

Foreword



Lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in today's world and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Global visions for the future of lifelong learning are being discussed at the international level, and regional and national political leaders are working towards establishing the appropriate legislative frameworks. Meanwhile, more and more of the world's cities are making implementation happen by building learning cities. Learning cities enable their citizens to learn throughout life. In doing so, they enhance individual empowerment, social cohesion, and economic and cultural prosperity, thereby laying the foundation for sustainable development.

Learning cities at all stages of development can benefit greatly from sharing ideas with other cities, as solutions for issues that arise as one learning city develops may already exist in another. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning established the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) in order to promote this sharing of ideas, and to provide cities with the expertise, guidance and support they need throughout the development process. This international policy-oriented network serves as a source of inspiration, know-how and best practice for those involved in building learning cities.

I am pleased to introduce the Guiding Documents of the UNESCO GNLC. These Guiding Documents consist of the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities* and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*, both of which were adopted at the 1st International Conference on Learning Cities in Beijing, China, in 2013. They serve as the basis of our work and provide cities and partners with guidance on building learning cities.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to UNESCO GNLC cities, partners and supporters, all of whom recognize the major role played by lifelong learning in enhancing social, economic and environmental sustainability. I would also like to encourage cities and partners all over the world to join the initiative and create lifelong learning opportunities for all in the world's communities.

Arne Carlsen
Director
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning