UNION OF THE BALTIC CITIES

SUSTAINABLE CITIES COMMISSION

Annual report 2024

UBC Sustainable Cities Commission

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Union of the Baltic Cities Sustainable Cities Commission

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UBC is the leading network of cities in the Baltic Sea Region, mobilising the shared potential of its member cities to tackle challenges related to social, economic and environmental development. Established back in 1991, today the network includes over 70 cities and municipalities, in addition to Ukrainian cities.

In the Secretariat of the Sustainable Cities Commission – one of eight UBC Commissions, – we support the development of clean, resilient, and attractive urban environments. UBC cities are already recognized as global forerunners in climate-smart development, and together we work towards green, resource-efficient and sustainable future.

Our work

Editorial

We have witnessed remarkable progress in the journey toward urban sustainability, driven by collaboration, innovation, new funding opportunities and an unwavering commitment to green transformation both on the EU level and in our member cities.

In 2024, the European Union strengthened its commitment to environmental protection with the adoption of the **Nature Restoration Law**, aiming to restore 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030. Continued efforts to achieve the goals set by the **Biodiversity Strategy for 2030** were accompanied by major advancements in ecosystem conservation and biodiversity protection. Notable developments included **Recast of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive** and preparation of **European Water Resilience Strategy**. The directive sets objectives for achieving energy neutrality in wastewater treatment processes, enhance circularity and address emerging pollutants. Europe's green transition saw accelerated progress also in sustainable mobility (revision of the **European TEN-T regulation**), energy efficiency (**Energy Performance of Buildings Directive**), and clean technology innovations, supported by funding and versatile regulatory incentives.

At the local level, cities have faced both substantial opportunities and significant challenges in putting these ambitious plans into action. A key highlight in 2024 in our work has been the **scaling up of circular economy models** and **green public procurement**, which emphasize resource efficiency, chemicals and climate. The Secretariat applied for additional resources from the Interreg BSR Programme to further develop the tools and innovative approaches to green public procurement through the **ChemClimCircle-2** and **HAZGONE** platform projects.

UBC member cities continued to adapt to the impacts of climate change and this topic coupled with disaster risk reduction will be further developed in the new project **ClimaResponse** starting in the beginning of 2025.

This year, UBC member cities, as in previous years, have intensified their climate neutrality and resilience efforts and disclosed their climate actions on CDP-ICLEI Track, the global climate and environment reporting mechanism for cities. On the following pages, you will find more insights into the results of the 2024 disclosure on the basis of UBC-CDP cooperation.

Overall, 2024 was a year marked by significant strides toward sustainability and resilience. **The UBC Sustainable Cities Commission remains committed to advancing the shared vision of sustainable, climate resilient and thriving cities that can weather the challenges of the future while providing a high quality of life for its citizens.**

Warm greetings,
Agnieszka Ilola
Head of Secretariat at the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission

UBC SCC Secretariat

The Secretariat of the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission has been hosted by the City of Turku since 1996, and it is currently a part of the Project Services unit of the city. The **international team of Secretariat experts** creates opportunities for networking, connecting member cities, communicating local excellence across borders, and managing international projects boosting cities' sustainability advancements.

Agnieszka Ilola
Head of Secretariat

Mariia Andreeva
Communications Coordinator

Jussi Välimäki
Financial Manager, Controller

Ira Sibelius
Special Advisor

Olena Zinchuk
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Maija Rusanen
Special Advisor

Anna Valtola
Financial Assistant

Lotta Lehti
Project Coordinator

Helmi Andersson
Project Coordinator

Adham Maharramli
Project Officer

Juha Kiviniemi
Financial Assistant

UBC SCC Advisory Board 2023–2025

The activities of UBC SCC are supported by an established Advisory Board, steering the Commission’s aims and strengthening the cooperation with UBC member cities by bringing national and topical expertise. In the current term (2023–2025), the UBC SCC Advisory Board consists of **13 experts** from member cities including three Co-Chairpersons.

Co-Chairs		
Risto Veivo	Turku	Finland
Per-Arne Nilsson	Malmö	Sweden
Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik	Gdańsk	Poland
Advisory Board members		
Andres Jaadla	Rakvere	Estonia
Jaanus Tamm	Tartu	Estonia
Elina Ojala	Lahti	Finland
Olli-Pekka Mäki	Turku	Finland
Stephan Braun	Greifswald	Germany
Dace Liepniece	Liepāja	Latvia
Gunita Osite	Jelgava	Latvia
Guntars Ruskuls	Riga	Latvia
Ola Nord	Malmö	Sweden
Thea Ohlander Arfwidsson	Malmö	Sweden

In 2024, the Advisory Board held three online meetings:

25 March 2024. Planning the UBC Sustainable and Planning Cities Commissions meeting in September, exchanging on most recent developments in cities, introducing events and activities offered to cities by SCC projects.

3 June 2024. Consulting on new SCC project proposals, planning joint activities and exchanging on upcoming European events, introducing latest highlights and opportunities from the SCC projects.

28 October 2024. Discussing feedback from the Commissions meeting, highlighting open funding opportunities and upcoming events, planning the Commission’s activities for 2025.

Activity highlights in 2024

Feb	•**UBC TALKS webinar** about funding for innovative and climate-smart cities, launched with Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme •**EMPEREST international workshop #1** in Tartu: Raising awareness and initiating actions towards socio-environmental resilience to PFAS
Mar	•**UBC TALKS webinar** about mapping and monitoring PFAS in cities •**UBC SCC Advisory Board meeting 1/2024**
Apr	•**UBC 92nd Executive Board meeting and study visits** in Riga •**Sustainable Cities Bulletin 1/2024:** spectrum of actions for sustainable cities •**HELCOM 50th anniversary event** in Riga
May	•**UBC TALKS webinar** about EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters •**Baltic Cities Bulletin** edition "Towards green and just transition" co-created with UBC Sustainable Cities Commission
Jun	•**EMPEREST international workshop #2** in Gdańsk: Technical solutions for removing organic micropollutants from wastewater •**UBC SCC Advisory Board meeting 2/2024**
Sep	•**Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicator Workshop** by SUMPs for BSR project •**UBC Sustainable & Planning Cities Commissions seminar** in Gdańsk •**UBC TALKS webinar** about sustainable urban mobility planning
Oct	•**EMPEREST international workshop #3** in Riga: Assessing risks and finding solutions to PFAS in local urban environment •**UBC SCC Advisory Board meeting 3/2024** •**Annual Forum** of the **EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in Visby: UBC stand at the Networking village and EMPEREST project at the seminar
Nov	•**Sustainable Cities Bulletin 2/2024**: Cooperation supporting climate resilience •**Approved project applications**: ClimaResponse and ChemClimCircle2 •**UBC TALKS webinar** about green public procurement
Dec	•**UBC 93rd Executive Board meeting and meeting with EU institutions** in Brussels •**Approved project application**: Mission Ocean BAB project

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UBC Sustainable & Planning Cities Commissions meeting
9−12 September 2024 in Gdańsk

For the second year in a row, UBC Sustainable and Planning Cities Commissions joined forces in organising a holistic seminar in 2024. This special format and focus merged our best approaches: planning the smart transformation of selected city areas in Gdańsk with sustainable practices and climate-preparedness measures shared from around the region. The Commissions meeting brought together over **60 participants** from **13 UBC member cities**!

Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk and Vice-President of UBC Piotr Grzelak opening the seminar. Photo by Mariia Andreeva.

Taking place in the heart of the UBC community, the seminar was opened by the Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk for Sustainable Development and Economy **Piotr Grzelak** (Vice-President of UBC), the Secretary General of UBC (hosted in Gdańsk) **Paweł Żaboklicki**, and the Deputy Mayor of Gdańsk for Spatial Development and Housing **Emilia Lodzińska**. The seminar was organised and steered by the Chairperson of the UBC Planning Cities **Paulina Szewczyk**, Head of UBC SCC Secretariat **Agnieszka Ilola**, Deputy Director of Environmental Department of the City of Gdańsk **Dagmara Nagorka-Kmiecik**, and the Architect of the City of Gdańsk **Piotr Lorens**.

Filled with inspirational study visits, thought-provoking discussions, and hands-on workshops, this seminar allowed our Commission representatives to share their ideas on climate-proofed districts in a non-linear way, exchanging with the architects and planners, and putting multimodal mobility points, stormwater solutions, and low-emission zones directly to the workshop area maps. We hope that the plans for the areas in Gdańsk will be developed in a smart and sustainable way, creating a sponge city, and enabling citizens to enjoy green districts, which are safe, attractive, and incorporate the historical and cultural values!

UBC 93rd Executive Board meeting
5 December 2024 in Brussels

In December 2024, the 93rd UBC Executive Board meeting was organised in combination with meeting the EU institutions: European Parliament, European Commission, Committee of the Regions, and the Eurocities network. The meeting facilitated the exchange on how UBC, its member cities and stakeholders, can cooperate in the future. The UBC Sustainable Cities Commission was represented in this event by the Head of Secretariat **Agnieszka Ilola**.

The discussion with the EU institutions on "**Reinforcing the Role of Baltic Cities in EU Policy Dialogues**" raised many important points and concerns regarding the representation of local authorities. It's crucial to maintain an integrated approach in urban policies and priorities and to involve cities in all stages of policymaking. **UBC cities represent strong democratic governance models and serve as drivers and testing grounds for the green transition in the Baltic Sea Region**. Cities are instrumental in advancing sustainable urban development, driving digital transformation, and in fostering social inclusion.

Further discussions addressed challenges at the EU's external borders, the urgency of climate action, and the future of cohesion funds. Cities expressed concerns that cohesion funding is under threat in upcoming EU budget discussions, potentially reducing resources for cities and regions and hindering Europe's urban transformations. A fragmented approach to urban policies, the integration of urban priorities and the need for regular impact assessments of new urban initiatives was also highlighted by **Dainis Turlais**, Member of the Committee of the Regions.

> **"We need stronger, greener and more united Europe."**
> **— Mantas Jurgutis, UBC President**

At the 93rd UBC Executive Board meeting participants decided to welcome **Kołobrzeg** as a member city, **Chernvitsi** and **Kamianets-Podilskyi** as associated cities and **Nordic Urban Resilience Institute (NURI)** as a partner. Moreover, proposals on future actions supporting Ukraine were presented by the UBC Task Force on Ukraine.

The panel with the representatives from European bodies and the UBC President Mantas Jurgutis.
Photo by Agnieszka Ilola

Communications and outreach

Communications are at the core of most of the UBC SCC activities: we support our member cities by promoting their excellence in the region and create various platforms for cities to exchange their experiences in reaching sustainability and climate goals.

In 2024, the Commission's cumulative outreach via its main media channels constituted of over **21 500** impressions, in addition to the active engagement through the target channels of topic-oriented projects of UBC SCC: for example, over **150 000** views received the EU-wide photo competition celebrating the Interreg Cooperation Day, the campaign launched by the SUMPs for BSR project to bring attention to the benefits of engaging citizens in active mobility.

Social media representation is important for UBC SCC to disseminate information and keep stakeholders informed about the recent developments and cooperation opportunities.

Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn (joint account with UBC Secretariat)	Youtube
916 followers	400 followers	842 followers	97 subscribers
over 4300 impressions	over 6600 impressions	over 8000 impressions	over 1200 views

UBC SCC regularly sends newsletters and bulletins to the subscribed contacts of ca. **320 recipients**. In 2024, **27 newsletters** were delivered inviting stakeholders to events, sharing calls for exchange, or informing about new content developments.

In 2024, UBC SCC published **2 editions** of the **Sustainable Cities Bulletin** with a comprehensive and versatile sustainability-related content and involving cities' contributions collected through the special calls for stories. SC Bulletin 1/2024 (4 April 2024) highlighted the open funding opportunities, cities' climate ambitions, and offered a range of events to join during the year. SC Bulletin 2/2024 (19 November 2024) focused on the "**Cooperation supporting climate resilience**": it featured **stories from 7 UBC cities** that engaged citizens, local companies, as well as European counterparts into the climate dialogue.

This year, UBC SCC also co-created the spring edition of the **Baltic Cities Bulletin**, published by the UBC General Secretariat, on the topic "**Towards green and just transition**". This publication, featuring **15 city stories** on the topic, was sent to over **1160 recipients** in May 2024.

UBC TALKS webinar series in 2024

The UBC TALKS webinar series are regularly launched by UBC SCC as an important capacity development tool for local authorities – all topics are carefully selected to address the challenges and trends of the local administration officers.

We organised **five webinars** in 2024, joined by **189** live participants from altogether **23 UBC member cities** (**ca. 200** recording views).

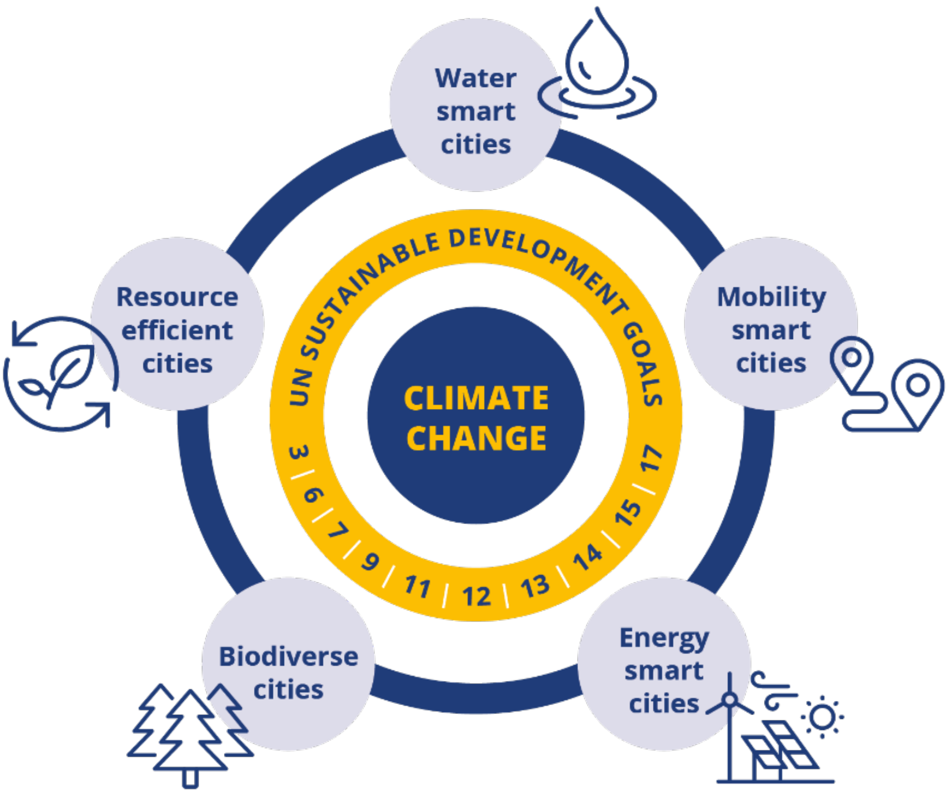
Funding for innovative and climate-smart cities	•**27.2.2024 | 59 PARTICIPANTS** •Cities were encouraged to apply for project funding and were provided with inspiration by the Interreg BSR Monitoring Committee together with the Joint Secretariat, as well as by the projects Arts on Prescription (Odense), SUMPs for BSR (**Turku)**
Mapping and monitoring PFAS in cities	•**26.3.2024 | 62 PARTICIPANTS** •The role of cities in addressing PFAS and solutions developed to address this threat were discussed with EUSBSR PA Hazards, HELCOM, and universities from **Turku** and **Riga**
EU Mission: Restore our Ocean and Waters	•**28.5.2024 | 18 PARTICIPANTS** •The Mission Ocean direction towards protecting waters and the tools from across Europe were presented by the SUBMARINER Network, EuroGOOS Baltic Operational Oceanographic System, HELCOM, and the Marine Education Centre in **Malmö**
Sustainable urban mobility planning	•**24.9.2024 | 31 PARTICIPANT** •The understanding of the SUMP concept and best practices from local implementation were shared by the University of **Gdańsk**, as well as **Panevezys**, **Turku**, and **Greifswald**
Green public procurement	•**26.11.2024 | 19 PARTICIPANTS** •The range of the sustainability topics that can be managed through the green public procurement were highlighted by the experts from the cities of Stockholm, **Helsinki**, **Riga**, and **Tallinn**

All UBC TALKS webinars are recorded and available in our video library as learning materials: study them yourself and share with your colleagues from other departments!

UBC Sustainability Action Programme 2030

The Union of the Baltic Cities Sustainability Action Programme 2022–2030 was developed over several rounds of co-creation workshops, discussions and consultations with the UBC member cities as well as network's key stakeholders, with active collaboration across all UBC bodies. The document was approved at the XVI UBC General Conference on 29 October 2021. The document outlines 5 topics selected as core themes for the local cooperation in sustainability: **water**, **mobility**, **resource efficiency**, **biodiversity**, and **energy,** listing actions that should be taken to achieve a better and greener future in the cities.

The 2024 activities of the UBC Sustainable Cities Commission strategically supported the implementation of the priorities for all these core topics. Many of these activities contributed to the cross-cutting topic of the **climate change** with climate mitigation and adaptation measures – those have been highlighted while integrated into the five core topics.



Water-smart cities

In 2024, UBC SCC launched a range of exchange opportunities for cities to develop their smart water management sector, not only **supporting pan-European cooperation mechanisms for protecting waters**, but also through specific contexts of **addressing hazardous substances – the latest and most urgent regional challenge** as assessed by HELCOM.

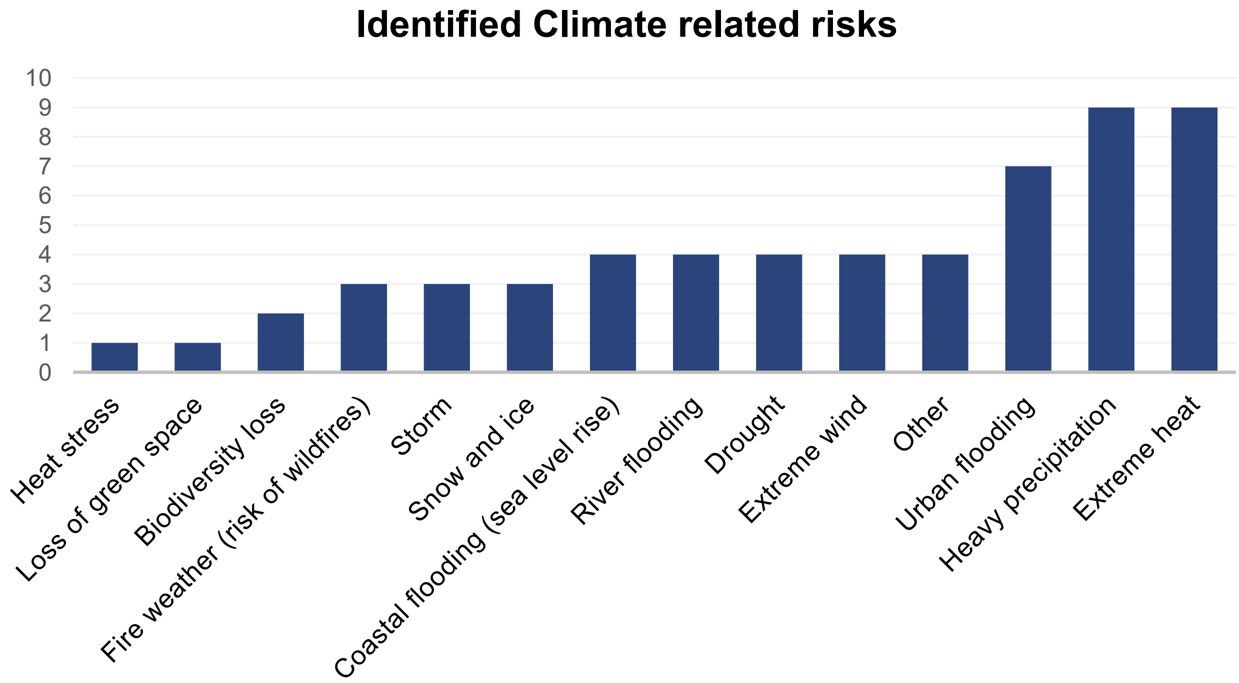
"For the City of Gdańsk, it is very important to address the pollution of the Baltic Sea. More actions are still needed to restore the quality of lakes and rivers in the Baltic Sea basin."
— Dagmara Nagórka-Kmiecik, Deputy Director of the Environmental Department, City of Gdańsk

