

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

for democratic and
sustainable communities

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities
Citizenship Education cluster



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About this publication

This publication aims to make readers aware of the importance of citizenship education (CE) in local communities within the framework of lifelong learning. It supports cities and citizens in advancing their work on this critical aspect of formal and non-formal education, and in striving for progress in the provision of CE for youth and adult learners. It is mainly based on information from the 2020 survey of cluster members, as well as on case studies and inputs from the conference, 'Strengthening citizenship education at local level', which was held virtually on 12 and 13 November 2020.



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Foreword by experts

UNESCO's 2015 **Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education** (RALE) defined three key areas of adult learning and education: literacy, vocational training and CE. Not surprisingly, CE was the least developed of the three. To date, it has remained invisible, uninstitutionalized and neglected, not only in the most underdeveloped countries, but also in many advanced ones. Furthermore, CE has focused overwhelmingly on primary and secondary education, while pre-primary, tertiary, and adult and non-formal education have been significantly overlooked in this regard.

It is therefore particularly cheering to see the case studies from advanced learning cities that feature in this publication. These cities have demonstrated great leadership in promoting CE in their respective urban policies. Cities practise various types of CE, such as community education, popular education and adult liberal education, showing that citizenship is not universal, but diverse – and reflects the political histories and cultural specificities of each city, cultivating a unique awareness of citizenship to form a 'collective intelligence' that shapes societies favouring democracy and sustainability. Learning cities, provided that they are designed to be democratic and sustainable, will be key to teaching people how to live together.

Professor, Seoul National University

Soonghee Han

The publication brings three crucial issues to our attention: (1) lifelong learning and the new ways it finds to address contemporary challenges; (2) learning cities as a new framework for community learning, taking into account the latter's long history and universal validity; and (3) active citizenship – an increasingly important field of education due to the growing threats to democracy, freedom and human rights we face today.

Recent developments have underscored the need for a book such as this to reflect on CE. These developments include, on the one hand, the delay in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (recently estimated to be in excess of 60 years) and the growing need to rethink the role of education and learning. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many structural problems and revealed failures in establishing democracies that are stable, dynamic and resistant, and in educating citizens to be active, critical and aware.

Learning cities capture the finest tradition of community learning, while offering improved concepts and new frameworks for a kind of lifelong learning that can be a motor both for real social transformation and for diverse forms of urban partnerships that can boost education and learning for groups of all kinds, thereby fostering a type of citizenship that can pave the way for functional, resilient and sustainable democracy. Active citizens in urban learning environments are one of the preconditions if we are to 'educate our way out' of the multiple crises we are currently experiencing.

Secretary General of ICAE, University of Belgrade

Katarina Popović

Foreword by coordinating city mayors

In 2019, one year after joining the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), Yeonsu-gu (Republic of Korea) started working with the city of Larissa (Greece) to coordinate the GNLC cluster on citizenship education. Yeonsu-gu is delighted to be fostering the practices of 'Learning, Acting, Sharing' by actively sharing knowledge and experiences with other cities through this international network in a great collaboration with our excellent the Larissa Learning City Team and UIL.

Will we be able to create opportunities to make our lives better amidst the challenges we face? There is a pressing need – and demand – to focus our attention on promoting global citizenship at the transnational level so that each of us can contribute proactively to building sustainable and inclusive societies.

As a learning city, we have provided consistent, multilateral support for the activities of local communities, and strengthened online/offline communication to improve the skills people need to become 'good citizens,' even during the pandemic.

We will continue to provide a space to share various case studies and experiences that will enhance our capacities as global citizens, and our ability to look after each other, local communities and the planet we all inhabit.

We hope that citizenship education for democratic and sustainable communities, drawing on the diverse and meaningful activities of our cluster members, will be of assistance to all cities, local communities and citizens who are striving for progress with regard to the provision of citizenship education. Thank you.

Mayor of Yeonsu-gu, Republic of Korea

Nam-seok Ko



The emergence of Larissa as a coordinating city of the UNESCO GNLC cluster on citizenship education has been a great honour and serves as recognition of the city's efforts to promote CE. Furthermore, it has come at an hour of great responsibility, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging local communities.

In collaboration with the great team from the city of Yeonsu-gu and with significant support from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), we have attempted to create the conditions needed to enable fruitful dialogue among cities. For the past two years, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, and by utilizing new technologies, we have been meeting with cities all over the world. We have exchanged good practices and shared our thoughts on the future of democracy and the role of citizens.

This publication presents the results of this dialogue. In a time of unprecedented crisis, learning cities are called upon to promote critical thinking and active citizen participation, transforming local communities and citizens. In Larissa, we often say that the city is built first and foremost upon its citizens. Ensuring democracy is the greatest challenge we will face in the future, and it depends on education, on humanitarian values, and on how we learn to talk about the social good.

Taking this as our compass, we believe that, to build a peaceful, democratic and sustainable world, we must continue the work we have started.

Mayor of Larissa, Greece

Apostolos Kalogiannis



*The roots.
The experiences of youth.
The plain.
These are not overturned. They are seated inside us.

The beautiful courtyards with the rose bushes, the bougainvilleas.
People sitting outside them on the sidewalks.
The good morning they said with ease to each other.
The concept of neighborhood.*

•
Apostolos Kalogiannis, Mayor of Larissa, 2021

Introduction

Mayors and citizens of any city have in their hearts a deeply held respect for and appreciation of their place, their city. For 6,000 years, people have looked to cities for protection, safety and a better place to live together.

Since the establishment of Uruk in Mesopotamia, and in the intervening millennia, cities have been the places in which writing was begun, great buildings were erected and art was created. In cities, we find both the beginnings and the development of extensive trade, systems of taxation, monuments, fine art and crafts, increased productivity, and governments. The first schools followed the invention of writing in Syria, Egypt, China (Confucius) and Greece. History offers us many examples of great movements of people seeking the safety of cities, particularly in times of famine, disease and war. Cities have always been metaphors for and symbols of a promised greatness. Above all, we note the contribution that learning has made to the development of cities, and how cities in turn have provided the impetus and support for learning.



