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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN

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TOWARDS GREEN AND JUST TRANSITION

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BALTIC CITIES BULLETIN



Dear UBC Friends and Colleagues,

In the times of uncertainty caused by multiple climate risks, green transition is crucial to overcoming challenges and quickly adapting to the current situation. The green transition means a shift towards an environmentally sustainable and climate-safe future, yet on a just principle. Already at the XVII UBC General Conference in Palanga last year this topic was featured in the programme and thoroughly debated through the prism of climate neutrality, thus its importance is clearly recognised by our member cities.

The time is just right to take a leap and turn green transition agendas into action locally. We are getting closer to the shared European goal of 2030 for cities to become climate-neutral and smart, adapt to climate change, protect our water resources and otherwise ensure a nature-positive future. The UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030 is also aligned with this strategic timeline as an important step towards building a more inclusive, result-oriented, impact driven and dynamic city network and a platform for close collaboration towards a sustainable, green, safe and resilient Baltic Sea Region.

The spring 2024 issue of the Baltic Cities Bulletin focuses on the road we walk together towards green and just transition, and how it can help to ensure prosperous, resilient, and happy life in cities. Green transition means a holistic approach, taking into account climate preparedness and net zero ambitions, available financing for the change, and a strong social dimension.

The role of UBC members as trendsetters in sharing knowledge and best practices is clear in the Baltic Sea Region, but we need to upkeep the bold goals and ambitious green agendas. We call for active leadership in our member cities to provide support mechanisms for allowing green transition, just and equitable to all!

With Baltic Sea greetings,

Handwritten signature of Mantas Jurgutis.

Mantas Jurgutis
President of UBC

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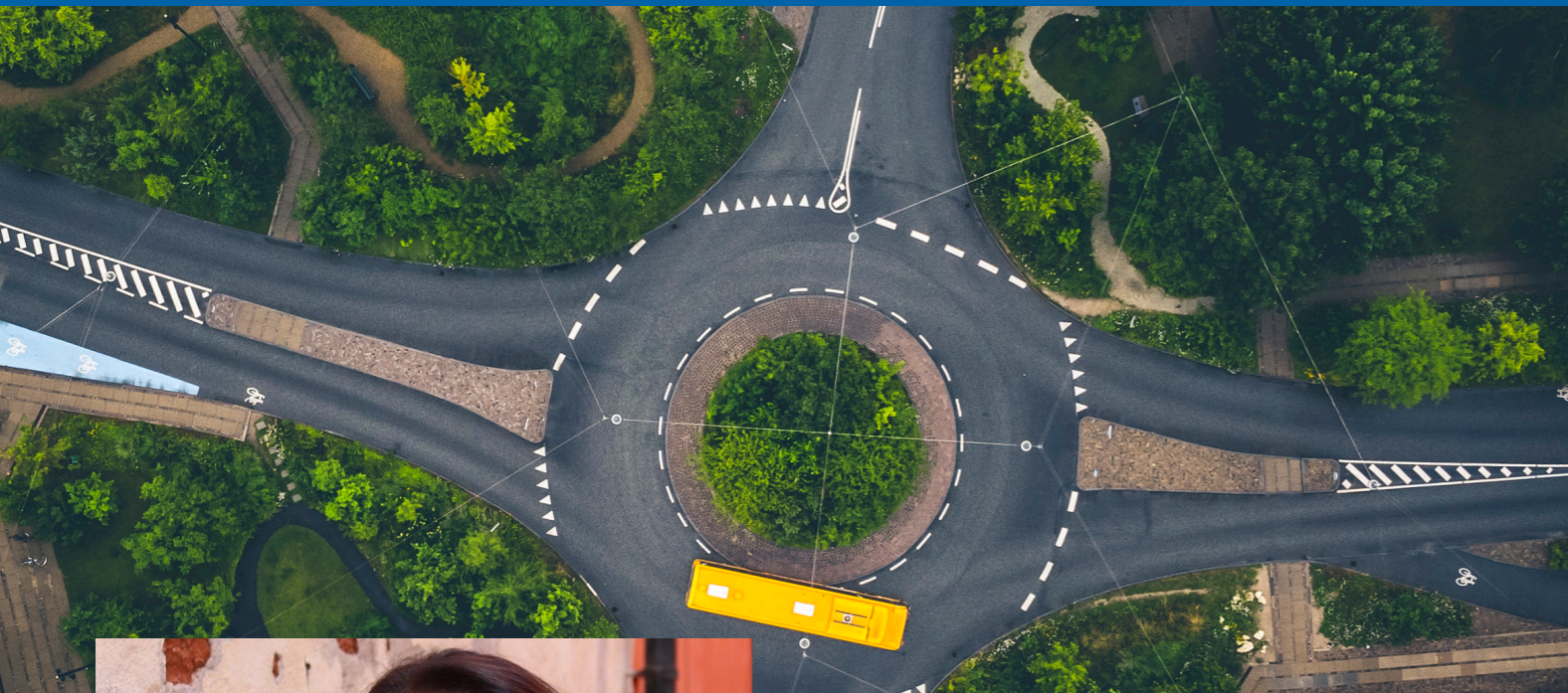


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OPEN CALLS FOR ARTISTS OR PERFORMERS IN KAUNAS



TOWARDS GREEN AND JUST TRANSITION



by Agnieszka Ilola | agnieszka.ilola@turku.fi

inclusion, ensuring that all residents have access to clean transportation options and green areas regardless of their socio-economic status. Cities are unique in many ways and, as such, also their green transition roadmaps need to be tailored to local conditions. Among our member cities we have many good examples of innovative projects, which contribute to the collective green transformation ambition and values and in the following pages we are sharing some of them with you.

Driving ambitious climate neutrality plans

UBC cities continue to demonstrate their strong commitment to climate change mitigation and adaptation and in recent years many of them have accelerated their efforts in cutting carbon emissions, and setting very ambitious targets to become climate-neutral as early as 2030.

Knowing that climate change will exacerbate the existing urban environmental management challenges in cities, UBC has committed to cooperate with CDP, the global climate change disclosure non-profit organisation, on regular and comprehensive measuring of cities' climate footprints and actions. It is very important for cities to have reliable and effective tools for regular monitoring of progress, benchmarking and managing positive transformation towards their climate goals.

The project Climate-4-CAST, which started in the beginning of the year, aims to support UBC cities in even stronger integration of climate actions into their urban governance processes. An open-source decision support tool developed in the framework of the project will allow both a visualisation of individual measures' emissions impacts in different scenarios and a cost-benefit analysis of the measures' perfor-

Cities around the world are recognizing the need to transition to a more sustainable and equitable model of development, one that addresses both the ecological footprint, climate crisis and the pressing social issues of our time. This transition is not without its challenges, but the benefits are manifold, offering opportunities for economic revitalization, social cohesion, and environmental stewardship. How are UBC cities making their transition a reality?

Many UBC cities are already spearheading a green and just transition by demonstrating the highest level of climate ambition, investing in sustainable mobility, renewable energy, and greening of urban spaces. In their comprehensive approach many cities stem to prioritize equity and social

mance against city goals. Thus, the project, which develops the tool steered with experiences of a.o. Aarhus and Riga, will help to accelerate cities' climate actions and improve policy implementation for climate neutrality.

Swifter progress towards climate goals supports overall sustainable development in the BSR and also benefits citizens and businesses. In turn, this progress can only be unlocked with the participatory mechanisms. Cities like Vaasa and Turku demonstrate the benefits of cooperation with local stakeholders through the quadruple helix approach – involving the city, companies, universities, and community.

Transition to greener mobility

Changing mobility patterns in cities remains challenge at scale for it requires cultural, structural and behavioural change. The newly started project SUMP for BSR strongly supports cities shifting their planning practices towards people-centered sustainable urban mobility planning focusing on active mobility modes and promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for citizens, while reducing emissions from traffic. Special focus lies on supporting small and mid-sized cities in preparing and implementing their sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP).

Green mobility is not only a service for citizens of the future, helping to curb the carbon emissions – examples from Greifswald, Gdynia and Gävle demonstrate how it can also become a tool for promoting health and social wellbeing for city residents of all ages.

Restoring nature and enabling biodiversity

Equally important to sustainable mobility in cities is to enhance the protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity. The EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sets a comprehensive long-term plan to protect nature and put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery, for the benefit of people, climate and the planet. Moreover, to help reverse biodiversity loss within and around urban areas, the EU has called on European cities of more than 20,000 inhabitants to develop ambitious Urban Greening Plans. Following the EU's call, the impactful actions are taken by UBC cities to safeguard ecosystems, protect endangered species, and foster biodiversity within their urban boundaries.

Tartu, the European Capital of Culture 2024, focuses on the wellbeing of all its citizens, including humans, pollinators and plants. Ambitious projects are developed in the city to support biodiversity while educating on the importance of urban nature and ensuring that citizens are integral part of this process.

In Turku, the effort to stop the biodiversity loss resulted in the EU funded project to create Europe's first biodiversity park. This park will be a tool for urban ecological restoration and a platform for developing and testing experimental approaches for preserving and actively enhancing biodiversity in urban environment.

In Aarhus, an ambitious target to double the area of wild nature by 2030 is aligned with the city's commitment to prioritize biodiversity conservation, renaturalisation processes, and citizen engagement. Many ongoing initiatives allow for new more holistic approach combining restoration of natural ecosystems, protection of biodiversity, enhancement of recreational opportunities, and support of climate adaptation.

Fostering locally based transitions in cities

The path to a green and just transition is not without its obstacles. Political inertia, vested interests, and financial constraints often pose significant challenges to vast progress. Moreover, the impacts of climate change and social injustice are not felt uniformly across all cities, with some facing greater vulnerabilities and disparities than others. Despite existing challenges, the momentum towards a green and just transition continues to grow, driven by the collective efforts of cities and communities around the region.

As we confront the urging threats of climate change and social inequality, the imperative for change has never been clearer. By embracing sustainability and equity as guiding principles, cities have the power to pave the way towards a greener, more resilient and inclusive future for everyone. UBC cities are demonstrating that a transition to sustainability is not only possible but also beneficial for all stakeholders.





DEPOSIT CUPS SYSTEM IN VALMIERA

by Elizabete Ločmele | elizabete.locmele@valmierasnovads.lv

Every year, the Valmiera City Festival is a highly anticipated event not only among Valmiera residents, but also among people from the region, Latvia, and even its closest neighbours, the Estonians. In 2023, approximately 50 000 people attended the event and generated 68.4 m3 of waste.

Catering takes a big part of the festival and is a sector enjoyed by nearly every visitor. Most of the waste collected consists of plastic cups and street food packaging. This has a big impact on the environment, and every morning during the city festival weekend, a lot of waste can be seen not only in the trash bins but also on the ground of the premises.

The aim of the Valmiera Municipality is to have a festival without litter. It is understandable that such a goal is rather a utopia, but it allows for a vision of the future for both the event organisers and the visitors. If the municipality chose to replace disposable plastic cups with paper cups, the amount of waste produced would not change. On the other hand, if we introduce a deposit system for cups, the amount of waste generated will be significantly reduced, as it is the drinking cups that make up a significant part of the waste collected during the city's festivities.

Dialog with local partners

To clarify the concerns of catering companies, a seminar 'Introduction of the deposit system for cups at municipal events' was organised. The seminar was attended by entrepreneurs from the catering services sector and other stakeholders.

Participants asked questions about the introduction of the deposit system, its functionality and other unclear issues. It is important for businesses to work quickly, and it is therefore a burden to explain to customers what a deposit cup is and how the system works. The City Festival organising team will launch an extensive communication campaign early on so that visitors of the event can already familiarise themselves with the system.

The organisation of the seminar was very important as it allowed the stakeholders to be involved in the discussions very early, before key decisions were taken. Communication with the involved sides can determine the success of introducing something new in such big event.

The event took place within the Vidzeme Innovation Week. The discussion was organised by the Valmiera Municipality Government within the framework of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme's project 'BALTIPLAST'.



VAASA AIMS FOR CLIMATE NEUTRALITY BY THE END OF THE DECADE



by Johanna Punkari | johanna.punkari@vaasa.fi

The City of Vaasa has set a strategic objective to achieve carbon neutrality by the end of the decade. Vaasa's vision to achieve the carbon neutrality target, is based on identifying, piloting, evaluating and up-scaling innovative climate mitigation solutions.

The city also aims for climate readiness by paying special attention to more precise planning for climate change adaptation, such as stormwater management and enhancing biodiversity in urban areas. Vaasa is a charter signatory in the EU Mission for Climate Adaptation. The city is also currently preparing a Circular economy Green deal agreement between the Finnish state and the city. The purpose of this agreement is to identify the most impactful circular economy actions relevant to operations and baseline, and to set goals and indicators related to these actions.

One central aspect is to create a real-time database and tools for planning and decision-making. The city, companies, and universities are allocating resources to establish a collaborative IoT-data platform. This platform is intended for the identification of energy-saving potentials, conducting energy optimization within buildings and urban processes, implementing energy flexibility measures in a renewable energy-based system, monitoring transportation evolution, and the execution of walking and cycling. The possibilities for future development are endless.

Towards green solutions

The city-owned energy company, Vaasan Sähkö, is making significant investments in transition towards carbon neutral district heating and electricity production. Vaasan Sähkö has made investments to the city's wastewater treatment plant, waste heat recovery facility, and for recovering waste heat into a heat storage facility in cooperation with companies. In electricity production, EPV (Vaasan Sähkö owned company) is developing a Power2x2power plant. The regional waste company is developing a full-scale carbon dioxide capture plant and hydrogen plant to achieve their own carbon neutrality targets.

Vaasa aims to become a cycling city, as 81% of the city's residents live within 5 km of the city centre. The city is currently developing a network of cycle lanes and improving cycle parking to reduce emissions. City staff drive their work-related journeys with the city's shared electric cars or by borrowing citybikes during working hours. The city aims to develop its climate action efforts more in a participatory direction. By the way, we also co-own the world's most environmentally friendly ferry Aurora Bothnia, with the municipality of Umeå in Sweden. The vessel operates the northernmost all-year around sea route in the world.

CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM ACTIVITIES IN GDAŃSK

GREIFSWALD, THE SECRET CYCLING CAPITAL OF GERMANY

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photo by Piotr Wittman

by Stephan Braun | s.braun@greifswald.de
foto by Stadtwerke Greifswald GmbH

The Department for Environment organizes the Gdańsk Climate Change Forum. The aim of the work carried out by Gdańsk Climate Change Forum is to update the document "Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the City of Gdańsk by 2030", with the feedback from local community: residents, representatives of science, experts, non-governmental organizations and all people directly interested in the issue.

The Municipal Climate Change Adaptation Plan (MCCAP) is a document that should respond smoothly to ongoing changes. For this reason the Gdańsk Climate Change Forum has become an agora for discussion, defining problems and searching for the best solutions in 8 thematic areas, such as:

1. Biodiversity of fauna
2. Biodiversity of flora
3. Air quality
4. River conditions and floods
5. Health and sensitive groups (i.a. seniors, disabled, homeless people, children)
6. Temperature changes and droughts
7. Rising sea levels - occurrence of flooding from the sea and sea level rise.
8. Wind, hail and storms

During the first edition of the Forum, which took place on October 25, 2020, online, due to the SARS-COV-2 epidemic, the participants identified a number of problems from each of the thematic areas, which were then ranked in terms of importance. The next step was to analyze the problems and threads indicated by the residents, and search for solutions to the problems developed during the next edition of the Forum. The second edition of the Forum took place on

October 11, 2022 at the Hevelianum Center in Gdańsk. The event had a workshop formula, participants worked in 8 thematic tables. The results of the work were sorted and collected in a publicly available Report.

Together for the climate

On September 29, 2023, at the AmberExpo Exhibition and Congress Center, the third meeting was held as part of the Gdańsk Climate Change Forum. Last year's Forum was one of the events organized by the Association of Pomeranian Municipalities, the Pomeranian Voivodeship Local Government and the City of Gdańsk as part of a 2-day series of meetings and conferences entitled "Together for the climate". The work at the thematic tables consisted of proposing the most important actions for the solutions developed during the meeting in October 2022. The forum, like the previous ones, was organised in a workshop formula. The panel discussions were conducted by a team of professional, impartial moderators, invited by the Foundation for the Development of the University of Gdańsk in cooperation with the Center for Sustainable Development of the University of Gdańsk.

In 2024, Gdańsk started to prepare an update of the "Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the City of Gdańsk", which will include the activities developed by the participants. The meetings as part of the Gdańsk Climate Change Forum were preceded by an information and educational campaign. Social media posts, posters and animations displayed in public transport and public facilities, as well as thematic articles on the gdansk.pl and trojmiesto.pl websites enabled local community to learn more about the subject.

A few years ago, Greifswald was considered the secret German cycling capital. This was due to the high proportion of cycling traffic, which was 44% (2009) and 39% (2014), but there was a need for improvement in cycling infrastructure.

In recent years, the cycling improvements included in particular closing gaps in the cycle path network in the surrounding area of Greifswald. In addition, a central, modern and lockable bicycle parking facility was created at the main train station. The activities in the area of public relations are also very important to make cycling even more attractive for the citizens and guests of the city. The improved cycle paths into the surrounding area marked the beginning of the development of new cycle tours by the Greifswald Agricultural Initiative – an association of tenants of agricultural land and land lessors; the city administration is involved in this initiative.

City cycling events

One of the new features became the tours to explore the landscape with its special elements (e.g. kettle holes, avenues) or to get to know the organic farms in the area. Another highlight in the area of cycling is the now annual bicycle festival, which is organized by the local municipal utilities on May 1st. Here, citizens can get to learn about bicycles and also get active through various activities: a family tour, or bicycle races for athletes and children.

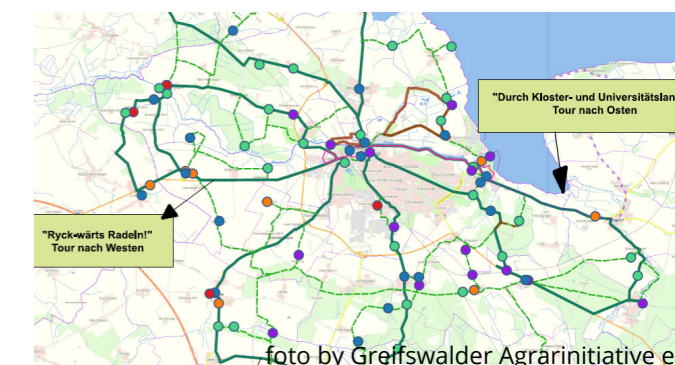
The annual bicycle festival also marks the start of our annual CITY CYCLING: a 3-week bicycle campaign in which citizens can enter the kilometres they have cycled and from this CO2 saving is determined compared to using a car. At the end of the campaign, the mayor awards the cyclists with the most

kilometres ridden with an annual, individually designed trophy for the best school, the best team in general, and the best cyclist.

Home and abroad cooperation

We are proud that we have now been able to convince our partner cities in Brazil (Pomerode) and the USA (Newport News) to take part in city cycling. So the 3 sister cities ride together in a competition at the same time and collect cycling kilometres.

Recently, an annual Kidical Mass (organized by the General German Bicycle Club) has also taken place in Greifswald. The Kidical mass movement aims to increase bicycle safety for children. The cooperation and commitment of civil society are very important to us. Only together can we develop our cities into real cycling cities. We see Greifswald on a very good path here. You are warmly welcome to discover the "bicycle capital" Greifswald.



INNOVATIVE ENERGY SOLUTIONS TESTED IN TURKU



by Helmi Andersson | helmi.andersson@turku.fi
photos by Nick Bakker

The city of Turku aims to be climate neutral in 2029 and climate positive from then onwards. As part of the transition towards a more sustainable city, Turku is participating in **RESPONSE project (Integrated Solutions for Positive Energy and Resilient Cities)**, which is funded by the European Union's research and innovation funding programme Horizon 2020.

In RESPONSE, technological innovations are tested and implemented in real world conditions in the lighthouse cities of Turku and Dijon. The demonstration site in Turku is located in the Student Village. Here, the city's first positive energy district (PED) is being built.

A PED is a built area which produces more renewable energy than it consumes on a yearly basis. The Turku PED is brought about by greatly increasing local renewable energy production, capturing waste heat more efficiently, and reducing energy consumption in the buildings. The utilization of energy is then optimized with the help of smart systems.

In addition to installing novel technological solutions for energy production, storing, and recycling, traditional retrofitting measures have been implemented in the older buildings, vastly improving their energy efficiency. The residents of the Student Village also play an active role in reducing energy consumption within the block.

Addressing real life challenges

As temperatures climb, the pressure to reduce carbon emissions and adopt new innovative solutions in cities continues to increase. RESPONSE is part of a broader group of projects funded by the European Union, aimed to demonstrate and develop PEDs in different surroundings. Following implementation, the solutions will be monitored and assessed. An evaluation of the results will help show the practical feasibility of building PEDs in colder climates.

Just as in RESPONSE, the energy transition in Turku is implemented together with municipal residents, businesses, and communities. The city has already managed to cut its emissions by 56 % compared to 1990 levels and is continuously searching for new ways to reduce its carbon footprint.

Learn more about Turku's path towards climate neutrality through the [city's climate plan for 2029](#).



SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY FOR CHILDREN IN GÄVLE

by Karola Fors | karola.fors@gavle.se



Gävle municipality in Sweden has been working with the project "Here and there- children in traffic" (Hit och dit - barn i trafik) for the last couple of years. The aim of the project is to encourage children and guardians to walk, bike or commute by bus to and from school and pre-school. The project packages many activities to promote sustainable mobility. The activities aim to address issues that parents travelling by car name as the reason for choosing the car.

The activities range from the fourth-year students participating in educative activities on how to cycle, the second-year pupils joining in on a bus travel course, the guardians can borrow electric cargo bikes or bikes with a carrier for free to try this travel mode for a period of 10 days, the teachers can become winter cyclists by getting spiked wheels on their bikes promising to bike at least three days a week. Special attention is paid to the traffic environment around these schools and different kinds of physical interventions are handled according to the observed needs, for example in relation to bicycle signs, bike racks, car-speed measures, the conditions of the bike lanes and crossing passages.

The focus is on how the children describe their environment and issues they would like to improve. They get to show and describe the needs of their traffic environment and influence the decision-making process. Workshops and surveys about travel habits to

and from school/preschool are also being conducted with guardians, the school staff, and the children.

Ways of support

An activity which particularly is related to the aim of inclusive sustainable mobility is the possibility that is given to school staff to borrow up to 30 school bikes for free when classes are about to go on excursions or visit various destinations for educational purposes. This activity was added to the project after noticing that not all the children could participate in the schools' activities that implied having a bicycle. In this way, all the pupils can participate in common activities on the same terms. All the schools can borrow bicycles, not only those who participate in the project.

The municipality cooperates with the responsible department for school properties for this project, the schools, as well as the regional authority in Gävle which also finances the activities. The municipal department for service and maintenance has been also a part in the project. The project has shown good results, and it will be continued!





GDYNIA: PIONEERING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR A GREENER FUTURE

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In an era where environmental consciousness is a pressing necessity, cities worldwide are stepping up to the challenge of fostering sustainable practices. Among them is the city of Gdynia, nestled on the Baltic coast of Poland.

Gdynia is researching and enforcing sustainable solutions, ranging from textile circularity initiatives through tree planting projects carried out with the citizens to climate education workshops in schools and among decision-makers, as well as decarbonisation projects. Being the pioneer in calculating the city's carbon footprint, Gdynia is aware that actions must be taken at various levels, where raising consciousness is of key importance. In order to implement major energy and transport projects, we need to educate citizens through everyday actions.

The city recognized and took action in the field of textile waste. To tackle this issue, Gdynia cooperated with Ubrania do Oddania (UdO) [eng. Clothes to Donate] and has implemented innovative strategies to promote circularity: Gdynia was the first one to set a city-wide programme of collecting textiles and donating them to UdO, a brand that's renewing, recycling and reselling clothes in so-called "circular boutiques" while donating part of the income to charities. Through initiatives like that, along with encouraging sustainable fashion choices, Gdynia aims to minimize waste and maximize the lifespan of textiles, reducing its ecological footprint.

City's sustainable initiatives

Not only reducing waste but also "making the greenery greener" lies in the scope of Gdynia's interest. Along with the citizens, through financial support for them, the city encourages the residents to plant trees and shrubs on their properties. By financing the initiative and allowing people to plant all kinds of greenery levels, the city aims to enhance biodiversity. The project's pilot was very successful and hopefully will become an annual action taken in the town.

Moreover, Gdynia is carrying out climate education initiatives on all levels, recognizing its essential role in fostering a culture of sustainability from a young age. By integrating Climate Fresk (a well-known workshop based on IPCC reports) into the school plan, the city is empowering the next generation with the knowledge and ideas to deal with environmental challenges proactively. These workshops educate students about the importance of sustainable practices and inspire them to advocate for change within their communities. The same workshop is held for the decision-makers to make them aware of the burning issue of climate change and the need to take action.

The city's efforts to broaden the ecological consciousness among the residents are multi-level work, with different groups considering the impact they have. The need to enforce sustainable solutions is environmentally sound and economically prudent. Gdynia lays the groundwork for long-term environmental resilience and economic prosperity by investing in circular economy practices and climate education.

Climate Change Malmö's work is based on leading research and analyses of how we can most effectively achieve our climate goals while creating more societal benefits such as a better living environment and more jobs.

The Malmö Commitments pave the way for an inclusive, equitable, and socially sustainable society, focusing on Climate Change Malmö's research-backed strategies to achieve climate goals while enhancing societal well-being. We have developed three scenarios for a 70% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, targeting road transport, electricity, heating, and machinery emissions. These scenarios encompass 13 measures, emphasizing behavioral change, carbon capture, and technical solutions.

Malmö is a key EU city striving for CO2 neutrality by 2030, part of the EU 100 mission cities. Beyond climate, the Malmö Commitment promotes an equitable, socially sustainable city. Launched during the ICLEI World Congress in 2022, this initiative aims to foster healthy, safe urban spaces and just transitions to a socially sustainable economy. The Commitment prioritizes social equity in local sustainability policies, bringing together governments committed to addressing inequalities and sustainability challenges.

Cooperation for better future

Ten pioneer cities and regions, including Malmö, have joined forces to work collaboratively towards

these goals, inviting more cities to participate. We are expanding the group of follower cities via our work within ICLEI. Acknowledging that vulnerable groups suffer most from climate crises, the initiative aims to address historical injustices. To ensure climate actions reach their full potential, socially just transitions are emphasized. This includes identifying vulnerable groups locally, integrating their needs into sustainability plans, and prioritizing their voices in climate emergency responses.

A circular process in four phases - Analyze, Strategize, Act, Accelerate - has been initiated, working with ICLEI to design social equity indicators for monitoring progress and sharing knowledge. The goal is to ensure all voices are heard, and sustainability benefits reach the entire community. Through data sharing and collaborative learning, the initiative aims to create a more inclusive and sustainable future for Malmö and beyond.

<https://malmo-commitment.org/>





GREENING TARTU ONE PARK AT A TIME

by Mirjam Võsaste | mirjam.vosaste@tartu.ee
photos by Mana Kaasik

Increasing biodiversity in urban areas is crucial to mitigating the effects of climate change, reducing the loss of species and their habitats, and creating a better habitat for people both mentally and physically.

Each day, the City of Tartu is focusing more and more on the wellbeing of its citizens, be they humans, pollinators, or plants. The first steps towards greening and making our parks more diverse were made under the project Curated Biodiversity, which is part of Arts of Survival, a European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 programme.

Until now, Vabaduse Park has gotten little to no use because of its lack of ground vegetation and sunlight. The area was brought back to life with local plant species that do well in the shade, and diversity was added with stones and dead wood. It is now a biodiverse urban grove where people can find shelter on hot summer days, sit and play on the tree trunks, or pick wild strawberries. Curated Biodiversity also created the first urban meadow in Tartu and started changing the perspective on mowing.

