

# CHARTER

OF EDUCATING  
CITIES



INTERNATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
**Educating  
Cities**

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
EDUCATING CITIES (IAEC)  
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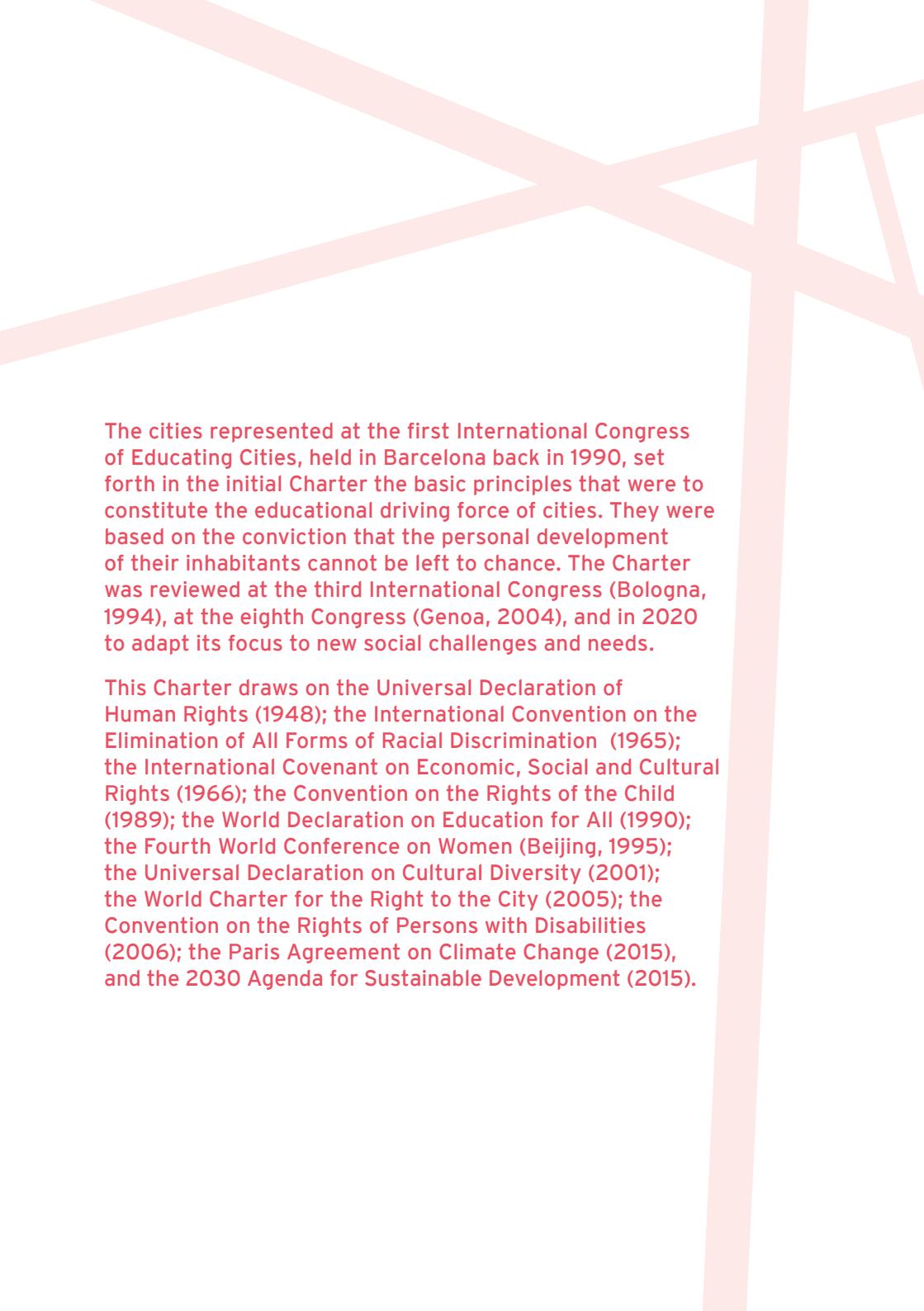
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The cities represented at the first International Congress of Educating Cities, held in Barcelona back in 1990, set forth in the initial Charter the basic principles that were to constitute the educational driving force of cities. They were based on the conviction that the personal development of their inhabitants cannot be left to chance. The Charter was reviewed at the third International Congress (Bologna, 1994), at the eighth Congress (Genoa, 2004), and in 2020 to adapt its focus to new social challenges and needs.