*Οι ρίζες.
Τα βιώματα της νεανικής ηλικίας.
Ο κάμπος.
Αυτά δεν ανατρέπονται.
Είναι καθισμένα μέσα μας.*

*Οι όμορφες αυλές με τις
τριανταφυλλιές, τις
μπουκαμβουλίες.
Τους ανθρώπους να κάθονται
έξω
απ' αυτές στα πεζοδρόμια.
Η καλημέρα που έλεγε
με ευκολία ο ένας στον άλλο.
Η έννοια της γειτονιάς.*

**Απόστολος Καλογιάννης,
Δήμαρχος Λάρισας, 2021**



At the same time, however, many believe that cities are deceptive: while they offer freedom (and freedom of choice), it has become increasingly difficult to determine who belongs to this created and manufactured space. Regeneration often leads to displacement and homelessness; property owners create new rights; different kinds of power are exercised by citizens in different countries and localities. Too many large cities have become known for their pollution, crime, homelessness and poor housing on a vast scale. This raises the question: how can a city be reconfigured so that it enhances the lives of all citizens, including, in many cases, new arrivals? This is the question at the heart of ongoing attempts to harness adult learning and CE to address community and social problems.

As cities continue to worry about economic development, the risk is that social development will not match economic progress. Yet these two agendas are connected, and the resulting educational needs are integral to both. This is an important motivation for the concept of the learning city, which has been spurred on by the global drive towards and interest in lifelong learning. The objective of learning cities is to enhance economic development, achieve environmental progress, and enhance social and cultural life and equality within the city. Different cities have chosen their own versions of what it takes to become a learning city. Knowledge challenges what we know and expect, and how we are required to act. It creates new opportunities, but also leads to new risks and dangers. In the sixteenth century, new knowledge in Europe related to tides, winds and navigating the globe by means of the stars; the risks centred on the impact of colonization, and on the spread of culture, religion, language and, indeed, diseases from Europe. At base, the crises brought about by these advances and risks posed a challenge for learning – for the ‘new world’ and for the old world of Europe. The only way to overcome such challenges (to navigate them, so to speak) is to ‘learn’ one’s way through them. The path to the future, and through periods of crisis, is defined by learning – and this is the path chosen by the learning cities. The ongoing crises of today’s world – climate change, wars, mass migrations, refugees, political crises, health crises including COVID-19, economic problems, rapid technological change – lead to dangers, the most urgent of which include pollution, exclusion and the increased gap between rich and poor. Some crises pose existential threats, and all require learning in depth not just how to survive, but how to make life better for everybody. Learning cannot be done by an elite group alone; it must be achieved by all. Against this backdrop, CE is key because living, surviving and our well-being depend on citizens’ learning. Education, whether it is of the citizens, by the citizens or for the citizens, is the new imperative for democracy.



Acronyms and short conceptual definitions of basic terms

UNESCO GNLC :

The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) is an international policy-oriented network. It supports local governments in developing lifelong learning strategies that provide inspiration and expertise, and in sharing best practices. It was launched by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) in 2012.

GNLC clusters :

In order to further support collaboration among member cities on specific topics, UNESCO GNLC launched seven thematic clusters during the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities in Medellín, Colombia, in 2019. The seven thematic clusters are: (1) education for sustainable development; (2) equity and inclusion; (3) educational planning, monitoring, and evaluation; (4) global citizenship education; (5) entrepreneurship; (6) health and well-being, Education for All; and (7) literacy.

Cluster on citizenship education :

The UNESCO GNLC cluster on global citizenship education (CE) comprises 57 cities. Larissa (Greece) and Yeonsu-gu (Republic of Korea) act as the coordinating cities. It is further supported by the UNESCO Section of Global Citizenship and Peace Education. The cities in this cluster are committed to developing and further improving relevant lifelong learning policies and strategies aimed at promoting citizenship.



Theoretical views on citizenship education

the November 2020 conference



Theoretical views on citizenship education

the November 2020 conference

In the framework of the UNESCO GNLC cluster on CE, an online conference was held on the theme of ‘Strengthening citizenship education at local level’ (12 and 13 November 2020). UNESCO learning cities from around the globe came together virtually to share good practices and current challenges related to CE. The event was organized by the cities of Larissa (Greece) and Yeonsu-gu (Republic of Korea) and supported by UIL. Over 200 participants from around the world provided online inputs for the discussions.

The conference involved a number of mayors and vice mayors, as well as city and youth representatives. Experts in CE gave keynote presentations and others moderated the sessions: Arjen Wals (UNESCO Chair in Social Learning, Wageningen University, Netherlands); Katarina Popović (Secretary General of ICAE and University of Belgrade, Serbia); Carlos Torres (Founding Director of the UCLA Paulo Freire Institute); Cecilia Barbieri (Chief of Section of Global Citizenship and Peace Education, UNESCO); Alexis Kokkos (Hellenic Adult Education Association, Greece); Divina FrauMeigs (University of Media Sociology, Sorbonne University, France); Ioanna Laliotou (University of Thessaly, Greece); Bryony Hoskins (Roehampton University, London); Ted Fleming (Teachers College, Columbia University, US); Olga Tsiourva (Regional Manager of the Labour Force Employment Agency of Thessaly, Greece); Roberto Guevara (President of the International Council of Adult Education [ICAE]); Fergal Finnegan (Maynooth University School of Education, Ireland); George Koulaouzidis (Hellenic Open University, Greece, member of the board of directors of the European Association for the Education of Adults [EAEA]); and Ashley Stepanek Lockhart (research consultant in international education and development)

The keynote presentations covered a variety of topics related to CE, including human rights, environmental sustainability, social inclusion, democracy and



INTERNATIONAL ONLINE CONFERENCE

Strengthening Citizenship Education at Local Level

LARISSA (Greece) - YEONSU (Republic of Korea)
UNESCO GNLC Cluster on Citizenship Education

challenges related to the digital world, as well as the role of NGOs in fostering CE, culture and local traditions. Many questions were asked and solutions proposed. Many representatives, such as Mr Nam Seok Ko, the Mayor of Yeonsu-gu, presented good practices and citizenship initiatives that cities have implemented. They shared their efforts to foster CE, as well as actions to promote partnerships, public dialogue and community participation (Bucheon and Yeonsu-gu, Republic of Korea; Gdynia, Poland), good practices to promote intercultural understanding and peaceful development (Shiraz, Islamic Republic of Iran), to ensure access to learning opportunities for all (São Paulo, Brazil; Larissa, Greece; Gwangmyeong, Republic of Korea), projects for migrants' and refugees' integration (Escazu, Costa Rica), initiatives for environmental sustainability (Aswan, Egypt; Suseong-gu and Dangjin, Republic of Korea), actions to address the COVID-19 pandemic (Heraklion, Greece) and to support youth.