UBC SAP: Water milestones in 2024

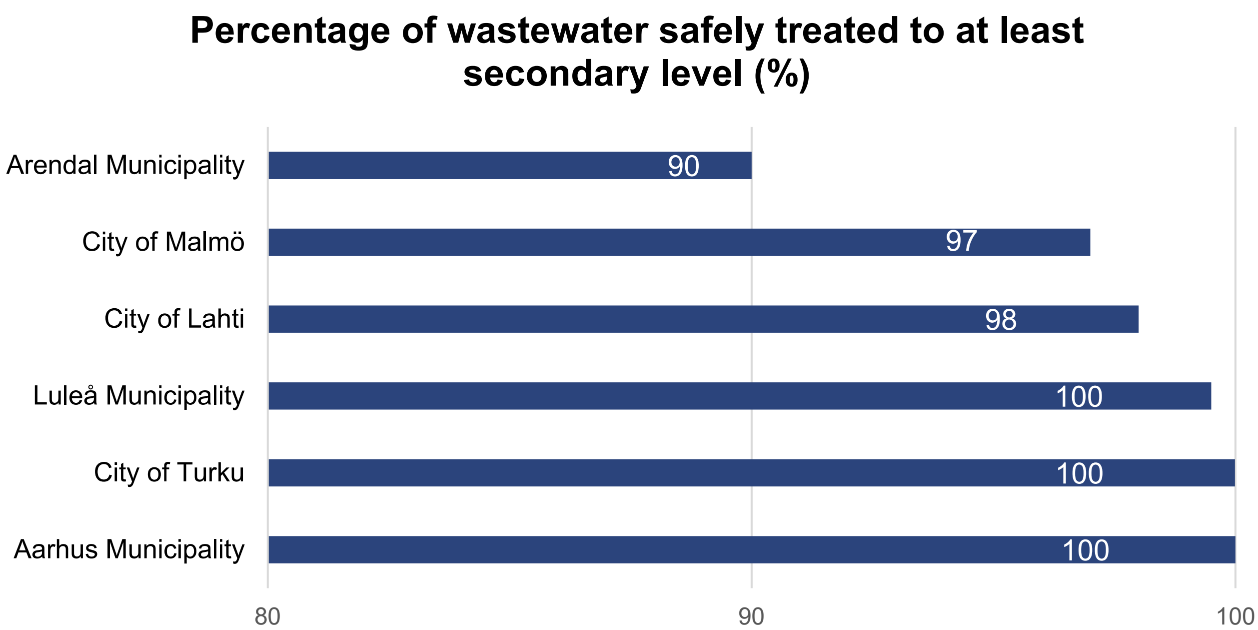
- **Leading the EMPEREST project** strengthening cities' capacities to respond to the risks of PFAS and organic micropollutants.
- Associated organisation in the **NonHazCity 3** project.
- **Successful cooperation wrapped**: partner in the finalised **Zero PFAS II** project.
- **New cooperation**: partner in the **Achieving Zero PFAS** project addressing hazardous substances and increasing capacities with Lithuanian and Ukrainian experts.
- **Positive funding decision**: partner in the **Mission Ocean BAB** project (Horizon Europe; implementation starts in 2025).
- **Organising 2 UBC TALKS webinars**: presenting tools for PFAS risks and introducing the EU Mission Ocean to local authorities.
- **Co-organising a seminar "Let's Talk About PFAS"** with PA Hazards at the **Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in **Visby**.
- Administering the online platform **Baltic Smart Water Hub.**

Water trends and highlights from UBC cities

UBC member cities annually disclose their climate-related data through CDP-ICLEI Track, powered by the UBC-CDP cooperation since 2017. Just as in previous years, they have identified the most acute climate risks to be associated with water such as **heavy precipitation** and **urban & river floods** leading the list.



UBC cities have reported a **high share of safe wastewater treatment** and have identified and acted on different aspects of urban water management, like **stormwater**, **wastewater treatment**, **urban and coastal flooding**, **cloudburst** and **restoring natural water environments**.



Cities are facing increasing challenges from **heavy rainfall**, **flash floods** and **urban flooding**, affecting infrastructure, mobility, and water quality. To address these challenges, cities are increasingly recognising **the need for urgent action**.

UMEÅ: Various measures and adaptations will be required to cope with future climate change with torrential rain, higher flows, floods, impacts on existing watercourses and more. A well-thought-out green structure is an important prerequisite for achieving the goal of sustainable stormwater management that is adapted to future climates.

LAHTI: Heavy rains are expected more often and that can create urban floods. Stormwater floods damage infrastructure and properties. Management capacity changes and capacity re-sizing will be needed. Water protection and groundwater protection measures are needed, and the costs of management will rise.

Cities are **taking responsibility** and are **introducing innovative solutions and actions** to tackle and mitigate the challenges posed by increased risks associated with rising water body levels.

TRELLEBORG: Water pipes and parts of houses have been exposed after coastal flooding. The municipality has a special coastal protection program that is ongoing, to investigate which valuables along the coast must be protected and how this should be achieved.

TURKU: Risks related to water management, such as rainstorms, floods (stormwater and seawater) and the freezing-melting cycle shift will be managed through sustainable solutions. Awareness and expertise will be continuously improved, stormwater will be utilised to enhance urban spaces. In addition, the wastewater treatment company of Turku completed a new discharge pipe and UV plant in 2023, ensuring treated wastewater is directed into the sea along its own route, even during heavy rains, while the stormwater network is now fully repurposed for rainwater management.

Cities are choosing **nature-based solutions**, that would help manage excess water flows but also **contribute to biodiversity and urban resilience**. Cities are also implementing **smart monitoring systems** to improve responses to extreme weather events.

RIGA: In most of the city there is a common system in which wastewater and rainwater merge; in case of heavy heaths the common system cannot withstand the load, and street overflows are affecting the mobility of the population. Within the Interreg project MUSTBE, it is planned to pilot nature-based rainwater treatment solutions in Riga, on the river where rainwater flows in. Sensors will also be installed for monitoring purposes.

Cities are also working on **engaging residents** in water management efforts. **Informational campaigns and training programs** help them to understand the risks of flooding and stormwater issues and support them in securing their water supply, contributing to overall city efforts.

MALMÖ: The municipal water company VA SYD have a campaign called "*Make space for water*" which targets house-owners and educates them in how they can avoid damage when cloudbursts occur and how they can save water. They also offer free consultations for citizens.

UBC SCC water projects

EMPEREST

The EMPEREST (Eliminating Micro-Pollutants from Effluents for Reuse Strategies) project aims at the elimination of organic micropollutants, and specifically PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) from the water cycle, addressing local authorities, water utilities, as well as regional stakeholders.

Funding: Interreg BSR Programme

Duration: Jan 2023 – Dec 2025

Budget: 5,43 MEUR

UBC members in the project: Riga, Gdańsk, Kaunas, Tallinn, Tartu, Turku, Jonava, Malmö, Panevėžys, Tauragė.

Project contacts in UBC SCC: Lotta Lehti, Mariia Andreva, Agnieszka Ilola

The **EMPEREST project**'s **Lead partner** is UBC Sustainable Cities Commission. EMPEREST works across four main activity strands:

1) **Developing guidelines for monitoring and assessment of PFAS in the aquatic environment with HELCOM**. The monitoring recommendations were published in March 2025.

2) **Developing a local PFAS risk-assessment tool for cities with Riga**. The tool was developed and tested in 2024, and four cities (Jurmala, Kaunas, Panevėžys and Riga) finalised their PFAS risk-assessment plans based on it. The tool will be available for wider testing in spring 2025, and final version will be launched in summer.

3) **Testing advanced treatment technologies at wastewater treatment plants, aiming at removing micropollutants from effluent**. Technological pilots were launched, and testing proceeded through 2024 in Gdańsk, Tartu, Tallinn and Szczecin, before moving to Kaunas and Turku. Combined results from the piloting conducted at 6 WWTPs will be released in 2025.

4) **Capacity development for local authorities and water utilities experts**. PFAS training materials were developed in 2024, and their testing is ongoing. The EMPEREST training package will be available in spring 2025.

In 2024, EMPEREST organised **3 international workshops** (Tartu in February, Gdańsk in June, and Riga in October), as well as a **UBC TALKS webinar** about different approaches to PFAS and organic micropollutants (March), hosting altogether ca. **280** participants.