This Charter draws on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); the World Declaration on Education for All (1990); the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001); the World Charter for the Right to the City (2005); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006); the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015).

# PREAMBLE

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**Today, more than ever before, cities and towns - whether large or small - have countless educating opportunities, but they can also be influenced by forces and inertias of "miseducation". In one way or another, cities have major elements for a holistic education: they are complex systems yet also lifelong educational agents, both plural and multi-faceted, capable of fostering educational and social transformation factors.**

In the educating city, education transcends the school walls to permeate the entire city. This leads to a citizen-focused education, where all administrations assume their responsibility to educate and transform the city into a space of respect for life and diversity.

**“ Education transcends the school walls to permeate the entire city. ”**

The educating city is undergoing a permanent process that sets out to build communities and self-reliant and supportive citizens, capable of living side by side despite differences, peacefully solving their conflicts and working towards the "common good". These citizens are aware of the challenges that humankind faces today and count on the knowledge and skills that allow them to take joint responsibility in the search for solutions required by today's life-changing circumstances.

The educating city has its own personality, integrated into its own country. Accordingly, its identity is mutually dependent on its territory. It is also a city that relates to its surroundings: neighbouring towns and cities, rural areas and cities in other countries. Its constant goal is to learn, innovate, share and, therefore, enrich and make the lives of its inhabitants safer and more decent.

The educating city must exercise and develop its educational function in parallel to traditional ones (economic, social, political and service provision), with the aim of training, developing and empowering all people of any age to respond to their educational needs at all times and in all aspects of life.

Education begins in childhood, but it never ends, nor is it restricted to vocational or professional training. It sets out to raise awareness in order to balance out freedom and responsibility, triggering the feeling of interdependence between people and nature as a way of inhabiting the city and the planet, promoting reflection and critical thinking, as in the ability to understand complex problems; fostering jointly responsible engagement in the design and development of policies; and imagining and picturing lifestyles that do not imply the destruction of the territory or inequality between people.

The reasons that justify this educating function are social, economic and political, focused particularly on an efficient social, cultural and educational project. These are the major challenges of the twenty-first century: first of all, to “invest” in education and in each person, so that they are increasingly able to reflect, express, affirm and develop their own human potential, with their uniqueness, creativity and responsibility. Second, to foster conditions of full equality so that all people can feel respected and be respectful, capable of dialogue and active listening. Third, to bring together all possible factors so that a truly inclusive knowledge society can be built, city by city and town by town. And fourth, to learn about and develop community awareness and skills to organise life together in conditions of equality and justice.

**“ To learn about and develop community awareness and skills to organise life together in conditions of equality and justice. ”**

Educating cities with their formal educational institutions, non-formal initiatives (with an educational intention, but outside the formal education system) and informal activities (not intentional or planned) will work together, either bilaterally or multilaterally, to make the exchange of experiences become true. In the spirit of cooperation, they will mutually support study and investment projects, either in the form of direct cooperation or in collaboration with international organisations.

Guaranteeing the rights of children, adolescents and young people in the city involves, first and foremost, fully guaranteeing their status as the central figures of their lives and the development of their civil and political rights. However, they must also be able to engage in community life through reputed representative and participatory tools, alongside adults and senior citizens, thereby fostering harmonious living between generations.

Not only is humankind experiencing an era of changes, but a true change of era, and even paradigm. People need to be trained to understand today's political, social, economic and ecological situation and freely choose how they want to inhabit it. They should develop skills to confront the "culture of now", to take part in global complexities from the local world and to stimulate independent and critical thinking in the face of an information overload controlled from hubs of economic and political power.