There was remarkable agreement among mayors, politicians and academics regarding these topics. However, as Mr Kalogiannis, the Mayor of Larissa, said, we live in 'worrying times.' As the conference proceeded, two things became clear. First, the range of crises and challenges faced by different cities is wide and diverse, at least at first sight. Second, there is widespread consensus that the neoliberal economic model is a singular driving



force that consistently leads to these challenges. Many representatives claimed that more democracy was the best solution, and they believed that the traditional democratic values of education supported CE. This belief is based on a shared understanding of the answer to the question as to what makes a good citizen, namely one who is responsible, caring, participates in creating a healthy and peaceful society in which all are respected, where everyone's voice is heard, and where all can take initiatives, ask critical questions and be critical.

In determining what must be done to address the challenges of the future, the conference focused on many possible versions of what they deemed to be the main strategy of CE at the local level:

- the need for critical literacy is a major learning requirement for education today and in the future; this refers to the idea of critical consciousness articulated with great clarity by Paulo Freire;

- the importance of understanding the often neglected power of citizenship to deliver peace, with poverty and inequality as the twin threats to global peace;
- the role of good citizenship educators and the importance of art, and using the arts in support of CE;
- the importance and centrality of non-governmental organizations (NGO): very often, NGOs' interest and expertise in areas such as environmental science and human rights adds to the vast reservoir of knowledge, expertise and commitment available to the learning city;
- the task for CE is to educate citizens to live in a world in which the survival of each person is connected to global issues such as climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences;
- the challenges of working with youth, and the principle 'nothing about you without you'.





A survey

'Citizenship education in learning cities'

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2

A survey : 'Citizenship education in learning cities'

In the context of the work carried out by the CE cluster, the coordinating cities and UIL collaboratively developed a survey to identify member cities' strategies, priorities and opportunities in implementing CE. The survey was launched in May 2020 and sent to all members of the CE cluster. In total, 18 cities completed the questionnaire. The main purpose of the survey was to identify the strategies and collaborations established by cities to promote CE; the target groups to which these strategies and collaborations were addressed; the topics of interest and good practices of each city; the impact of CE on citizens, especially in the context of the COVID-19 crisis; and cities' plans to participate more actively in the work of the cluster. More specifically, the following provides data on the cities that took part in the survey, the date they joined UNESCO GNLC (included in parentheses next to the respective city name), and the population in each case.

The population of most cities varies between 100,000 and 350,000. There are 3 cities with over 800,000 inhabitants and 3 cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. It is worth mentioning that a significant number of Korean and Greek cities participated in the survey. Both countries have an increased presence in UNESCO GNLC.



Six of the cities received a UNESCO Learning City Award

Espoo, Finland (2015) / Contagem, Brazil (2017) /
N'Zérékoré, Guinea (2017) / Larissa, Greece (2017) /
Gelsenkirchen, Germany (2017) /
Heraklion, Greece (2019)

Continent and country	City	The date joined UNESCO GNLC	Population
Africa			
Guinea	N'Zérékoré	2016	195,330
Asia and the Pacific			
Iran	Shiraz	2017	1,700,687
Republic of Korea	Bucheon	2016	869,165
	Gwangmyeong	2016	350,547
	Yeonsu-gu	2019	340,618
	Dangjin	2016	165,374
Kingdom of Thailand	Chachoengsao	2020	38,645
Europe and North America			
Turkey	Izmir	2020	4,367,251
Finland	Espoo	2016	295,000
Germany	Gelsenkirchen	2016	257,651
Poland	Gdynia	2019	246,204
Belgium	Charleroi	2020	202,376
Greece	Heraklion	2016	173,993
	Larissa	2016	162,000
	Corinth	2020	58,192
France	Évry-Courcouronnes	2019	69,080
Latin America and the Caribbean			
Brazil	Contagem	2016	648,766
Nicaragua	León Santiago de los Caballeros	2020	290,619

Source: <https://uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/learning-cities/members>**The cities that took part in the survey (18 cities)**

Africa	N'Zérékoré, Guinea	Asia and the Pacific	Shiraz, Iran / Bucheon, Republic of Korea / Gwangmyeong, Republic of Korea / Yeonsu-gu, Republic of Korea / Dangjin, Republic of Korea / Chachoengsao, Kingdom of Thailand
Latin America and the Caribbean	Contagem, Brazil / León Santiago de los Caballeros, Nicaragua	Europe and North America	Izmir, Turkey / Espoo, Finland / Gelsenkirchen, Germany / Gdynia, Poland / Charleroi, Belgium / Heraklion, Greece / Larissa, Greece / Corinth, Greece / Évry-Courcouronnes, France

2.1

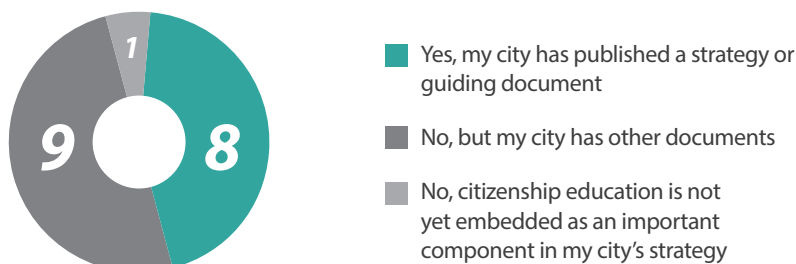
Strategic approaches that promote citizenship education