New approach to green spaces

At the end of 2022, Tartu became a lead partner in the urbanLIFEcircles project, whose aim is to support biodiversity in the city while educating people about the importance of urban nature and inviting them to be a part of the process. In May 2023, Uueturu Park was transformed from a patch of heavily mowed grass to a green oasis. Together with 60 volunteers, we planted around 1,500 plants from 69 native species to support local plant populations and pollinators. To our surprise, this change – which was intended to benefit nature – also made the park more attractive to people. For the first time ever, people sat down between the flower-

beds or read books and painted pictures under the trees.

Our experience in Tartu has shown us that people do not want to see heavily mowed grass or tidy flowerbeds and nothing else. What makes them spend more time in urban nature is colour, variety, and biodiversity. Several studies have shown that even if you are unable to recognise all the flowers, butterflies, and bumblebees, your health and immune system get a boost from simply spending time in an area that is rich in species.

We welcome you to the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024! Visit us to see our urban grove, the green oasis, restored frog ponds, an urban meadow and other actions we have taken to reconnect people with nature.



THE GREEN BOOK OF ZAPORIZHZHIA RECOVERY

by EcoSense NGO | ecosense.ngo@gmail.com

Zaporizhzhia is already preparing for green post-war recovery, prioritizing human and environmental safety, human capital, energy independence, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship development.

During the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war, Zaporizhzhia city heroically resisted Russian attackers and remained unoccupied, despite Russia capturing 72% of the Zaporizhzhia region in February-March 2022. Following regular rocket and artillery attacks, the city's utilities are working to restore infrastructure, damaged housing, and communication systems to ensure that life continues as normal.

In February 2023, the first regional Recovery Committee in Ukraine was established in Zaporizhzhia to unite the community and authorities in post-war recovery efforts, achieve sustainable results, and ensure democratic and transparent recovery planning processes.

Based on public opinion surveys, focus group research, forums, and public discussions, key issues were selected for the development of sectoral recommendations for post-war recovery. The findings of experts' work are summarized in the analytical report The Green Book of Zaporizhzhia Recovery: A Roadmap.

Priorities for the future

The document provides an overview of post-war recovery and sustainable development measures for Zaporizhzhia, which experts recommend including in recovery plans and programs, taking into account the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and plans for Ukraine's integration into the EU and European Green Deal.

The priority strategic directions of Zaporizhzhia's post-war recovery should be:

1. Restoring mental health and psychological adaptation of the population to uncertainty, which creates conditions for psychosocial well-being of citizens, enables public engagement in the city's recovery processes, and improves social interaction and social cohesion.
2. Ensuring environmental safety of citizens and restoring the environment affected by industrial pollution and military operations
3. Green restoration of energy infrastructure, considering the need to adapt to emergencies, address climate change, and meet decarbonization goals adopted by the Covenant of Mayors
4. Economic recovery through entrepreneurship and technology development, cluster creation, promotion of cultural and creative industries, and integration of IDPs.
5. Restoration and development of infrastructure with inclusiveness, barrier-free accessibility, and environmental friendliness (Build Back Greener) as guiding principles.
6. Modernizing and reconstructing the housing sector for energy efficiency, inclusiveness, accessibility, and climate change adaptation.
7. Community development through programs for the integration of IDPs as additional human capital.

Effective cooperation among citizens, local government, public organizations, businesses, and the state, as well as international partnerships and lessons learned from European cities, are crucial for Zaporizhzhia's green post-war recovery. Today, despite wartime challenges, the entire community of Zaporizhzhia is dedicated to fostering these conditions.

ARTS AND CULTURE: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE



by Annaliina Pahkala | annaliina.pahkala@espoo.fi
photo by Laura Löfman

ADVANCING CLIMATE NEUTRALITY IN BALTIC SEA REGION CITIES THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION



by Climate-4-CAST project team | climate-4-cast@hcu-hamburg.de
photo by ©Kannapat - stock.adobe.com

In truly happy and fulfilling life, people need to be able to look beyond mere survival needs and enjoy expressing themselves, creating, and experiencing joyful things. Often, this can be achieved via arts and culture. Culture brings people together, creates meaning, and strengthens the sense of belonging. Espoo, the second largest city in Finland and the Chair of the Cultural Cities Commission 2024–2025, implements several models to ensure that in experiencing culture, no one is left behind.

During challenging times, it is common for public discourse to portray art and culture as excessive luxuries, overlooking their considerable power to create well-being. Regrettably, the discourse can ring true for individuals experiencing financial strain, making it difficult for them to engage in cultural activities. Kaikukortti, first introduced in Espoo, was created to tackle this problem by working as a free-of-charge ticket to many cultural venues and courses. It is a kind, accessible way to lower the barrier for experiencing culture, despite one's financial status.

Espoo also approaches its citizens with cross-sectoral methods to create services for meaningful spare time. Espoo's Cultural and Sports Units work together to offer senior citizens joyful moments of arts, culture, and exercise near their homes via Senioripaku (The Senior Van). Senioripaku, operating when many services are on a summer break, makes stops around Espoo, making access to cultural and sports services easy for senior citizens. With a moving service, Espoo tackles the challenge of the city's vast size and widespread population.

Bringing people together

The importance of meaningful spare time has been recognised on a national level in Finland, which introduced the nationwide Finnish Model for Leisure Activities in 2021. The model's aim is to offer leisure activities for children, near their schools and free of charge. Great care has been taken to formulate the hobby catalogue according to the preferences of children and young people in Espoo's implementation of the model, the Espoo Hobby Path. It joins the forces of culture, sports, and education to truly serve children and young people – especially those who might otherwise lack access to hobbies.

Not only do programmes such as Senioripaku or the Espoo Hobby Path offer interesting activities to people of different ages, but they also create spaces for coming together. That is perhaps where culture's true power lies – in its ability to bring people together to experience meaningful things.

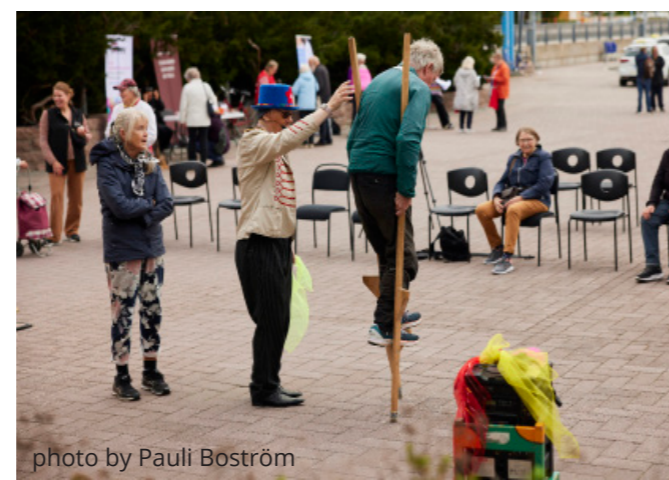


photo by Pauli Boström

As the urgency to address climate change intensifies, collaborative efforts and innovative approaches become paramount in achieving climate neutrality in cities. One such initiative aiming for significant strides in the Baltic Sea Region is the Climate-4-CAST project.

Climate-4-CAST, a transnational cooperation project co-funded under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, embodies the commitment of UBC member cities to lead the way towards sustainable urban environments. At its core, Climate-4-CAST empowers local public authorities through an open-source decision support tool, linking climate actions to municipal budgets and ultimately enabling the establishment of climate budgets.

Launched in November 2023 with a projected completion date of October 2026, Climate-4-CAST unites a consortium of 10 diverse partners from Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland, and Sweden. Led by the HafenCity University Hamburg (DE), the partnership includes two UBC member cities, Aarhus (DK) and Riga (LV), among its six pilot cities, alongside other UBC members serving as Associated Organisations in the project: Växjö and Luleå (SE), Hamburg (DE), Turku (FI), and Gdańsk (PL). Leading the project's transfer and dissemination activities in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond is the Sustainable Cities Commission of the Union of the Baltic Cities.

Project's objectives

The project's innovative approach aims to confront critical challenges hindering climate action across cities in the region. By providing essential and practical decision-support, Climate-4-CAST addresses uncertainties

surrounding emission impacts, timing, and associated costs within local public authorities. Moreover, the project seeks to bridge the gap between climate experts and decision-makers, fostering more effective communication and informed decision-making.

Through collaborative efforts with diverse stakeholders from the Baltic Sea Region countries, Climate-4-CAST aims to support cities in implementing climate actions effectively. By catalysing innovation and best practices within the Climate-4-CAST project, UBC members and the other project partners continue to serve as trendsetters in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond, driving the EU agenda towards a green and just transition.

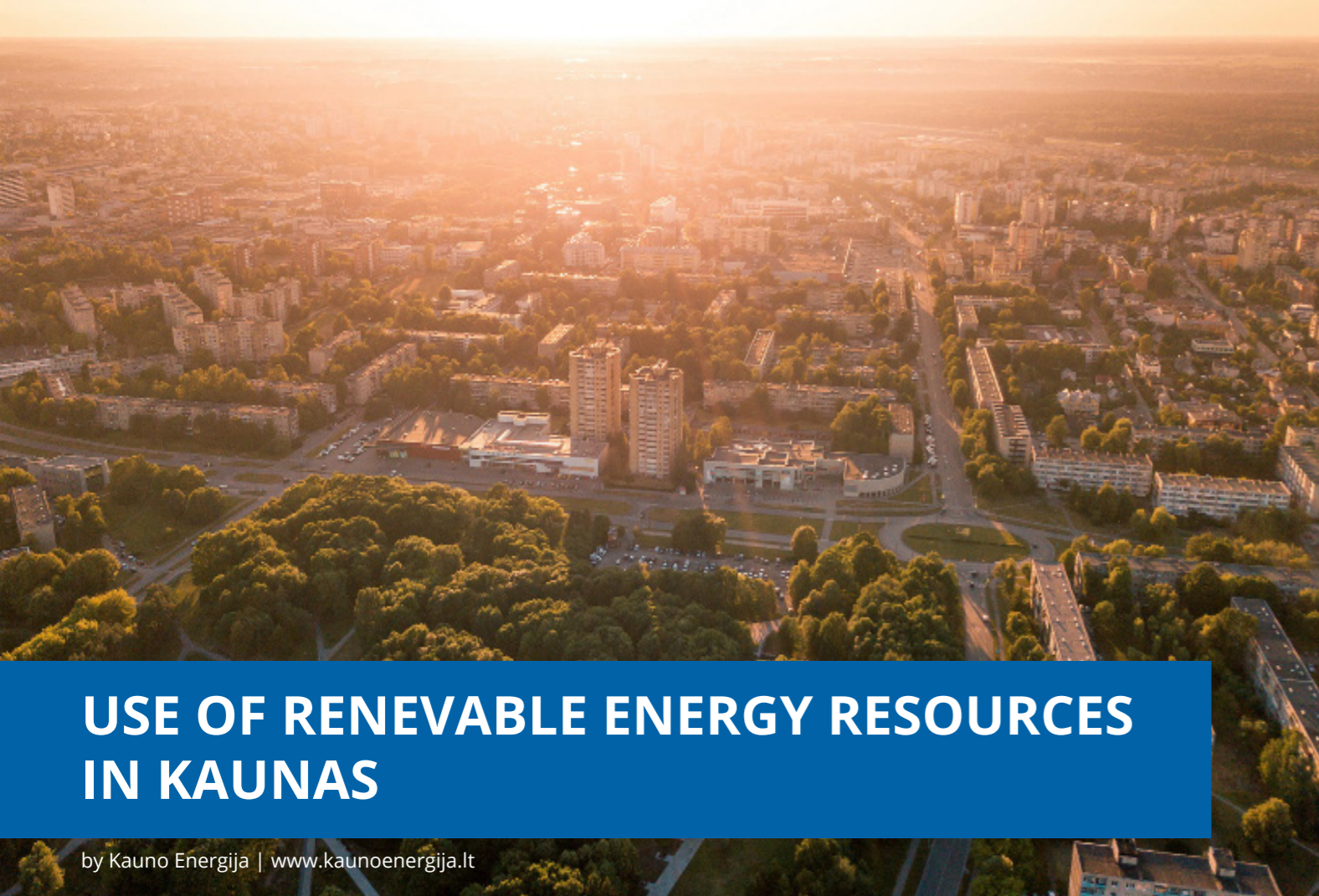
In the broader context of the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030, Climate-4-CAST exemplifies the commitment of UBC member cities to lead the way in ambitious climate strategies and to promote the dissemination of tools and methods developed in sustainability-related projects across UBC cities. Through partnerships and collaborative initiatives such as the Climate-4-CAST project, UBC members remain at the forefront of advancing sustainable urban development in the Baltic Sea Region.

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union

ENERGY TRANSITION
Climate-4-CAST



USE OF RENEVABLE ENERGY RESOURCES IN KAUNAS

by Kauno Energija | www.kaunoenergija.lt

Energy transformation - from natural gas to biofuel. One of the goals of Lithuania's national energy strategy is to achieve by 2050 that heat production does not emit CO2 into the environment. Kauno Energija actively contributes to this target: the company implements less polluting technologies and applies preventive measures.

In order to reduce the use of fossil fuels (natural gas) in heat production, in 2012 "Kauno Energija" started investing in the construction of thermal boilers using biofuel. Using support from the European Union Structural Funds and the Lithuanian Environmental Investment Fund, "Kauno Energija" has invested more than 5.38 million euro in the construction of biofuel boilers in recent years. This has increased the share of heat generated from renewable energy sources from 11 to 90 per cent. The amount of greenhouse gases (CO2) emitted by the company in 2021 was 22,203 tons.

The energy transformation of "Kauno Energija", transitioning from fossil fuels to the use of renewable energy resources, has received international recognition. At the Global District Energy Climate Awards ceremony, the company won an award for the modernisation of Kaunas city's heat economy, which had the greatest impact on reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions.

