good practices and cooperation with other networks and actors.

Mr Mäkelä informed about the postponed workshop in Turku. A new date is 21 October 2020.

Budget application: 10000 EUR

Inclusive and Healthy Cities – no leadership at the moment

Paweł Żaboklicki, Secretary General, informed that the city of Gdynia who had been chairing the Commission for several years, decided to pass chairmanship to another city. The city of Gdańsk would be open to help to revitalize the Commission but in cooperation with other cities. Gdynia and Turku positively responded to this proposal.

Izabela Chorzelska, Deputy Director of the Social Development Department of the city of Gdańsk, confirmed the discussion on the future of this Commission had been initiated. She referred to the relatively small number of persons actively involved in the Commission's works so far. The letter to the Mayors of the UBC member cities will be prepared with request to confirm the cities' interest in inclusive and healthy issues and to appoint or update the Commission contact persons in the cities. Ms Chorzelska emphasised that it would be also necessary to define what "healthy" and "inclusive" mean to the member cities. They will be asked in the letter to propose two, three topics under these notions that would set the directions and guidelines for the Commission work in the next two years. Also, a questionnaire on the future Commission's main topics is taken into account. Ms Chorzelska informed that another solution would be to combine the Inclusive and Healthy Cities Commission with the work of other UBC Commissions.

Björn Grönholm commented on the name Inclusive and Healthy Cities. He said some other organizations discuss health and well-being and in his opinion this would describe the Commission's activities more clear.

Kaspars Varpins, Safe Cities Commission, referred to the list of contact persons of the Commissions. He asked the UBC Secretariat to send a query to the cities to update the contact details of their representatives in the Commissions.

Elina Rantanen, 1st UBC Vice President, Turku, agreed it would be a good idea to ask cities what their expectations towards the Commissions were. It would help to redefine some of the Commissions goals, to rethink their tasks and activities and also would be a great discussion in terms of the future UBC Strategy. Ms Rantanen asked the President about the decision on the Commissions' funding. She referred to the suggestion in the agenda which said that Board was to assign the Presidium to make a final decision on Commissions funding. In her opinion Presidium is to make proposals, and the Executive Board is to make decisions on funding.

President Jurgutis supported the renewal of the Commission and ensured the assistance of the Secretariat and Presidium. He also informed that due to the lack of the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission representative, its application would be discussed and reviewed by the Presidium. He agreed that the Presidium was to make proposals, but this time he would ask the Presidium for the final approval of all applications. He added that as the budget might need changes during a year due to the uncertain situation, the Presidium would be asked to review it if needed to ensure the resources were used efficiently and on time.

All action plans and budgets are attached to the minutes.

Decision:

The Board assigned the Presidium to approve the Commissions' applications.

The Board recommended the Commissions to strengthen the cooperation between them.

3. Budget 2020.

Secretary General presented the UBC financial report for 2019. Paweł Żaboklicki informed that the income was mostly generated by the membership fees, fees from the General Conference in Kaunas and the assets saved in 2018. The main expenditure were: spendings of the commissions, services/maintenance, meetings, communications, etc. Five annexes are attached to the report: membership fees, expenditure of UBC commissions, contributions to the secretariats, projects with external funding, cities' contributions to the UBC events. The financial report is attached to the minutes. Subsequently Secretary General presented the UBC budget proposal for 2020. The income comes from the membership fees and money transferred from 2019. The expenditures include e.g. commissions, services/maintenance, meetings, communications, EUSBSR HA Capacity project, etc. The budget is attached to the minutes.

President Jurgutis added the UBC would be working to increase the income from other sources. Also, he noted that the UBC budget might need revision during the year due to the pandemic situation.

Decision:

The Board took note of financial report 2019 and adopted the budget for 2020.

4. Questionnaire 'Mapping the needs of UBC Member Cities' – summary.

Questionnaire 'Mapping the needs of UBC Member Cities', sent out to the UBC member cities in the beginning of March 2020, aimed at identifying the cities' needs and expectations towards the Union.

Anna Dargiewicz, UBC Secretariat, presented the survey results.

There were 37 responds from 35 cities. The questionnaire consisted of two parts “UBC now” and “UBC in the future”.

The survey questions included:

- What does UBC do best?
- What can be improved?
- What are the main internal challenges?
- What does your city expect from UBC?
- What are the main external trends and challenges UBC should address in the future?
- How do you see the future role of UBC?

According to the responds, UBC is a good networking provider that brings the cities and municipalities around the Baltic Sea together, sharing experience and expertise, good practices and information. Also, a big dissemination capacity of project results was recognized.

