Declaration for the 13th International Congress of Educating Cities, 2014

1. Introduction

2014 marks the 20th anniversary of the creation of the International Association of Educating Cities (IAEC). During this time the IAEC has consolidated itself and has continued to grow, reaching more than 478 cities from more than 36 countries from all the continents.

During these years, the cities committed to the principles of the Charter of Educating Cities have met up regularly, every two years, to exchange experiences and knowledge so as to be able to tackle the important global challenges which are posed and that directly affect the lives of the citizens.

In times of crisis the concept of Educating Cities makes even more sense. Difficulties force us to be creative to foster attitudes of solidarity and to call upon citizens' involvement.

Under the heading ***"An educating city is an inclusive city"***, the 13th International Congress of Educating Cities 2014 took place in Barcelona from 13th to 15th November, in which 838 participants from 189 cities and 34 countries.

The congress included 7 plenary sessions, 84 workshops and 49 *speakers' corners*. We have analysed and shared experiences and made proposals so as to make the cities of the world more educating and inclusive cities that satisfy the conditions for generating social welfare and the health of all those who inhabit them. Cities that promote attitudes of solidarity, respect and interest for the common good, among all the people who coexist in them.

This Congress promoted critical debate and has helped us to become aware of the fact that the educating city plays an essential and determining role in the integral promotion of inclusion, citizen participation, and its creative and innovative potential.

Within the full process of defining the new Post-2015 Urban Development Agenda, it is necessary to continue working so as to consolidate and broaden the achievements reached within both the local and international framework with the aim of fighting against social exclusion, boosting new firm and transversal responses. It is for this reason that the Educating Cities sign the present Declaration which develops some of the principles of the Charter of Educating Cities. This Declaration is based on some considerations to immediately adopt some commitments to foster social inclusion and finally to make a call at a national and international level.

2. Considering that

1. More than half the world's population resides in urban settings and it is foreseen that this trend will continue upwards. Furthermore, it is stated that cities are the setting in which the various crises that humanity faces nowadays are manifested in a more severe way; crises with repercussions throughout the world, whose effects highlight situations of discrimination and exclusion.
2. Exclusion has multiple dimensions: social, economic, political, cultural, relational, digital, generational, and of gender, and is expressed in various ways in the different countries of the world: poverty, unemployment or labour precariousness, the weakening of the community relations, and the fracturing of social ties, spatial segregation of the population, the lack of housing or precariousness in this respect, unequal access to health and to a healthy environment, unsuitability of the spaces and public services regarding people suffering from disabilities or reduced mobility, the lack of access to public transport, deficient provision of public services of quality, and the absence of policies of equal opportunities, etc.
3. In the city, exclusion can be specifically found in some groups in a more notable way than in others, mainly due to gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religion, or in the most vulnerable groups of the population such as children or the elderly, the disabled or people in situation of social or economic disadvantaged; but it is also increasingly affecting the unemployed and the middle classes, who are especially suffering the effects of a crisis that, in some regions of the world, could become structural.
4. The contemporary city, when moved by the dictates of the market, ends up becoming a space of growing inequality and social exclusion. But the city can also be the best potential provider of social and democratic resources for promoting inclusion.
5. The new information and communication technologies take on greater relevance in a globalised world, in which the cities are more interconnected than ever. The ICTs have affected the daily life of the people, modifying our reality; they are an important means of interaction and relation and of access to knowledge, but they can also be an instrument of control, harassment and a source of inequality. And that's why it's necessary to foster their potential and to fight against their bad use.

6. Political action allows us to act on the causes of exclusion and to transform the social reality based on actions which include values such as equality, solidarity, respect for differences and the promotion of sustainable development, generating societies with greater cohesion and which are more democratic that guarantee the exercising of the basic human rights of the citizenship (civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights).

7. The educating city boosts and generates policies of citizen participation, of work and collaboration between all the social and educational agents that make it up, it knows how to give democratic relevance to its actions and how to strengthen the civic action, social inclusion and economic wealth in its setting.

8. It is worth highlighting the central role of the local public administrations of the tasks of implementing inclusive and transversal policies. Likewise, by joining the citizen initiative to the municipal effort, this allows all the resources of the city to be mobilised, creating collaboration networks, fostering an active citizenship and values of solidarity and commitment, all in all, gaining in efficiency when tackling social exclusion.

9. An educational offer of quality, either in the formal or non-formal field, based on the principle of equal opportunities, is a key tool for fostering inclusion, with medium or long-term results. Within this framework, schools play a central role by being, at the same time, sources of knowledge and venues for the development of the necessary personal life skills, and active laboratories of social and cultural diversity, that allow the shaping of a responsible, critical and collaborative citizenship. A learning process that does not end in childhood and youth, but is extended throughout life.

10. Unequal access to the cultural offer and leisure activities are a source of educational and social inequalities. There is a notable need for democratizing the access to a cultural and leisure offer of quality, as well as fostering a policy for the uses of time that allow the family, work and leisure life to be conciliated.

3. Our commitment

We, the Educating Cities are proactive agents committed to social cohesion. The actions for fostering cohesion are multiple and diverse and are characterised by the fact of having an integral vision and a transversal focus. The rich debates and shared experiences during the Congress of Barcelona highlighted the fact that the Educating Cities are clearly committed to inclusion. For this reason, and in a solemn way, we would like to make the following common commitments public.

1. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to making proactive and preventive policies so as to foster inclusion, and to make concrete proposals for tackling the causes of exclusion.
2. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to improving the processes of personal and social construction of the citizenship:
   - Boosting policies of social inclusion that include the whole reality of the community, oriented by the democratic principle of equality;
   - Establishing the necessary social services for attending the most vulnerable groups, services that foster autonomy and the potential of people, with the aim of achieving their social reinsertion.
   - Providing the resources aimed at cohesion, inclusion and coexistence for favouring the creation of cooperative institutions and individuals.
   - Making an equally-balanced distribution of the resources and fostering civic empowerment.
3. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to fostering lifelong education, formal, non-formal and informal, as one of the most pertinent instruments for developing personal and social skills and to invest in human capital.
4. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to achieving the educational success of all the citizenship and the improvement in the quality of the schooling system, by providing and promoting programmes and actions for increasing the school success in compulsory education and access to lifelong learning, implementing skills development strategies. This involves:
   - Encouraging ways of interaction by educating communities, especially between the school and the family;
   - Boosting teacher and parent training;
   - Combating the stigmatization of stereotypes that make social cohesion and good coexistence especially difficult;
   - Promoting the relation between educational communities located in different places of the city with the aim of strengthening the sense of belonging in the city and the fraternity between social and cultural groups that are usually far apart from each other.
   - Promoting the education of adults so as to provide training opportunities to those who have not had one or who dropped out from their studies.
5. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to generating educational projects with a social aim, that combine learning and community service, with the object that the citizens who participate are trained in the reality and needs of their urban surroundings, contributing to its transformation and improvement.

6. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to creating active spaces for the inclusive interrelation of the citizenship, boosting networking, participative procedures and of deliberation; spaces to cultivate divergent thought and creative and critical thinking through experimentation, discussion and debate in the public life.

7. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to fostering social cohesion, harmonious coexistence, and intergenerational and intercultural relations, promoting the richness of the cultural diversity present in the city and the learning of different languages.

8. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to promoting an accessible and interconnected city by means of a sustainable public transport and adapted to the different needs, a unique city for all the citizenship, free from physical barriers and spatial segregation.

9. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to fighting against inequalities of gender and to boosting educational and social actions for avoiding the feminization of social exclusion.

10. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to fostering dialogue and cooperation between the work world (business, trade unions, professional associations, etc.), work, knowledge, culture and the Municipal administration so as to be able to offer personalised guidance and educational and professional support services that foster educational reinsertion and reactivation or the labour improvement of the citizens, and which generate innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.

11. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to boosting the social responsibility of the companies by encouraging them to dedicate a part of the actions to improve the social cohesion of the urban setting in which they are located; and to strengthen civic-social volunteering in Third Sector organisations, as it is a privileged place for joint meetings and activities between generations and between different cultural, social and ethnic groups that can contribute to improving the quality of life of the citizens and of the neighbourhoods.

12. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to promoting synergies between universities, higher education institutions, research and technology centres, science parks and training centres and schools, making the city a space rich in opportunities for training and learning in the knowledge society.

13. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to offering all the citizenship educational, cultural, sports and leisure opportunities which are close by and within their reach, and which transmit the values of inclusion, solidarity and social cohesion.

14. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to promoting health and well-being to the whole population by means of preventive policies that foster a healthy lifestyle, as well as ensuring access and health care to the whole population.

15. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to carrying out a communication policy that ensures the accessibility of information, that contributes to breaking down the stigmas and negative prejudices associated with certain collectives, and that facilitates access to the information and communication technologies for people in situation or risk of social exclusion.

16. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to promoting initiatives that enable personal, family and work life to be conciliated, and that foster employment and the rationalization of the new uses of time in the city.

17. The Educating Cities commit ourselves to adopting the necessary follow-up and evaluation instruments for implementing these policies, as well as making known and sharing our experience, the knowledge acquired, as well as the results obtained, with other cities.

4. We call upon

Having confirmed the urban, social, economic and cultural changes mentioned above, and having collectively assumed as Educating Cities a series of commitments as a guide for our present and future action in pursuit of social inclusion, we would like to end this declaration by calling upon the international, national and regional public actors, and the citizenship as a whole, to contribute in a co-responsible way to the achievement of these goals.

For this reason, we call on governments, institutions and citizens:

1. To recognise the role played by the local governments as agents of inclusion and as generators of opportunities and solutions for old and new causes of exclusion.
2. For a greater decentralisation, by the state and regional powers, of the key competences for the promotion of social inclusion, in favour of policies of proximity, ensuring a suitable redistribution of the resources.
3. For a greater commitment, by all the public administrations, to contribute the provision of human, infrastructural and financial resources, necessary for developing and sustaining the required policies of social inclusion.
4. For a commitment, between the local entities from the same metropolitan area, the multi-level coordination and consultation of policies and services with the aim of achieving a greater efficacy in the actions of social inclusion.
5. For an active involvement, by the organised civil society, especially from the civic-social Third Sector, and of all the citizenship, in the definition and implementation of policies of social inclusion of the cities.