Newly constructed buildings utilising city heat are classified in the A++ energy efficiency class.

In accordance with the Construction Technical Regulations, newly constructed buildings must comply with the A++ energy efficiency class. This means that a larger portion of the building's consumed energy must come from renewable

energy sources. According to the same regulation, the heat supplied by the company is recognised as produced from renewable energy sources. Therefore, the buildings supplied with it will meet the requirements of the A++ energy efficiency class.

We guarantee environmentally friendly heat production to our business clients.

We care not only about the environment but also about motivating our customers to use city heat. For business customers, we will provide a guarantee (certificate) every month with the invoice, confirming that the heat energy supplied by us was produced from renewable energy sources.

Additional efforts by the company to reduce CO2 emissions

- We are installing biofuel-fired heat generation units in our own production sources.
- We reconstruct an average of 8 km of heat supply networks of various diameters annually.
- We conduct "green" procurement. We select suppliers not only based on the price and quality of goods, services, or work but also based on their lesser environmental impact.
- We gradually renew our fleet of vehicles by choosing electric and hybrid cars.
- We sort waste generated in production and administrative activities and dispose of it to waste management companies according to established procedures.
- The company takes the initiative to inform the public about energy-saving measures in order to reduce air pollution.



by City Promotion Office in Darłowo | promocja@darlowo.pl

The city of Darłowo is open to ecological initiatives. It recently hosted an expedition under the slogan "Save the Baltic Sea". It also proudly promotes its own park revitalization projects and a unique nature footbridge over the dune.

At the end of March, beautiful sunny weather graced the beach in Darłowo. Usually, at this time of year, there are only a few walkers here, as the season is still several weeks away. However, on that day it was full of life. Members of a special expedition under the slogan "Save the Baltic Sea" walked across the Darłowo beach. Guests from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Italy are traveling through 8 countries covering a distance of 6000 km! All to draw attention to ecology and the pollution problems of the Baltic Sea.

It was an excellent opportunity to involve local preschool children and maritime school students in the cleanup of Darłowo beach. A large delegation of residents welcomed the expedition participants on the beach in Darłowo. Everyone joined in the ecological action.

"We learned about this unique expedition from Lithuanian organizers during the last General Conference of the UBC in

Palanga", says Arkadiusz Klimowicz, the Mayor of Darłowo. "We were in constant contact with those marching along the Baltic Sea shore and decided to use this day for ecological activities in our city", he adds.

This was not the first ecological action of this type in Darłowo. The city proudly promotes its original project called "Green Darłowo", within which, thanks to funding from the European Union, it restored three city parks and created a completely new one from scratch. In total, nearly 12 hectares of city greenery have gained a new look. These areas were promoted during last year's "Clean, Green Cities" campaign. In Darłowo, the organizers met with residents in "Wyspa Łososiowa" ("Salmon's Island") park. That is where a cleanup action took place (145 kg of waste were collected) and trees were planted (5 catalpa trees). A number of interesting attractions were prepared. Ecological workshops (including making wicker products from paper, "zero waste") and waste segregation classes were conducted.

"Darłowo is a green city that not only focuses on individual actions, but also proudly promotes the country's only nature footbridge built over the dune" says Artur Wejnerowski, Head of the City Promotion Office. "From there, you can admire protected plant species, and in the evenings, watch the most beautiful sunsets", he adds.

The green transformation in Darłowo involves much more action. The city implemented a project to replace furnaces as part of the "West Pomeranian Anti-Smog Program". Darłowo also joined the nationwide "Warm Home" program, which financially supports initiatives aimed at replacing heating sources and insulating buildings.

UBC News & FACES

by Anna Sośnicka | anna.sosnicka@ubc.net



92nd UBC Executive Board meeting, Riga, 24-26 April 2024

92nd UBC Executive Board meeting, Riga, 24-26 April 2024

The meeting was opened by UBC President Mantas Jurgutis. Linda Ozola, Deputy Chair of Riga City Council, welcomed the participants and presented the city of Riga.

Aurélie Royet-Gounin, Ambassador of France in Latvia, invited UBC cities to the 3rd edition of the United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC), which will be co-hosted by France and Costa Rica and held in Nice on 9-13 June 2025. The overarching theme of the Conference is "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean".

UBC accepted Ukrainian cities Rubizhne and Chernihivka as Associated Cities and Rivne region as Partner. The representatives made presentations introducing their cities and region.

Help for Ukraine has been continuously high on the UBC Agenda. In April UBC was accepted as an associate partner of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. The Alliance was launched by the Committee of Regions and its partners, including EU and Ukrainian associations of local and regional authorities, to coordinate their joint efforts directed towards helping the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

At the last General Conference in Palanga, October 2023, the Task Force to discuss Ukrainian cities membership and participation in UBC was established. Marko Paunovic, Head of UBC Antenna in Brussels, which moderates the TF, presented the proposed action plan with the time frame. The main aim of

the TF is to prepare the framework for the integration of new Ukrainian cities into the UBC activities, support them during the war, and post-war democratic consolidation and recovery. The TF will consist of the Member Cities, Executive Board, Board of Audit, Secretariat, Presidium, Commissions.

Dmitrijs Zverevs, Chair of Youthful Cities Commission presented an idea to establish the UBC Youth Board. The first idea was expressed by YCC at the XVII UBC General Conference in Palanga, October 2023. At the meeting of the Commission in March 2024 in Gdańsk, the concept was discussed and further developed. The Board authorised the YCC to develop concrete proposal for establishment and operations of UBC Youth Board.

Chairs of the UBC commissions: Cultural Cities, Learning Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Sustainable Cities and Youthful Cities made presentations on current and planned activities in 2024.

Paweł Żaboklicki, UBC Secretary General, informed about the project "MariEx - Creating new Maritime Experience Points & marketing narratives for land tourists to renew the maritime destination profile of the South Baltic area". The project has been recently approved by the Interreg South Baltic Programme. UBC is a partner in the project.

The meeting was followed by study tours, showing the impressive modern face of the city - VEFRESH center for innovation, VERDE office district, startups, Latvian University House of Science and Ola foundation. The participants visited also the support center for Ukrainian residents.



UBC joined European Alliance of Cities and Regions for reconstruction of Ukraine



by Anna Sośnicka | anna.sosnicka@ubc.net

Union of the Baltic Cities has been accepted as an associate partner of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine. The official acceptance letter on behalf of the Committee of the Regions President Vasco Alves Cordeiro will be sent soon.

The European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine was launched by the CoR and its partners, including EU and Ukrainian associations of local and regional authorities, to coordinate their joint efforts directed towards helping the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine.

The aims of the Alliance are:

- to coordinate joint efforts, with European Union cities and regions ready to deploy resources to support an effective and sustainable reconstruction of Ukraine;
- to further facilitate the contacts and cooperation of its core partners with the EU institutions and within the "Ukraine reconstruction platform", as well as between EU and Ukrainian local and regional authorities and associations;
- to provide information and feedback to EU institutions and the "Ukraine reconstruction platform", and foster the political dialogue with the local and regional level accompanying the reconstruction efforts;
- to facilitate providing expertise in capacity building, good governance, and technical assistance to cities and regions in Ukraine.

In the framework of Alliance, 15 partners including Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Association of Ukrainian

Cities, Eurocities, Energy cities, Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and over 40 associated partners – cities, municipalities, regions and organizations, will join forces to help Ukraine in recovery and reconstruction.

More information: https://cor.europa.eu/en/engage/Pages/European-Alliance-of-Cities-and-Regions-for-the-reconstruction-of-Ukraine.aspx?utm_source=SharedLink&utm_medium=ShortURL&utm_campaign=UkraineAlliance



Everything you always wanted to know about BSR education systems

by Matti Mäkelä | matti.makela@turku.fi



Learning Cities Commission decided in its' Turku meeting in September 2023 to organize a series of webinars about the education systems in different Baltic Sea countries. The goal is to give education experts more information about the differences, similarities and best practices in different countries.

"Sharing information about different education systems is crucial for fostering understanding and collaboration. Variations may include curriculum content, teaching methods, resources, funding, and cultural influences. Understanding of education systems in every country helps us to make informed decisions, facilitates exchange of experience and promotes new project ideas", says Ilona Doniņa (Head of International and Investment Projects Division from Rīga Local Government) about the importance and added value of the webinars.

Project Manager Niina Salonen (Turku) agrees with Donina: "When planning joint initiatives for education development in Baltic Sea Region it is crucial to understand the backgrounds and starting points of the different education systems across the region. The presentations and discussions help us to identify possible challenges and to learn from the best practices of each country." Salonen herself was a speaker in the presentation of the Finnish education system.

One-hour webinars started with the education system of Poland already in October 2023. Until May 2024 the education systems of Latvia, Finland and Lithuania were introduced. Later in the Spring and Fall of 2024 we will hear the presentations about the education systems of Ukraine, Sweden, Denmark, Estonia and Germany. Webinars have been uploaded into the UBC website.

Education Conference in Riga, meeting in Tartu

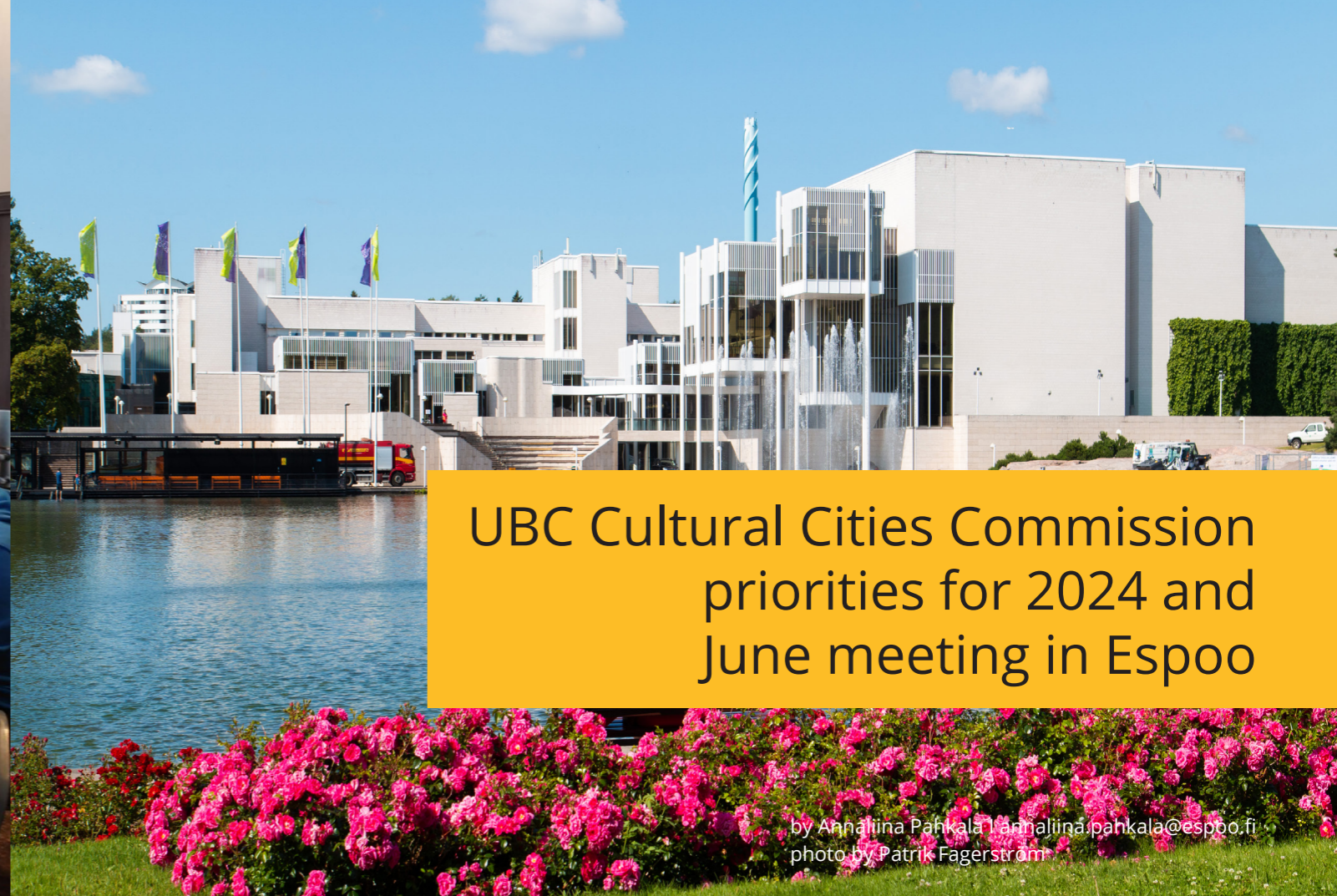
Learning Cities Commission met in Tartu, European Capital of Culture 2024, on 9th and 10th of April 2024 with 23 participants from six countries and nine cities. Commission decided that the UBC's 2024 Education Conference will be held in Riga on 23rd of October. The main theme of the Conference will be the future of education. Registration for the conference starts in late May.

Commission meeting included also presentation of the Estonian education system and study visits to kindergarten, two schools of basic education and the University of Tartu.

Takeways from the Youthful Cities Commission's meeting in Gdańsk



by Dmitrijs Zverevs | dmitrijs.zverevs@riga.lv



UBC Cultural Cities Commission priorities for 2024 and June meeting in Espoo

by Annaliina Pahkala | annaliina.pahkala@espoo.fi
photo by Patrik Fagerström

On 20-21 of March young people, youth workers and civils servants from 8 different municipalities around the Baltic Sea met for a vibrant and ground-breaking meeting of the Youthful Cities Commission.

As we are getting closer to finalising the Commission's transformation process, it was once again confirmed that there's still potential for it to be more instrumental for young people themselves. It is not only about having young people present at the Commission's and other UBC events (which is exceptionally valuable for all the stakeholders, by the way) but also about encouraging their active participation on the local level via experience exchange and learning from each other. Therefore, the Commission is now starting mapping local youth councils around the Baltic Sea in order to create a common platform for them for cooperation and information exchange. Would you like your youth council to be on the map? Just write us an email!

