

REPORT: UBC Sustainable Cities Commission meeting “Natura 2000 and urban development efforts” “How to implement Integrated Stormwater management”

Time and location: Thursday 12th October – Friday 14th October 2016 in Jelgava, Latvia.

Local host Jelgava: Deputy Mayor Jurijs Strods, Deputy Mayor Aigars Rublis and Strategic Director Gunita Osite, (also UBC SCC Advisory board member)

List of participants: Jurijs Strods(Jelgava), Aigars Rublis(Jelgava), Anna Kotaviita(UBC SCC), Björn Grönholm(UBC SCC), Janne Rinne(UBC SCC), Juhani Järveläinen(Lahti), Seppo Salonen(Pori), Mervi Vallinkoski(Jyväskylä), Pekka Salminen(Turku), Jolanta Lizus(Jelgava), Anna Zaķe(Jelgava), Jānis Artemjevs(Jurmala), Nika Kotoviča(Riga), Inta Ādamsone(Cesis), Dace Liepniece(Liepāja), Ilze Tijone(Bauska), Aiga Spāģe(Jelgava), Eva Plaude(Jēkabpils), Agnese Kauliņa(Jelgava), Mārtiņš Rūtenbergs(Rīga), Vita Caune(Nature Conservation Agency/Pierīga Regional Administration), Rihards Kepītis (Jelgava, Nature Conservation agency), Gunita Osite(Jelgava), Anna Rage(Riga), Ieva Locmele(Jelgava), Lucija Kursite(ELLE, environmental consulting company), Valts Vilnītis(ELLE, environmental consulting company), Bent Jepsen (LIFE-Nature Coordinator), Artūrs Bitens(Jelgava), Ineta Umbraško(Jūrmala), Ilze Černovska(Jūrmala), Žanna Barkovska(Jelgava, JPPI "Pilsētsaimniecība"), Ilva Meiere(Jelgava, JPPI "Pilsētsaimniecība"), Annely Esko(Environmental Board Estonia), Bert Holm(Environmental Board Estonia)

Topic I: “Natura 2000 and urban development efforts”

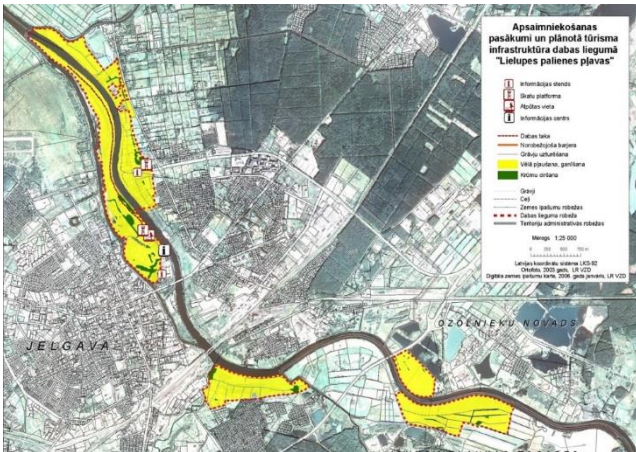
Focus on Natura 2000, Natura 2000 sites located in the urban areas in the BSR.

Natura 2000 is a network of sites selected to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. The legal framework of Natura 2000 network is based on two EU Directives, the Habitats Directive (1992) and the Birds Directive (1979), providing guidelines for site conservation. Natura 2000 does not exclude human activity on the sites, rather it represents a model of humans working with the nature rather than against it. Often, misunderstandings and conflicts with stakeholders arise during the urban planning process regarding Natura 2000 sites – transparent permitting processes and communication is therefore important for reaching dual goals: ensuring the well-being of the Natura 2000 sites and developing the city in sustainable means. How does your city apply article 6 of the Habitats Directive? What kind of issues have you faced when starting a project/plan including a Natura 2000 site? How can cities benefit from having a Natura 2000 site in the city?