Referring to the question about the main internal challenges - members' engagement, cooperation among cities, project opportunities and clear focus on strategic priorities were pointed out.

The cities gave some recommendations on what can be improved, including project development capacity or representation of cities' interest on the EU level. This goes hand in hand with the future role of the UBC that appears from the picture framed by the respondents. The UBC cities want to see the UBC as a strong regional player that provides expertise, new ideas, projects, a leader trying to solve problems of the cities and a reliable and respected partner in EU decision-making.

Among the main trends that UBC should address in the future the cities listed: IT and digitalization, crisis response capacities, health issues, climate change, SDG2030, democracy challenges, migrations.

The questionnaire was conducted with the assistance of Out of the Box International. The results are attached to the minutes.

President Jurgutis underlined the survey results should be treated as guidelines in the future work of the UBC, including strategy process, decisions, projects, etc. In his opinion, the results show the real needs of the cities.

Jørgen Kristiansen, UBC Vice-President, Kristiansand, noted the survey was a chance to see a broader picture of the UBC. It was a good feedback that would help to utilize the UBC in the best way. His impression was that the more a city contributes in the organization, the more it benefits from it.

Elina Rantanen found this document very useful also in terms of the UBC strategy process. She focused on the question about the members' involvement. The answer of the majority of respondents was that they could be and should be more involved. Ms Rantanen was concerned how those cities should be

approached and what should be provided to make them more active. She referred to Mr Kristiansen's opinion and found it very useful.

Piotr Grzelak also paid attention to the question of cities' involvement. Also, he noted lobbying in Brussels was mentioned among the cities' expectations towards UBC. In his opinion it was very important, especially nowadays. He suggested that the survey could be sent out once again when the new challenges connected with the crisis would be taken into account. Mr Grzelak stressed that one of the main goals for the cities, region and UBC will be to attract people to visit the region during the summer. That would need a common promotion of the BSR, also in Brussels.

President reminded the survey was conducted in cooperation with Out of the Box. It is possible to repeat the survey.

Izabela Chorzelska referred to the list of the most important topics for UBC, and noted the healthy and social issues were among the priorities.

Jukka Vilen, city of Kemi, added the UBC was an excellent network for such city as Kemi. He said they could learn a lot from the cooperation. The expertise the UBC offers is valuable and it is important to find and use new methods to share it, e.g. via digital tools. In his opinion the UBC will be needed in the future.

Karin Wohlgemuth, city of Rostock, pointed out that the city mayors should be more involved in the UBC. She was wondering if the UBC could offer them a space where they could present and exchange their opinions directly and remind the UBC is a very useful instrument also to them.

Björn Grönholm, informed the SCC made short interviews during the XV UBC General Conference in Kaunas. One of the questions asked was why you were involved in UBC and what was the added value of being in UBC. The material is being edited now and it will be available next week on youtube.

President Mantas Jurgutis thanked the cities and the Board members for all contributions to the questionnaire.

5. Strategy, policy, projects.

President Jurgutis reminded the current UBC Strategy ends on 31 December 2021. The Strategy is attached. It is the time to start the work on the new Strategy. President said the questionnaire results would be a guideline in this process. He referred to earlier discussions held by the Presidium and suggested setting up a task force responsible for the new strategy process. The survey also shows that the cities expect more policy & project work and lobbying on EU level. Having this in mind a proposal to set up a task force on policy and projects was presented.

Decision:

The Board authorised the Presidium to set up a task force on new UBC Strategy and a task force on Policy & Projects.

6. Letter from the Parliament of Ukraine.

President Mantas Jurgutis received official letter from Yuliia Ovchynnykova, Member of the Parliament of Ukraine. Ms Ovchynnykova is proposing to strengthen cooperation between Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions and asks about the conditions for Ukrainian cities to join UBC. The letter is attached.

President Jurgutis emphasized that UBC should be an open organization, but the regional identity can't be forgotten. He reminded that some UBC cities have partner cities in Ukraine and other eastern countries and stressed that UBC should take the decision in line with the EU Eastern Partnership policy.

President Jurgutis proposed to answer that UBC was open for discussion and would like to receive information which cities are interested in cooperation.

Elina Rantanen supported that idea. She reminded that in the letter it was mentioned that the Ukrainian cities are interested in full membership. Ms Rantanen stressed that Ukraine was far from the BSR so partnership with those cities would be more natural kind of cooperation.