As we spoke about making young people more visible and more heard at all levels of governance, quite naturally we found ourselves in the heat of a discussion about establishment of UBC Youth Board – a bold idea first voiced during the UBC General Conference in Palanga last year. The Commission committed to nurturing the proposal to the level that it can be voted for during the General Conference. We will share our first conclusions (about the concept of a permanent youth representation body within UBC) with the Executive Board already in April. Would you like to be a part of the discussion, too? Then just share your ideas with us! We are keen to hear them and think about them together with you!

As you probably know, the next issue of the UBC Bulletin will be dedicated to youth (something we are very enthusiastic about, naturally). So, we took a time to think about some of the thematic focuses it might have. Mental health, inclusion and active youth participation were among the proposed ones. Still remember about the local youth councils we mentioned some paragraphs earlier? We think it would be great if they could be among the contributors for the Bulletin.

So, if we may ask you for just one thing at this moment, it would be reaching out to where your local youth council is (Telegram, Instagram, local coffee shop or, maybe, the dark basements of the City Hall) and opening your city's network of UBC-associates for them. We bet it will definitely be more fun, but it actually can also be a beginning of another big thing. In the meantime, Youthful Cities Commission will make sure there are things for the young people to do within the network.



In the 2023 XVII UBC General Conference in Palanga, the cities of Espoo and Kaunas found a common interest for multidisciplinary development in the cultural field. This resulted in Espoo beginning the term 2024-2025 as the Chair of the Cultural Cities Commission, in cooperation with Kaunas as the Vice Chair.

For the year 2024, the Commission prioritises themes of professionalisation of the cultural and creative field, regional identity, and participation and co-creation through art and culture. The Cultural Cities Commission is also participating in the project Baltic Sea Region Cultural Pearls for More Resilient Cities and Regions. The Commission's term has kicked off with inspirational online meetings and the first webinar, and as summer draws near, the time has come for the Cultural Cities Commission to set a course for the first in-person meeting of the year.

Commission's meeting in Espoo

On 6-7 of June, the Commission will gather for the Baltic Sea Culture Summer Meeting in the Chair city of Espoo. We welcome the Commission members for a discussion and ideation together, and for an unforgettable visit to the summery seaside city. In addition to meeting face-to-face, the visit will involve getting acquainted with the local cultural services and Espoo's own twist on them. The action-packed and exciting programme includes:

- Thursday 6th of June:
- Study visit to Lippulaiva Library
 - Meeting and sharing of best practices
 - Keynote speech by philosopher and author Frank Martela
 - Dinner together

- Friday 7th of June:
- Commission meeting
 - Study visit to EMMA Espoo Museum of Modern Art
 - The concert of children's International Summer Summit
 - Choral Festival (organized by Tapiola Choir)

The registration for the meeting will open soon. For further information, visit the UBC website ubc.net/event/ubc-cultural-cities-commission-meeting-in-espoo/ (the website is being updated) or contact annaliina.pahkala@espoo.fi / taiju.kiesila@espoo.fi

Warm welcome to our Baltic Sea Region Cultural Commission colleagues – see you in Espoo!



UBC Safe Cities Commission projects

by Kaspars Varpins | kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv



Since the last Baltic Cities Bulletin (Spring 2023) there has been some updates on the projects with UBC Safe Cities Commission involvement.

VOALA - Volunteers and Local Authorities - Baltic Sea Region Network

Funded by the Swedish Institute, the VOALA project concluded with recommendations, an overview of the analyzes and conclusions identified during the project, which identified challenges, good practices and ideas for further action. An important contribution to the conclusions in the form of experiences, practices and suggestions was made by the organized meeting of the UBC Safe Cities Commission and the international round table "Cooperation with voluntary organizations active in the areas of civil protection and building resilient societies", which took place in Gdańsk in September 2023. Already in the last phase of the project, active work began on preparing the project on a larger scale.

BYFORES - Baltic Youth for Resilient Society

CBSS Project Support Facility funded project BYFORES, like VOALA project, has come to an end. As well in this project, recommendations have been developed. The project focused especially on promoting the recommendations of the previous project "ReSit- Situational Picture of Volunteerism for Societal Resilience in the Baltic Sea Region" from the point of view of young people as volunteers concentrating on clarifying the role and mission of young volunteers, improving their coordination, making it more attractive, etc.

Based on the VOALA and BYFORES projects, the Baltic Sea Region Network of Volunteer organizations and authorities has been created. This platform was established to improve coordination and cooperation among volunteer organisations and authorities at the national and international level in the field of civil protection. The

Terms of Reference of the Network has been developed and organisations (including local authorities) are invited to apply for membership of the Network by writing to the Chair of the Finnish National Rescue Association (kaisa.eskelinen@spek.fi) and the Coordinator of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (vineta.polatside@cbss.org). By contacting them it is possible to ask for the Terms of Reference of the Network, to get acquainted with them.

PA SECURE KIDS - Strengthening children's participation in civil protection and building resilient societies

The European Commission's DG Justice co-funded project "PA Secure Kids" has been moving forward accordingly. One of the outcomes - "Existing mechanisms and processes for child and youth participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden" has been developed. The mapping report offers an up-to-date overview of mechanisms and practices that exist in the Baltic Sea Region to involve children and young people in DRR practices. The mapping exercise is the first step in the development of sustainable and inclusive mechanisms for child participation in planning, implementation and follow up of national and local measures for building resilient societies.

In February 2024 a workshop on Child Participation in DRR took place in Stockholm, where national experts engaged in comprehensive discussions on the current status of child participation in DRR in their respective countries. The conversation revolved around identifying areas for improvement and building the capacity of authorities to ensure effective child involvement. It also explored different aspects that enable child participation in the prevention and preparedness stages of DRR. The commitment to ongoing collaboration was evident, with experts pledging to train as trainers, contributing to the dissemination and application of the mechanism to be created. Next national workshop will take place in end of the May 2024. Meanwhile, in September 2024 will take place a workshop of the project

partners for the development of scenarios to be used in the interactive workshops for children. In addition, the testing on the developed guidelines to work with children will begin this summer.

RESILIENT CITIES - Connecting resilient cities

The EU CERV Programme funded project "Resilient cities" will have its first crisis management conference, that will take place in Vienna, on 6-8 May, 2024 co-organized by International City Network for Crisis Management and UBC Safe Cities Commission. The Vienna conference with the topic "No Fear of the Dark - preparing for energy shortages together" will address the issue of how to deal with the energy shortages in work with the local communities. At the conference there will be presentations from various cities, including UBC network cities - Rostock, Pori and Tallinn. If you are interested to take part in the conference, please contact UBC Safe Cities Commission Chairman Kaspars Vārpiņš (kaspars.varpins@liepaja.lv).

Following the Vienna, next conference will take place in Liepaja (Latvia) on 1-3 October, 2024 with the topic "Crisis communication: How to reach stakeholders?". More information will follow, but already now you can mark the dates in your calendar. Furthermore, in May 2025 the conference will take place in Ljubljana with the topic "Safe place to stay - preparing for sheltering people", but the concluding conference will be in October 2025 in Rostock with the topic "Digitizing crisis communication and warning procedures in an urban city".

NEEDS - Needs-based education and studies in societal security

The Erasmus+ funded project NEEDS has concluded and all the goals have been achieved. The project has received "Good practice" label in the Erasmus+ Project Results platform. If you are interested in taking the NEEDS project developed Societal Security Online Course, visit the course website - <https://cbss.org/civseccourse/>.

From NEEDS to SEEDS

Right after the conclusion of the NEEDS project, UBC Safe Cities Commission together with Riga Technical University and Swedish Defence University as a lead partner received funding from CBSS Project Support facility to run the project "From NEEDS to SEEDS" which will come to an end already this summer. During the project a Summer University was organized where project partners together with the students developed various learning tools and approaches for the societal security education. The highlight of the project was the participation in co-organization of the Baltic Excellence Program together with the Ministry of the Interior of Finland that took place in March 2024 in Helsinki.

RAZOM - Planting the seeds for cultivating resilience and cooperation in the BSR and Ukraine

Based on the NEEDS and From NEEDS to SEEDS projects, Swedish Defence University together with Council of the Baltic Sea States and Lviv State University of Life Safety has received Swedish Institute funding. The money was awarded from the Baltic Sea Neighbourhood Programme Special call Ukraine to Strengthen societal security and build capacity in Europe by transnationally discussing and sharing experiences, knowledge, good practices, common challenges, policy recommendations and networks. UBC Safe Cities Commission Chairman Kaspars Vārpiņš has been invited to the project as an expert to bring the point of view and expertise of municipalities to the project.

UBC Safe Cities Commission meeting in Pori, May 21-23, 2024

The next meeting of the UBC Safe Cities Commission will be held in the Finnish city of Pori on May 21-23, 2024. Work on the agenda is still ongoing, and more detailed information about the program along with an invitation to register will be available soon on your e-mail and will be published on the UBC website.



Sustainable transformation for resilient coastal city commissions meeting in Gdańsk

by Paulina Szewczyk | p.szewczyk@bpp.gdynia.pl
and Agnieszka Ilola | agnieszka.ilola@turku.fi
photos by Danuta Giorewa- Brach



Cross sectoral and multi-level: UBC TALKS webinar series

by Mariia Andreeva | mariia.andreeva@turku.fi
photo: Mariia Andreeva

Following the success of the UBC Planning and Sustainable Cities Commission meeting in Turku, we are pleased to announce that the next joint Commissions meeting will be organized on 9-12 September 2024 in Gdańsk, Poland.

Gdańsk is the Polish maritime capital with the population reaching half a million. It is a large center of economic life, science, culture and a popular tourist destination.

According to the concept of a compact city, developing cities are looking for opportunities to fill in urban structures as close as possible to their centres. Gdańsk development strategy encourages seeking new solutions and implementing adaptive measures to make public spaces more green, inclusive and accessible. At the meeting, we will look for opportunities to revitalize urban structure by finding the best ideas for sustainable and smart transformation of port and industrial areas.

Don't miss this excellent opportunity and join us for inspiring lectures presented by experts and successful practitioners and tap into the combined know-how of your peers during in-depth area transformation workshops!

In Gdańsk we are going to work on three workshop areas

WORKSHOP AREA 1 comprises about 38 ha of the Duty Free Zone, located in exposed and representative part of harbor entrance. The main activity at this moment is reloading of general cargo, including fruit, commercial vehicles, frozen fish and seafood.

WORKSHOP AREA 2 covers 19 ha at the southern embankment of the Martwa Wisła River, opposite the Westerplatte peninsula with a monument – symbol of starting of the II World War. This area is bordered by historical Nowy Port. Currently, it is a part of the Port Gdańsk. Both presented areas are generating heavy truck traffic through the revitalized and developing residential areas of Letnica and Nowy Port.

WORKSHOP AREA 3 covers 17 ha and is located in the vicinity of the football arena and the exhibition and congress centre. This location has convenient access to public transport: rail, tram and bus. In addition, it is located at an important road connection leading through the tunnel under the Martwa Wisła River.

We strongly encourage you to consider your participation in the upcoming UBC Planning and Sustainable Cities Commissions meeting in Gdańsk. Places will be limited so be on the lookout for registration details soon!



Majority of UBC member cities already joined UBC TALKS – don't miss out on this opportunity!

By the springtime of 2024 we can safely say that UBC TALKS webinars are a well-recognised platform for our members: representatives from 47 UBC cities participated at least in one, or even in all 22 editions so far. These series were established by UBC Sustainable Cities Commission in January 2020, and this year, we organise 5 webinars tackling various sustainability aspects, climate-related challenges, and cooperation-driven solutions.

On 27 February 2024, our Secretariat arranged a special webinar edition with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, offering funding for innovative and climate-smart cities. Local authorities are at the core of the programme, and for our cities this funding offers a great range of opportunities for improving urban environments.

“We have a specially designed thematic focus that meets the needs of public authorities. Our Programme addresses the issues that are of high relevance to all Baltic Sea cities: we want to make them more resilient and greener,” emphasized Ronald Lieske, Director of the Interreg BSR Programme MA/JS during the webinar.

This webinar engaged Interreg experts advising on what activities could be funded under the current call, the Monitoring Committee, as well as two already funded projects: Arts on Prescription and SUMP for BSR. While the Arts on Prescription ensures inclusive transition

through engaging citizens in social art activities to improve their mental wellbeing, the SUMP for BSR focuses on the transition towards people's active mobility and healthier lifestyle while reducing traffic emissions.

Later in spring, on 26 March another UBC TALKS webinar looked into the topic of equipping cities with knowledge and tools to address PFAS and other hazardous substances in water. This webinar, driven by the EMPEREST project achievements, introduced the growing concern and challenges of PFAS, a group of man-made pollutants. To help municipalities identify pollution hotspots and prioritise wisely the use of their resources for monitoring and cleaning up, EMPEREST develops simple, locally adapted risk assessment tools, paired with training materials to increase the know-how of water utilities and municipal authorities.

Each of these webinars hosted over 60 live participants, and more events are coming in May, September and November! All UBC TALKS take place on last Tuesday of the month at 9.30 CET: join us to learn how your cities can improve further!

