



# Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action





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# Foreword

The acceleration of change at global and local levels widely affects the lives of people around the globe and forces us to rethink our common concepts of living and learning. If we are to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which seeks to ensure healthy, safe and prosperous living environments for everyone, now and in the future, it will be crucial to re-evaluate our dominant models of social and economic development.

For this reason, it is my pleasure to introduce the document *Learning Cities and the SDGs*, which is a *Guide to Action* for mainstreaming lifelong learning as a key driver to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The document seeks to facilitate the process of transforming global goals into local actions by showing concrete steps, which members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) have taken to promote green and healthy environments, equity and inclusion as well as decent work and entrepreneurship.

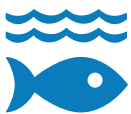
This *Guide to Action* is closely linked to the *Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities*, adopted by the participants of the third International Conference on Learning Cities, which took place from 18–20 September 2017 in Cork, Ireland. The conference helped to raise awareness of the critical contribution learning cities can make in achieving the SDGs. This transformative process requires strong political commitment and leadership as well as integrated governance and multi-level partnerships with public and private stakeholders from many sectors, including civil society. We are pleased to see that UNESCO GNLC member cities are increasingly enforcing local and global partnerships, organizing sub-regional meetings and contributing to a vibrant exchange of knowledge and practices within the network.

I would like to extend my gratitude to all member cities of the UNESCO GNLC for their efforts towards making lifelong learning opportunities available for all. I am pleased to see the high interest of cities around the world in joining the network and achieving the ambitious vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, I call upon city leaders and stakeholders across all sectors in cities and communities to work together in partnership and implement lifelong learning to create environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability.

Kabir Shaikh  
*Director a.i.*  
*UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning*



# Guide to Action



## Introduction

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* sets out an ambitious and transformational vision for a world free of poverty, hunger, violence and war; a world in which equity, inclusion and a healthy environment are assured for everyone. This vision has been set out in 17 goals and 169 targets.

As all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include targets relevant to the local contexts of learning cities, there is a need to localize the SDGs and establish lifelong learning as the guiding principle for building more sustainable cities and achieving the 2030 Agenda. Learning cities respond particularly to the targets of SDG 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') and SDG 11 ('Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable').

The UNESCO approach to learning cities was agreed at the first International Conference on Learning Cities, which took place in Beijing in 2013. The concept of a learning city was defined in the *Beijing Declaration* and developed further in the *Key Features of Learning Cities*. The *Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities*, adopted at the second International Conference on Learning Cities in 2015, outlined eight strategic directions for sustainable learning cities. These include expanding the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (UNESCO GNLC) and opening membership to all cities in UNESCO Member States that wish to implement the *Key Features of Learning Cities*.

Given the necessity for urgent intervention to secure a sustainable future, there has been increasing demand from member cities of the UNESCO GNLC for a concrete action plan on how sustainable transformation can be enforced at local level by pursuing a lifelong learning approach. The third International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), which took place from 18–20 September 2017 in Cork, Ireland, has therefore sought to move from the global discourse to the local promotion and implementation of lifelong learning to continue the support for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This *Guide to Action* draws on the results of the third ICLC, namely the Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities, as well as previous international and regional meetings of the UNESCO GNLC and existing UNESCO GNLC publications.

## Transforming global goals into local actions

Although the primary responsibility for achieving the SDGs lies at the country level, implementation does not fall exclusively within the remits of national governments and ministries of education. Promoting sustainability and lifelong learning requires a sector-wide approach at all levels of government, traversing education, employment, migration, citizenship, social welfare, public finance, and so on. In fact, all parts of society, including civil society and youth representatives, can make important contributions and should work collaboratively to meet the diverse learning needs of all citizens. Encouraged by the *3x3x3 Youth Statement on Learning Cities*, adopted at the second ICLC in Mexico City, learning cities are asked to 'include youth as an active and meaningful stakeholder in the creation of learning cities'.

Local governments, being the closest level of government to people, are best placed to link the global goals to local communities and are particularly encouraged to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Localizing the SDGs for cities is therefore an important step in adapting the global goals to the context of urban communities. While local governments are well placed to implement the global agenda at local level, they often must do so with limited resources, capacity, autonomy and decision-making power. Therefore, to promote sustainable cities and human settlements, there is a need for national governments to establish appropriate conditions for cities to drive the 2030 agenda.