As learning is central to citizens' development, and education in turn facilitates learning, strategic approaches are required to bridge the gap between a good idea and its implementation. Seventeen of eighteen (17/18) cities have produced strategy documents of various kinds that guide CE. Almost half of the survey respondents (8 out of 18) have developed a dedicated strategy or guiding document for promoting CE. Nine cities have prepared other documents to promote CE, such as national or international strategies, concept papers and guidelines, and local development and/or education plans. One city has declared its commitment to intervening in order to support vulnerable groups in light of the pandemic (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Cities' strategic approaches for promoting CE (total responses: 18)

Cities' strategic approaches for promoting citizenship education

number of cities



In the case of almost all the cities, the main purpose of their strategic engagement has been to inform and activate citizens, raise public awareness, promote participation for all ages, and communicate the benefits of lifelong learning and active citizenship. Factors such as the size of the population, local geography, rates of literacy (that vary widely), the extent to which the city wants to reach vulnerable groups, and the degree to which cities in different continents experience social problems uniquely affect cities' strategies regarding the promotion of CE. The inclusion of CE in a city's strategic plan can win resources for the achievement of specific goals in an organized way and within a specific time frame. Elected officials' efforts to foster their respective cities' vision testifies to their commitment to making policies and actions highly visible to all citizens. When local authorities offer a framework within which this potential can be exploited, most citizens respond positively. The need to offer this framework consistently seems to be of the utmost importance, not just as arbitrary one-off services, but in the form of integrated public services. There are many paths that can be taken to make a city better.



ESPOO



In **Espoo**, the issue of **global citizenship** is highly visible as it is an integral part of the Finnish **core education curricula** that develop transversal competencies (knowledge, skills, values, attitudes). In addition to the **Library Act** and the **Youth Act**, which promote active citizenship at the national level, **Participatory Espoo** is a cross-sectoral development programme designed to promote citizen participation, whereby businesses and communities work together to overcome common challenges. Espoo's residents have a high degree of confidence in democracy and decision-making, and Espoo aims to increase that still further through a spirit of openness, and by training its personnel and elected officials. The **Espoo Story** is at the heart of Espoo's publicity strategy, which is created by elected officials and residents **together**. To do this effectively, Espoo has launched surveys, one consisting of open-ended questions and another with answers marked on a map; these collected residents' opinions inform the city's strategy.

*Let's
create
THE ESPOO
STORY
together*

N'ZEREKORE



N'Zerekore focuses on prevention, and its local development plans include priority actions focusing on: citizen participation in the electoral process; cleaning up the city; preserving peace and social cohesion; promoting gender equality; paying taxes; and protecting public goods. The city is focusing primarily on issues such as the prevention of violence, racism, sexism and homophobia; discrimination in all its manifestations; and the protection of children.

Thematic areas

There is no one or best way to establish more inclusive or democratic cities. Each city defines its own needs and priorities, and the themes presented here are designed to inform and inspire others to build on the experiences of their counterparts across the world. In accordance with their strategic plans, cities are working hard to promote diversity and intercultural understanding, counteract climate change and promote environmental sustainability, and enhance critical skills for civic literacy. Strengthening democratic values is a priority in all Korean cities, while preventing violent extremism is a primary concern of cities from Europe, Africa and Latin America.

Figure 2: Cities' interests in thematic areas of CE (total responses: 18)

Cities' interests in the matic areas of citizenship education

number of cities



Some cities are specifically interested in encouraging participation in electoral processes; promoting inclusion, gender equality, a non-discriminatory culture and cultural heritage; and improving qualities relating to citizens' well-being, such as morality, wisdom and happiness (Figure 2).

HERAKLION



Regarding the promotion of diversity and intercultural understanding, **Heraklion** organizes local intercultural understanding events to strengthen the **integration of immigrants into society and the workplace**, with projects such as 'Fit for All'.

ÉVRY-COURCOURONNES

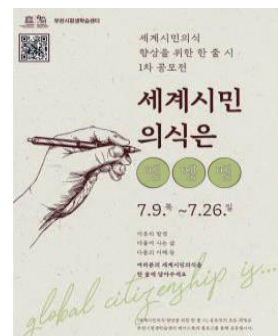
As a number of languages are spoken in **Évry-Courcouronnes**, the city organizes **story readings and workshops in the mother tongues** of its young children, thereby promoting the city's diverse cultural heritage.

When given the chance to dream and act for a better world, a critically thinking citizen can be a catalyst for change. It is important to allow citizens to have their say in the fields of art, science and sports, and to let them express their creativity in cooperative projects that exploit their human potential, regardless of race, religion or culture.

BUCHEON

**No prejudice,
and you see a
bigger world.**

Bucheon uses the **liberal arts** to encourage more people to get involved in active citizenship, and to enhance critical skills for civic literacy. Through a **One-Line Poem Contest** designed to improve global citizenship awareness, citizens are asked to write creative, one-line poems to capture global citizenship and its local practices. Winners are chosen by citizens and experts – a practice that benefits both participants and the wider community. To encourage the dissemination of the one-line poems, digital wallpapers and ballpoint pens are provided.



LARISSA

Larissa's Citizens' University aims to cultivate learning for every citizen, and to promote **transformative thinking** and actions. In collaboration with the city's stakeholders, it organizes courses such as 'Education through Arts', 'Parents' School', 'Digital Learning for Older People', 'Road Safety Education' and lectures on a wide range of topics relevant to CE, including the issue of educating educators. These interventions are the result of an elaborate and systematic process of needs assessment.



Additionally, cities organize actions whose main purpose is to strengthen the values of **participatory democracy** in the local and global community.

DANGJIN



Dangjin operates a **civic university** for the systematic provision of CE, fostering independent and democratic citizens who understand their role in the community and the wider world. Courses such as 'Human Value Exploration' and 'Citizens' Power through Art' focus on citizens' thinking and expression and aim to help them make autonomous choices.

