

Conference Brief

Theme: Inclusion – A Principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities

1. Place and date of the conference:

The conference will be held in Medellín, Colombia, from **1 to 3 October 2019**.

2. Aim:

To identify, discuss and promote effective lifelong learning policies and practices that support the development of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

3. Theme and sub-themes:

Inclusion - A Principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities

The following sub-themes will be discussed:

- 1) Policies for inclusion at the local level.
- 2) Governance structures to support inclusive policies.
- 3) Monitoring mechanisms for learning cities.

To facilitate interaction among participants parallel sessions will take place as follows: a) youth at risk; b) refugees and migrants; c) digitally excluded populations; c) people living in slums and deprived neighbourhoods; d) disabled population; and e) other groups, including elderly and imprisoned populations.

4. Participants:

The conference will bring together some 650 participants from all around the world, including mayors, city education executives, officials from ministries of education, and representatives of UN agencies, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and private-sector representatives

5. Working languages:

English, French and Spanish (with simultaneous interpretation)

6. Logistics:

The city of Medellín will provide local transportation during the conference, as well as transit to and from the airport. The host city will provide lunch for participants for the three days of the conference. Participants will bear the costs of their travel to the conference and their accommodation.

7. Conference venue and hotel:

The conference venue is Centro de Convenciones Plaza Mayor: <https://plazamayor.com.co/>

The organizers of the conference have a special agreement with some hotels and have already reserved a number of rooms at the hotels listed below:

	Website
Hotel Dann Carlton	https://www.danncarlton.com/
Hotel NH Collection	https://www.nh-collection.com/es/hotel/nh-collection-medellin-royal
Hotel Estelar Milla de Oro	https://www.estelarmilladeoro.com/
Hotel San Fernando Plaza	http://www.hotelsanfernandoplaza.com/
Medellin Marriott Hotel	https://www.espanol.marriott.com/default.mi
Hotel Holiday Inn	https://www.ihg.com/holidayinnexpress/hotels/us/es/medellin/mdeex/hoteldetail

N.B.: When booking hotels, **please clearly indicate 'ICLC participant'**, and the hotels will apply discounted rates, subject to verification.

8. Visas:

Regarding visa requirements, all participants are invited to consult the *Cancillería de Colombia* website. To find out whether you need a visa to enter Colombia and to learn more about the visa application procedure, please click [here](#).

Participants may also contact the Colombian consulate nearest to their current place of residence. The corresponding contact information is available [here](#).

9. Registration:

All participants will need to register before 16 August 2019 via the conference website:

www.learningcities2019.org

10. Previous conferences:

To find out more about the previous conferences, reports are available on UNESCO's website:

- [1st International Conference on Learning Cities – 2013 – Beijing, China](#)
- [2nd International Conference on Learning Cities – 2015 – Mexico City, Mexico](#)
- [3rd International Conference on Learning Cities – 2017 – Cork, Ireland](#)

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Concept Note

Inclusion – A principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities

Fourth International Conference on Learning Cities
(Medellín, Colombia, from 1 to 3 October 2019)

Background

Lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living. It includes people of all ages, in all life-wide contexts and through a variety of formal, non-formal and informal modalities of learning that together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands. Inclusion is a key principle of Sustainable Development Goal 4 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’. This goal with its 10 targets calls on governments and other stakeholders to enable people from all age groups and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to participate fully in and benefit from quality lifelong learning opportunities. Inclusion in the context of lifelong learning reaffirms the right to education of every individual as upheld in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The conclusions and recommendations of the 48th UNESCO International Conference on Education (ICE) – ‘Inclusive education: The way of the future’ – in 2008, reaffirmed inclusive education as fundamental for the achievement of human, social and economic development. Importantly, participants at the ICE endorsed ‘inclusive education as an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination’.¹ Further, they emphasized the importance of addressing ‘social inequity and poverty levels as priorities, as these are major obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education policies and strategies’, in addition to promoting ‘school cultures and environments that are child-friendly, conducive to effective learning and inclusive of all children, healthy and protective, gender-responsive, and encourage the active role and the participation of the learners themselves, their families and their communities’.²

The fourth International Conference on Learning Cities will follow the International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education organized in Cali, Colombia, from 11 to 13 September 2019. The forum will seek to build a common understanding and a renewed commitment to reinforcing inclusion in education among education policy-makers, education practitioners, civil society organizations, NGOs, UN agencies, development partners and the private sector.

¹ UNESCO International Bureau of Education. 2008. *Final Report, 48th International Conference of Education – Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future*

² Ibid

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with its focus on leaving no one behind, provides a unique opportunity to build more inclusive, just and fair societies. Inclusion in education is rooted in the right to education framework. It is meant to secure the condition that can advance the right to education for all vulnerable and marginalized groups on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, ability or socio-economic status. To move on this direction, policies and actions within the education system must be connected to wider social and economic policies that are truly intended to eliminate the entrenched structures and conditions in society that sustain inequality and marginalisation of the most disadvantaged groups.

Challenges and solutions for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities

Many cities around the world face acute challenges in managing rapid urbanization— from ensuring adequate housing and infrastructure and supporting growing populations, including displaced ones, to confronting the environmental impact of urban sprawl and reducing vulnerability to disasters. Half of humanity – 3.5 billion people – live in cities today and 5 billion people are projected to live in cities by 2030.³

Effective urban policy and planning can ameliorate social inequity and reduce poverty levels of urban populations. In the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an effective collaboration among national, regional and local governments and development sectors is required to provide a good quality of life to all citizens, including lifelong learning opportunities for all. Ensuring access to quality and resilient infrastructures and basic services for all urban dwellers is a key component of development objectives, as well as fostering local economic opportunities to create decent jobs and social cohesion. At the same time, education, not only as a goal of development but also as a means, can contribute to ameliorating and overcoming the challenges associated with rapid urbanization. Yet, in order to achieve this, learning opportunities in cities should be of high quality, inclusive of the diverse backgrounds of all learners and strengthened by a continuous process of lifelong learning.

Learning cities thus can become safe, resilient and sustainable when guided by the principle of inclusion. Cities can be key hubs of action in which local governments empower diverse communities and social actors to engage in the definition of policies and strategies that lead to inclusive and lifelong opportunities for all.

The International Conference on Learning Cities – Inclusion as part of sustainable cities

The Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities, adopted at the First International Conference on Learning Cities⁴ in 2013 in Beijing, China,

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

⁴ The conference resulted in the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities](#).

underline how learning cities play a significant role in promoting social inclusion, economic growth, public safety and environmental protection. Learning cities are those that can effectively mobilize resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education. Learning cities also revitalize learning in families, communities and the workplace throughout life. In order to expand learning opportunities to all learners in all contexts, learning cities make use of modern learning technologies. Developing quality in learning and nurturing a culture of learning throughout life are at the centre of learning cities. Guided by the principle of inclusion, in learning cities ‘all citizens, regardless of ability, gender and sexuality, social background, language, ethnicity, religion or culture should have equal access to learning opportunities’.⁵

Building on the above momentum, the Second International Conference on Learning Cities in Mexico City in 2015 defined the role of learning cities in achieving sustainable and launched to the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC). The Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities recommends that policies and strategies for building sustainable cities ‘involve all citizens, especially vulnerable people such as indigenous groups, women, persons with disabilities, refugees and displaced people, and place them at the heart of learning city initiatives’. Crucially, social, economic and political inclusion are at the core of learning cities when ‘ensuring that all citizens, irrespective of age, sexual orientation or economic, cultural, religious or ethnic background, acquire the literacy and basic skills they need to assert their rights’.⁶

The Third International Conference on Learning Cities (2017), which took place in Cork, Ireland, gave further impetus to the cause of inclusion. The resulting *Learning Cities and the SDGs: Guide to Action* underscores how ‘responding to the learning needs of all groups in society fosters equity and inclusion’ and thus supports both 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’). It is of particular importance that attention be paid to marginalized and/or vulnerable groups, including ‘women and girls; people with disabilities and reduced mobility; migrants and refugees; and ethnic minorities’.⁷

To further advance progress made during the first three conferences, the Fourth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC) will be dedicated to the theme of ‘Inclusion – A Principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities’, and will take place in Medellín, Colombia, from 1-3 October 2019. Under this framework, the focus will be placed on specific target groups such as refugees, migrants, digitally excluded and disabled population.

⁵ UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, Guiding Documents.

⁶ Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities, Second International Conference on Learning Cities, Mexico City, 2015.

⁷ Ibid

1. Aim and objectives

To identify, discuss and promote effective lifelong learning policies and practices that support the development of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

More specifically, the objectives of the conference are to:

- develop a common understanding of the potential of inclusion as part of lifelong learning and sustainable development;
- identify public policies and planning approaches that strengthen inclusion at the city level as a priority for lifelong learning;
- share experiences of the implementation of local actions that support inclusion through lifelong learning;
- highlight monitoring mechanisms of the progress made towards the implementation of local inclusion strategies.

2. Expected outcome

The *Medellín Manifesto on Learning Cities* will be the outcome document of the conference. It will address policy priorities and actions of the UNESCO GNLC, with a view to making learning cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

3. Theme and sub-themes

The overall theme of the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities is:

Inclusion - A Principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities

The following sub-themes will be discussed in pursuit of the objectives of the conference:

(1) Policy: Underlying concepts and key principles of lifelong learning policies for inclusion at the city level.

- What are the fundamentals of a shared understanding of inclusion and equity in the context of lifelong learning?
- Across a range of contexts, which populations are regarded as vulnerable groups at the local level?
- How can lifelong learning policies be tailored to the socio-economic and educational needs of vulnerable groups and to the development needs of the city?