## The contribution of learning in families, communities, towns and cities to the achievement of the SDGs

In order to contribute to the creation of sustainable societies, people require capabilities for living and working, including literacy and basic skills; professional development and vocational skills; community engagement and active citizenship. In a world where social, economic and political contexts are constantly being reshaped, learning must be continuous, lifelong and life-wide. More and more cities recognize the importance of lifelong learning and are reinventing themselves as learning cities. They acknowledge that lifelong learning is the key to developing the resources necessary

for building cities which are green and healthy, inclusive and equitable and which strive for decent conditions for work, employment and entrepreneurship. In this sense, the learning cities concept encompasses other approaches to sustainable development on the local level, such as *Healthy Cities*, *Child Friendly Cities*, *Smart Cities*, *Age Friendly Cities*, *Resilient Cities* and so forth. It is a people-centred and learning-focused approach, which provides a collaborative, action-orientated framework for working on the diverse challenges related to sustainable development that cities increasingly face.

For such changes to take place in such a short period of time (until 2030 – 13 years) opportunities for lifelong learning, adult education, non-formal and informal learning, and learning in families, communities, towns and cities need to be introduced where they are not currently available.

It is worth noting that the learning city principles can also support socio-economic development in areas surrounding cities. Particular focus should be on areas where the rates of poverty and unemployment are higher, and health and social services are lower. Enforcing social and economic well-being as well as providing learning and work opportunities for residents in deprived areas will contribute to the sustainability of cities, which are often challenged by large numbers of labour migrants.

## Planning and monitoring learning cities

The *Key Features of Learning Cities* provide a robust framework for planning and monitoring progress of learning cities. At the same time, cities should draw on the Sustainable Development Goals, their targets and indicators for the implementation and monitoring of their actions. Strong links between the Key Features and the SDGs can be identified. To demonstrate these specific relationships, a set of five examples is provided at the end of this document (see pp.20-21).

In accordance with the 2030 Agenda, local governments should integrate the SDGs into their existing policies and plans to the greatest extent possible and according to the specific local context, priorities and needs.

Implementation should be monitored using global indicators, while creating additional national/local ones where appropriate. Cities should start their monitoring processes with a manageable set of indicators, using both the Key Features and the SDGs. This initial cluster of relevant and measurable indicators can then be expanded over time, developing an integrated and holistic approach to the achievement of the SDGs, based on the learning city's specific profile.

## Implementation guide

In alignment with the *Key Features of Learning Cities*, this implementation guide comprises three thematic sections, focusing on: green and healthy learning cities (environmental sustainable development); equitable and inclusive learning cities (individual empowerment, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion); and employment and entrepreneurship in learning cities (economic development and cultural prosperity). It is important to acknowledge that these three dimensions of sustainable development are fundamentally connected and that lifelong learning activities in a city will usually affect several of them. A fourth, and equally important dimension, is culture (cultural expression and heritage, and diversity), which is included as a transversal theme in the following sections.

The three sections draw on the experiences of GNLC members and highlight actions related to lifelong learning which cities have taken to promote sustainable development in urban communities. These examples of good practice show the diversity of initiatives and reflect the manifold contexts and development stages in which cities operate. The subsequent questions highlight some important issues related to the respective thematic areas. Along with a selection of related *Key Features* and SDGs, this can serve cities as a basic tool to self-assess their ongoing activities and define their potential need for action. Every city will have to develop its own framework for planning, implementation and monitoring, with a selection of targets and indicators, responding to its particular environmental, social, cultural and economic challenges, and the demands of its learners.