Jørgen Kristiansen said that having a partnership with countries outside the BSR would be interesting and reminded that the Executive Board is not authorized to make a decision of expanding the area, this is the task of the General Conference.

Paweł Żaboklicki informed that according to the UBC Statute, cities outside BSR can become Associated Cities of the Union.

Karin Wohlgemuth and Paweł Żaboklicki reminded previous contacts between the UBC and the Black Sea Club as well as the project "Between the Baltic and the Black Sea -cities as engines of interregional cooperation" with WiseEuropa Institute, Poland.

Decision:

The Board authorized President Mantas Jurgutis to send a reply letter expressing openness for cooperation and asking which particular Ukrainian cities would be interested in such collaboration.

7. EUSBSR Horizontal Action 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 (EUSBSR).

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 HA Capacity is to ensure broad participation of local and regional authorities as well as all other stakeholders. Capacity building activities include among others, workshops for PAs/HAs, annual meetings of EUSBSR stakeholders, as well as support to other stakeholders such as PA Focal Points/steering group members, and managing authorities of ERDF and ESF networks. HA Capacity has also been responsible for organizing the Networking village and Participation Day linked to the EUSBSR Annual Fora.

The objectives of HA Capacity have been implemented within the project PA EDU / PA TOU / HA CAP, co-funded from the BSR INTERREG Programme.

In 2016 UBC appointed Centrum Balticum Foundation from Turku to join the project and act on behalf of UBC. Mikko Lohikoski, Turku, was appointed HA Capacity Coordinator. In 2018, after 1st stage of the project, agreement with Centrum Balticum ended. UBC joined the Interreg project as partner.

In March 2019 UBC signed contract for HA Capacity Coordinator with Mikko Lohikoski. The contract was terminated in November 2019.

UBC expenses in the 1st reporting period (7.06.2018-31.03.2019) – 16 627,82 EUR

UBC expenses in the 2nd reporting period (1.04.2019-30.09.2019) – 11 544,54 EUR

85% of expenses were supposed to be refunded by Interreg. Interreg First Level Control in Warsaw did not consider contract as employment and resources were not returned till now.

The day before the Board meeting the President signed partner declaration regarding the prolongation of the project from 1 October 2020 to 30 June 2021. Application was submitted on 17 April 2020. The UBC budget for the new period would be 67 700 EUR. Own contribution 10 155 EUR.

President Mantas Jurgutis said that the contract was terminated because the first and the second report were not approved by the First Level Control, and the UBC Presidium and the Executive Board could not be responsible for the decisions which had not been taken by newly elected UBC authorities.

President Jurgutis informed that together with Secretary General he took part in a meeting with Norden Association and Swedish Institute in Stockholm in January 2020 to discuss continuation of the project.

The next step is to appoint the new UBC HA Capacity coordinator.

Elina Rantanen supported President's actions and thanked for openness and clarification.

Decision:

The Board authorized the Presidium to appoint the UBC HA Capacity coordinator.

8. Idea to create UBC pool of experts.

President Mantas Jurgutis introduced a proposal of creating a new body in the Union structure, a pool of experts. UBC is regarded as a regional networking organization, but it wants to develop also its policy, advocacy dimension. UBC has appropriate competences and expertise. In the member cities and in the commissions there are people who are real experts in their fields. They could become members of the pool of experts. This new body can assist the cities, commissions, partners in UBC projects. This would connect members of UBC and present the Union as an organization of experts.

Pool of experts would be an online tool that cities could use as a source for their own initiatives.

Björn Grönholm reminded that a similar body, the Baltic Smart Water Hub, managed by Sustainable Cities Commission was created at the General Conference in Växjö, 2017. In the hub there are already 43 water related experts on fresh water, sea water, storm water and waste water.

Karin Wohlgemuth supported the proposal and asked the President if the list of the experts would be available on the website and if it would be possible to have a chat or a video conference directly with these persons.

President Jurgutis responded that this strategical tool needs more discussion about the structure, as it would combine wide range of experts in different fields. He said that if the Board accepts the idea, the concept would be developed and presented at the next Board meeting.

Decision:

The Board decided to continue the work on pool of experts concept.

9. Digitalisation in the member cities.

Karin Wohlgemuth, on behalf of Smart and Prospering Cities Commission, introduced the concept of Digital Nordic cities.

One of the ideas for UBC development could be creating strategic lines. One of them could be digitalization, a topic which different UBC commissions could deal with.

Digitalization is a topic on the agenda of many cities. Some of them are very advanced in it, while the others are still far behind.

