

Declaration of the

14th International Congress of Educating Cities

Rosario/Argentina, 2016

The 14th International Congress of Educating Cities in 2016 of the IAEC, held in the city of Rosario, Argentina, from 1 to 5 June 2016, gathered delegates from 113 cities in 23 countries on 4 continents. The central theme put forward for discussion and debate was **“Living together in our cities”**, and the agenda focused on the importance of knitting bonds of coexistence, solidarity and respect for diversity, which are key dimensions for attaining a harmonious social integration in the heart of our communities. This theme was developed at plenary sessions, workshops, speakers' corners and study visits.

The core of our convictions, values and our day-to-day work was questioned repeatedly in the spirit of building fairer, more cohesive, more harmonious cities, recognizing once again the potential of educating cities as an invaluable platform for intervention in the public arena.

The Congress echoed experiences that clearly presented the dilemmas and challenges that our urban communities now face. Dilemmas and challenges that illustrate the complexity involved in living together in societies threatened by violence, exclusion, environmental damage, and, in some cases, by the gradual slide of the State away from its role as guarantor of the welfare of its citizens. The following topics were also central planks around which the presentations were focused: childhood under threat in contexts of social and economic crises, new emerging generations of youth, current migrations, and how they impact and modify our social structures, the difficulties in accepting what is different about and intrinsic to other cultures and identities in the heart of our communities. These presentations enabled us to share successful initiatives from several experiences which can be benchmarked by other cities. Initiatives which invite us to set up hope-inspiring projects in order to build cities capable of facing the challenges mentioned above with conviction and optimism.

Thus, at each session and activity of this Congress, we looked at the city as a complex, diverse space that hosts both spontaneous and planned or structured relations, while recognising that these relations are not always fluid. In this sense, we believe that the city is configured as a space of coexistence, in which the path of each individual living within it is important. Thus, we acknowledge the importance of carrying out decisive and coordinated actions by local government and entities of civil society, in order to foster the construction of common shared codes. These will allow people from different generations, cultures and backgrounds to live peacefully, while recognising the diverse identities present in our cities.

We affirm that in each and every space of the Congress – the speakers’ corners, workshops, panel discussions – it was emphasized the importance of the irreplaceable role of the State, the care and attention that our actions must provide to the most underprivileged and vulnerable, and the central place that Human Rights must occupy in each and every of our cities’ agenda.

Therefore, we educating cities acknowledge that:

- We live in cities that are facing complex problems linked to an increase of inequalities, processes of fragmentation of the social fabric and spatial segregation. These problems are often linked to discrimination on the basis of ethnic and/or social origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation, as well as to violence and sexual or labour-related exploitation among others. This threatens the existence of public space as a meeting point and area of action of the citizenry.
- The problems and challenges that local governments face are arduous, complex and persistent. They encompass situations that jeopardise political options and decisions in which a multiplicity of agents and institutions intervene with different levels of responsibility.
- Educating cities have tools of different kind and range to intervene in the public sphere, which range from strategic urban planning to appreciation of the rights of the citizen. Opportunities for intervention in the field of culture and education constitute a privileged domain to foster better living together.
- In the construction of liveable cities which foster coexistence, the consideration of heritage (past), agreements and pacts that are re-established ever day (present) and goals and dreams (future) acquire a strategic importance in the design of projects, their planning and their development. The diversity of the good practices presented in this Congress illustrate that such construction is possible and is within our reach.

We educating cities are committed to:

- Articulating proposals, building consensus, forging commitments and coordinating efforts oriented towards dealing with the problems that strike at harmonious coexistence and equality together with other levels of government, civil society and the academy.
- Stimulating the expansion of public space, citizen participation and debate in planning, design and management processes, bearing in mind the special attention that specific social groups require. Fostering public urban space as a place for memory, a privileged ground to meet and dialog and a platform for urban transformation, having equality as a priority.
- Designing specific actions in order to attain greater democratization of access to knowledge, wisdom, information and communication technologies (ICT); being education a key tool.

- Expanding the notion of coexistence, respect for difference and equality of rights, to the multiple dimensions that social life encompasses.
- Sharing with other cities our best practices and the acquired know-how that has allow us to correct adverse situations and move forward in the construction of more educating cities, that is places for better living together.

Finally, this Congress proves that the IAEC constitutes a privileged space for setting up initiatives, articulating thoughts and working together to meet this challenge. The IAEC calls on all international, national and regional public actants, and to the citizenry as a whole, to contribute co-responsibly to attaining these goals.