Global citizenship is taking shape without the existence of a democratic global space, without many countries having achieved an effective democracy in line with their social and cultural patterns, and without more established democracies being satisfied with the quality of their systems. Meanwhile, the relative balance between superpowers in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century has given way to new international tensions. All this is taking place within a major eco-social crisis that is jeopardising many human lives and that is marked by the decline in basic mineral resources for the sustainability of the economy, climate change, the threat of pandemics, and the loss of biodiversity, which - as pointed out by the scientific community - are forcing to a far-reaching transformation of the social and economic organisation.

Urban metabolisms are one of the factors that most contribute to global climate change, given that more than half of the world's population lives in urban environments. Meanwhile, cities - with their territories and populations - are vulnerable from multiple aspects. The effects of climate change, food or energy dependency, overconsumption and pollution make them places that need major transformations to guarantee decent and healthy living conditions for the people and other beings living there. They are also scenarios marked by substantial inequalities of all kinds.

This new situation is accentuating a feeling of insecurity among the citizens of most countries, with the consequent danger of populist shifts that make life, confidence in democracy and world peace even more difficult. Faced with the concerns or fears that emerge, simplistic slogans and the irrational search for

**“ (...) cities in all countries must use their local dimension to act as experimentation and consolidation platforms for full democratic citizenship. ”**

scapegoats seduce a part of the population, with the consequent danger of radicalisation and violent confrontations. In this context, cities in all countries must use their local dimension to act as experimentation and consolidation platforms for full democratic citizenship, as driving forces behind peaceful living through training in ethical and civic values, as ways to respect the plurality of the possible forms of democratic government, and as incentives for fostering well-designed representation and engagement tools. Education based on values and human rights is more pressing than ever before, as it gives meaning, provides encouragement, draws up a democratic roadmap and enables people to live together peacefully.

**“ Education based on values and human rights is more pressing than ever before, as it gives meaning, provides encouragement and draws up a democratic roadmap. ”**

Diversity is inherent to life, and obviously to modern-day cities, and the feeling is that it will increase even more in the future. Thus, one of the challenges of the educating city is to foster balance and harmony between identity and diversity, taking into account the contributions of its own communities and the right of all its citizens to feel that their own cultural identity is being recognised. And this requires fighting racism and all types of exclusion. The current challenge is to recognise the right to singularity without jeopardising the construction of the common good. Educating cities embrace the goal of inclusion, welcoming each person as they are and inviting them to engage in a shared citywide project.

**“ Educating cities embrace the goal of inclusion, welcoming each person as they are and inviting them to engage in a shared citywide project. ”**

The educating city will also direct its action towards the construction of co-educating cities, transforming a social structure that generates gender inequality, analysing its origins and combating its consequences, such as violence and the feminisation of social exclusion.

We are living in a world of uncertainty that prioritises the quest for security, which is often expressed as the negation of the other and as mutual distrust. The educating city is aware of this and does not seek simple unilateral solutions: it accepts the contradiction and proposes processes of knowledge, dialogue and engagement as the ideal way of living in and with uncertainty. The cultivation of language and critical thinking in a world overflowing with 'post-truths' in politics, the media and social networks, is increasingly important to stop citizens from sitting back and accepting so many stigmatising stereotypes.

As people, we are interdependent. Without care we cannot survive. Throughout life, but especially at certain moments of the life cycle such as early childhood, old age, periods of severe illness, and for people with functional diversity, we need to receive care on which our survival and physical and mental wellness depends. The educating city must recognise, foster and encourage care and make society jointly responsible for it.

In response to all the challenges and needs expressed, the right to an educating city must be affirmed as an extension to the right to education. The right to the educating city must be a key guarantee of the principles of equality between all people, of social and global justice, of territorial balance and of the ever-necessary sustainability and resilience.

**“ The right to an educating city  
must be affirmed as an extension  
to the right to education. ”**

This accentuates the responsibility of local governments to develop all of the city's educating potential, incorporating the principles of the educating city into their political project.