IZMIR

On the theme of strengthening democratic values, **Izmir** envisions the whole **city as an educational campus** that provides social and cultural solidarity at the local, national and global levels. Its call for **Collective Wisdom** invites citizens to submit ground-breaking ideas to improve all areas of life. In the context of the **Mobile Office** initiative, the Mayor visits and holds meetings in districts across the city, thereby decentralizing the function of the municipality, making it more transparent, involving local people in decisions, and distributing the wealth created in all neighbourhoods and villages of the city.



SHIRAZ

Regarding climate change and the promotion of environmental sustainability, **Shiraz** organizes CE workshops for children at **Residential Complexes** in the city. These focus on road safety, solid waste disposal/management and green space-related matters, aiming to raise children's awareness of environmental issues. The city also publishes a series of **books** on CE.



City of Shiraz

2.2

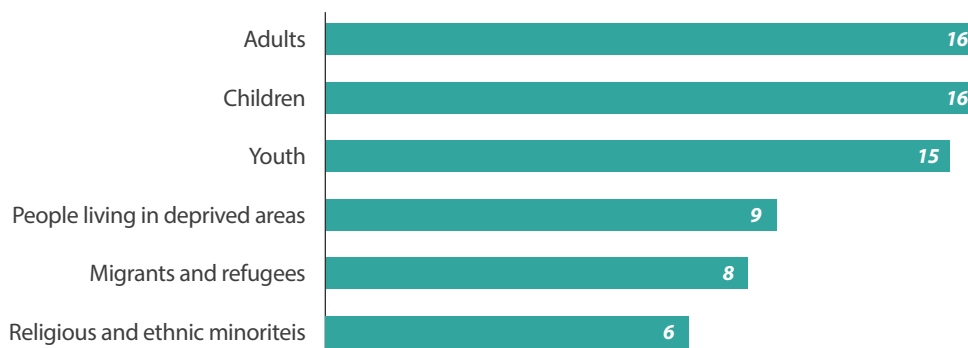
Main target groups for citizenship education

Most cities identify target groups for activities as a way of addressing unequal access to resources and power. Adults, youth and children are considered to be highly relevant target groups for CE at the city level. Half of the participating cities, most of them in Europe, have chosen to implement specialized interventions for people living in deprived areas. The same applies to initiatives aimed at migrants/refugees and ethnic/religious minority groups, perhaps reflecting the current economic and refugee crisis in Europe (Figure 3). However, Europe only experiences one side of the latter crisis. The other side is experienced by the countries that immigrants are leaving!

Figure 3: Main target groups of CE (total responses: 18)

Main target groups of citizenship education

number of cities



In order to address the issues affecting different groups, vulnerable or not, a holistic approach is required that will enhance responses to the educational needs of every citizen. Learning cities are deeply committed to addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, yet in our modern and interconnected world, each one of us may be vulnerable, the only difference being the type of vulnerability to which we are susceptible.

For citizens to have the opportunity to participate equally in decision-making, they must be able to think critically, understand complex issues, solve difficult problems, grasp new opportunities, and keep up with the fast-moving world of today. This calls for an active citizenship policy which, to succeed, must offer citizens from different groups the chance to continue learning.

Cities create friendly environments for all citizens that motivate learning and encourage local networking in order to ensure access for all.

CHACHOENGSAO



Chachoengsao has established a **Knowledge Centre** at the heart of the city that provides a range of services, including a library; an activity space; an exhibition hall; a rehearsal room for theatre, music and dance; computer laboratories; a café; meeting rooms; and an auditorium. The centre focuses on fostering people's development and encouraging them to 'think outside the box'.

The city also offers **Online Services** free of charge and provides **On-Site Services** to every home in the urban area in cooperation with its network partners. Through the 'Reading City' project, which distributes quality books and resources, it promotes information literacy among people who may not find it convenient to visit the city's learning centre.

YEONSU-GU



Yeonsu-Gu's Warm and Happy Village

Project strengthens cooperation among residents through the creation of public-interest spaces as a base for their activities. The project aims to make every village a welcoming and happy one, and has created a **public database of spaces and human resources** where good practices are shared, activists improve their skills through training, and activities are organized, such as forming disaster prevention camps or creating village newspapers.



Many cities are implementing interesting projects focusing on children and youth.

CONTAGEM



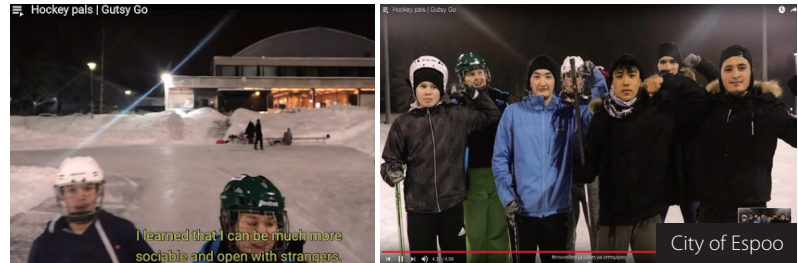
Contagem has established the **Oficinas Integral Online** project. Activities centring on dancing, drama, music, arts and crafts, environmental education and sustainability, and citizenship values are sent to students through social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube). The format of these activities enables children, teenagers, young adults, adults and older people to remain active and keep in touch with their teachers and friends, while also receiving guidance on self-care that enables them to continue developing more fully. The activities are for students of all ages, students with all kinds of needs, family members and migrants.

LEÓN SANTIAGO DE LOS CABALLEROS



One of the policies in place in **León Santiago de los Caballeros** promotes CE to youth and children through **specific didactic strategies, content, criteria and materials** designed to equip students with critical skills.

ESPOO



Espoo's eighth graders are encouraged to carry out **acts of peace in their neighbourhoods** through a programme called **GutsyGo**, which focuses on youth and refugees. For example, pupils arrange ice hockey lessons for refugees so that participants can get to know one another, thus promoting social integration. As part of the GutsyGo project, pupils in Espo helped older people to digitize their photographs.

GWANGMYEONG

Gwangmyeong's Step into the Agora project is a democratic citizenship learning programme for teenagers that **strengthens social participation**. Public interest is stimulated through discussions and a mock election focusing on local problems. The city's **'Let's play with human rights'** project enables parents and children to learn together.