Smart and Prospering Cities Commission noticed a need of cities for consultations, exchanging expertise, experiences, successful implementation concepts. Therefore the Commission proposes to establish a platform for exchanging knowledge.

Kaspars Varpins supported this idea and reminded that due to pandemic Safe Cities Commission lately had two online meetings. He said the digital solutions would become more popular and necessary for the inhabitants to have contact with municipal institutions.

Mr Varpins added that the idea of pool of experts and the idea of a platform for digitalization could be connected.

Mantas Jurgutis added that this ongoing online Executive Board meeting shows how important digitalization is. In public sector digitalization is more challenging than in private sector. Mr Jurgutis asked about the costs of creating such platform, as SPC Commission suggests them to be covered by UBC.

Karin Wohlgemuth responded that the SPC Commission knows them, but the costs could be low in her opinion.

President Jurgutis said that the idea of the platform on digitalization is a good. SPCC budget will be yet discussed. The commission should send more concrete concept of the platform. UBC may allocate some money through the commission work.

Decision:

The Board found the idea interesting and asked Smart and Prospering Cities Commission to provide more details of the concept.

10. Information from Brussels on forthcoming events, conferences, consultations - Out of the Box International (OTB).

President Mantas Jurgutis said that UBC has a lot of potential and therefore there can be more policy and projects based approaches towards the EU. Having this in mind he proposed to establish the UBC Antenna in Brussels.

Marko Paunovic, Out of the Box International, presented his organization and its potential role in operating as UBC Antenna in Brussels.

Out of the Box International is an organization which works on policy on EU level and city level. The aim is to develop innovative policies. The organization is present in 30 countries and operates mostly on expertise base, with aim to help cities write policies that activate citizens.

The current cooperation with UBC includes 5 funding applications, policy cooperation, two workshops at the last General Conference held in Kaunas in October 2019, assisting with this online Executive Board meeting, preparing survey on the needs of member cities.

Mr Paunovic indicated four different roles which Out of the Box International could play as the UBC Antenna:

1. Strengthening visibility of UBC on EU level. Two events are planned for this year: one within European week of regions and cities, the second is a possible event in the European Parliament.
2. Facilitating institutional partnership with key EU stakeholders (Scanning, analysing, meeting).
3. Reinforcing UBC role as a partner in European projects.
4. Building synergies with member cities offices.

The expected results of the cooperation between UBC and OTB would be: better visibility of UBC at the EU level, UBC taking part in some of the most relevant policy dialogues with the European Commission / European Parliament, increasing financing coming from the projects.

Mr Paunovic presented also news from Brussels, relevant to the cities. The presentation is attached.

Piotr Grzelak asked if there were any tools being prepared for tourism which we could use in the BSR. Marko Paunovic answered that tourism was quite high in the EU agenda, and he would check the possibilities. Mr Grzelak added it is one of the main goals for UBC to lobby for the tourism in the BSR and for some tool for revitalization in this branch of economy. Mr Paunovic said that at present there was a call for small companies that need help because of coronavirus pandemic, but in his opinion tourism will be one of the priorities for the recovery.

Mantas Jurgutis said that Antenna in Brussels is a strategic opportunity for UBC, and using a ten years of experience in Brussels of Out of the Box International would bring fruits.

President Jurgutis stressed that one of his goals as the UBC President is to make UBC very visible in Brussels. He asked the Board to authorize this challenge and expressed hope to get soon the first results from Brussels from grants, policy papers and screening. Mr Jurgutis emphasized that the activity of Antenna would not duplicate the activities of the cities' Brussels offices, the cooperation is planned.

Decision:

The Board approved the proposal to establish the UBC Antenna in Brussels.

11. Severe waste water treatment problem in Guatemala.

City of Rostock holds a friendship with the City of Panajachel which is situated at the Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. The lake is endangered. Rostock wrote a letter to UBC with a request for help and description of the situation. The letter is attached.

Karin Wohlgemuth informed that during the last visit of specialists from Rostock in February 2020 they learned that the lake was in danger of dying due to contamination. The municipalities which are placed around the lake have no consciousness of the need to clean it, there is no cooperation between them

in this matter. Lake Atitlan is the largest sweet water reservoir in Central America, the water is needed for the daily human use and fauna and flora in the lake.

Rostock asked two questions to UBC. The first one is if the Union can help to establish a city organization around Atitlan with focus on environmental issues, which would help the 15 cities around the lake to find a way for cooperation, and to find an instrument which would make their voices heard.

Mrs Wohlgemuth added that Union of the Baltic Cities has a good experience after supporting cities in Africa in establishing Lake Victoria Region Local Authorities Cooperation (LVRLAC) around Lake Victoria.

The second question is if UBC could also give some environmental expertise in that region.

Björn Grönholm stressed that the topic introduced by Rostock is globally very important. Sustainable Cities Commission has experience working with water related issues since 2006, including waste water treatment in BSR countries and in Africa within LVRLAC project. UBC could use experience gained at LVRLAC project for capacity building in Guatemala.

Problem at Lake Atitlan is related to waste water treatment. Mr Grönholm informed there were solutions for these kind of problems for example Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs). European Commission has also funding instrument, kind of benchmark for different problems, possible solutions.

Mr Grönholm asked Rostock to discuss this question a little bit more with stakeholders and cities around the lake in order to obtain more information. He suggested representatives of Lake Atitlan cities to participate in the World Water Congress & Exhibition to be held in Copenhagen on 18-23.10.2020.

President Mantas Jurgutis asked Rostock to ask partners in Guatemala for more details so Sustainable Cities Commission experts could examine options how UBC could be of help.

12. Board Member city from Norway.

President Jurgutis reminded that the XV UBC General Conference in Kaunas, 17.10.2019, authorized the Board to approve after consultations with Norwegian cities the member representing Norway.

There are three Norwegian cities in the UBC. Jørgen Kristiansen informed that Bergen, having around 300 000 inhabitants, plans to focus more on Eurocities. Mr Kristiansen will propose to the city of Arendal to join the UBC Board.

13. Secretariat.

Mantas Jurgutis reminded that following the proposal of the Mayor of Gdańsk, the General Conference in Kaunas decided to maintain the UBC Secretariat in the City of Gdańsk, for the next four-year period.

UBC President and Mayor of Gdańsk proposed Paweł Żaboklicki to continue as Secretary General for the next four-year period.

Decision:

The Board approved the proposal and elected Paweł Żaboklicki as Secretary General for the next four-year period.

Paweł Żaboklicki thanked for the trust and stressed that the secretariat is ready to provide all necessary services to member cities, commissions and other UBC bodies. He pointed out that after recently carried out survey we know more about expectations of member cities, and secretariat's goal is to fulfill them. Mr Żaboklicki informed that after consultations with the President, in order to optimize the secretariat work, the responsibilities of the staff have been adjusted. Responsibilities are shown at the UBC website.

14. 11th EUSBSR Annual Forum in Turku / 15. Next Executive Board meeting.

Secretary General Paweł Żaboklicki informed that the 11th European Union Strategy for BSR Annual Forum in Turku had been postponed from 16-17 June 2020 till 19-20 October 2020 due to coronavirus pandemic.

More information at:

<http://annualforum2020.eu/en/annual-forum-2020>

As regards the venue of next Board meeting in autumn it could be held either in Liepāja or in Turku in conjunction with the EUSBSR Annual Forum. The second option would allow the Board members to reduce travelling.

Björn Grönholm informed city of Turku and Sustainable Cities Commission are involved in preparations of EUSBSR Annual Forum. He stressed participation of cities was needed in order to strengthen local level dimension of the EU Strategy. The program is still under preparation, but many of the plenaries and workshops will be of interest for the UBC cities. One specific session will be devoted to cities' development.

Mantas Jurgutis focused on two options of organizing the next Executive Board meeting, the first one to make it during the Annual Forum, the second one would be to have two meetings in October.

Eliina Rantanen invited the Board to Turku. She stressed that it was not only a question of money, but because of pandemic all events are being postponed till autumn, which is going to be a very busy time. So it would be advisable to combine various events.

President Jurgutis said he would discuss the question with the city of Liepāja. In case the autumn Board meeting is held in Turku, the spring 2021 meeting could be held in Liepāja.

16. Any other business.

Paweł Żaboklicki reminded that a subpage on the UBC website was created where member cities can present their actions in fighting the coronavirus pandemic. Eg. helping hospitals and welfare houses, information campaigns for the citizens, etc. Already several cities contributed.

The Board encouraged member cities to share their best practices on dealing with the pandemic.

President Mantas Jurgutis thanked all the participants for a very fruitful meeting and closed the 85th online Executive Board meeting.

Mantas Jurgutis
Chair

Paweł Żaboklicki
Secretary General

Lina Duobaite
Adjuster

Jørgen Kristiansen
Adjuster

The documents are available at:

<https://ubc.net/document-categories/executive-board-meeting-documents/85th-executive-board-meeting-17-april-2020-930>