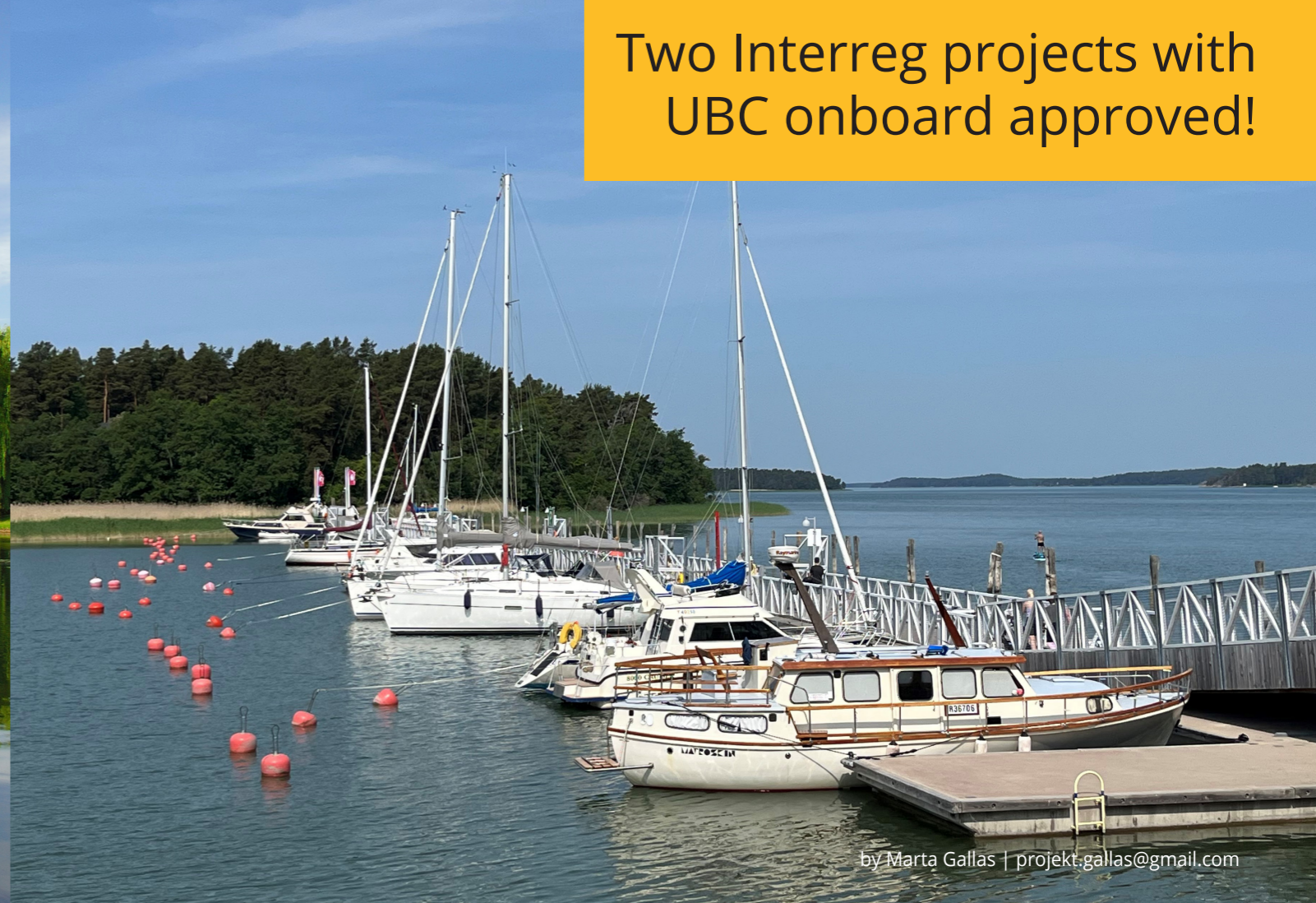
Upcoming webinars: www.ubc-sustainable.net/events
Past UBC TALKS: www.ubc-sustainable.net/ubc-talks

Collaborative efforts for sustainable urban development



by Wolfgang Schmidt | wolfgang.schmidt@kiel.de

Two Interreg projects with UBC onboard approved!



by Marta Gallas | projekt.gallas@gmail.com

In a world where urbanization is rapidly transforming our cities, sustainable development has become paramount. In this pursuit, collaborative efforts between organizations play a crucial role in shaping intelligent and livable regions. One such promising collaboration is between the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission and the Smarte KielRegion, marking a significant step towards sustainable urban development in 2024.

Grounded in the UBC Strategy 2022-2030 and insights gathered from a series of events in 2023, the Action Plan for 2024 by the Smart and Prospering Cities Commission focuses on the concept of the Smart Region. This vision aims to intelligently and futuristically develop cities and their surrounding areas, with a primary focus on effortless, rapid, and carbon-neutral transportation, sustainable energy applications, and community well-being.

The collaboration with Smarte KielRegion, funded by the KielRegion and the German Federal Ministry of Housing, Urban Development, and Construction, strengthens the efforts towards realizing this vision. Together, they seek to harness digital solutions to enhance well-being, protect coastal landscapes, and network people, resources, and data for optimal solutions.

Cooperation plans for 2024

Through a series of events in 2024, both organizations will engage stakeholders, experts, and interested parties to explore core objectives and solutions for sustainable urban development. The virtual event offers an opportunity for

deep dives into intelligent urban development, discussions on sustainable transportation solutions, and insights into digital solutions for regional well-being. The in-person event provides a hands-on approach, encouraging participants to analyze real-world projects and engage in workshops focused on sustainable solutions.

Crucially, citizen and stakeholder involvement remains pivotal throughout the project. By soliciting feedback through platforms like LinkedIn polls, both organizations ensure that the voices of the community are heard, and solutions are tailored to their needs.

In conclusion, the collaboration between the UBC Smart and Prospering Cities Commission and the Smarte KielRegion marks a significant stride towards sustainable urban development. By combining expertise, resources, and community engagement, they pave the way for intelligent and livable regions, setting an example for collaborative efforts in addressing the challenges of urbanization in the 21st century.



Creating new Maritime Experience Points and marketing narratives for land tourists to renew the maritime destination profile of the South Baltic area - the MariEx project has been approved.

The South Baltic area is a hotspot for both coastal tourism and - around the lagoons and in the hinterlands - rural tourism in proximity to the coastline. For many holiday guests, maritime experiences are an essential part of their stay and one of the motivations to visit the region.

Challenges are thereby to find a proper balance between the wishes of the land tourists and the needs of their "genuine" users, so that the maritime character of the places can be kept alive in an authentic way.

To address the above-mentioned challenges, the project MariEx was established with the principal goal to seek to create new kinds of maritime experience points (MEPs), and to take them up into the "narratives" of the touristic marketing towards holiday tourists staying at the coast or in its hinterlands. Thus, the authentic maritime character of the South Baltic area as holiday destination will be safeguarded and further promoted, for the benefit of the attractiveness of both seaside resorts and hinterland locations.

The project has just been funded from Interreg South Baltic Programme with a total project budget of approx. 2,3 mln Euro. It is planned for 3 years, starting in May 2024 and finishing in April 2027. Partnership of the Project include: Tourism Association Vorpommern from Germany as the Lead Partner, Municipality of Kröslin, The Association of Sea Cities and Municipalities based in Gdansk, Municipality of Darłowo, Administration of Klaipeda District Municipality,

Association Klaipeda Region, Hörte Harbour Association, Destination Sydkyst Denmark and Union of the Baltic Cities.

We are also proud to announce the start of a new project "BOATMAN: creating a South Baltic network of sustainable-tourism hubs connected to the maritime heritage theme" co-financed by the INTERREG South Baltic Programme 2021-27.

The project, initiated by the Jack Strong Foundation (PL) and Klaipėda University (LT) has a goal of popularizing recreational boat building and other activities around heritage ships and boats.

BOATMAN is a joint initiative of sailors, historians, operators of heritage ships, local municipalities and tourism professionals from Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and Denmark. Together they want to revive the unique common Baltic Sea heritage of wooden boat building craft in the places on the South Baltic coast, where there is demand for innovative and sustainable out-of-season tourist attractions. Five community centers /sustainable tourism hubs connected to maritime heritage will be created in Västervik (SE), Dreverna (Klaipeda Region, LT), Gdańsk, Puck and Tolk Micko (PL). Within the projects investments and volunteer work several historical vessels will be restored or their replicas built. The whole touristic offer will be given a common branding and professional joint marketing. European Maritime Heritage Association (EMH) and Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) are among the international supporters of this project.



PITCH project pilot-testing phase completed

by Anna Sońnicka | anna.sosnicka@ubc.net

The 4th Transnational Partners meeting of the PITCH project was held on 10-11 April 2024 in Athens. It was hosted by SYMPLEXIS, the lead partner responsible for Work Package 3: Pilot-testing of local integration strategies featuring personalized integration roadmaps for migrant women. UBC is a partner in the project.

On the agenda there were topics: finalization of local integration strategies & PITCH Model, capacity-building activities for operators and community actors, future dissemination events and actions. During the meeting, the partners: Symplexis, CESIE, ZRS, INCOMA, CSI, DDG and Swideas, shared the results of the local activities, also challenges they had to face during this pilot - testing phase.

During this phase, in all countries the local advisory committees, consisting of 10 members (2 from municipality, 3 local stakeholders, 3 representatives of migrant women, 2 project partners) were selected to translate the PITCH model to the 7 local integration strategies. A set of tools allowing to identify the individual needs and aspirations of each woman was developed. In each country 5 linguistic and cultural mediators were selected to support the women.

The groups of 30 migrant women (altogether 210), not taking part in the life of community, were formed. They took part in Cozy Corners - 10 gatherings in each country, offering an informal atmosphere and a safe space, where the women were asked what their needs, wishes and obstacles for successful integration were. The personalized roadmap for integration for each woman was prepared.

Later, all migrant women took part in the training program. Three Activity Clusters: Upskilling, Awareness and Social training offered

wide range of topics. Upskilling cluster offered i.a. language lessons, skills development like creating basic documents, a bank account, social media accounts, writing a cv, online job applications, writing a business plan, study visit to business incubators.

Awareness rising / Guidance cluster concerned rights and duties, abuse of rights, domestic violence, sexual abuse, active citizenship, career training guidance, talent discovery, skills analysis and career path design.

In the Social cluster there were two Neighborhood walks - Exploring the city and Exploring local businesses founded by migrant women, also Social cafés, e.g. Movie nights, Picnic, DIY workshop, etc.

Each migrant women must have chosen at least one topic from the Upskilling Cluster (20 hours), at least one topic from the Awareness / Guidance cluster (15 hours) and attend at least 5 social cafes (15 hours). Minimum 50 hours in total.

In the next project phase UBC is responsible for dissemination activities such as: the PITCH White paper on the PITCH Model, a webinar "New approaches in integration - A model to support integration strategy building", Final Conference which will be held in Brussels in December 2024.

More information: <https://pitch-eu.eu/>



Co-funded by
the European Union



MC-YOU meeting in Faro

by Jakub Rybicki | jakub.rybicki@ubc.net

MC-YOU project members held its first onsite work meeting in Faro, Portugal, on the 21st and 22nd of March. The event was a great opportunity to meet in person and proceed with the project's assignments.

MC-YOU project aims to empower young people to take a proactive role in creating resilient cities. With this end in view the youngsters are supposed to develop and test a new youth-led policy model that includes leveraging creative and educational potential of Minecraft. The project also offers a sustainable solution to policy makers to engage youth in political processes on the local level by endowing them with a sense of agency and creating real impact for their communities.

At the beginning of the meeting, the hosts warmly welcomed all the participants and shared their expertise and experience with regard to youth projects. In this context a special attention was given to the project MI.MOMO conducted by Faro municipality. It was followed by the thorough discussion about each of the partner assignments and common responsibilities.

During two working sessions on March 21 and 22 the consortium agreed upon further steps regarding the project agenda i.a. deadlines for particular deliverables were set, information on a draft version of Communication and Dissemination Plan and visual identity components was presented etc.

A study visit which enabled all the members to learn more about the MI.MOMO project was also part of the event's program. Persons who were directly involved in this project shared their thoughts and showed how it influenced young

people from the municipality as well as other local residents. It raised awareness with regard to modernism architecture among the inhabitants and activated local community around the unnoticed part of local heritage.

Last point on the official agenda was a Peer Learning Event that took place at Faro Town Hall on March 22. Partners presented best practice examples from their countries that used Minecraft as a successful tool for youth participation. Wide variety of projects was presented which gave the audience food for thought.

This exchange of experiences had proved Minecraft to be a useful way of engaging young people that gives them a sense of empowerment and agency they need. The event was concluded after a series of remarks and comments. The knowledge acquired during this meeting will be utilized in the creation of "Minecraft as a youthful policy tool" - a digital document that will showcase Minecraft best practices.



Funded by
the European Union

YUPAD activities in Gdańsk



by Igor Jojkic | igor.jojkic@gmail.com

YUPAD project Partner Meeting

The fourth Transnational Partner Meeting of the YUPAD project, held in the vibrant city of Gdansk on 7 February, 2024 marked a pivotal moment for stakeholders and contributors to come together, reflect on progress, and set the course for future initiatives. The agenda, meticulously planned, underscored the project's commitment to fostering innovation, enhancing youth participation, and addressing the pressing challenges facing our communities today.

The heart of the meeting was a series of discussions and workshops aimed at consolidating the work accomplished thus far and brainstorming strategies for amplifying impact. The sessions were thoughtfully designed to not only assess the milestones achieved but also to pave the way for robust plans that would propel the project into its next phase.

Keynote presentations from the partners provided valuable insights into emerging trends and best practices in youth participation and development. These sessions sparked lively debates among participants, encouraging exchange of ideas and experiences from all partner countries.

The meeting also served as a platform for networking, with ample opportunities for

participants to forge new partnerships and strengthen existing ones. These connections are vital for the project's sustainability and expansion, offering paths for collaboration beyond the confines of the meeting.

In conclusion, the fourth and last Transnational Partner Meeting not only celebrated the achievements of the YUPAD project but also laid the groundwork for its follow up. With a renewed focus on collaboration, innovation, and impact, the project team is certain to make significant progress in empowering youth and contributing to the betterment of their communities in the future.

YUPAD project Dissemination Event

In an era where youth engagement in civic activities is more crucial than ever, the YUPAD Dissemination Event, held on February 21st, 2024 in Gdansk New City Hall, stands out as a beacon of innovative approaches to fostering youth engagement in participatory budgeting processes. The event unfolded a series of enlightening presentations and case studies, each shedding light on the transformative YUPAD project and its tools designed to empower young individuals and policymakers alike.