GELSENKIRCHEN

In **Gelsenkirchen**, CE is mainly provided by the aGenda 21 bureau and the 'Volkshochschule' (adult education centre) via a range of projects for all age groups. '**Kolleg21**' (**college21**) is an interdisciplinary trainee programme for students from universities in the Ruhr region. It equips participants with **practical skills** that complement their often research-oriented studies. The programme focuses



on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), project management and event management to train participants to act as agents of change and multipliers for sustainable development. Through its work on specific projects, the aGenda 21 bureau gets to know what is important to **promote sustainability** in practice at the local level. Additional workshops provide participants with the knowledge and skills that they need to think globally, and this in turn allows them to take effective action in the local context.

HERAKLION

In **Heraklion**, a **storytelling** project has brought different generations together: older people recount their stories to the young.



2.3

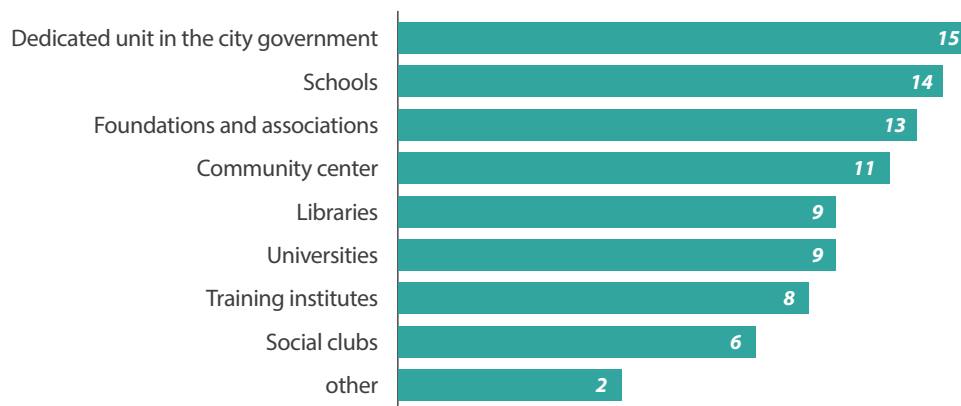
Institutions and stakeholders responsible for promoting citizenship education

Most of the cities (15 out of 18) have a dedicated municipal department that promotes CE at the city level. In two of the cities, the responsibility lies solely with the city government or is directed by the Ministry of Education or General Office of Education.

Figure 4: Institutions and stakeholders responsible for CE (each city could give more than one response)

Institutions and stakeholders responsible for citizenship education

number of cities



Implementing projects depends on networking actively with stakeholders in the respective cities. About half of the cities, most of them European, state that various institutions and organizations contribute to the promotion of CE, and that their involvement varies depending on local systems and partnerships between local governments, universities, training institutes, foundations, associations, schools, community centres, libraries, social clubs and youth clubs. Activities carried out by these institutions and organizations include hosting and organizing seminars, meetings, open discussions, events, training programmes, workshops for students and teachers, and advisory and participatory councils; providing material support; establishing communication platforms; preparing publications; and conducting business and educational programmes for citizens and officials.

Schools and foundations/associations play a major role in promoting CE at the city level for most cities (15 out of 18). In schools, CE is integrated into the institution's philosophy, curriculum development and activities (e.g. workshops on democracy and human rights for students and teachers), while the development of a public-private network of foundations and associations contributes to the implementation of projects, research, and the exchange of ideas and good practices. Additionally, **community centres** serve as important meeting places for implementing CE in most cities (11 out of 18). It seems that, in some cases, **universities and training institutes** play a slightly less important role than schools in promoting and implementing CE (9 out of 18). It is possible that not all cities have universities and, in those that do, they may be underused resources in learning city projects. This could be an indication of a low level of engagement between some universities and their local communities. The higher education sector can be a strong ally in cities' efforts to promote CE. Many cities would benefit from the resources provided by the higher education sector. A university is a real asset to a city. As long as educational institutions do not instrumentalize learning and treat learners merely as consumers and/or workers, their resources can be used for research and teaching to support economic activity. In addition, they can help to develop and deliver support for cities' citizenship learning agendas, many of which have, in recent years, been particularly affected by inequality and poverty. As regards the economy, it appears that a rising tide does not lift all boats. Indeed, each time an economy has boomed, relative poverty has increased. Universities are in a strong position to support critical outreach programmes and boost social engagement through CE initiatives.

In half of the cities, **libraries** play a significant role in promoting CE. An example of libraries' contribution is found in Chachoengsao, where libraries and schools organize an 'Educational Week' focusing on topics such as the social sciences, geography, economics, environmental science and sports. In addition, **libraries** are well placed to increase participation in **cultural activities**. So, too, are **cultural institutions such as music colleges, art colleges, museums, art galleries and theatres** – and it seems that most cities are fully aware of the powerful resources that these represent. As learning spaces, they not only support and develop skills in their core areas and raise the level of cultural experience for the city; they also do something much more important. They provide spaces where the public imagination can flourish. The power of imagination is as important to a city as the power of planning or teaching. The public imagination needs to be developed, and these institutions provide spaces for people to ask critical questions about the past, explore their dreams for the future and imagine a better world.

In many cases, cities work on building strong social networks that lead to resilient and democratic communities capable of using adaptation tools of all kinds



GDYNIA



Gdynia's UrbanLab consists of actual rooms and locations. It acts as a meeting place to develop **social capital**; promote **effective dialogue** between citizens, NGOs, institutions, and scientific and business communities; diagnose **common challenges**; and find **effective solutions** to these challenges through a shared process. The meeting place also functions as an **incubator of skills and innovation**. At the same time, **the Youth Exchange Centre** promotes bottom-up initiatives by providing spaces where citizens can **engage in interesting activities in their free time**, and by **letting youth take over the operative management** of the centre. Participatory engagement, independent decision-making about what events to organize, and knowledge exchange are at the heart of the centre.

