

Membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities Concept Note

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 help local governments develop concrete strategies for building learning cities, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning has initiated the establishment of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

The UNESCO GNLC 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.

UNESCO GNLC members believe that lifelong learning for all is crucial for their cities' future. The 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 recognize progress in building learning cities.

The UNESCO GNLC's members are cities, as represented by mayors or other formally endorsed city representatives. For the purpose of this membership concept, a city is understood as an administrative unit with a minimum of 10,000 inhabitants governed by a city council or another form of elected body. A learning city could therefore be a learning municipality, a learning village, a learning town or a learning community.

What are the benefits of becoming a member of the UNESCO GNLC?

The key benefits of becoming a member of the 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
 - 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 Coordination Team of the UNESCO GNLC
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 specializing in the field of lifelong learning for sustainable development
3. Receiving recognition for your efforts and showcasing the actions of your city
 - a. Sharing your milestones and progress through the communication channels of the 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.

Is there a membership fee?

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

Who can apply?

The key players in the network are city authorities from UNESCO Member States. Other city representatives who wish to adopt the learning city concept may also apply for membership once this is formally endorsed by the mayor of their city. All endorsed members act as delegates of the city.

Who is the member?

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

What are the requirements for becoming a member?

In order to join the network, the municipality should pursue the vision of enhancing lifelong learning and becoming a learning city. 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.

What is the application procedure?

1. Applicants must complete an application form, which is available on the UNESCO GNLC website (<http://learningcities.uil.unesco.org/home>). The form can be filled in electronically or in handwritten form and must include the mayor's stamp and signature.
2. The application form should be sent by email to the responsible National Commission for UNESCO for endorsement and a copy should be forwarded to the Coordination Team of the UNESCO GNLC at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (learningcities@unesco.org).
3. The National Commission for UNESCO will endorse the application by signing it and will then submit the complete application to the Coordination Team of the UNESCO GNLC at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

For the National Commissions' contact information, please visit the [Database of National Commissions for UNESCO](#).

Who administers membership?

Membership is endorsed by the National Commission of UNESCO in the respective country, based on the requirements defined in this concept note.

As the UNESCO GNLC is an open, voluntary and flexible network, any city wishing to be part of the network can join. Membership is therefore not granted, but rather administered by the Coordination Team of the UNESCO GNLC at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

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