Participants of the EMPEREST workshop organised as an EU Green Week partner event in Gdańsk. Photo by Gdańsk Water Utilities (GIWK)

UBC SCC cooperates closely with EUSBSR **PA Hazards**. In October, EMPEREST co-organised a seminar "**Let's Talk About PFAS!**" (ca. **60** participants) at the **Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in Visby. The project was also promoted to the **650** participants of the Forum at the Networking Village – at the stands of UBC, HELCOM, and EUSBSR PA Hazards.

The interest towards EMPEREST activities in UBC SCC social media channels realised throughout the year in over **8100** engagements.

Zero Pfas II

The Zero PFAS II (Minimization and reduction PFAS input to Baltic Sea) project aims to strengthen the Baltic Sea PFAS network and increase PFAS knowledge sharing and information exchange with stakeholders through thematic workshops and science roadshows.

Zero PFAS II was led by IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute between October 2022 – February 2024, funded by the Swedish Institute. UBC SCC was a **project partner**.

In February 2024, UBC SCC co-organised the PFAS Roadshow in Tartu (ca. **80** participants), as a joint event of the Zero PFAS II and EMPEREST projects – great opportunity to connect local and national experts, informing them about the PFAS challenge and possible solutions to it.

The project organised regular digital meetings called **Baltic Sea PFAS Network** Coffee Break. These casual meetups provide a platform where PFAS experts can discuss diverse issues related to PFAS pollution and learn from experts at the forefront of this field.

Achieving Zero PFAS

The Achieving Zero PFAS project aims to take action against PFAS by facilitating cooperation and knowledge-sharing as well as coordination between stakeholders.

UBC SCC is a **project partner** in the **Achieving Zero PFAS project**, which is led by IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute (September 2024 – August 2026), funded by the Swedish Institute. Despite many efforts the knowledge about per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is still very limited in many countries. The project focuses on two countries: Lithuania and Ukraine.

The project will organise trainings for university students in relevant fields in order to increase capacities of future experts to address the complex issue of PFAS pollution. Further, one of the objectives of the project is to establish a PFAS laboratory in Ukraine. Extensive use of firefighting foams because of the war has severely increased the risk of PFAS pollution in the country, and laboratory analyses are needed to measure the pollution and collect necessary data.

NonHazCity 3

The NonHazCity 3 (Reducing hazardous substances in construction to safeguard the aquatic environment, protect human health and achieve more sustainable buildings) project helps municipalities, entrepreneurs and individuals construct and renovate buildings with tox-free materials in order to protect health and the environment.

UBC SCC joined the **NonHazCity 3 project**, led by the Riga City Council (January 2023 – December 2025, funded by Interreg BSR Programme), as an **associated organisation**.

In 2024, UBC SCC supported the exchange and cooperation between NonHazCity 3 and EMPEREST to increase the awareness about the hazardous substances’ risks and the developed solutions. The NonHazCity 3 project was featured at the **UBC TALKS** webinar bringing cities’ attention to the green public procurement (November). Synergies between the projects effectively highlighted the need for comprehensively addressing up- and downstream measures in hazardous substances’ management.

Mobility-smart cities

In 2024, UBC SCC supported cities in **sustainable urban mobility planning** to develop monitoring and evaluation processes and prioritise active mobility. With the **revision of the European TEN-T regulation** this year, these topics are even more important for cities and their functional urban areas, listed as urban nodes.

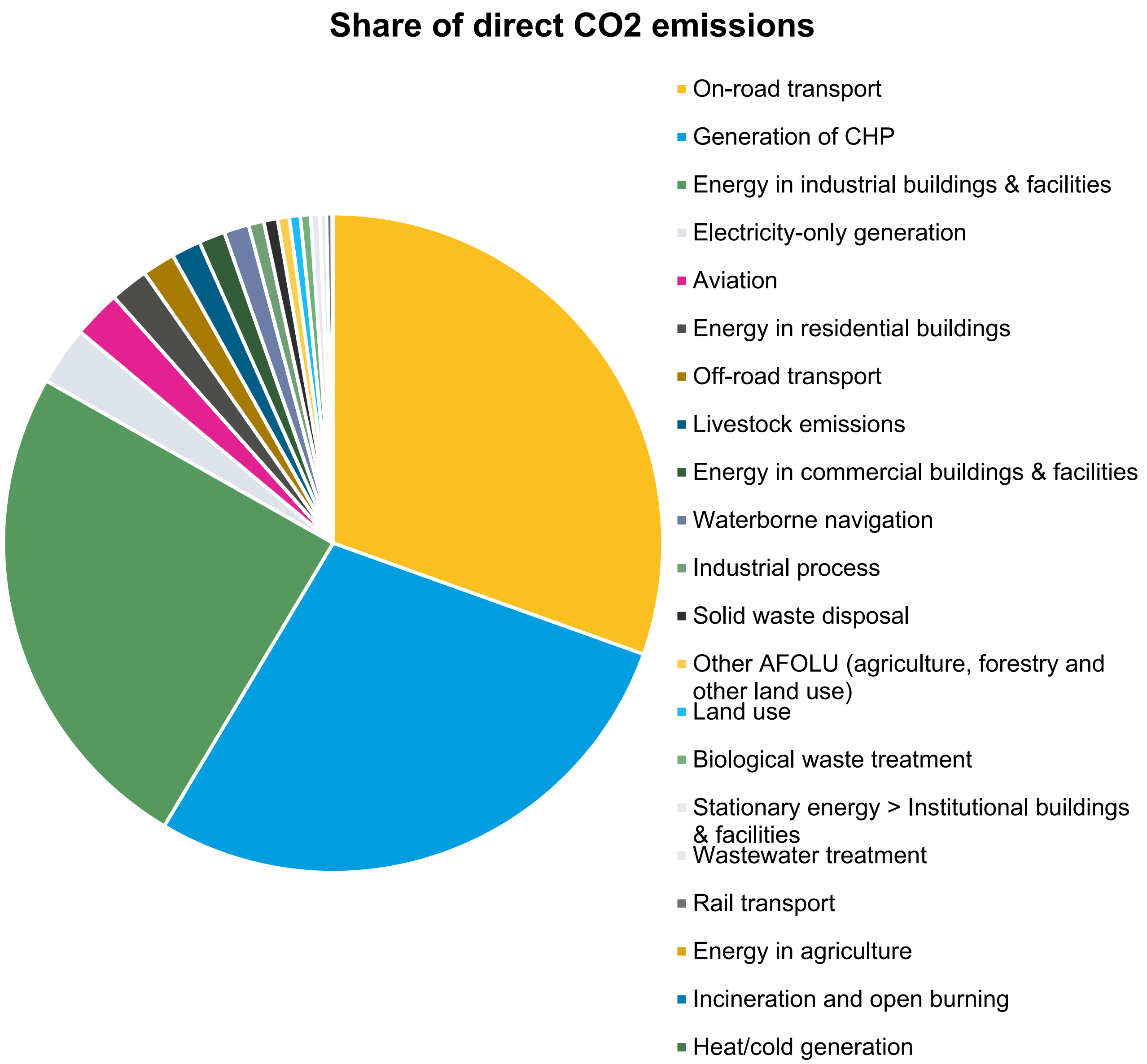
"Sustainable mobility planning is a key element in making our cities fit for the future. The exchange of expertise between the Baltic Sea region cities regarding good mobility solutions is therefore very valuable for us."
— Dr Stephan Braun, Climate Protection Officer, University and Hanseatic City of Greifswald

UBC SAP: Mobility milestones in 2024

- **Leading the SUMPs for BSR** project supporting active mobility and developing monitoring and evaluation in cities.
- **Organising a UBC TALKS webinar** presenting the Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning concept and pilots launched in UBC cities.
- Organising a **Sustainable Urban Mobility Indicator workshop** to map indicators useful indicators for cities.
- Developing the **first version of the monitoring and evaluation framework** for the small and medium sized cities.
- Developing the **concept for the training package** on the Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning to be organised in Spring 2026.

Mobility trends and highlights from UBC cities

Cities across the Baltic Sea Region are working hard to reach their ambitious goals of reducing CO2 emissions to **reach climate neutrality**. According to the data disclosed by UBC member cities through CDP-ICLEI Track, **CO2 emissions from on-road transport** tops the share of direct CO2 emissions, which stresses the importance of urgent action on sustainable mobility and focus on the active mobility modes.



The modal share is one of the most important indicators of Sustainable Urban Mobility, and despite the difference in the methodology of the collection of the data on the passenger travel share (by distance travelled or by number of trips) and potential of short journeys to be not counted against the share, the overall trend shows that the **UBC member cities are excelling in the share of sustainable urban mobility modes**.

