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Global Network of
Learning Cities



Yeonsu 2021

Yeonsu Declaration for Learning Cities

**Building healthy and resilient cities
through lifelong learning**



FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON LEARNING CITIES

Education
2030



Yeonsu Declaration for Learning Cities

Building healthy and resilient cities through lifelong learning

Preamble

1. We, the mayors, deputy mayors, officials and representatives from 229 learning cities in 64 countries worldwide, education executives, education experts, representatives of UN agencies, the private sector, and regional, international and civil society organizations, have convened both online and in person in Yeonsu, Republic of Korea, from 27 to 30 October 2021 for the fifth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC), dedicated to **building healthy and resilient cities through learning**.
2. We gather during an **unprecedented crisis that emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic**, which endangered the health of populations and forced governments around the world to close learning institutions, affecting nearly 1.6 billion children and students in more than 190 countries and countless adult learners, with a profound impact on mental health and well-being.
3. We underline that with more than half of humanity living in urban areas, **cities have a key role in promoting learning for health and strengthening resilience**.
4. We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has **hit vulnerable populations hardest** and has fuelled **inequality in cities**, exacerbating pre-existing issues as well as giving rise to new forms of inequality, and this requires a collective response through education and lifelong learning to avoid the risk of an even greater increase in health inequality.
5. We commend members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities **on their commitment to lifelong learning** throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including their efforts to promote health literacy among local populations, and their capacity to now expand on innovative strategies and programmes implemented during the crisis.
6. We convey our gratitude to the **Mayor of Yeonsu and his city** for their leadership as hosts of the fifth ICLC, demonstrating great adaptability and commitment throughout this period of difficulty.

Our commitment to building healthy and resilient cities through lifelong learning

We commit to:

7. demonstrating the **political will** necessary to place lifelong learning for health and the development of resilience at the centre of our cities' agendas, recognizing the influence this has on developments within the city as well as the resonance of such leadership at national and international levels;
8. paying attention to the **specific contextual factors of each of our cities** in order to implement policies and initiatives for learning for health in a way that involves everyone in the city and

considers local communities' social and cultural perceptions of health-related issues, including Indigenous knowledge;

9. implementing, in response to crises, **co-ordinated local plans for the preservation and provision of essential services**, including emergency medical services, sexual and reproductive health services, education, public transport, housing and sanitation;
10. working with and **empowering local people to develop capacities to protect their own health** by providing an array of educational tools for the acquisition of knowledge about the virus, transmission prevention, self-protection and effective use of the healthcare system;
11. establishing a new paradigm for **learning for health in cities**: a concept which includes mental health and well-being and a personal and societal resource for health literacy and citizenship for health;
12. as a dimension of learning for health, promoting **health literacy** in the city – meaning the ability to locate, understand and critically evaluate health information, including through technology, and to apply that information to solve health issues – and supporting local people to identify false information and reduce its impact on health-related decision-making;
13. strengthening **citizenship for health** in recognition of the wider societal impact of health issues and the common good of global health, giving learners more agency to act with ethical and social responsibility when it comes to their own health and the health of their communities;
14. strengthening **resilient cities** in terms of **community resilience** – multi-sectoral planning involving local people, and bottom-up and top-down policies and practices to foster long-term resilience in communities – as well as the **resilience of local learning systems**, particularly with regard to the continuation of learning in cities during crises, as well as ways of protecting learning systems in the face of future disruption through innovation and technology.
15. ensuring that **learning opportunities involve and respond to the needs of vulnerable populations**, including children, understanding that vulnerabilities are often intersectional, meaning individual learners may experience multiple forms of disadvantage at the same time, and that people with lower levels of education often have lower levels of health literacy;
16. recognising the contributions of the **formal education sector**, including schools, universities and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, to learning for health and resilience in cities throughout and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, namely their adaptability in ensuring the continuation of learning and their provision of health education;
17. building the **capacities of local non-formal learning providers**, recognizing the positive impact of early childhood care and education on health, as well as the long-term roles of youth and adult learning centres and organizations in creating learning opportunities for health awareness and promoting the use of technology for health literacy;
18. making use of **informal spaces within our cities** for learning for health and to develop resilience, including homes, local neighbourhoods, workplaces, green spaces, public transport, municipal buildings and the digital sphere; and

19. **broadening the scope of stakeholder involvement in lifelong learning at the city level** so that the health sector is well represented, including health professionals, practitioners and experts, as well as stakeholders in the field of urban design in the knowledge that city planning decisions impact health and learning;
20. strengthening our efforts to achieve the **17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and assert the contributions of learning cities to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, particularly **SDG 3** ('good health and well-being'); **SDG 4** ('ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'); **SDG 5** ('gender equality'); **SDG 8** ('employment and decent work'); **SDG 11** ('make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable') and **SDG 13** ('combat climate change').

Ways forward

21. We will endeavour to **integrate these commitments into local actions and development strategies** in order to strengthen learning for health and to develop resilience in our cities, specifically by capitalising on the recent mobilisation of mayors to design and implement post-pandemic recovery plans.
22. In the transition from emergency to normality, we will **capitalize on and preserve the creativity** that has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, including more collaborative approaches to learning.
23. We will **diversify resources, raise funds and develop financial mechanisms** to ensure the realisation of these local actions, development strategies and post-pandemic recovery plans.
24. We will conduct a **research-based and data-driven review** of the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to learn lessons and build resilience in preparation for future crises.
25. As members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), we will strengthen the solidarity of the network through **knowledge-sharing, technology transfer and the dissemination of good practices** in cities at the global level.
26. We call on **national governments** to adopt new policies for lifelong learning for health and support the development of resilient cities in UNESCO Member States.
27. We urge UNESCO to reinforce collaboration across its networks, and specifically between the **UNESCO Cities Platform** and UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), during the post-pandemic period.
28. Furthermore, we commit to engaging with the **main activity areas of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities** (GNLC) as set out in the new strategy of the network.

29 October 2021

Yeonsu, Republic of Korea