(2) Governance: Structures and frameworks to support cities' policies for inclusion.

- What legal frameworks at the national level support inclusion in the context of lifelong learning?
- How are cities collaborating with national authorities to develop inclusive policies that have an impact on the delivery of basic services (e.g. education) at the local level? Are there multilevel governance frameworks in place that strengthen this collaboration?
- Which other stakeholders are participating in the development of inclusive policies?

(3) Local actions: Lifelong learning policy implementation and practices at the city level to address the needs of vulnerable groups.

- Which institutions and sectors participate in the planning and implementation of inclusive lifelong learning at the city level? What mechanisms need to be in place to ensure the participation of vulnerable groups in this process?
- How can employers from the public and private sectors and civil society collaborate at the city level to further enhance lifelong learning opportunities for vulnerable groups?
- How are flexible learning pathways between formal, non-formal and informal learning created in ways that respond to, value and recognise the knowledge and skills of vulnerable groups in cities?
- What is the impact of local actions on specific groups, including youth at risk (NEETs), migrants and refugees, digitally excluded populations, and people living in slums and deprived neighbourhoods?

(4) Monitoring: Data and financing arrangements to keep track of and improve inclusion at the city level.

- Are sufficient and sustainable financing arrangements in place at the local level for initiatives geared towards inclusion?
- How do we know that lifelong learning is contributing to making cities more inclusive and sustainable?
- What information, knowledge and evidence are needed to improve inclusion in lifelong learning policies and practices?

(5) New work plan for GNLC members

To advance knowledge and practice in specific policy areas, the coordination team of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) will, based on the results of a survey conducted in April 2019 among GNLC Members, identify areas of priority, and organize a special session at the conference to define a two-year work plan for GNLC members (2020–2021).

4. Place and date of the conference

The conference will be held in Medellín, Colombia, from 1 to 3 October 2019.

5. Participants

The conference will bring together some 650 participants from around the world.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is inviting member cities of the UNESCO GNLC to form a two- or three-member delegation to participate in the conference, comprising mayors, city education executives and experts who are specialists and stakeholders in developing learning cities.

UIL will also invite Member States to select participants from the following groups: national educational executives; experts; and representatives of cities interested in the UNESCO GNLC.

In addition, UIL is inviting representatives of international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private-sector partners, as well as experts in the field of education and lifelong learning, to participate in the conference.

The Medellín Council is inviting mayors, city education executives and experts from Colombia, as well as partner cities, to join the conference.

6. Working languages

English, French and Spanish (with simultaneous interpretation)

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Provisional Agenda

Inclusion – A Principle for Lifelong Learning and Sustainable Cities

Fourth International Conference on Learning Cities

(Medellín, Colombia, from 1 to 3 October 2019)

Monday, 30 September	
All day	Arrival and registration
18:00 - 20:00	Learning City Award 2019 ceremony
Tuesday, 1 October	
09:00 - 10:00	Opening ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colombia • UNESCO • Keynote
10:00 - 10:15	Adoption of the Conference Agenda and election of the Conference Board UNESCO Learning City Award Picture
10:15 - 10:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
10:45 - 12:00	Plenary Session I <i>Policies for inclusion at the local level</i>
12:00 - 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00 - 15:15	Plenary Session II <i>Governance structures to support inclusive policies</i>
15:15 - 15:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15:45 - 17:00	Plenary Session III <i>Monitoring Mechanisms for learning cities</i>

Wednesday, 2 October		
09:00 – 10:15	<p>Parallel thematic forums 1</p> <p>Theme 1 <i>Youth at risk</i></p> <p>Theme 2 <i>Refugees and migrants</i></p> <p>Theme 3 <i>Digitally excluded populations</i></p>	<p>Mayors' Forum Presentations on experiences developing learning cities (closed session)</p>
10:30 – 10:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
10:45 – 12:00	<p>Parallel thematic forums 2</p> <p>Theme 1 <i>People living in slums and deprived neighborhoods</i></p> <p>Theme 2 <i>Disabled population</i></p> <p>Theme 3 <i>Other groups including elderly people and imprisoned population.</i></p>	<p>Mayors' Forum cooperation strategy for GNLC members (closed session)</p>
12:00 - 14:00	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
14:00 - 15:15	<p>Breakout sessions per region/theme</p> <p>Workshop 1 <i>Green and Healthy Learning Cities</i></p> <p>Workshop 2 <i>Employment and Entrepreneurship in Learning Cities</i></p> <p>Workshop 3 <i>Learning City Planning and management</i></p>	<p>Mayors' Forum Organised groups according to the priority topics (closed session)</p>
15:15 - 15:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>	
15:45 - 17:00	<p>Closing Ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement from the General-Rapporteur of the Conference • Adoption of the outcome document • Colombia • UNESCO 	
Thursday, 3 October		
09:00 – 17:30	Site visits	