The event kicked off with the introduction to the YUPAD project, a pioneering initiative aimed at

increasing young people's active involvement in their communities through participatory budgeting. The presentation of YUPAD Tools, including the Bees methodology, the YUPAD Calculator, and the Curricula for Educators and Policymakers, offered attendees a glimpse into the project's foundation and its potential to reshape youth engagement strategies.

The next point of the event agenda was devoted to case study presentations from the region. The first one, presented by Ms. Marta Dzierżawska referred to Gdansk experiences, provided insights into effective citizen participation mechanisms and the green civic budget's impact on community involvement.

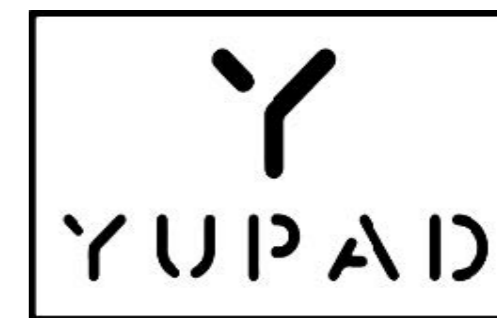
Ms. Dace Ribena shared the Riga's case study, highlighting successful strategies for attracting young people to participatory budgeting and the practical application of the YUPAD tools. Ms. Aleksandra Ilijin's exploration of Novi Sad's best practices in youth participatory budgeting underscored the potential for upscaling such mechanisms to foster greater youth engagement.

The event also served as a platform for discussing policy recommendations at both local and European levels, with presenting strategies to enhance youth participation in civic processes. This forward-thinking segment underpinned the importance of integrating

the YUPAD project's insights into broader policy frameworks to ensure sustainable youth engagement.

A vibrant Q&A session allowed attendees to dive deeper into the discussions, addressing queries and expanding on the day's topics. This interactive segment further highlighted the community's interest in the YUPAD project's objectives and its implications for future participatory budgeting initiatives.

The attendees were left with a renewed sense of purpose and a call to action to implement the lessons learned and tools presented. The YUPAD Dissemination Event not only showcased innovative approaches to engaging youth in participatory budgeting but also laid the groundwork for future initiatives aiming to empower young people to take an active role in shaping their communities.



DECARBOMILE project's leap forward



by Igor Jojkic | igor.jojkic@gmail.com



Local advancement to transnational cooperation

by Mariia Andreeva | mariia.andreeva@turku.fi
photo by Mariia Andreeva

The future of urban delivery is getting a sustainable makeover with the DECARBOMILE project. This innovative initiative is at the forefront of developing interoperable and multimodal vehicles, designed to tackle the challenges of last-mile delivery in cityscapes.

By joining the power of multimodal and electric vehicles, DECARBOMILE is not just a step but a leap toward greener, more efficient urban transportation. This transformative approach promises to enhance delivery services, improve air quality, and ease traffic congestion.

At the heart of DECARBOMILE lies a commitment to optimizing logistic vehicles. Special attention is given to cargo-bikes and their integration with non-conventional modes of transport like river and rail. The project's real-world impact is being rigorously tested across four living labs and satellites, examining the vehicles' performance in varying conditions. These tests are vital for assessing the vehicles' real-world efficiency and their adaptability to diverse urban logistics scenarios.

Crucial to DECARBOMILE's strategy is its collaborative framework, engaging with a triad of local stakeholders. Workforce feedback will inform delivery services, ensuring they are finely tuned to the local context. Support from local businesses and logistics providers is indispensable for the feasibility and endurance of the proposed solutions. Moreover, regional institutions offer a macro perspective that is essential for the broader application and replication of these innovative delivery methods.

The project's vision extends to the economic aspect, emphasizing the sustainability of the solutions. This

sustainability is not just environmental but also economic, ensuring all stakeholders find the new models beneficial. This includes the exploration of fresh governance and business models for logistic hubs, which integrate social innovations to foster widespread acceptance. The adaptability of these models to specific contexts, the creation of skilled local jobs, and the potential for replicating the methods in other locations are also pivotal aspects.

As we approach the half of the DECARBOMILE project duration, the spotlight shines on the UBC team. Their contributions have been instrumental in extracting the critical lessons and successful strategies, which are underpinned by the project's five strategic pillars: collaboration, space management, added-value services, regulation, and digitalization. The team's active participation in the ELTIS SUMP Platform Coordination Group Meeting in Brussels on December 5, 2023, reflects their dedication to enhancing urban logistic consolidation models across Europe.



International projects are a gateway to securing funding for testing innovative solutions, exchanging expertise across borders, and learning best practices from fellow cities. It comes as no surprise that in UBC Sustainable Cities Commission international projects are actively used to support cities' green transition ambitions!

Currently, our Secretariat is involved in four projects funded by the Interreg BSR Programme – all aligned with the UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030 to boost its implementation. These projects, engaging different UBC members, have various offers for cities willing to benefit from the transnational knowledge and experiences.

SUMPs for BSR project, started in November 2023 under our Secretariat's leadership, looks into the transition of cities to green mobility for the benefit of citizens' healthy lifestyles and reduction of emissions. This project aims to increase the uptake of sustainable urban mobility plans as a strategic tool and to develop a common framework for monitoring and evaluation. We will organise capacity-building activities targeted for cities focusing especially on developing sound local processes for monitoring and evaluation and on the promotion of active mobility. First UBC TALKS webinar will be organised on 24 September 2024.

Another project led by UBC SCC is EMPEREST, addressing the reduction of hazardous substances in water in cooperation with local and regional authorities, water utilities, and international organisations. We aim to ensure the water safety from micropollutants like PFAS to support closing the loop for further water reuse free from these "forever chemicals". For cities, EMPEREST develops a local PFAS risk assessment framework that would allow identifying potential pollution sources and establishing a dialogue within local water ecosystems.

Protecting the Baltic Sea is one of the crucial shared missions of our region, and BALTIPLAST project joins this by bringing solutions for local authorities and citizens to reduce single-use plastic waste – one of the main sources of pollution on land and at sea. UBC SCC leads BALTIPLAST transfer activities, developing an interactive platform for sharing best practices and preparing an educational kit for cities to reduce the use of plastic in the municipal premises, as well as to guide preparations of local strategies and action plans addressing plastic waste reduction.

Climate-4-CAST also supports the improvement of processes within city administrations: this project develops a Decision Support Tool for calculating carbon emissions and climate impacts to accelerate cities' progress towards climate neutrality. Our Secretariat will transfer the ready tool and bring the climate neutrality dialogue to cities starting next year.





Green STEAM's education activities in Turku

by Teija Marmann | teija.murmann@turku.fi
photo by Mari Lindroos

The activities of the Erasmus+ funded Green STEAM project have involved over 100 teachers and 2,000 students in the City of Turku, southwestern Finland, over the past year. The initiative is part of international collaboration between municipalities and universities in Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Cheers of joy can be heard in the central square of the School Village of Ilpoinen School in Turku: a group of second graders has successfully built a track where the Sphero Indi robot continues its journey along an infinite figure-eight. The Green STEAM project, promoting sustainability education methods, is in a two-week session at Ilpoinen School.

"We are practicing teamwork and logical problem-solving. At the same time, we are familiarizing ourselves with the basic principles of programming, namely constructing sequences of commands," explains the project coordinator and STEAM teacher Salla Sissonen.

Spaghetti towers, frescoes, and robotics

Ms. Sissonen has visited a total of ten primary schools in Turku over the year as part of the Erasmus+ funded Green STEAM project, with more than 100 teachers and 2,000 students participating. STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) brings together science and art for sustainability education in schools. The classes focus on practicing fundamental skills for building a sustainable future.

"Together, we have inspired students to engage in all sorts of projects: building towers with spaghetti, practicing basic math through a pretend store while creating board games or farm animals from recycled materials. At Pääskyvuori School, we got to draw a large fresco of magnified microscopic images on a wall. And everyone gets excited about robotics," Ms. Sissonen says.

Development of STEAM pedagogy in international collaboration

The STEAM teacher circulating in the primary schools of Turku for this academic year is part of a broader international collaboration focused on developing STEAM approaches from the perspective of sustainability education. The project includes the cities of Tallinn in Estonia and Jelgava in Latvia. Additionally, Turku and Tartu Universities, as well as Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania, are involved.

"In Turku, active work on building the STEAM network and developing matching pedagogical approaches has been ongoing since 2018," says Katri Lehtinen, project manager for Green STEAM and STEAM Turku projects.

All educational levels in Turku, from early childhood education to secondary education, as well as universities and businesses, participate in STEAM Turku activities. "In Turku, it has been considered an important objective to strengthen our knowhow in engaging and integrative STEAM pedagogy and build a broad ecosystem of partners around it, which also benefits local business policy. This ecosystem accommodates plenty of interdisciplinary expertise and active initiatives," adds Ms. Lehtinen.

Indeed, the activity at the School Village of Ilpoinen School seems to be engaging, integrative and energetic. "Our infinity loop works too!" exclaims a second grader, and Ms. Sissonen crouches down to give the diligent builders a high-five. The robot moves along the figure-eight, goes through a tunnel made from a recycled cardboard box, and climbs the hill built on top of it. There's a broad smile on the students' faces: with teamwork, anything can be achieved – nothing is impossible.



UBC cities at the spear of climate action

by Adham Maharramli | adham.maharramli@turku.fi

This year marks the 8th year of collaboration between UBC and CDP – a not-for-profit charity that runs the global disclosure system. This partnership has seen many UBC member cities consistently disclosing their environmental data to the CDP, signalling a collective commitment to climate action.

Committed cities

The latest round of disclosures in 2023 welcomed a new city: Elva from Estonia joining the ranks of cities publicly sharing their environmental data. This dedication to environmental transparency and cooperation forms the UBC cities' united front against climate change. Each year cities receive scores from the CDP and can benefit from valuable feedback and resources to strengthen their climate initiatives. Recognizing ambitious actions, the highest-scoring cities are publicly acknowledged and awarded the A-list city badge. Over the past five years, 11 UBC member cities have earned this distinction, exemplified most recently by Malmö and Turku.

Advancements in climate action

The previous year's disclosure saw a proactive position in tackling greenhouse gas emissions. Cities have shared their ambitious targets, pledging to surpass the European Union's ambitious emission reduction goals set for 2050. According to the disclosed data, sustainable mobility initiatives are gaining traction in the BSR, with walking, cycling, and public transportation strengthening as preferred modes. Despite the persistence of cars, there is a noticeable shift towards more sustainable options, reflecting cities' commitment to reducing their carbon emissions.

Energy consumption sources disclosed by the reporting cities unveil a diverse mix, showcasing efforts to transition away from unsustainable sources. Cities like Umeå and Arendal are leading the change by relying primarily on hydropower, while others, such

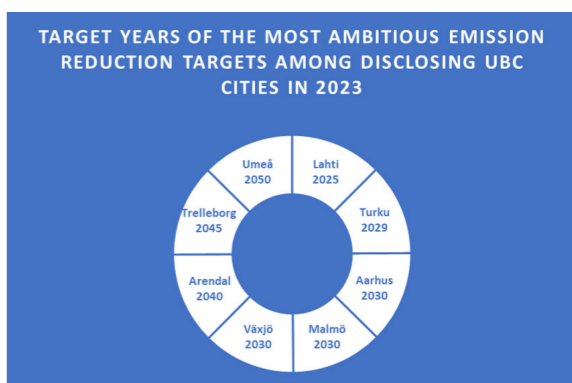
as Lahti, Växjö, Malmö, and Trelleborg, demonstrate potential through a blend of renewable sources.

Collective efforts of the UBC cities fighting against climate change are backed by their robust climate action plans adopted by 13 out of 15 reporting cities, with the remaining cities integrating climate goals into broader strategic frameworks. Moreover, cities are increasingly recognizing the value of biodiversity preservation. Initiatives in Aarhus, Turku, Lahti, and Malmö show proactive measures to protect ecosystems and endangered species within urban landscapes.

It's time to act!

The journey towards a more sustainable future requires collective action, with cities at the forefront of driving the change. Through collaboration and innovation, UBC member cities are paving the way for a greener, more just future for all.

We are calling on more UBC cities to join the disclosure to bolster the collective efforts against climate change! Find out more insights about UBC-CDP cooperation: <https://www.ubc-sustainable.net/action/ubc-cdp-cooperation>





DISCOVER MALMÖ: WHERE SUSTAIN- ABILITY MEETS SCANDI-CHIC

Malmö – a city with sustainability at its core and with experiences for all.

Nestled along the southern coast of Sweden, Malmö stands as a beacon of Scandinavian charm, innovation, and sustainability. With its fusion of historical heritage, modern architecture, and eco-conscious ethos, Malmö offers visitors a truly unique experience that seamlessly blends the past with the present and the natural with the urban.

At the heart of Malmö's allure lies its unwavering commitment to sustainability. From its efficient public transportation system, including an extensive network of bike lanes, to its eco-friendly initiatives that promote renewable energy and waste reduction, Malmö exemplifies what it means to be a green city of the future.

In May, Malmö is pleased to be the host city for one of the largest televised events on the planet, the Eurovision Song contest. And as a part of the

city's ongoing sustainability work, it will meet all the requirements for a certified sustainable event with a significant margin. The city already has a sustainable organization at its core and now efforts are being made on several levels to reduce the event's climate impact. Among other things, the locations for the open programme in the city have been chosen based on where there is already sustainable infrastructure, creating a great experience for visitors without the need for new construction.

But Malmö is not just about sustainability - it's also a vibrant cultural hub brimming with artistic expression, culinary delights, and a lively social scene. Innovation thrives alongside tradition, creating a dynamic tapestry of experiences as well as an innovative business and startup-scene.

Welcome!

by: Ola Nord | ola.nord@malmo.se
photo by: Fredrik Johansson elvanfoto.se

SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY PLANNING: GDYNIA'S CONTRI- BUTION TO SUMPS FOR BSR PROJECT

Gdynia, a northern city in the heart of the Baltic Sea Region, stands as a forerunner of sustainable urban development in Poland. Supported by the Interreg BSR, it has joined the SUMPs for BSR project, which together with partners aims to increase the share of active mobility, promoting healthier lifestyles and reducing emissions.