# PRINCIPLES

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## THE RIGHT TO THE EDUCATING CITY

- 1 Lifelong inclusive education
- 2 Far-reaching educational policy
- 3 Diversity and non-discrimination
- 4 Access to culture
- 5 Intergenerational dialogue

## THE COMMITMENT OF THE CITY

- 6 Knowledge of the territory
- 7 Access to information
- 8 Governance and citizen participation
- 9 Monitoring and continuous improvement
- 10 Identity of the city
- 11 Liveable public spaces
- 12 Functionality of municipal amenities and services
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## FULLY DEDICATED TO SERVING ITS INHABITANTS

- 14 Health promotion
- 15 Training of educational agents
- 16 Inclusive vocational guidance and job placement
- 17 Social inclusion and cohesion
- 18 Joint responsibility against inequalities
- 19 Promotion of community involvement and volunteering
- 20 Education for democratic and global citizenship

## THE RIGHT TO THE EDUCATING CITY

1

### Lifelong inclusive education

The right to the educating city is proposed as an extension to the fundamental right of all people to education. All the inhabitants of a city have the right to enjoy, in liberty and equality, the resources and opportunities it provides for education, entertainment and personal development. The educating city is constantly renewing its commitment to the lifelong education of its inhabitants in the most varied aspects. And to make this possible, all groups must be taken into account, with their particular needs.



The city's policy-makers and public servants will implement policies aimed at overcoming any type of obstacle that undermine the right to equality and to non-discrimination. Both the city council and other administrations will be responsible for this, while citizens themselves will also be involved, both individually and as members of the organised civil society.

2

### Far-reaching educational policy

Cities will effectively exercise the powers that correspond to them in matters of education. Whatever the scope of these powers, the municipal authorities should propose a far-reaching, cross-cutting and innovative educational policy, which includes all forms of formal, non-formal and informal education and their constant interaction with different cultural manifestations, sources of information and approaches to the discovery of the reality of the city and each of its neighbourhoods.



Municipal policies for education will always be understood as referring to a broader context inspired by the principles of social justice, equality, democratic community spirit, sustainability, quality of life and the personal development of its inhabitants.

3

### Diversity and non-discrimination



The city will promote education in diversity for social understanding, international cooperation, recognition of and respect for indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups subject to discrimination, and world peace. This education fights against any form of discrimination. The educating city will foster freedom of expression and worship, cultural diversity, dialogue and active listening in terms of equality. It will also host all types of initiatives in line with these principles, no matter their origin. It will help remedy any inequalities as a result of social class, origin, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, functional diversity or any other type of diversity. In turn, it will promote the recognition, knowledge, learning and use of the languages present in the city as a way to integrate people and foster cohesion.

4

### Access to culture



The educating city will promote the right to culture and the engagement of all citizens and, in particular, of the most vulnerable groups, in the cultural life of the city as a way of inclusion and fostering the feeling of belonging and harmonious living. In addition to the enjoyment of cultural assets, this cultural participation will include the contribution that all citizens can make to a dynamic and ever-changing culture and citizen involvement in the management of cultural facilities and initiatives.

In turn, the educating city will stimulate artistic education, creativity and innovation by promoting and supporting cultural initiatives, whether avant-garde movements or popular culture, as a means of personal, social, cultural and economic development.

5

### Intergenerational dialogue



The educating city will foster proximity and cooperation between generations and will fight ageism, not just as a formula for peaceful and harmonious living, but also as a way to find common and shared projects between groups of people of different ages. These projects should be geared towards civic initiatives and actions that embrace an intergenerational nature and take advantage of the respective skills, experiences and values of different age groups.

## THE COMMITMENT OF THE CITY

### 6

#### Knowledge of the territory

The educating city recognises that knowledge-based political decisions allow for more appropriate responses, so local governments should have accurate information on the situation and living conditions of its inhabitants and the territory, while also carrying out or endorsing studies, which they will keep updated and accessible to citizens. In the formulation of projects and policies, their educational impact must be formally and explicitly taken into account and permanent open channels of communication with individuals and groups must be ensured.