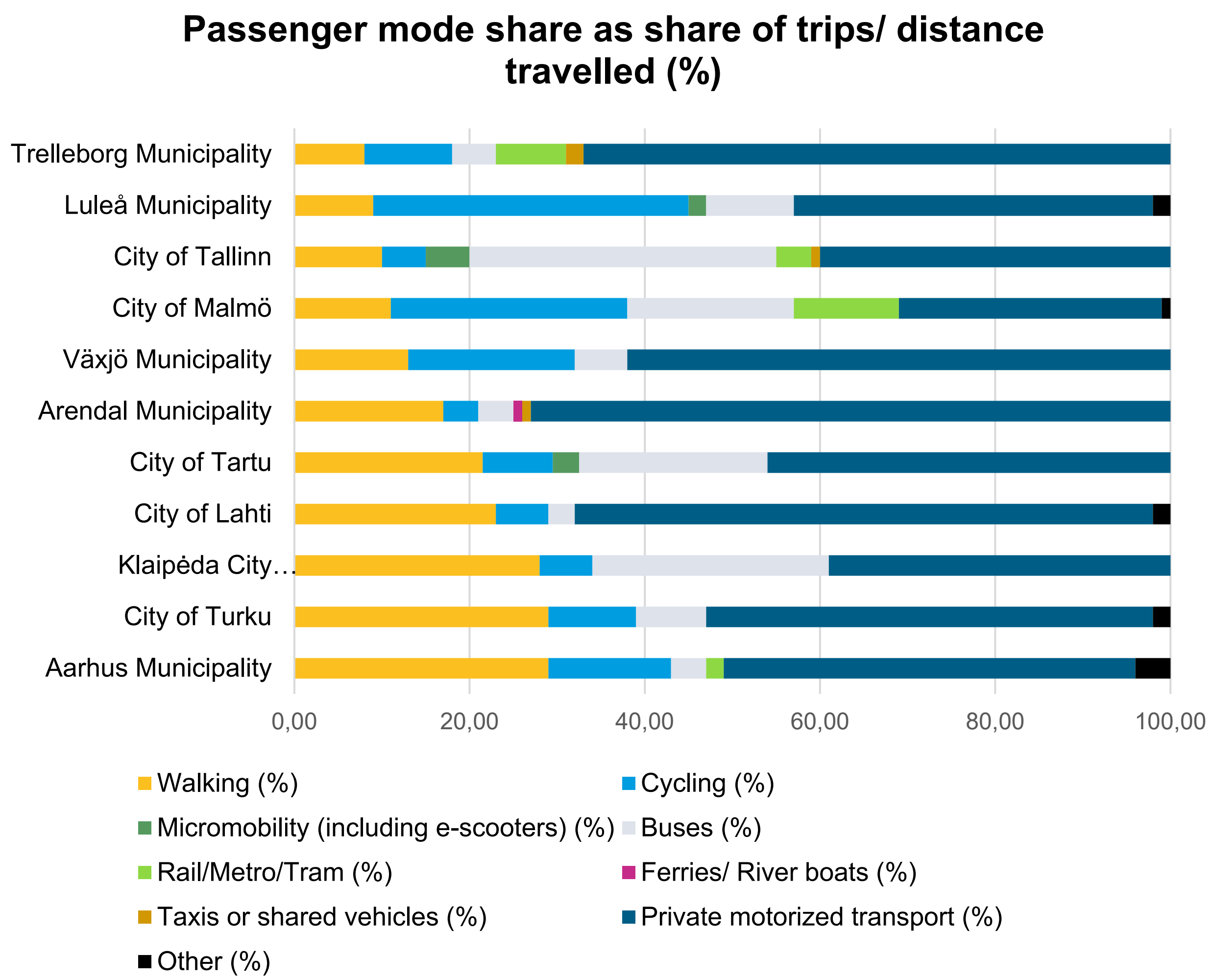
Walking & cycling being the most sustainable means of mobility are represented with combined share valuing from around **15% in Tallinn** up to **45% in Luleå**. Even though the sustainable mobility modes (**bus, rail, micro-mobility, water transport**) amount to a great share of the modal split in the disclosing UBC member cities, **private motorised transport** still dominates the passenger mode share ranging from as high as **73% in Arendal** to as low as **30% in Malmö**.

UBC member cities are working actively on developing and implementing sustainable urban mobility that would help them reduce the private motorised transport dependency, increase the quality of life for their residents and ultimately reduce CO2 emissions.

KLAIPEDA: Contributing to Lithuanian CO2 emission obligations, Klaipeda city municipality has car, bicycle and scooter sharing systems and transport network companies.

ARENDAL: Arendal is advancing fossil-free waste management by introducing its first all-electric refuse truck, replacing a diesel vehicle that consumed 17,000 litres annually. This pilot, part of a competitive tender, cuts CO2 emissions by 45 tons per year and will guide the transition of the entire 18-truck fleet. The project boosts electrification efforts, reduces noise pollution, and supports broader municipal adoption. Estimated total CO2 reduction: 850 tonnes.

UMEÅ: Umeå has an action plan for better air quality with actions focusing on transport and mobility management. The program is divided into four subject areas: actions in street infrastructure, actions focusing on the emitting source, governance and influence on traffic behaviour, planning and land use. The plan has recently been revised with a wide representation of stakeholders and organisations in the region.



UBC SCC mobility project

SUMPs for BSR

The SUMPs for BSR (Enhancing effective Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning for supporting active mobility in BSR cities) project helps smaller municipalities develop and apply sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMPs) to encourage shift towards people's active mobility and thus a healthier lifestyle while reducing traffic emissions at the same time.

Funding: Interreg BSR Programme

Duration: Nov 2023 – Oct 2026

Budget: 3,07 MEUR

UBC members in the project: Turku, Cesis, Gdynia, Greifswald, Gävle, Panevezys

Project contacts in UBC SCC: Ira Sibelius, Adham Maharramli

In **SUMPs for BSR project**, UBC SCC as a part of City of Turku is the **Lead Partner** and responsible for the transfer activities. The project focuses on increasing the uptake of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans especially in small and mid-sized BSR cities.

SUMPs for BSR will develop a common framework on monitoring and evaluation for sustainable urban mobility planning, a unified model for testing and experimenting with innovative mobility solutions, and a training programme supporting a larger audience of cities in their SUMP process.

In 2024, SUMPs for BSR project partners have developed initial versions of the **framework for monitoring and evaluation of the SUMP**, **model for experimenting with active mobility solutions** and co-developed **the pilots to test those solutions**. In 2025, the partners will design the comprehensive **training programme** to transfer knowledge and experiences to the BSR cities ensuring the long-lasting effect of the work done. The project also hosted a **UBC TALKS webinar** about sustainable urban mobility planning introducing the SUMP as an indispensable tool for planning and managing urban mobility and importance of the monitoring and evaluation as part of it (September 2024).

In 2024, partner cities of SUMPs for BSR project co-organised an international active mobility photo competition "**Active Mobility in Action**", met with widespread participation and enthusiasm, reinforcing the importance of active mobility in urban areas. The competition reached over **155,000 people** through various social media channels across the BSR, with **50+ entries** from six UBC member cities: **Turku, Gävle, Greifswald, Gdynia, Panevezys,** and **Cesis**.

UBC SCC also represented SUMPs for BSR at the **Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in Visby (ca. **650** participants), at the stand of the Union of the Baltic Cities and PA Spatial Planning VASAB in the Networking Village. In UBC SCC social media, the interest towards SUMPs for BSR activities collected over **7000** engagements throughout 2024.

Energy-smart cities

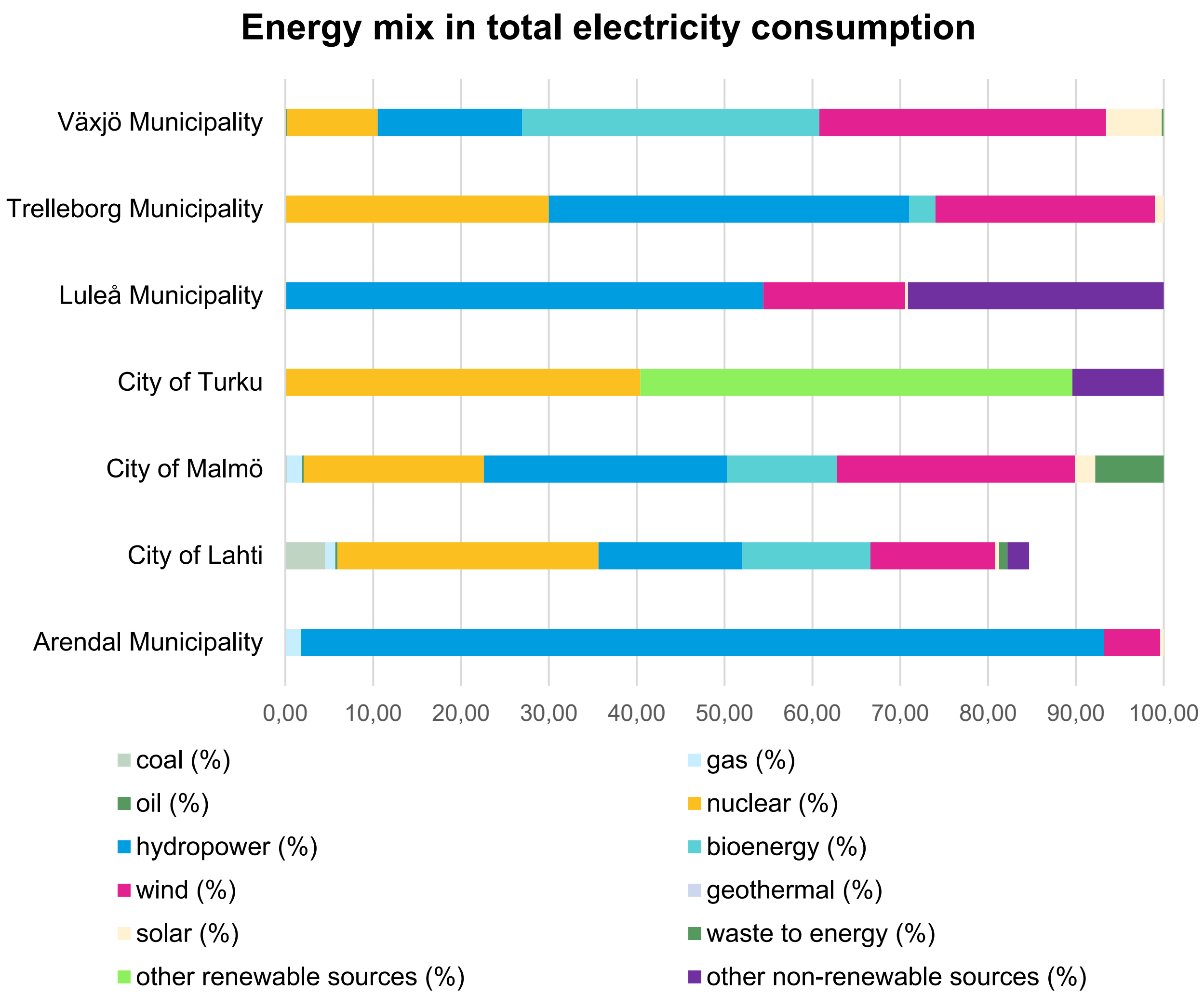
Energy efficiency is one of the measures to support cities' paths towards climate neutrality. **Positive energy districts** were one of the key trends in Europe throughout the year, and their Baltic Sea Region examples were brought up in UBC SCC publications and media to inspire cities with this holistic approach. Further, UBC SCC supported the energy topic through the strategic approach to limiting carbon emissions and forecasting financial aspects of the climate actions when preparing **climate budgets**.

