

## UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)

### Membership Concept Note

(Updated and effective as of 1 October 2018)

#### 1. BACKGROUND

The number of city dwellers around the world has been growing more rapidly than ever in recent years: more than half of the world's population lives in cities today, and this is expected to rise to 60% by 2030. Cities have played an increasingly influential role in national and world affairs as they have expanded. However, this expansion is also presenting municipal governments with multiple challenges relating to social cohesion, economic development and sustainability. A growing number of municipalities see the implementation of a lifelong learning strategy for inclusive, sustainable urban development as key to tackling these challenges. This is why they are taking action towards becoming 'learning cities'. In order to support local governments develop concrete strategies for building learning cities, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has initiated the establishment of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

UNESCO GNLC is an international policy-oriented network providing inspiration, know-how and best practice. UNESCO GNLC's mission is to support and accelerate the practice of lifelong learning in the world's communities by promoting policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities, forging links, fostering partnerships, building capacities and developing instruments to encourage and recognise progress in building learning cities.

The network is based on the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities* and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*. These two documents were adopted at the 1st International Conference on Learning Cities in 2013. Important additional documents include *Learning Cities and the SDGs: A Guide to Action* and the *Guidelines for Building Learning Cities*.

UNESCO GNLC opened for membership in 2015, and since then the number of member cities in the network has increased to more than 200 cities from all five UNESCO regions. UNESCO GNLC members are engaged in building learning cities and believe that lifelong learning for all is crucial for their cities' future. In applying to become a member of UNESCO GNLC, each city acknowledges its commitment to continue developing into a learning city, sharing experience and best practices, developing partnerships and strengthening its policy and implementation of lifelong learning for all.

UNESCO GNLC's members are cities, represented by mayors or other formally endorsed city representatives. For the purpose of this membership concept, a city is normally understood as an administrative unit governed by a city council or another form of elected body, and recognised as a city by the national government of the country it is located in. A learning city

can therefore be a learning municipality, a learning village, a learning town or a learning community.

## 2. BENEFITS OF BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE UNESCO GNLC

The key benefits of becoming a member of UNESCO GNLC are:

1. Receiving guidance and support during the journey towards building a learning city
  - a. Accessing tools and strategies for developing learning cities (e.g. training modules and video tutorials on how to build a learning city)
  - b. Getting insights into best practice from the latest research and practice reports
  - c. Receiving news updates on learning city developments around the world from the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team
2. Being part of a dynamic network and strengthening your own partnerships and networks
  - a. Receiving support when hosting international conferences and regional meetings
  - b. Connecting with other learning cities with common interests, tackling similar issues and envisioning similar development agendas
  - c. Communicating with a network of experts and professionals specialising in the field of lifelong learning for sustainable development
  - d. Getting technical support from member cities
3. Receiving recognition for your efforts and showcasing the actions of your city
  - a. Sharing your milestones and progress through the communication channels of UNESCO GNLC
  - b. Participating in the learning city case studies to showcase your city and its actions, innovative measures, best practices and lessons learned
  - c. Being eligible for the UNESCO Learning City Award

Based on UNESCO's inclusive approach and open-source policy, all publications and documents are published on the UNESCO GNLC website and are freely accessible to all.

## 3. MEMBERSHIP REGULATIONS

### Who can apply?

Key players and/or authorities from a city located in a UNESCO Member State that wishes to adopt the learning city concept may apply for membership. An application may only be submitted once it has been formally endorsed by the city's mayor.

### Who is the member?

The member is the city itself, represented by the mayor and/or the person who has been formally endorsed as a representative of the city. All endorsed representatives act as delegates of the city.

### What are the requirements for becoming a member?

In order to join the network, the municipality should pursue the vision of providing lifelong learning and becoming a learning city. The strategies set out in the key documents, the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities* and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*, must be adopted by the mayor of the city, who needs to endorse the membership application. The city needs to complete the membership application form and submit it to its National Commission for UNESCO for endorsement. In addition to this, members are required to submit a Progress Report on their learning city project every two years to the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team.

### Application procedure

1. Applicants must complete an application form, which is available on the UNESCO GNLC website (<http://uil.unesco.org/learning-cities>). The form must be filled in electronically and must include the mayor's signature.
2. The application form should be sent by the applicant by e-mail to the responsible National Commission for UNESCO for endorsement, copying the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) ([learningcities@unesco.org](mailto:learningcities@unesco.org)). For the National Commissions' contact information, please visit the [Database of National Commissions for UNESCO](#). Please note that National Commissions have the right to request additional documents and records from the city if necessary in order to endorse the application.
3. The relevant National Commission for UNESCO will endorse the application by signing it before submitting the completed application, copying the city, to the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL; [learningcities@unesco.org](mailto:learningcities@unesco.org)). Alternatively, the city can submit the final application directly to UNESCO GNLC, copying the National Commission for UNESCO after its endorsement. Please note that UIL has the right to request additional documents and records from the city if necessary in order to finally accept the application.

### How many cities can be designated as members per year?

The National Commission for UNESCO can endorse applications from up to **three cities** per country per year to join UNESCO GNLC.

### When can an application be submitted?

There is one open call for applications per year, **from 1 March to 30 April**, during which time cities may submit their membership applications to their National Commission for UNESCO. After this application period has ended, the National Commission for UNESCO **has up to one month** to send the endorsed applications to the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team.

### Membership fee

UNESCO GNLC does not ask for a membership fee. To support the development of the network and its services, however, the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team welcomes voluntary financial and non-financial contributions from its members.

### Who administers membership?

It is important to note that membership is not granted, but rather administered by the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. As UNESCO GNLC is an open, voluntary and flexible network, any city wishing to be part of the network can join as per the requirements outlined above.

### Communication with the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team

Member cities are expected to communicate to the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team by e-mail any new information on their city (e.g. new mayor, new contact person, new learning city plan, events organised within the scope of the network etc.) in order to keep the Coordination Team informed and their online profiles up-to-date.

### Submission of Learning City Progress Report

Member cities are requested to submit a Progress Report detailing how they are implementing their learning city project. The collection of submitted reports serves to support the monitoring of the concrete achievements of member cities by underlining effective policies, strategies, measures, partnerships and progress. These Progress Reports should be submitted every two years by e-mail to [learningcities@unesco.org](mailto:learningcities@unesco.org), using the Progress Report template provided by the UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team on the dedicated website (<http://uil.unesco.org/learning-cities>). Submission deadlines are as follows:

**Current members:** deadline for Progress Report submission 31 March 2019, and subsequently 31 March of every other year

**Cities joining after 1 October 2018:** deadline for Progress Report submission 31 March of every other year

## Evaluation of Progress Reports and withdrawal from the network

The UNESCO GNLC Coordination Team will assess member cities' Progress Reports based on the network's guiding documents and regulations. If a member city (1) submits an incomplete Progress Report, (2) does not show progress in building a learning city, and/or (3) does not submit its biennial Progress Report, the city's membership will not be renewed. Cities whose membership is not renewed can apply to re-join the network as per the application periods outlined above. Please note that cities whose membership is not renewed will be notified of the fact by UNESCO GNLC.

## Learning City Award

The UNESCO Learning City Award is a biennial award given to member cities which have achieved outstanding progress in building a learning city. A maximum of one city per country can be awarded per cycle.

## How to apply for the Learning City award?

Member cities should apply for the award through their National Commission for UNESCO. The National Commission will be requested to nominate a maximum of two cities per country for the biennial award. For the National Commissions' contact information, please visit the [Database of National Commissions for UNESCO](#). More information about the Learning City Award can be found at the following link: <http://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/unesco-learning-city-award>.

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