### 7

#### Access to information

The city should guarantee sufficient and understandable information and encourage its inhabitants to access all available information. The educating city, considering the value of selecting, understanding and processing the vast amount of information currently available, will provide resources that are accessible to everyone and will guarantee access to connectivity in all areas and spaces of the city.



The educating city will set up training programmes in information and communication technologies for all ages and social groups in order to take advantage of the possibilities on offer, to leave nobody behind and to combat the digital divide. Likewise, it will promote the scientific and research capacities and abilities of all people, and especially children and young people, with a view to bolstering a critical and objective view of reality.

It will also attend to groups that need tailor-made mentoring, providing them with specialised points of information, guidance and mentoring. As a response to the advancement of possible control instruments such as artificial intelligence and big data, the city will strive to guarantee respect for privacy, intimacy and autonomy.

## 8

**Governance and citizen participation**

The educating city will be built from a governance paradigm, where public administrations and citizens will cooperate in its design and progress. This collaboration will be a hallmark of the educating city.

It will also encourage citizen participation in municipal management and community life from a critical, constructive and co-responsible point of view, thereby opening up decision-making processes to citizens. It will have civil and social institutions and organisations, taking into account private initiatives and other forms of spontaneous participation. To do so, the local government will provide the necessary information in advance and will use interaction to foster training activities and approaches from childhood onwards. At the end of a participatory process, the citizens will receive information about its nature and results, and the effectiveness and limits of the procedure followed will be analysed.



Children, adolescents and young people will be recognised as citizens of the present day, with the right to participate in the management and improvement of community life on the same terms as adults, with the city providing the appropriate channels and tools for this.

## 9

**Monitoring and continuous improvement**

The city will evaluate the educational, social and ecological impact of municipal policies in order to guarantee their continuous improvement.



The city's educational project, its values, its quality of life, its celebrations, and its campaigns or projects will be the subject of reflection and evaluation, together with the necessary tools to guarantee the coherence of policies that can help people develop personally and collectively.

## 10

**Identity of the city**

The city needs to know how to find, maintain and showcase its own complex and ever-changing identity, while also underlining the tangible and intangible heritage and



historical memory that makes it unique. This is the basis for a fruitful dialogue with its surroundings and with the world. The recognition of its customs and their origins must be compatible with human rights. In this way, the city will provide an attractive image without distorting its natural and social environment, while fostering among its inhabitants the feeling of belonging and shared responsibility.

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## Liveable public spaces

The layout of public spaces will meet the needs of accessibility, care, health, socialising, security, play, recreation and the balance between personal, family and work life.

The educating city will place a special focus on the needs of children, people with functional diversity and senior citizens in its urban planning, amenities and services, in order to ensure a friendly and respectful environment in which they can develop with the highest possible degree of autonomy. Likewise, it will ensure urban planning with a gender perspective. These multiple views will guarantee an urban space fully committed to all citizens.

Educating cities will promote the installation of outdoor sports and play areas that enable contact with nature and foster social relationships.

The transformation of a city should adhere to the harmony between new needs, sustainability and the continuity of buildings and symbols that are clear references of its past and its existence. The city will promote the harmonious living and integration of the community in public spaces, buildings and natural spaces, always avoiding the formation of ghettos.

Furthermore, the city will ensure that its inhabitants live in spaces where they can discover beauty. To do so, it will introduce aesthetic and environmental criteria in all its projects and engage artists in the planning and design of public spaces.



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## Functionality of municipal amenities and services

The municipal government will create and guarantee the upkeep of the spaces, amenities and public services appropriate to the personal, social, moral and



cultural development of all its inhabitants, providing them with specifically trained professionals to pay special attention to children, adolescents, young people, senior citizens and people with functional diversity.

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## Sustainability

The educating city will undertake to satisfy the rights and material needs that guarantee a dignified life: food, water, housing, sanitation, energy, transport, and a safe and healthy environment. The city will take into account the eco-dependent condition of human life and the physical limits of the planet. The participation and joint responsibility of all its inhabitants will be actively fostered in the adoption of fair, resilient and sustainable lifestyles and consumption, under the principles of sufficiency, sharing and justice, while also taking precautions to protect community assets that guarantee a dignified survival for current and future generations.