UBC SAP: Energy milestones in 2024

- Partner in the **Climate-4-CAST** project **developing capacities of local authorities** to prepare climate budgets and strengthen cross-departmental cooperation in cities.
- **Positive funding decision**: partner in the **ClimaResponse** project (Interreg BSR; implementation starts in 2025).
- **Organising a UBC TALKS webinar** presenting funding opportunities for local authorities around the topics of innovations and climate actions.

Energy trends and highlights from UBC cities

UBC member cities continue on their way to **decarbonising their energy sources**. This year, 7 out of 13 cities have disclosed their energy mix. While **hydropower** is dominating the energy mix of **Arendal** with a whopping 91.4% share in total energy consumption, it holds the overall top of the share of all disclosing cities with **nuclear** and **wind power** following closely. It is great to see that **solar power** is also gaining traction in the region with **Växjö** already sourcing over 6% of its energy from solar. According to disclosed data **oil** and **coal** have been **gradually phased out** completely. With some potential to reduce the still low share of non-renewables in the energy mix, cities are established to switch to sustainable and renewable energy sources in the coming years.



With the high overall share of low or carbon-free energy sources in the energy mix of electricity consumption, cities are focusing on energy efficiency and securing the resilience of supply.

LAHTI: Most of the old buildings are not sufficiently prepared for extreme heat waves. Lahti was involved in CANEMURE LIFE project, where significant modifications were done in part of the city-owned houses. The idea of the modifications was energy saving, but simultaneously the buildings were made more resistant to climate change and heat. Updating building instructions and the rising climate awareness among officers, builders and citizens significantly support adaptation work.

TURKU: Energy poverty is one of the challenges to be tackled on the way to a resource-wise and emission-free energy system. Together with Turku Energia, the City of Turku is actively making efforts to ensure both sustainability and reasonable costs in energy distribution.

UBC SCC energy project

Climate-4-CAST

The Climate-4-CAST (A Climate Action decision Support Tool to accelerate cities' progress towards climate neutrality) project provides authorities with a tool to visualise and analyse various action scenarios for meeting climate goals to better plan public budgets with climate neutrality measures and monitor results of their implementation.

The Climate-4-CAST project, led by HafenCity University Hamburg, addresses city administrations alongside regional and national public authorities, and as a **Work Package 3 Leader**, UBC SCC supports the transfer of the project results to the target groups.

Climate-4-CAST aims to assist local authorities in integrating climate actions into urban governance processes in their efforts to climate neutrality – and supports this by developing an **interactive tool for climate budget calculations**.

Funding: Interreg BSR Programme

Duration: Nov 2023 – Oct 2026

Budget: 3,77 MEUR

UBC members in the project:
Hamburg, Aarhus, Riga, Gdańsk, Turku, Växjö

Project contacts in UBC SCC:
Olena Zinchuk, Mariia Andreeva

In 2024, project partners completed the work regarding integration of the financial aspects into the tool's design schematic (led by City of Tampere and Kausal Ltd.) which marked an important step towards technical tool development and its operationalisation framework for implementation in the cities. To this end, action plans for the 1st piloting round (led by City of Aarhus) at the partner cities have been drafted and subsequently implemented throughout the year, providing a conceptual and functional basis for the upcoming 2nd round of pilots (led by City of Riga) as well as the evaluation activities (led by Uppsala University).

UBC SCC informed its member cities and other interested stakeholder about Climate-4-CAST and its training opportunities coming up in 2025. A lot of interest towards the project was attracted at the UBC Commission events, as well at the **Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in Visby (ca. **650** participants) at the Networking Village stands of the Union of the Baltic Cities and EUSBSR PA Energy.

The interest towards Climate-4-CAST activities in UBC SCC social media channels realised throughout the year in over **4400** engagements.

Resource-efficient cities

The resource-efficiency topic, and the circular economy related to it, were explored in UBC SCC during 2024 with the support of several projects developing concrete circular solutions for cities. Reducing **plastic pollution** and boosting **green public procurement** were the main activity trends this year.

"Several UBC Cities and municipalities are frontrunners for circular economy and increased resource efficiency. The total amount of waste from households in Malmö has decreased from 421 kg/pers (2019) to 382 kg/pers (2023) which is good compared to the trend in Europe where the latest statistic shows that it has increased and now is 505 kg/pers on average. Much more needs to be done and more reuse, recycling, diversion, energy use and detoxification for a cleaner and more circular future must happens. This is good for cities, business and a more sustainable future."
— Per-Arne Nilsson, Senior Strategist at the Environmental department, City of Malmö

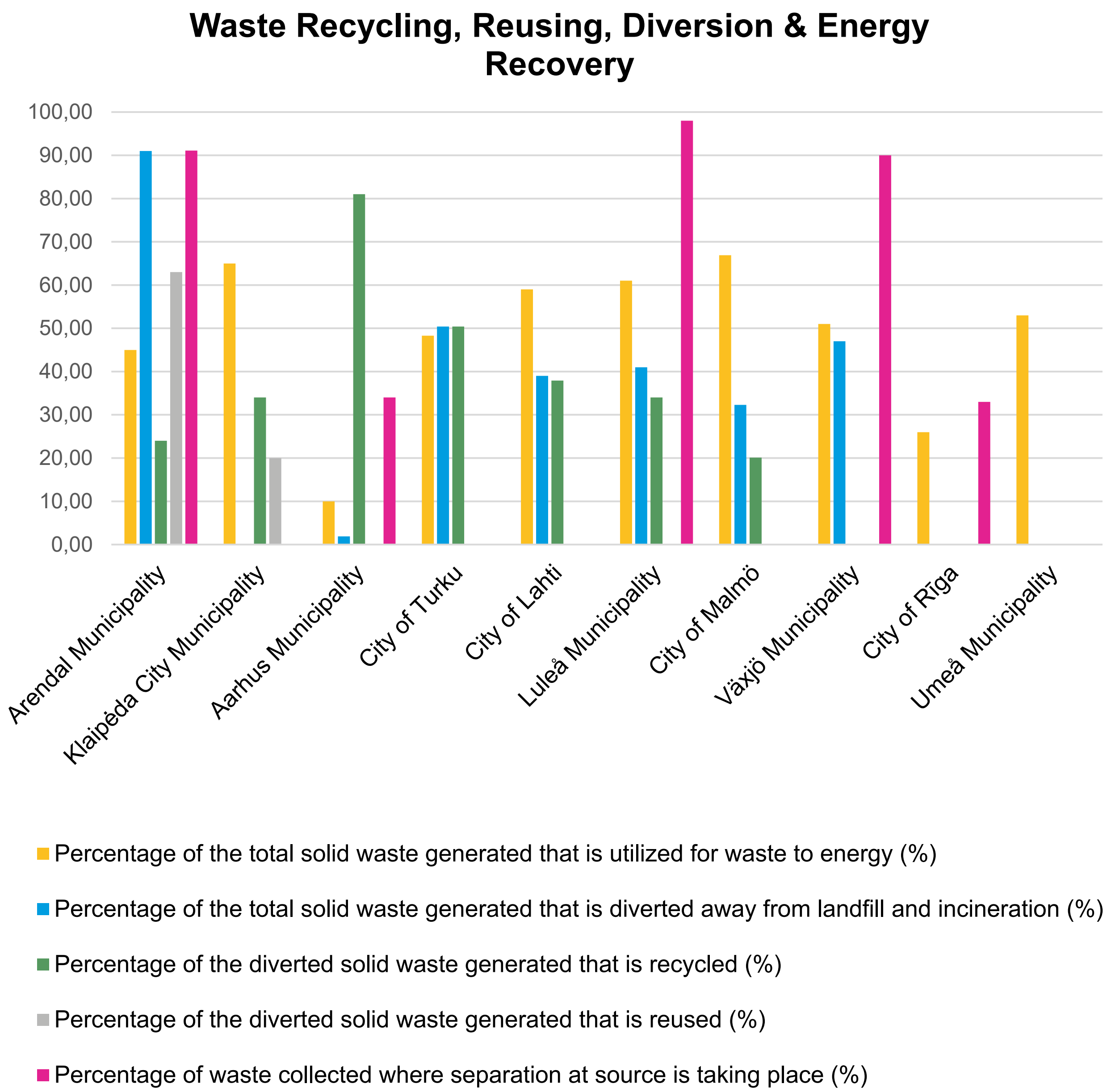
UBC SAP: Resource-efficiency milestones in 2024

- Partner in the **BALTIPLAST** project **supporting local authorities** with a set of strategic, soft and technological measures to reduce single-use plastic.
- Associated organisation in the **ChemClimCircle, Change(K)now!, Circular MuSe** projects.
- **Positive funding decision**: partner in the **ChemClimCircle 2** project, associated organisation in the **Circ@Home** project (Interreg BSR; implementation starts in 2025).
- **Organising a UBC TALKS webinar** highlighting the benefits of the green public procurement and the variety of its applications in city administrations.