In addition, its Experimental Science Centre serves as a scientific and educational 'playground' that promotes the principle of **'learning through fun' for all ages** and provides the space for creative experimentation. By promoting science, adopting modern technologies and tools, and inspiring enthusiasm and curiosity, the centre aims to function as a European platform for knowledge exchange, and to build a society that both understands the problems civilization is facing and engages responsibly in activities designed to further the common good.



City of Gdynia

CORINTH

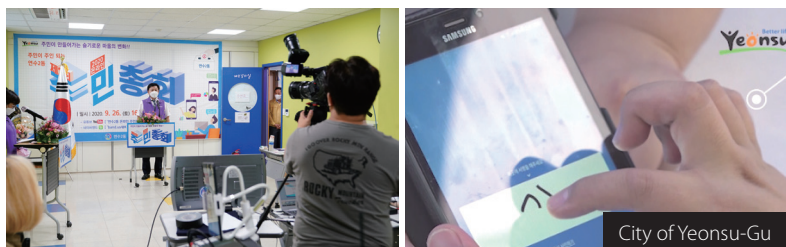


In **Corinth**, a new member of UNESCO GNLC, the municipality has joined forces with the local university to launch a noteworthy initiative to establish a strong network of local stakeholders. In this context, it has hosted a conference on supporting teachers through the pandemic, attended by more than 450 participants, and has published a book detailing its framework for learning cities today.

A number of cities emphasize the importance of actively involving citizens in decision-making, and have fostered this by organizing participatory councils, local residents' councils, open meetings and youth councils.

YEONSU-GU

Yeonsu-Gu operates a **Residents' Self-Governing Council and School**, which increases residents' autonomy and participation in the city's decision-making processes, thereby supporting the implementation of **direct democracy**. The school offers residents wishing to participate in the council a series of basic and advanced courses on policies of self-government, good practices for community participation, and global CE. The **Council** collects citizens' suggestions and holds a referendum (via electronic and on-site voting) to decide which projects should move forward. Residents vote electronically using an **online multi-family housing management platform**, which enables communication between the city and its inhabitants. In addition to e-voting, the platform also provides digital broadcasting facilities and an e-lounge for residents.



ESPOO • IZMIR

In many cities, CE is directly linked to practices that enhance citizen participation, such as **Espoo's Council for the Elderly** and **Izmir's Council for the Disabled**, both of which monitor and influence official decision-making processes that affect the lives of these citizens.

ÉVRY-COURCOURONNES



Évry-Courcouronnes operates a **children's municipal council**, supervised by children's facilitators. The council holds weekly workshops that focus on **institutional discovery** (the role of a town hall, citizens' rights, the function of an elected official) as well as on projects for local residents **proposed by the children**.

CHARLEROI

In **Charleroi**, five **participatory citizen councils** (one per district) meet regularly in order to enhance dialogue between the city and its inhabitants. Several **advisory panels** have been set up focusing on specific themes, such as the inclusion of people with disabilities, gender equality and animal welfare.

LARISSA

Larissa's Youth Council aims to encourage young people aged 18-30 to participate in socio-political life through **open and constructive dialogue** between youth and local authorities. Within the first year of operation, 250 young people had joined the council and more than 10 awareness-raising and training activities had been organized. At the same time, Larissa has hosted simulations of Municipal Councils for young Roma and students aged from 6 to 17 years.





2.4

Citizenship education during the pandemic

In a year in which COVID-19 has affected the lives of individual citizens across the globe and dominated the political and economic agendas of most countries, the survey asked how CE had been impacted by the pandemic. It seems that CE has gained importance, as 15 cities responded that informing and activating citizens had been key to tackling the pandemic. Volunteering has emerged as a further important element. More specifically, 5 cities with more than 150,000 inhabitants (Dangjin, Larissa, Yeonsu-gu, Shiraz, Espoo), state that, during the pandemic, voluntary activity increased. During the pandemic, cities focused on certain issues, such as strengthening democratic values and ensuring human rights.

Most cities believe that the importance and impact of CE and societal values (acting responsibly, maintaining contact with inhabitants and communities, being aware of rights and social obligations) have increased since the onset of COVID-19. There are many good examples of how cities have responded to the pandemic, which are outlined below.

In **Shiraz**, citizens and private organizations support vulnerable people and medical staff by providing lunchboxes for quarantined individuals, distributing sanitary products and offering foreign language services. **Gelsenkirchen** implements neighbourhood initiatives to reach citizens who have no access to digital resources or who are socio-economically disadvantaged. **Gwangmyeong** organizes visits to every village in order to deliver pandemic-related CE, and **León Santiago de los Caballeros** rolls out a house-to-house campaign to develop recommendations, preventive measures and new methodological strategies that pay adequate attention to students.

Technology has played a critical role in maintaining contact with – and offering services to – citizens. **Espoo** has developed a **smartbot to answer questions** in 100 languages and has launched an **advisory telephone hotline** in collaboration with local volunteers. Meanwhile, **Larissa** has created a **citizen portal** where residents can apply to volunteer, take part in online public debates on critical issues related to the pandemic, and participate in activities such as viewing online readings of children's books by authors. **Bucheon** is planning to establish an **e-studio for online lifelong learning** that can be shared and used by local organizations.

It appears that the pandemic has accelerated the use of technology to extend learning beyond traditional time and space. Technology is a game-changer that allows access to – and distribution of – knowledge through a wide range of channels and in many forms, 24 hours a day. This makes it easier and more appealing for all citizens to embed learning into their everyday lives and enjoy more meaningful educational experiences. Combined with the efforts of the cities to close the

digital gap and ensure equal access for all, this trend represents an excellent opportunity for the provision of quality CE, particularly for adults.

Usually, when a crisis occurs, we are forced to learn many things in a very short space of time. During the pandemic, we have had to engage in a major learning experience with regard to social distancing, immune responses, hygiene practices and bereavement. The response of volunteers shows how many people have joined together in solidarity to protect health and lives. To acknowledge their solidarity is to recognize the existence of hope in this world. However, something even more significant is happening. Those who were previously considered to be lower down on the socio-economic scale (and who were paid less, too) have become frontline staff and priority workers. Nurses and health care workers, volunteers and countless others who work in risky environments have acted in ways that can justifiably be described as heroic. We have already learned a great deal about scientific knowledge, and about the importance of family, of caring for and hugging our children. And there is still so much more we have to learn.