## FULLY DEDICATED TO SERVING ITS INHABITANTS

### 14

#### Health promotion

The educating city will ensure the all-round and healthy growth of all people, fostering their physical, emotional and mental well-being. To do this, it will promote universal access to healthcare and endorse healthy environments and lifestyles.



Health promotion will include physical activity and emotional, interpersonal, sexual, nutritional and addiction prevention education. Likewise, it will promote the construction of the city as a space that cares for all people and it will foster active ageing and social relationships that help combat loneliness and isolation.

### 15

#### Training of educational agents

The city will make every effort to provide families with the training to accompany the growth of their sons and daughters, ensuring a balance between the need for protection and self-reliance for the discovery of the city, within a spirit of respect and trust.



Along the same lines, it will develop training proposals for professionals and for other agents who carry out educational tasks in the city, often without being aware of it. It will also ensure that the municipal security and civil protection forces act in accordance with these proposals.

### 16

#### Inclusive vocational guidance and job placement

The city should offer its inhabitants the prospect of taking on a role in society, providing them with the necessary advice for their personal and vocational guidance and fostering entrepreneurship. Cities will work towards offering studies, profession and trades free of gender stereotypes.





In the specific field of the connection between education and employment, there should be a close relationship between educational planning, the needs of the labour market and the needs of the community.

In this sense, cities will define lifelong training and mentoring strategies, of a formal and non-formal nature, for groups in situations of inequality, exclusion or engaged in the non-formal economy, which will help them improve their quality of life. In this sense, they will cooperate with trade union and business organisations in the creation of jobs that enable their socio-labour insertion.

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## Social inclusion and cohesion

Cities should develop policies against the various mechanisms of violation of rights, exclusion and marginalisation.



In particular, they will attend newcomers, migrants or refugees, who in addition to the right to freedom of movement between countries, have the right to feel the city in which they arrive as their own. Their interests, specific needs, knowledge and skills should be valued to allow them to develop a recognised role in society. Cities will also dedicate efforts towards fostering social cohesion between neighbourhoods and all their inhabitants, no matter their status or condition.

With the same aim in mind, attention will also be paid to local collectives that suffer from social stigmas and marginalisation.

The educating city will commit to eradicating all forms of violence and harassment, paying special attention to violence related to gender, sexual identity and orientation, origin and ethnicity, age, physical appearance, etc.

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## Joint responsibility against inequalities

Interventions aimed at fighting inequalities may take on several forms, but they should be based on the overall vision of the person's rights and interests. Any significant intervention in this area needs to guarantee joint responsibility and coordination between the authorities involved and their services, based on the best knowledge that the local government has of the needs and the territory.



In the fight against inequalities, cooperation will also be fostered between the authorities and civil society, NGOs, the business community and other private initiatives.

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## Promotion of community involvement and volunteering



The city will foster community involvement and volunteering as forms of participation and shared responsibility, in order to channel actions for the community and share information, materials and ideas for the all-round development of people. To this end, educating cities will support community involvement initiatives in areas as diverse as culture, sport, solidarity, knowledge exchange, etc., all based on respect for human rights and democratic values.

Meanwhile, they will provide training for greater efficiency in the collective decision-making, planning and management processes that community life entails.

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## Education for democratic and global citizenship

The educating city should provide the entire population with education in the values and practices of democratic citizenship that foster respect, tolerance, participation, responsibility, interest in public life, and commitment to the common good.

Furthermore, the educating city will raise awareness about the interdependence of the local and international dimension posed by global challenges, thereby facilitating an education for global citizenship which enables citizens to participate, commit and contribute both locally and internationally.

All of this, added to the other principles, should allow all individuals to feel the city, its surroundings and the planet as their own.



This Charter highlights the commitment of signatory cities with all the values and principles expressed in it.

It is defined as open to its own reform and should be expanded with any aspects that rapid social evolution requires in the future.

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