Resource-efficiency trends and highlights from UBC cities

In 2024, 10 out of 13 UBC members disclosing their climate data through CDP-ICLEI Track, have reported the share of **reuse, recycling, diversion and energy recovery from the solid waste**.

The reported data shows a high level of diversion of solid waste away from landfilling and incineration with **Arendal** championing the chart. The reuse and recycling rates are substantial with **Arendal** reusing 63% of solid waste and **Aarhus** recycling 81% of the solid waste. Another interesting trend is high levels of energy recovery from solid waste with **Malmö** recovering energy from 66.9% of their solid waste. The high level of waste collected with separation at source shows the potential for even higher recycling and reusing rates and less solid waste ending up in landfills and incineration plants.



UBC member cities are increasingly focusing on **better waste separation**, improved **circular economy** and **circular & carbon-neutral construction**.

MALMÖ: Mechanical separation of plastics to remove fossil oil-based plastic from the energy recovery system is being installed in municipal waste management company Sysav's energy-producing facility that uses waste incineration. Options appraisal, business plan development and procurement are underway, and the system is estimated to be ready to be installed and tested.

AARHUS: Food waste has been separated at the source since the end of 2023, and we are looking forward to getting coherent data.

UBC SCC resource-efficiency projects

BALTIPLAST

The BALTIPLAST (Baltic Approaches to Handling Plastic Pollution under a Circular Economy Context) project brings technological solutions to help public authorities reduce plastic waste and trigger investments in sustainable sorting and recycling.

The **BALTIPLAST project**, led by Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, focuses on reduction of plastic in production and consumption. The project targets city administrations, businesses and citizens, and as a **Work Package 3 Leader**, UBC SCC supports the transfer of the project results to the target groups.

Funding: Interreg BSR Programme

Duration: Jan 2023 – Dec 2025

Budget: 4,27 MEUR

UBC members in the project: Helsinki, Kaunas, Tallinn, Valmiera, Hamburg.

Project contacts in UBC SCC: Mariia Andreva, Adham Maharramli

Throughout 2024, project partners have developed and tested **concrete solutions for plastic waste reduction a.o. in municipal buildings, schools, city-organised events, offices and households.** Cities developed and tested the **guidelines on plastic prevention and reduction strategies for municipalities**. UBC SCC, responsible for disseminating project results to other BSR cities, prepared for next year: launching an educational kit for municipalities paired with the training events all through mid-2025.

One of the concrete project pilots – the approach of Tallinn to organising green events – was highlighted at the **UBC TALKS** about green public procurement (November 2024). UBC SCC also promoted BALTIPLAST at the **Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region** in Visby (ca. **650** participants), at the stand of the Union of the Baltic Cities in the Networking Village. The interest towards BALTIPLAST activities in UBC SCC social media channels realised throughout the year in over **6700** engagements.

ChemClimCircle

The ChemClimCircle (Integrating criteria for chemicals, climate and circularity in procurement processes) project equips municipalities with training modules to apply circular procurement and, by this, to use non-toxic and climate-neutral products.

UBC SCC joined the **project ChemClimCircle** as an **associated organisation**. The project is funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme (October 2022 – September 2024).

In 2024, UBC SCC exchanged with the ChemClimCircle partnership and promoted the results of this project in the **UBC TALKS** webinar about green public procurement (November 2024). The ChemClimCircle approach developed in the project provides a matrix for prioritizations of a procurement practices connected to sustainability aspects that incorporates tox-free, climate-neutral, and circular criteria into the process. The project provided solid methodology for development of green procurement tools in cities.

The cooperation in this project constellation has led to the successful funding decision for the **ChemClimCircle 2** project by Interreg BSR Programme, the implementation of which will begin in early 2025. In the new project, **UBC SCC joins with a project partner role** and a commitment to support the implementation of the ChemClimCircle approach in cities and development of the step-by-step guide as well as Navigator tool to increase the deployment of the green procurement practices in the Baltic Sea Region.

Change(K)now!

The Change(K)now! (A mindset change from single-use to circular or multiple-use of food delivery systems in cities of the BSR) project helps municipalities reduce single-use food packaging in food delivery and catering systems, and build social acceptance among companies and people for circular reuse of food packaging.

UBC SCC joined as an **associated organisation** the **Change(K)now! project** promoting a mindset change in food delivery systems from single-use to multiple-use crockery and packaging at different use types (November 2023 – October 2026, funded by the Interreg BSR Programme). UBC SCC supports project activities related to transfer of solutions to other municipalities beyond the project and promote training program on circular solutions for food delivery.

Circular MuSe

The Circular MuSe (Promoting circular economy approaches that increase resource efficiency in municipal services) project takes a comprehensive and systematic approach to promote circular economy principles in municipal services throughout the South Baltic area.

The aim of **Circular MuSe** is to support municipal companies and municipalities in smaller cities and rural areas in applying circular approaches that promote the reuse of raw materials in their supply chains, thus increasing resource efficiency in municipal services (July 2024 – June 2027, funded by the Interreg South Baltic Programme). UBC SCC joined this project as an **associated organisation.**

The project was successfully launched at the online Kick-off event on 12 September and the first project meeting was organised on 20-21 November in Sopot, Poland. Partners had an opportunity to meet each other for the first time, clarify detailed project work plan and activities as well as agree on upcoming project milestones and events.

Biodiverse cities

In 2024, cities were working on the **urban greening plans**, the requirement for which is valid for every city over 20 000 inhabitants. Further, the importance of protecting and improving urban biodiversity consistently grew. Addressing this, UBC SCC supported the project on developing the **urban biodiversity parks model** and promoted biodiversity in the regional discussions.

"Riga is bringing nature back by establishing city meadows, with 42 meadows currently covering nearly 13 hectares. The city is working on strengthening the role of biological diversity in urban planning through the development of the Riga Urban Greening Plan and Biological Diversity Guidelines. The principles and policy goals outlined in these documents will safeguard and promote biological diversity."
— Guntars Ruskuls, Head of the Board of Strategic Management, Riga City Council

UBC SAP: Biodiversity milestones in 2024

- Partner in the **Urban Biodiversity Parks project** enhancing biodiversity and increasing community involvement.

Biodiversity trends and highlights from UBC cities

In 2024, UBC member cities, regularly reporting their environmental data through CDP-ICLEI Track, are recognising the potential **risks emerging from biodiversity loss** and envisioning the actions needed to curb its progress.

LULEÅ: When biodiversity loss occurs, it will impact many, if not all, sectors. Indirect consequences include a reduction in the effectiveness of ecosystem services, such as clean air, soil, and water. There will also be an increase in invasive plant species, along with fragmentation and loss of habitat.

Cities are taking bold actions beyond the rhetorics and **implementing innovative solutions** and approaches. City of **Turku** is developing Europe's first biodiversity park in Skanssi and **Malmö** is taking an interesting approach to boost the biodiversity development with its green bonds.

TURKU: Turku region has an important role in stopping biodiversity loss in Finland. The city covers less than 0,1% of Finland's area but over 12% of all endangered species in Finland can be found in the area. The target is to stop biodiversity loss and the destruction of ecosystems and as a long-term target to restore lost ecosystems.

"The city has adopted the first biodiversity programme 2023–2029 and is now implementing 21 different actions."
— Olli-Pekka Mäki, Head of the Environmental Protection Division, City of Turku

MALMÖ: For the City of Malmö, green bonds are a tool for achieving the ambitious goals described in our environmental programmes. The investments financed with Malmö's green bonds will contribute to the transformation to a fossil-free society, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable development in Malmö. The initiatives also involve environmentally friendly investments, such as initiatives that increase biodiversity in the city.

UBC SCC biodiversity project

Urban Biodiversity Parks

The project Urban Biodiversity Parks as co-creative platforms for enhancing biodiversity, learning and community involvement in urban ecological regeneration develops and pilots the urban biodiversity parks concept as a tool for urban ecological restoration and regeneration.

The aim of the Urban Biodiversity Parks project is to establish a platform for developing and testing experimental approaches for preserving and actively enhancing biodiversity in urban environment. Biodiversity parks will be developed as recreational areas and experiential learning platforms for citizens, NGOs, private actors and education institutions.