## Reference documents

### 2030 Agenda and SDGs

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015)

Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

Incheon Declaration and the Education 2030 Framework for Action

(UNESCO, 2016)

Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002456/245656e.pdf>

Revised list of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators

(IAEG-SDGs, 2017)

Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Official%20Revised%20List%20of%20global%20SDG%20indicators.pdf>

### Guiding documents by the Global Network of Learning Cities

Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities & Key Features of Learning Cities (2013)

Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002349/234986e.pdf>

Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities (2015)

Available at: <http://www.uil.unesco.org/fileadmin/keydocuments/LifelongLearning/learning-cities/en-mexico-city-statement-on-sustainable-learning-cities.pdf>

3x3x3 Youth Statement on Learning Cities (2015)

Available at: [http://www.uil.unesco.org/system/files/the-youth-statement-on-learning-cities\\_o.pdf](http://www.uil.unesco.org/system/files/the-youth-statement-on-learning-cities_o.pdf)

Guidelines for Building Learning Cities (2015)

Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002349/234987e.pdf>

### Guiding documents for implementing and monitoring the SDGs at local level

The Sustainable Development Goals - What local governments need to know

(United Cities and Local Governments, 2015)

Available at: [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/the\\_sdgs\\_what\\_localgov\\_need\\_to\\_know\\_o.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/the_sdgs_what_localgov_need_to_know_o.pdf)

Getting Started with the SDGs in Cities (Sustainable Development Solutions Network and German Cooperation, 2016)

Available at: <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/9.1.8.-Cities-SDG-Guide.pdf>





## Green and healthy learning cities

Learning cities promote education for sustainable development (ESD) as a means of raising awareness of climate change, pollution, mental and physical health risks and the need for environmental protection. Safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are fundamental conditions for green and healthy cities, yet in many parts of the world they cannot be taken for granted. Learning cities build knowledge and skills for effective water resource and waste management in the public and private sectors, and help to improve hygiene standards. To reduce air pollution and promote sustainable mobility, learning cities introduce and expand safe and accessible alternatives to motorized transport. By building and maintaining the relevant infrastructure and communicating

the benefits of such actions, they increase acceptance of public transport and cycling among residents. Learning cities foster healthy work environments and recreational opportunities, including sports facilities and community gardens, to promote the happiness and well-being of all citizens as a key development goal. To improve the population's general health standards, learning cities ensure adequate skills development for health workers. They also promote educational activities focusing on nutrition and health (including sexual and reproductive health) in schools, communities and families. In addition, they recognize the importance of providing adequate learning opportunities in later life.



## What GNLC member cities have done to establish green and healthy living environments



- Promote health education for children and young people in schools and provide health-related training courses for teachers
- Offer health education activities for disadvantaged families, and home visits by health workers to spread the message about healthy lifestyles among citizens
- Organize health education events providing information sessions on healthy lifestyles (e.g. blood sugar monitoring, dental services, fitness classes) and screenings (e.g. anti-smoking films)
- Establish mobile clinics that empower citizens by helping them to learn about their own bodies and health issues
- Offer non-formal health-related courses and workshops, designed to transform women into community health advocates
- Set up a sanitation committees responsible for stimulating collective awareness of hygiene and health issues among inhabitants
- Include learning activities centred on topics such as recycling that are embedded in learning city events and used to raise citizens' awareness of environmental protection
- Establish cycling schools promoting alternative urban transport that educate citizens on road users' rights and obligations and communicate the traffic rules that apply to cyclists in the city
- Organize intergenerational workshops that encourage families to learn more about the environment, sustainable living and effective waste and resource management at the local level
- Introduce bins and recycling facilities in individuals' homes and a team of street cleaners to promote the concept of a green city
- Create sustainable parks serving as educational spaces equipped with interactive features, such as a learning trail for sustainable development

## Guiding questions for cities to assess their progress towards becoming green and healthy

### **Environmental protection**

- Are regular events or campaigns being held to inform people about the efficient use of resources, waste management and recycling?
- Are schools being encouraged to organize workshops on environmental protection to inform people about concrete ways of reducing pollution?
- Are residents being encouraged to help keep their local communities clean, thereby raising awareness of every citizen's responsibility to ensure a clean and healthy living environment?

### **Health services**

- Have information campaigns been launched to raise awareness of preventive measures and to promote regular check-ups?
- Are there programmes in place to inform local communities about the mental and physical health issues facing their city, e.g. led by health ambassadors or peer groups, and taking into account the needs of disadvantaged people?
- Do girls and women have access to information materials and consultation services on sexual and reproductive health?
- Are there mobile health services for residents with low mobility or those living in deprived areas, providing free basic health care services and health-related educational materials?
- Have sports events been organized for all residents of the city, promoting the benefits of physical activity with regard to health and well-being?

### **Mobility**

- Are public transport services widely available and are efforts being made to promote their use as an alternative to cars?
- Is cycling being promoted to city commuters (e.g. by organizing cycling events) and are bike paths being built to ensure the safety of cyclists?

### **Implementation**

- Is your learning city concept linked to national and municipal plans for public health and environmental protection plans, and are relevant stakeholders involved?
- Have funds been allocated for the delivery of ESD to children, young people and adults?
- To facilitate targeted educational planning, do you collect data on environmental and health-related issues, including happiness and well-being as measures of social progress?



## Relevant Key Features of Learning Cities

- 1.3.1 Reducing the negative impacts of economic and other human activities on the natural environment
- 1.3.2 Enhancing the livability of cities
- 1.3.3 Promoting sustainable development through active learning in all settings
- 2.5.4 Fostering a learner-friendly environment



## SDG targets for environment and health addressed by cities (examples)

- 3.9 Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination
- 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- 6.b Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management
- 7.1 Ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services
- 11.6 Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
- 15.a Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships



## Equitable and inclusive learning cities

Learning cities provide lifelong learning opportunities at all ages and at all educational levels through formal, non-formal and informal delivery mechanisms, using multiple and flexible learning pathways, entry points and re-entry points. This is of particular importance for the marginalized or vulnerable, who have either not had the opportunity to acquire sufficient basic knowledge and functional literacy skills, vocational skills or who need reskilling. They include, among others, women and girls; people with disabilities and reduced mobility; migrants and refugees; and ethnic minorities. Responding to the learning needs of all groups in society fosters equity and inclusion. Cross-sector approaches should be used that cover education, science and technology, family, employment, industrial and economic development, migration and integration, citizenship, social welfare and public finance policies. Many countries are experiencing

demographic change and ageing populations; consequently, learning cities must promote learning in later life in order to prevent older citizens from being excluded. By promoting community education as well as intercultural and intergenerational exchange, learning cities respond to the challenges of changing demographics, and help to secure cohesive social environments. Learning cities commit to ending all forms of gender discrimination and violence against ethnic minorities. They take into account the needs of all residents and involve them in public decision-making, contributing to more gender-sensitive policies and strategies, which in turn help to reduce inequalities. As learning cities enable individual empowerment by encouraging their citizens to become agents of change, they spread a culture of peace and equality both in their city and across the global community, thus helping to strengthen the concept of global citizenship.



## What GNLC member cities have done to achieve equity and inclusion



- Provide alternative educational opportunities for all citizens, in particular for vulnerable groups (e.g. young people and adults with low levels of literacy, school drop-outs, refugees and migrants), who are not in formal schooling or training, enabling them to acquire literacy and other basic/vocational skills as well as to participate in continuous adult education
- Offer online learning classes that allow people to attend free lectures on a range of topics relevant to their local community
- Establish migrant colleges enabling migrant workers to obtain professional qualifications, thereby helping them to integrate into society
- Promote intergenerational learning initiatives bringing schoolchildren and adults together
- Provide career guidance, particularly for women, to encourage them to pursue higher qualifications that will allow them to assume leadership positions
- Set up mobile libraries providing reading opportunities for all, especially people with disabilities, senior citizens and children below school age
- Make use of cultural centres that serve as learning sites, bringing together culture, art and learning, and hosting projects run jointly by local educational and cultural institutions as a means of enabling local people to access their cultural heritage and promoting intercultural tolerance
- Establish schemes that mobilize trained volunteers to encourage residents at risk of isolation (e.g. senior citizens, people with disabilities) to participate in cultural activities, art workshops, physical activities, etc.
- Establish 'culture of peace' programmes to reduce discriminatory practices, exclusion, abuse and violence in schools and families
- Create 'civic participation networks' that encourage citizens to take part in the city's decision-making processes, supported by the use of social media and modern technologies
- Follow approaches that encourage young people to contribute towards shaping the learning city, e.g. through the establishment of a youth council or the inclusion of young people in the learning city team

## Guiding questions for cities to assess their progress towards achieving equity and inclusion

### Accessibility

- Do all citizens have access to public learning spaces and mobile services for continual learning and training?
- Have public spaces been established to provide access to books and educational materials for all people, including those with reduced mobility?
- Have support programmes been established to enable vulnerable groups, including those affected by poverty, to access and participate in education?
- Are public resources provided to support non-formal educational activities organized by local communities?