Conclusions and looking to the future



Conclusions and looking to the future

*Pale squares under rough winds.
It's a dim night.
The song in the dark, praying for the dawn.
This winter, we shall bring Flora.
Daring buds spring in the moonlight.
Hopes we sing together that never let go.*

•
Nam-seok Ko, Mayor of Yeonsu-gu, 2021

The pandemic has given us a new understanding of the importance of national and local governments, and the way in which the system responds to crises. Economic precarity, the refugee crisis, the ongoing climate crisis, and any crises that may confront us in future add a still more serious dimension to the existential threats faced by our planet. Cities must keep learning in order to move forward, be more resilient and support the view that good government is essential. Learning and education appear to be the way forward, as cities navigate the crises, injustices and other problems they face. By adopting the basic principles of adult education, learning can be used as a model for CE courses and professional practices. The focus, however, is not merely on learning and providing courses, programmes, health care and preventive measures. More than anything, CE serves as a statement that a city accepts that learning is an integral part of its identity.

Above all, democracy is at the heart of a city's identity. According to the philosopher, John Dewey, democracy is a way of living together. Moreover, in the words of Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt, '[d]emocracy is the only politically conceived social order that has to be learned, over and over, every day, into old age' as a 'process of education and learning'.¹⁾ Aside from these definitions, democracy also demands that all citizens participate in a city's decision-making process. Yet citizens



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often lack the skills that democracy requires: they must learn how to engage in democratic and open discussions. This in turn involves learning how to listen, speak in public, understand complex thoughts and live with uncertainty. In today's world, it also involves learning how to distinguish facts from fake news by developing the ability to see through conspiracy theories and trust in evidence that is scientifically proven.

What we deem to be true in one era may no longer be accepted as fact in the next. Changing our view of what we know and what we take for granted is itself a form of learning. The thinking and reflection required to institute such changes is complex, challenging, and deserves the support of learning cities. The learning involved not only requires individuals to change their minds; it demands a social retooling of what we know. To move forward, we must increase cooperation across the globe in ways that inspire people to work with one another. The saying, 'think globally and act locally,' seems outdated in a world in which local actions can have global repercussions, and in which we are required to 'think and act both globally and locally' in order to benefit humanity.

As we strive to adapt to this new way of thinking that goes beyond equality and democracy, we should encourage our youth in particular to participate in all aspects of decision-making. We need good ideas. Integrating a wide range of opinions into public discourse helps us open minds and navigate the complexity of the modern world more intelligently. A modern world requires ever-changing learning organizations, dynamic strategic planning, institutional flexibility, technological change, and global systems that help humans work and evolve **together**.

1) Kluge, A. and Negt, O. (2014).
History and Obstinacy. New York: Zone Books, p. 452.

Afterword

The responsibilities of citizenship apply to everyone, regardless of age and background, and demand that individuals assume active roles in resolving local and global challenges. Responsible citizens assert truth, science and reason, and strive to include the most vulnerable members of society. These are the main conclusions of last year's meeting of the GNLC cluster on CE, held on 12 and 13 November 2020. In addition, the 2020 cluster survey flagged up member cities' actions to put the core principles of citizenship into action.

Situations such as the current pandemic, as well as the wider economic, political and environmental crises that affect us, remind us of the crucial role that CE plays in finding local and global solutions to global challenges. CE is essential if we are to build bridges to a future that is safe, fair and inclusive. Crises call upon individuals to work collaboratively with others, remain flexible, think critically, respect diversity, care for the environment, and engage actively in finding solutions and responses to current and emerging challenges. In addition, good practices show that CE supports individuals by improving self-esteem, empowerment, creativity and critical reflection.

Team Leader, UIL

Raúl Valdés-Cotera

It has become obvious in recent years that cultivating this form of citizenship will be crucial to the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The advent of the COVID-19 crisis makes the need for CE still more acute. But it also, in a way, creates a space for it. It is now more obvious than ever that local and global security and prosperity depend on having everyone 'on board'. We can no longer afford to leave any community behind.

The fifth International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC 5), 'From response to recovery: Building healthy and resilient cities through learning', will take place from 27 to 30 October 2021, and will be hosted by Yeonsu-Gu, Republic of Korea. This conference will be an opportunity to explore how learning cities can be resilient, promote health education and sustainability, and contribute to emergency responses. CE will certainly have a key role to play in achieving these goals.

I am grateful to the coordinating cities, Larissa and Yeonsu, as well as to all member cities of this GNLC cluster, for their commitment to this vital topic. I hope that, together, we will be able to further advance CE for the development of healthy and resilient cities.

Annex

Member cities of the Citizenship Education cluster

Australia: Melton

Azerbaijan: Baku

Belgium: Charleroi

Brazil: Contagem

Colombia: Bogotá, Santiago de Cali

Egypt: Aswan

Finland: Espoo

France: Évry-Courcouronnes, Mantes-la-Jolie

Germany: Gelsenkirchen

Greece: Corinth, Heraklion, Larissa, Thermi

Guinea: N'Zérékoré

Islamic Republic of Iran: Hashtgerd Newtown, Kashan, Mashhad, Shiraz, Tehran, Yazd

Italy: Lucca

Jordan: Amman

Nicaragua: León Santiago de los Caballeros

Poland: Gdynia

Portugal: Alcobaça, Anadia, Batalha, Câmara de Lobos, Gondomar, Lagoa-Açores, Loures, Setúbal

Republic of Korea: Bucheon, Busan Nam-gu, Dangjin, Eunpyeong-gu, Gumi, Gwangmyeong, Jeonju, Jincheon, Naju, Suseong-gu, Tongyeong, Yeonsu-gu, Yuseong-gu

Russian Federation: Kazan

Senegal: Guédiawaye

Thailand: Chachoengsao, Phuket

Turkey: Afyonkarahisar, Balıkesir, İzmir

Ukraine: Melitopol

Vietnam: Sa Dec, Vinh City



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