Funding: European Urban Initiative

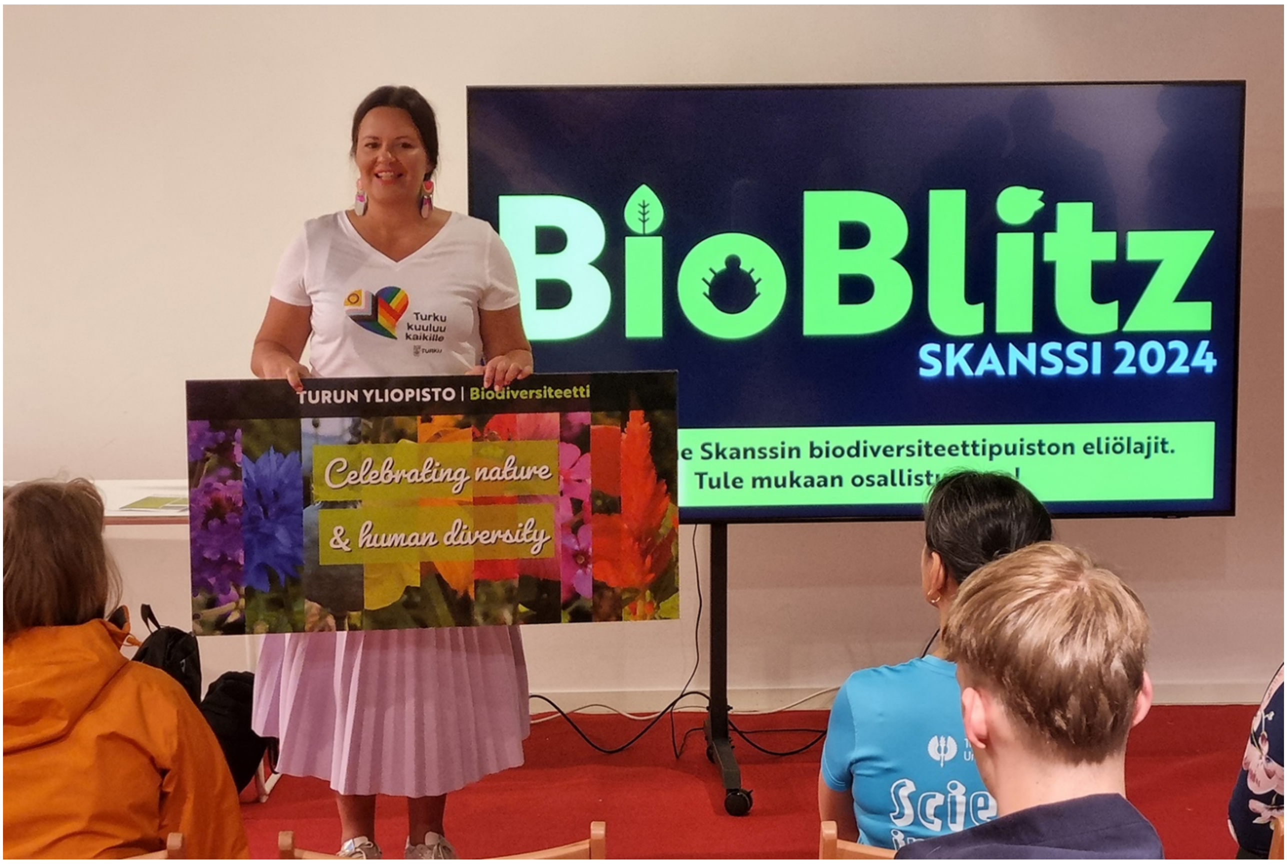
Duration: Mar 2024 – Aug 2027

Budget: 3,9 MEUR

UBC members in the project: Turku, Malmö.

Project contact in UBC SCC: Maija Rusanen

During the first project year, plans for the implementation of the Europe's first biodiversity park – the Skanssi park were refined and the work started with i.e. setting up the **local seed accumulation area**, **forest management activities** and **controlling invasive species**. Various stakeholders, such as school groups and residents, have been involved in the implementation from the start via **participatory nature management** and **two Bioblitz events**. Planning of smaller pilots in selected sub-urban neighbourhoods was initiated in close collaboration with the local communities.



Elina Rantanen, Deputy Mayor of the City of Turku and UBC Vice-President, at the BioBlitz event organised in the Urban Biodiversity Parks project. Photo by Klemen Strmsnik.

The City of Turku has formed a strong partnership, bringing together higher education and research institutions, regional public authority, and local companies to collaborate on Urban Biodiversity Parks. Three cities (**Malmö**/Sweden, **Košice**/Slovakia and **Neapoli-Sykies**/Greece) were invited to follow their efforts and co-develop transfer tools to maximise the transfer potentials of the results. The UBC SCC is on board to coordinate the project transfer activities.

Strategic Partnerships

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) provides coordinated approach, synergies and more effective use of funds in joint achievement of regional objectives: save the sea, connect the region and increase prosperity. The Strategy has been an important policy framework for UBC SCC and we have actively supported its implementation through several **EUSBSR Policy Areas**, incl. PA Hazards, PA Nutri, PA Innovation, PA Bioeconomy, PA Energy, and PA Transport.

UBC SCC at the 15th Annual Forum of EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

29–31 October 2024 in Visby

The Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is the main event for the stakeholders of our area to meet, exchange, network, and plan further activities. In 2024, the Forum took place in the heart of the Baltic Sea: in the city of **Visby**, hosted by the **Region Gotland** – the member of the UBC network since 1991 – and attracted **650** participants at the venue, in addition to the online audience of the livestreams.

On 29 October, the event started with a **roundtable on stakeholder engagement**, organised by the **Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation** (BSSSC) together with the **UBC** and the **Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions** (CPMR). The discussion focused on mapping the needs and gaps that might remain in the Action Plan – and how to overcome those. UBC Sustainable Cities Commission took active part in this event, in addition to Planning and Learning Cities. The discussion throughout this roundtable acknowledged the need and the added value of involving local authorities in the regional discussions.

One of the parallel sessions of the Forum, "**Let's Talk About PFAS: Connecting PFAS Strategies in the Baltic Sea Region**" was co-organised by UBC Sustainable Cities Commission together with EUSBSR Policy Area Hazards, Baltic Sea PFAS network and ongoing projects: EMPEREST, APRIORA, NonHazCity 3. This session engaged ca. 60 participants and focused on negative impacts of PFAS on citizens, and tools for local stakeholders to address this challenge.

With such a large number of Forum attendees, the **Networking Village** was the main place of exchange throughout the two event days. The UBC stand thrived under a lot of attention and interest, and participants could learn about the activities and establish new cooperations with the representatives from many Commissions: not only **Sustainable Cities prominently sharing own activities**, but also UBC Cultural, Safe, Learning, and Planning Cities.

Council of the Baltic Sea States

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is an intergovernmental political organisation for regional cooperation in different topics, including sustainability and climate. In 2024, cooperation between UBC SCC and CBSS focused on preparing a **project proposal** on local response to climate change.

As it was announced by the end of the year, the **ClimaResponse** received a positive funding decision from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, and its implementation will start in 2025. ClimaResponse will aim to enhance the capacities of public authorities to efficiently plan and implement climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies. CBSS is the Lead partner of the project, and UBC SCC will coordinate transfer activities.

Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

UBC SCC has the official observer status in the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) – intergovernmental organisation and regional platform for environmental policy-making established to protect the Baltic Sea marine environment from all sources of pollution.

To tackle concrete environmental challenges of the Baltic Sea, UBC SCC has cooperated with HELCOM in the **project EMPEREST** focusing on elimination of hazardous substances, and specifically emerging pollutants (PFAS) from the wastewater stream. In March 2024, UBC SCC invited HELCOM to the **UBC TALKS webinar** to present the PFAS monitoring guidelines that were under preparation in the project, to address the alarming presence of PFAS in water and biota all around the Baltic Sea Region.

Green City Accord

UBC SCC joined the Green City Accord (GCA) – European Union initiative to make cities greener, cleaner and healthier – and signed official Supporters' statement in May 2021. By signing the Accord, cities commit to addressing five areas of environmental management: air, water, nature and biodiversity, circular economy and waste, and noise.

Within the scope of cooperation, the UBC SCC is supporting cities in joining the GCA movement through awareness raising and communication campaigns, capacity-building activities, funding and expert advice on issues related to water quality and efficiency, urban biodiversity, air and noise pollution reduction as well as advanced circular economy measures. By 2024, 9 UBC member cities joined the Green City Accord initiative.

EU Mission Ocean

The EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters" aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments. In March 2024, the UBC SCC joined the **Mission Ocean Annual Forum** to bring attention to the innovative local solutions against PFAS developed in the Baltic Sea Region in the framework of our **EMPEREST** project, which is also the Mission Charter action.

The Secretariat also participated in the **2nd Mission Arena in Riga** organised on 25-26 April 2024 by the BlueMissionBanos coordination and support project. The project inspires, engages and supports stakeholders across the Baltic and North Sea Lighthouse Area in taking the necessary actions to make the blue economy carbon-neutral and circular while eliminating pollution and restoring biodiversity. The event focused on the current state of Mission implementation in the Eastern Baltic, highlighting good practices, scalable solutions and the most pressing issues that need to be addressed in the region for the effective deployment of the Mission. Participants actively contributed to the preparation of the "**Roadmap 2030: Steps for the Effective Deployment of the Mission Ocean & Waters in the Area 2 Region**". The event held in Riga brought together around 200 regional actors from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Sweden.

Cooperation with CDP

CDP-ICLEI Track[1] serves as a unified platform for cities to report their climate and environment-related data, actions, plans and goals. The **cooperation between UBC and CDP**[2] started in 2016 and continues to evolve. The close partnership made it possible for UBC member cities to report their environmental data and make their cities' journey towards the climate goals visible and praised. UBC cities acquire an opportunity to track the progress of their own and of similar cities and get assistance in setting up their climate targets and goals in accordance with international standards and initiatives.

> "When cities from the Baltic Sea region follow the global trend and disclose their climate and environment data, they unlock opportunities to lead, learn, and accelerate action. In 2024, 13 UBC cities accepted to report, and worldwide, over 1,000 cities, states and regions measure and disclose environmental data each year to show how they manage emissions, build resilience, protect themselves from climate impacts and create better places for people to live and work. In 2025, we wish every UBC cities will join the movement driving change through transparency."
> **— Étienne Métais, Associate Director for Cities, States & Regions at CDP Europe**

[1] The data used to produce this part of the report was collected through CDP-ICLEI Track. The contents of this report may be used by anyone provided acknowledgement is given to UBC, CDP and ICLEI using the following wording: This data was collected in partnership by UBC, CDP and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability.

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[2] CDP refers to CDP Worldwide, a registered charity (no. 1122330) with its registered office is 4th Floor, 60 Great Tower Street, London, EC3R 5AZ, United Kingdom, as well as its affiliates CDP North America, Inc., CDP Europe AISBL and their affiliates.

Annual report 2024

Union of the Baltic Cities Sustainable Cities Commission

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