### Inclusion

- Are programmes in place to ensure that both men and women have access to literacy, numeracy and twenty-first century skills as well as continual – and lifelong – learning and training?
- Are teachers and educators provided with training programmes that equip them to respond to the needs of all learners, including those with special learning needs?
- Are programmes offered to promote intergenerational learning and exchange?
- Have events been established to promote education for girls and women, including technical and vocational training as well as higher education?
- Have educational programmes been initiated to inform all members of society, in particular females and vulnerable groups, about their rights, and empower them to participate in public decision-making?

### Civic engagement

- Are meetings and campaigns organized to empower all people to take part in public decision-making?
- Are incentives offered for volunteers who organize and support educational activities?
- Is civic engagement actively promoted among all members of society, including young people and vulnerable groups, such as migrants, refugees, persons with low literacy levels and those affected by poverty?

### Implementation

- Does the implementation of the learning city concept follow a participatory approach, involving representatives from all social groups and facilitating civic engagement?
- Are resources allocated in order to enhance lifelong learning opportunities for all, including vulnerable groups?
- Have targeted educational planning strategies been introduced to cater for vulnerable groups and monitor their participation in education and learning outcomes?



## Relevant Key Features of Learning Cities

- 1.1.1 Ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to become literate and obtain basic skills
- 1.1.2 Encouraging and enabling individuals to actively participate in the public life of their city
- 1.1.3 Guaranteeing gender equality
- 1.1.4 Creating a safe, harmonious and inclusive community
- 1.2.4 Ensuring access to diverse cultural activities
- 2.1.1 Expanding access to early childhood care and education
- 2.1.2 Expanding access to education from primary to tertiary level
- 2.2.1 Establishing community-based learning spaces and providing resources for learning in families and communities
- 2.2.3 Recognizing community history and culture, and indigenous ways of knowing and learning, as unique and precious resources
- 2.5.2 Raising awareness of shared moral, ethical and cultural values, and promoting tolerance of difference
- 2.6.2 Providing adequate information, guidance and support to all citizens, and stimulating them to learn through diverse pathways
- 2.6.3 Developing systems that recognize and reward all forms of learning
- 3.1.2 Developing and implementing well-grounded and participatory strategies for promoting lifelong learning for all
- 3.2.2 Encouraging all stakeholders to provide quality learning opportunities and to make their own unique contribution to building a learning city
- 3.3.3 Adopting pro-poor funding policies and providing various types of support to disadvantaged groups
- 3.3.4 Encouraging citizens and residents to contribute their talents, skills, knowledge and experience on a voluntary basis



## SDG targets for equity and inclusion addressed by cities (examples)

- 4.5 Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- 4.6 Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7 Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- 10.2 Empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
- 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard
- 11.3 Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
- 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships





## Decent work and entrepreneurship in learning cities

Learning cities support educational and training opportunities and skills development for employability that serve as a bridge between academic and vocational training and cover all settings, including secondary and higher education and training institutions, workplace training and non-formal learning in the community. They help to fight poverty, strengthen the local economy and create decent work opportunities for their residents. Learning cities create enabling spaces for sustainability-driven business projects, innovation and entrepreneurship, by dedicating resources both to building relevant infrastructure and financial incentives, and to establishing inspiring learning environments. Fostering knowledge-driven economies does not automatically lead to better social cohesion. Indeed, it can even increase citywide inequalities if economic growth only benefits a small group. To create sustainable economic

development, learning cities must provide educational opportunities for all work sectors, from business leaders to low-skilled workers, and from commerce to culture. By supporting the work of artists and cultural institutions, learning cities acknowledge the cultural sector's important contribution towards sustainability. Learning cities thus foster an entrepreneurial culture that extends to social and cultural activities as well as economic development. Initiatives that support social enterprises for young people contribute towards building a much-needed culture of entrepreneurship. In addition, learning cities actively promote all aspects of equity, including those that lead to gender equality, opening up leadership positions for women in the public and private sector. They also strive to support good working conditions to prevent mental and physical health problems and exploitation, particularly in the informal labour market.