What are our activities within the SUMPs BSR project?

1) Transformation of the main transport hub in Gdynia
We will test new types of ICT solutions in cooperation with residents and decision-makers to elaborate on the possible solutions for the transformation of Constitution Square – the main transport hub.

Moreover, as part of our initiative, we will prepare a virtual tour of the Gdynia transportation hub and a promotional film of this area. By utilizing spherical imaging technologies, the tour will immerse viewers in the authentic atmosphere of the place, allowing them to experience the hub. However, the goal is not merely to

take the viewer on a virtual journey, we want viewers to feel the pulsating rhythm of this place, see its architectural richness, and green spaces, and recognize the diversity of people who visit it while addressing the mobility needs of users of the space in a user-friendly, intuitive way.

2) Teenagers towards sustainable mobility
We will also develop approaches to pedestrians and cyclists counting with the help of vision systems and machine learning and work with the younger generation to co-create their transport behaviour and preferences.

We aim to engage high school students in active commuting and understand their needs and expectations regarding daily mobility. We aspire for the younger generation to adopt sustainable modes of transportation in the future, thus it's crucial to understand their preferences and show the benefits of utilizing various active modes of transportation.

3) SUMP
Simultaneously, we are working on updating the SUMP for Gdynia. We will analyze the impact of the urban environment on the well-being of residents, consider ecological aspects and focus on green areas. We want to understand how people move around the city, what their needs and preferences are, and what factors influence their needs and choices of transportation which were elaborated in SUMP for the years 2016 – 2025.

Join Gdynia on the journey towards a greener, more sustainable future – together, we can make a difference.

by: Justyna Suchanek | j.suchanek@gdynia.pl
Alicja Pawłowska | a.pawlowska@gdynia.pl



EUROPE'S FIRST BIO-DIVERSITY PARK WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN TURKU

Biodiversity loss is global, but actions need to be taken locally to consider local species and biotopes. Cities play a significant role in fostering biodiversity and introducing novel ways to protect and restore biodiversity especially in urban areas where habitats and green areas are lost due to rapid urbanization.

A new type of concept of urban biodiversity park will be piloted in Turku with the EU funding: the Skanssi Biodiversity Park will develop and test the fostering of biodiversity in urban conditions through active measures.

The project "Urban Biodiversity Parks" is the city's answer to an urgent need to find new ways for active enhancement and regeneration of biodiversity in lost or degraded urban habitats – in addition to traditional nature conservation measures.

Another recognised challenge has been the lack of cooperation between urban authorities, experts, researchers and private actors, which hindered joint work on integration of biodiversity protection in the construction and maintenance of urban infrastructure. And to ensure just and inclusive transition, it's important to increase the awareness in all levels of society gaining public and political support for biodiversity.

The 20-hectare Skanssi Biodiversity Park is being developed into a pilot and flagship site for urban ecological restoration

and regeneration in a growing city. The Skanssi neighbourhood area has forests of different ages, a small water area, sandy slopes, an old gravel pit bottom, current vegetation, old yards and new landscape fields. Therefore, it offers a great platform to test diverse range of actions including increasing the amount of rare natural plants and rotten wood, taking care of sunlit environments and opening new meadows.

- In addition to the implementation of the Skanssi park, the project will test nature-based solutions that support biodiversity as a tool for regenerating residential areas and promoting the sense of community. The project will also advance new forms of business cooperation and develop an ecological compensation model linked to biodiversity parks. The lessons learned from the project and the biodiversity park model can be applied later in other cities, says Senior Advisor Maija Rusanen from the City of Turku.

The biodiversity park fosters nature in different ways, also recognising its cultural significance. This park is not just a nature reserve: here, the diverse nature is not just preserved but actively increased. The park will provide an attractive area for the city's residents to learn about nature and get involved in nature management measures. The project supports the implementation of the City of Turku's Biodiversity Programme and the City Strategy's goal for Turku to be one of the world's leading climate and nature cities in 2030.

The Urban Biodiversity Parks -project receives funding from the European Urban Initiative's Innovative Actions programme funded by the European Union. The project implementation started in March 2024, and will continue for 3.5 years.

by: Maija Rusanen | majja.rusanen@turku.fi

OPEN CALLS FOR ARTISTS OR PERFORMERS:

STREET MUSIC DAY

is a celebration when, in cities across Lithuania and abroad, everyone who knows how to play comes out to play in the streets, squares, plazas and even on public transport! Whether you are a professional musician or an amateur; whether you play metal or folk music - everyone can take part!

The event will take place in **Kaunas** on **18 May 2024**. All musicians of all music genres are welcome. We take care of:

- 2 nights' accommodation and meals;
- necessary technical equipment and drums, synthesizer;
- suggested daily programme and a sightseeing tour;

We look forward to receiving your letter of interest by 30 April vaiva@kmmn.lt



KAUNAS CULTURE FAIR

This is the annual opening of the cultural season and a platform for partnership building. The aim of the fair is to introduce the public to the activities of cultural organisations and initiatives, the news of the season, to increase the number of visitors to the events of cultural organisations and initiatives, and to increase the sales of cultural services and products.

We plan to invite 35 participants, who will have the opportunity to participate in the fair, the stage programme and portfolio screenings of artists working in Kaunas. This year we invite organisations and initiatives from all over Lithuania and abroad to register!

Kaunas Culture Fair 2024 will take place on **6-7 September** in **Kaunas**, Lithuania.

We look forward to receiving your letter of interest by 15 May. For more information please contact Viktorija Mašanauskaitė-Rinkšėlė, Kaunas Culture Fair Manager / Kaunas Artists' House Cultural Partnerships Coordinator, viktorija@kmmn.lt

KAUNAS FLUXUS FESTIVAL 2024

is looking for professional artists and creators from all fields and invites you to submit your ideas for the festival programme! Selected artists will be invited to perform their own performances or artistic actions at the festival, thus sharing their ideas, approaches, perspectives and broadening the perception of what FLUXUS can look and sound like today.

The festival will take place on **21 September 2024** in **Kaunas**. The theme of this year's FLUXUS Festival is the life stories of Jurgis Mačiūnas.

The selected artists will be invited to further collaborate, develop their ideas and perform their performances and artistic actions at this year's FLUXUS FESTIVAL.

We look forward to receiving your inquiry by 15 May vaiva@kmmn.lt





KIEL.SAILING.CITY: SETTING SAIL FOR „THE OCEAN RACE EUROPE 2025“

Kiel.Sailing.City has secured its position as the starting port for The Ocean Race Europe in 2025, marking a significant milestone for the renowned sailing event. Scheduled to commence on August 10, 2025, from the vibrant shores of Kiel, the race will culminate approximately six weeks later in the Mediterranean Sea, its final route contingent upon the race organizers' final decision.

After the successful premiere of The Ocean Race Europe in 2021 with the victory of Offshore Team Germany, the upcoming edition will continue the legacy under the motto "Connecting Europe". The racecourse will traverse the Baltic Sea, North Sea, English Channel, and Atlantic Ocean before reaching its conclusion in the Mediterranean.

Kiel's selection as the starting port comes after its impressive Fly-By during The Ocean Race 2022-23, a testament to the city's enduring passion for sailing. Dr. Ulf Kämpfer, Mayor of Kiel, expressed pride in hosting the prestigious event, citing the city's longstanding tradition of embracing sailing, notably during the internationally acclaimed Kiel Week.

Renowned as Europe's largest sailing event and summer festival, Kiel Week attracts millions of visitors annually in June. Beyond its festive atmosphere, Kiel.Sailing.City is committed to ambitious climate goals, aligning The Ocean Race Europe with initiatives focused on ocean health and protection. Collaboration with esteemed institutions like the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research Kiel underscores the city's dedication to environmental stewardship.

The Ocean Race Europe will receive support from the EU Mission - Restore our Ocean and Waters, underscoring a shared commitment to ocean conservation. Educational initiatives targeting race enthusiasts and schoolchildren will accompany the event, alongside an onboard science program aimed at gathering valuable data for ongoing research into oceanic dynamics.

For those captivated by sailing, Kiel Week 2024 offers an unparalleled opportunity to experience the maritime spirit firsthand. As anticipation builds for The Ocean Race Europe 2025, Kiel remains a beacon of sailing excellence, poised to welcome participants and spectators alike to its dynamic shores.

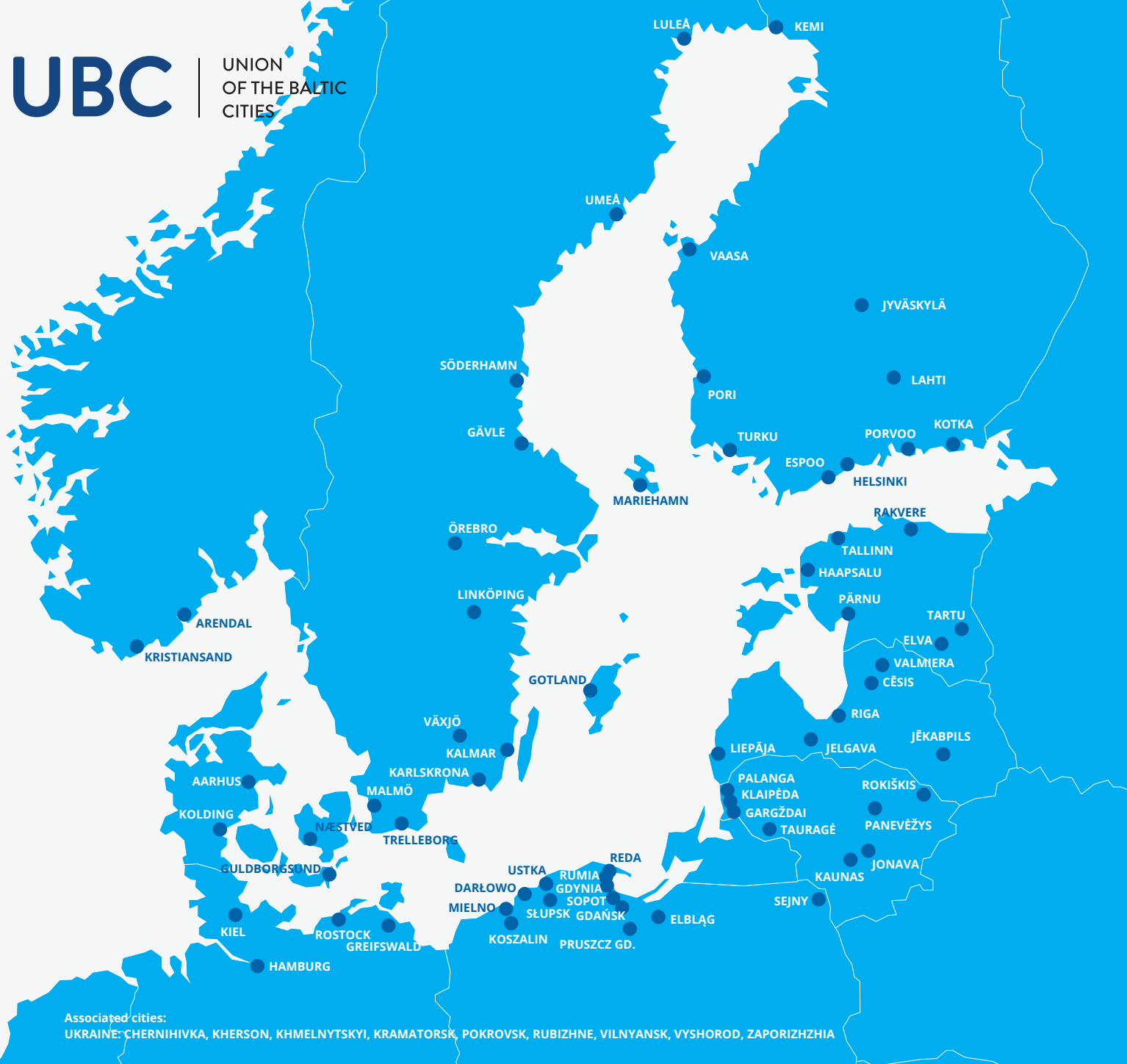
For more information:

- [The Ocean Race Europe 2025 - The Ocean Race 2022-23](#)
- [Kiel Week 2024 / Kieler Woche 2024 - Kieler Woche - From Kiel to the World \(kieler-woche.de\)](#)
- [Homepage - Kiel Sailing City \(kiel-sailing-city.de\)](#)

by: @Kiel-Marketing

UBC

UNION
OF THE BALTIC
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UBC – working together to foster sustainable, smart and safe cities

Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC) is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region with the members from nine Baltic Sea countries. Founded in 1991 in Gdańsk, UBC is a voluntary, proactive network mobilizing the shared potential of its member cities for a safe, smart and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. The UBC cooperates with numerous Baltic and European organisations.

The UBC's practical work is carried out through active cooperation of the member cities in eight thematic Commissions: Cultural Cities, Inclusive and Healthy Cities, Learning Cities, Planning Cities, Safe Cities, Smart and Prospering Cities, Sustainable Cities, and Youthful Cities. The Commissions coordinate and execute specific projects, activities and events.

Any coastal city or any other city interested in the development of the Baltic Sea Region may become a member of the UBC – please contact the UBC Secretariat.

www.ubc.net

Focus on youth!

We are delighted to announce that the next issue of the Baltic Cities Bulletin will be dedicated to youth and will be (provisionally) entitled "Baltic Sea cities implementing European Youth Goals".

In the autumn issue of the bulletin we would like to have a thorough look into how our young people are doing in the post-pandemic time and what support structures and services cities have developed to combat current challenges. To mention just a few, we will be looking into domains of mental health and well-being of young people, inclusivity & diversity, youth participation and even youth employment & entrepreneurship.

Young people have always been a driving force for social transformation in the region. Let's celebrate it with a new bulletin by highlighting their success stories and emphasizing what still needs to be done to support those with fewer opportunities! Therefore, we are particularly encouraging the young people of the cities to contribute to the issue with their own articles thus providing youth perspective to the urban trends.