Jelgava

Jelgava was founded in 1265. Development model of the city remains unchanged – Jelgava is one of Latvia's centres for industrial development and vocational education with favourable environment for families and children. Jelgava is located in the Southern part of Zemgale plain, only 41 km southwest from Riga, and is the fourth largest city in Latvia with 60 000 inhabitants. Jelgava has park, forest and water area altogether for 16.98 km², whereas Jelgava's territory in whole is 60.32km². Jelgava is a unique city with a nature reserve of national significance within its territory, the Lielupe flood land meadows. A 5km long strip of land behind Jelgava Palace is home to more than 50 wild horses and many rare species. These meadows are listed as a Natura 2000 site, a part of the European specially protected nature territory, due to the diversity of rare bird and plant species. The area is suitable for peaceful walks and studies of the nature taking along a guidebook in botany or participating in a guided tour to find out about horses, plants and other nature valuables.

Jelgava's Natura 2000 area



Since 2004, the nature reserve that spans over 352 ha has been listed as a Natura 2000 site, a part of the European specially protected nature area network. The nature reserve is also listed as an Important Bird Area to recognize its importance as a birds nesting site. All of this demonstrates the importance of the site as birds nesting grounds and a site of rare plant species. The nature reserve hosts one of the last natural or minimally altered floodplain meadows with a high biological and ecological value. Three habitat types listed in

Annex I of the Habitats Directive are found in the nature reserve. So far, 27 specially protected plant and animal species are found in the nature reserve.

Development project – Construction of a bridge crossing Natura 2000 site in Jelgava
Gunita Osite, Strategic Director at Jelgava City Council and Lucija Kursite (ELLE) presented the plans to build a bridge over the Lielupe river and crossing the Natura 2000 area. The bridge is seen as necessary route for the planned industrial area close to the city center of Jelgava. Investment money is available for building the bridge as part of TEN-T transport network corridors. The evaluation project is already on-going and the public participation will take April 2017. The EIA delivery will be in June 2017.

Summary

It was discussed that in many countries the Natura 2000 network was established in a hurry, without knowing the implications of this protected area network. In many countries, the implications for the land use and development were understood later. This has caused conflicts with land use and development. It was also emphasized that nowadays there are already examples where there is development in or in closeness of Natura areas. Compensation measures can be considered, if there is overriding public interest to execute projects in Natura 2000 areas. However, compensation procedure can be a very difficult and laborious process. In Germany there are many examples of Natura 2000 compensation.

Topic II: “How to implement Integrated Stormwater management”

Due to the climate change, the cities of the Baltic Sea Region face more frequent and intense storms and rainfall which often result in excessive flooding, storm water runoff and soil erosion in the urban areas. *iWater - Integrated Storm Water Management* project aims to improve urban planning in the cities of the Baltic Sea Region via developing integrated storm water management (ISWM) system. During years 2015–2018, common guidelines and tools of integrated storm water management will be developed in the partnering cities with the involvement of local stakeholder and interest groups.



Introduction to iWater - Integrated Storm Water Management project

The iWater project goals was presented including storm water management issues, green infra-structure, as well as storm water related problems and solutions. Innovative and integrative storm water management provides solutions to increasing storm water problems. EU funded iWater project aims to develop integrated storm water management in Baltic cities, build capacity in storm water management and Green Area Factor (GAF) tool, and pilot innovative storm water management in seven pilot sites. The key issue is that the storm water should be as resource rather than a problem. This shift requires new kind of thinking in the water management.

The results of the iWater summer schools that took place summer 2016 including more than 70 students from the whole BSR and the key lessons learned from the innovative student works. *The summer schools produced many innovative storm water solutions for pilot sites in seven cities. For more info see; <http://www.integratedstormwater.eu/>*

In the workshop, participants worked in finding solutions, comments and recommendations in storm water management. Some short examples;

For city of Lahti; green walls, green roofs, semi-permeable parking lots and using the storm water in place for irrigation was proposed as solutions to manage the water coming from the case area. For the water coming from the city center, restoring the natural stream in the area was proposed. This would have a big impact and could be easy to implement.

For city of Jelgava; building a dam, creating wetlands for recreation places, digging new and restoring old ditches and planting of more trees was proposed.

For city of Bauska; a green corridor in Krasta Street was seen as a possibility to manage storm waters. It was also emphasized that the impacts of new construction on storm waters should be studied.

Summary

Storm waters have for a long time been seen as a problem for cities but now it becomes more and more a resource for cities. Still many UBC cities are struggling with frequent problems of flooding.