## What GNLC member cities have done to achieve decent work and entrepreneurship



- Offer training programmes for young people and adults who are out of education/training to gain or upgrade their skills, providing them with ongoing support to find and retain employment
- Encourage the production and selling of local products in order to improve the living conditions of people in low-income settlement areas
- Set up partnerships with local employers to improve engagement and the transition of people with disabilities into training and employment
- Create online job databases to enable jobseekers and employers to instantly upload and access job-related information
- Offer regular school-based career guidance and support for businesses offering students dual and on-the-job training
- Develop schemes to align vocational training and skills development with local industries where job opportunities exist
- Provide professional development opportunities for educators and trainers in order to embed entrepreneurial knowledge and skills in formal and non-formal learning
- Establish university-industry campuses that support entrepreneurship and the commercialization of research-led opportunities
- Establish flagship programmes to develop the leadership and entrepreneurial skills of owners and managers of small and medium-sized businesses
- Provide workshops and mentoring programmes to promote entrepreneurship among women and vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants, lower socio-economic groups and those living in remote rural areas

## Guiding questions for cities to assess progress towards achieving decent work and entrepreneurship

### **Work**

- Are skills development programmes offered to all members of society, in particular to vulnerable groups, including school drop-outs, the unemployed, refugees, those affected by poverty and people with special learning needs?
- Are consultancy services and online job databases available to facilitate access to decent work opportunities?
- Are re-training programmes offered to allow for more flexible occupational pathways?

### **Entrepreneurship and innovation**

- Is financial assistance available and are there services for start-up businesses?
- Are entrepreneurial skills promoted among children and young people, for example by organizing competitions?
- What infrastructures and facilities are offered to encourage business development?
- Is there support for artistic work and is funding provided for projects in the cultural sector?

### **Workplace learning**

- Are incentives offered to companies that provide training courses for their employees?
- Does the city management encourage workplace learning for its employees, including transversal skills?

### **Gender equality**

- Are incentives provided for businesses that actively support women in managerial and executive positions?
- Are there programmes that actively promote and fund skills development and entrepreneurship for females?
- Is work-related training offered to women, including information on non-traditional work sectors for females?
- Has there been a campaign to acknowledge the work of women in the family and community, such as child-rearing, housework and volunteer activities in the community?

### **Implementation**

- Is your learning city concept linked to national and municipal plans for economic and social development, and are relevant stakeholders involved?
- Have funds been allocated to vulnerable groups in order to support them in finding and retaining work?
- To facilitate targeted educational planning, do you collect sex-disaggregated data on work and entrepreneurship?



## Relevant Key Features of Learning Cities

- 1.1.3 Guaranteeing gender equality
- 1.2.1 Stimulating inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- 1.2.2 Creating employment opportunities for all citizens
- 1.2.3 Actively supporting science, technology and innovation
- 2.1.3 Expanding access to and participation in adult education and technical and vocational education and training
- 2.3.1 Ensuring that all members of the workforce, including migrant workers, have access to a broad array of learning opportunities
- 2.3.2 Helping public and private organizations to become learning organizations
- 2.3.3 Encouraging employers and trade unions to support workplace learning
- 2.3.4 Providing appropriate learning opportunities for unemployed youth and adults
- 2.4.1 Training administrators, teachers and educators to use technologies that enhance learning
- 2.4.2 Expanding citizens' access to ICT tools and learning programmes
- 2.6.3 Developing systems that recognize and reward all forms of learning



## SDG targets for decent work and entrepreneurship addressed by cities (examples)

- 1.2 Reduce by at least half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions, according to national definitions
- 2.1 End hunger and ensure access for all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round
- 4.4 Substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- 8.5 Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- 9.3 Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets
- 11.a Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- 12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

# Links between the Key Features of Learning Cities and the SDGs

The following table includes five examples of the multiple links between the targets and indicators included in the *Key Features of Learning Cities* and those featuring in the revised list of Sustainable Development Goals:

 <p><b>Key feature:</b> 1.1.1 Empowering individuals and promoting social cohesion</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> Adult literacy rate: total number of literates aged 15 and above, expressed as a percentage of the total population of that age group</p>	 <p><b>SDG 4 Target:</b> 4.6 Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> 4.6.1 Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p>	 <p><b>SDG 16 Target:</b> 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> 16.7.2 Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group</p>
 <p><b>Key feature:</b> 1.1.3 Guaranteeing gender equality</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> Gender equality in business management: Percentage of seats held by women in boards of top 10 enterprises</p>	 <p><b>SDG 4 Target:</b> 4.5 Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and children in vulnerable situations</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated</p>	 <p><b>SDG 5 Target:</b> 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</p> <p><b>Indicator:</b> 5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments  5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions</p>





**Key feature:**

1.3.1 Reducing the negative impacts of economic and other human activities on the natural environment

**Indicator:**

Waste management: total annual domestic waste collected and processed, in kg per capita per year



**SDG 11 Target:**

11.6 Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management

**Indicator:**

11.6.1 Proportion of urban solid waste regularly collected and with adequate final discharge out of total urban solid waste generated, by cities



**SDG 12 Target:**

12.5 Substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse

**Indicator:**

12.5.1 National recycling rate, tonnes of material recycled



**Key feature:**

2.2.3 Recognizing community history and culture, and indigenous ways of knowing and learning as unique and precious resources

**Indicator:**

Development of learning resources through indigenous knowledge: number of learning programmes based on community history, culture and indigenous knowledge developed by the city authorities



**SDG 4 Target:**

4.7. Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

**Indicator:**

4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in: (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment



**SDG 11 Target:**

11.4 Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage

**Indicator:**

11.4.1 Total expenditure (public and private) per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage, by type of heritage (cultural, natural, mixed and World Heritage Centre designation), level of government (national, regional and local/municipal), type of expenditure (operating expenditure/ investment) and type of private funding (donations in kind, private non-profit sector and sponsorship)



**Key feature:**

2.3.4 Providing appropriate learning opportunities for unemployed youth and adults

**Indicator:**

Youth involvement in education and employment: Total number of youth (aged 15–24) not in education, employment or training as a percentage of the total youth population



**SDG 4 Target:**

4.3 Ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

**Indicator:**

4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex



**SDG 8 Target:**

8.6 By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

**Indicator:**

8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training

## Appendix

# Cork Call to Action for Learning Cities

### Global goals, local actions:

Towards lifelong learning for all in 2030

#### Preamble

1.

We, the mayors, deputy mayors, officials and representatives of cities worldwide, education executives, education experts, representatives of UN agencies, the private sector, and regional, international and civil society organizations from 180 cities in 80 countries, have assembled in Cork from 18 to 20 September 2017 for the third International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), dedicated to transforming global goals into local actions.

2.

We recognize that education and lifelong learning are at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and indispensable for their achievement.

3.

We are committed to achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions, recognizing the links between all of its social, environmental and economic aspects in order to secure a sustainable future for all. Another important dimension is culture, which includes the celebration of cultural diversity, provision of opportunities for cultural expression, and the protection and extension of cultural heritage.

4.

Effective implementation requires, among other things, protection of all human beings from poverty, hunger and violence; assuring inclusion, equity, gender equality, equal rights and the promotion of peace; effective management of the planet's natural resources and action on climate change; and ensuring sustainable economic growth to enable people to fulfil their potential and to enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives for themselves and for their communities.

5.

Partnerships, networks and global solidarity will be needed to tackle the numerous challenges in the world and to ensure equal opportunities for all, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable.

6.

We aspire to build mindful learning cultures in our cities that foster global consciousness and citizenship through local action to implement the SDGs.

7.

We believe that cities, by mainstreaming lifelong learning, are important drivers for achieving this global vision. In implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we follow the Agenda's fundamental guiding principle, which is to ensure that no one is left behind.

8.

To support the building of sustainable learning cities that are green, healthy, equitable, inclusive, entrepreneurial and capable of offering their citizens decent work opportunities, we:

9.

**recall** the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, aiming to end poverty, protect the environment, ensure equity and prosperity for all, and create peaceful and healthy living conditions in all parts of the world;

10.