Nowadays there are anyway a lot of good examples on success stories based on integrated management by including several sectors of city administrations to find attractive and cost-efficient solutions for storm water in urban areas. Many encouraging examples from several UBC cities are high lightening smart solutions. As a spin off, of the UBC meeting in Jelgava as well as on the ongoing work with the iWater project the UBC SCC will continue to focus on storm water management. A new initiative is a project focusing on climate change and storm water effects in relation to safety plans in urban areas.



Report: “Joint Meeting of UBC Commissions on Cultures of Sustainability in Baltic Cities”

City of Słupsk and City of Ustka, Poland 15th – 17th June 2016

Totally 32 participants from 14 UBC member cities met in Słupsk – Ustka (Dolina Charlotty)

Which elements make events safe and sustainable? Are all key players aware of sustainable principles and will they implement them? These and other questions were explored during the Union of Baltic Cities Sustainable, Safe and Cultural Cities Commissions’ joint meeting Cultures of Sustainability in Baltic Cities that took place in Słupsk and Ustka, Poland on 15th – 17th June 2016.

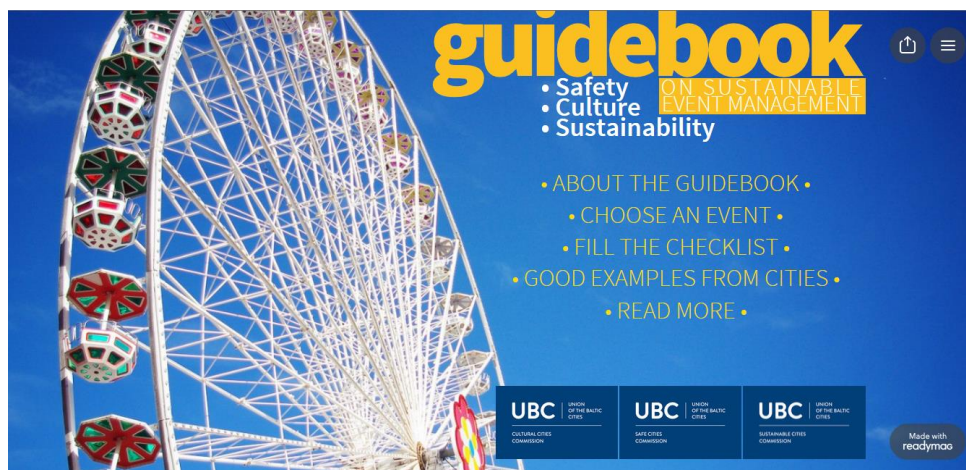
The aim of the meeting was to discuss and find key principles on how to produce sustainable events from small-scale local events to big international events in the Baltic Sea Region cities. The meeting offered a fruitful ground for experts from the three focus areas – safety – culture – sustainability – to change experiences and build new partnerships. The events are also used profiling cities on the map of tourists and in the branding of cities. Big, medium or small – all cities benefit from these events. Therefore it is important to find a smart way to proceed and make our events even more effective and attractive is to look for good practices together!

Guidebook for smart and sustainable event management

Need for common principles on sustainable event management

It was discussed during the meeting that organizing events is a co-operation between various actors, such as municipal authorities, businesses and NGOs. There’s an actual demand for smooth communication, clear instructions for necessary permits and safety regulations. In addition, cultural and social values should be incorporated in all levels of the event management. As the outcome of the meeting, the participants committed to work for establishing a guidebook for sustainable event management that would disseminate smart practices from the UBC cities.

By combining different angles (safety, culture, sustainability), it is ensured that all central elements will be taken into consideration and included in the guidebook. Secondly, the participants discussed that there is a need for commonly shared principles on sustainable event management in the Baltic Sea cities. Therefore, the possibility to use the guidebook also as a toolkit for cities will be explored. Finally, participants suggested that the guidebook would be published as web-application and distributed broadly in the UBC cities and well as schools and other relevant stakeholders.



The Guidebook for smart and sustainable event management is currently under process. The three UBC Commissions are producing a content and visual layout. Please contact UBC SCC if you wish to hear more information about the Guidebook.