**reaffirm** our commitment to SDG 4, through which member states committed to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and SDG 11, which aims at making 'cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable';

11.

**recognize** that the SDGs set out our common vision, but that local governments and communities are the key drivers for achieving them;

12.

**affirm** our collective understanding of the importance of lifelong learning for unlocking the full potential of urban and rural communities and securing sustainable living environments for present and future generations;

**13.**  
**recall** the main guiding documents for learning cities, namely the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities*, the *Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities*, and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*, which provide a comprehensive checklist of action points to enhance and measure the progress of learning cities, and recognize the advancements made by member cities;

**14.**  
**acknowledge** the diversity of Learning Cities, their different stages of development and variation in terms of size, population, economic strength and political autonomy, resulting in a great diversity of challenges and actions for a more sustainable future and opportunities for creative initiatives.

#### **Call to action:**

**15.**  
Recognizing the role of lifelong learning as a driver for environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability and acknowledging the importance of involving all stakeholders in the process, we:

**16.**  
**call upon** mayors to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 4 and SDG 11, according to the specific situation and needs of their respective cities to achieve sustainability in all its dimensions;

**17.**  
**call upon** national governments to provide the fundamental conditions and sufficient resources for building learning cities and to adopt inclusive policies to ensure that urban growth will benefit both urban and rural dwellers;

**18.**  
**call upon** all public and private actors, traditional and non-traditional stakeholders across all sectors in cities and communities, including higher education and training institutions as well as youth representatives, to come together in partnership to promote lifelong learning at local level in order to ensure that all generations are involved in the process;

**19.**  
**commit to** following a sector-wide approach in building learning cities and bringing the learning city concept to the attention of all partners involved in education and sustainable development at local and national levels;

**20.**  
**commit to** making inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities widely available and extending the scope and benefits to cities' surrounding areas, including innovation in the use of digital technologies for collaborative learning;

**21.**  
**commit to** strategic networking among member cities, documenting and disseminating activities for shared learning, and monitoring and evaluating progress;

**22.**  
**call upon** UNESCO to support capacity-building for the planning, implementation and monitoring of learning cities, based on the principles of lifelong learning and sustainable development.

**23.**  
In particular, we commit to implementing lifelong learning strategies pertaining to the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the SDGs that:

**24.**  
**promote** equitable and inclusive learning and living environments by eradicating all forms of discrimination and widening access to learning opportunities for all members of society, particularly for vulnerable groups;

**25.**  
**promote** green and healthy learning and living environments by combating climate change, pollution and poor health conditions and fostering safe drinking water and sanitation, sustainable mobility and good health services;

**26.**  
**promote** opportunities for decent work and entrepreneurship, including enhancing skills development and securing safe and healthy work conditions for everyone, particularly in the informal work sector.

**27.**  
We express our deep appreciation to the authorities and people of Cork for their hospitality, support and leadership in hosting the third ICLC, and we note with appreciation Cork's continued dedication to building a learning city and further promoting the learning city approach.

*Cork, 19 September 2017*



# The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in a Nutshell

**Vision:** Lifelong learning for all is our city's future.

**Mission:** To support and accelerate the practice of lifelong learning by promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities; forging links; fostering partnerships; providing capacity development; and developing instruments to encourage and recognize progress made in building learning cities.

**Guiding Documents:**

- Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities (2013)
- Key Features of Learning Cities (2013)
- Guidelines for Building Learning Cities (2015)
- Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action (2017)

**Learning city:** The Guiding Documents define a 'learning city' as a city that effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education; revitalizes learning in families and communities; facilitates learning for and in the workplace; extends the use of modern learning technologies; enhances quality and excellence in learning; and fosters a culture of learning throughout life. In doing so, it will enhance individual empowerment, social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.

**Network:** Membership of the UNESCO GNLC comprises learning cities at various stages of development. Partners and the Secretariat of the UNESCO GNLC also make essential contributions to the network.

**Secretariat:** The Secretariat of the UNESCO GNLC coordinates the network. The Secretariat is based in the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), the only organizational unit in the UN family that holds a global mandate for lifelong learning.

## UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

*'Lifelong learning for all is our city's future'*

For more information on the UNESCO  
GNLC's work and joining the network,  
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