

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Where we are

Since our last Strategic Plan for 2019-2022, the world has seen unprecedented changes in many areas: social, technological, scientific, cultural, etc. There are so many changes, and such are their scope that it is almost risky to plan four years ahead. Faced with this, it might be tempting to give up planning altogether, but progress and good results are rarely the result of chance. They need a direction, even though we can define the exact route. This new phase must therefore be characterised by dynamic and flexible planning and by a desire to constantly adapt to changes and new needs.

In a context of increasingly interconnected global crises, we, as humankind, have truly critical challenges ahead of us, for which partial solutions are of little use. Global issues are increasingly having an impact on local realities. The ecological and digital transition, threats to health, major demographic changes, migratory movements, growing economic inequalities, increased populism, intolerance, violence, etc. All of these call for us to refocus efforts in the same direction and pool our wishes to achieve progress in relation to the challenges set forth in the Sustainable Development Goals.

As Educating Cities, we have strived to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic and the climate emergency. And now we must work on being part of a sustainable recovery by incorporating the field of care and helping accompany the necessary transitions, thereby becoming local laboratories of global problems.

The current global context has also underlined the importance of local governments in building a culture of peace, opening avenues for dialogue and fostering local democracy and solidarity. Building peaceful, inclusive and sustainable environments in which all members of our communities can thrive makes us even more aware of the importance of the role that education plays in creating opportunities.

Against this backdrop, local governments and, by extension, their networks, must create channels of dialogue and collaboration with the different levels of government that affect the territory and with citizens and the plurality and diversity of their institutions. In order to serve citizens and enhance the quality of public administration, we cannot decide or act alone.

Therefore, the IAEC and its members intend to continue fostering local, regional and international dialogue forums and to participate in UCLG discussion forums.

IAEC cities play a key role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (2030 Agenda). Our knowledge about the territory and its agents, the exchange of experiences, the transfer of knowledge, and the training of elected and technical personnel will provide us with access to sustainable solutions to typical urban problems and to forums to share our local policies and good practices.

How has this Plan been developed?

The objectives of this Plan were defined after considering various points of view through a listening process and on the basis of experience and acquired knowledge. The results of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan show the achievement of a series of objectives, which at the same time motivate us to continue working in a strict, orderly, planned and consensual manner, while always evaluating the actions taken.

Based on the conviction that the collaboration of all parties is essential for a document that will mark out our actions in the next four years, this Plan has been prepared in a participatory way with a view to providing clear working guidelines for the next few years, but which are dynamic enough to adapt to an ever-changing context.

All the cities in the network were invited to collaborate in this co-creation process. Contributions were received from more than 120 cities in 10 countries, which have actively collaborated in this time of deliberation and consultation to chart the way forward for the Association's roadmap for the next stage. Some of these cities are new members to the network, while others have been with us for more than twenty years. This document contains a summary of the views, priorities and illusions, and of the collective work that we intend to carry out to respond to our needs, interests and aspirations.

To this end, we have assessed our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

SWOT

Strengths: Recognised for its extensive track record. The IAEC does not compete with other networks, but through collaborations of various kinds and scope with different stakeholders it manages to influence local public policies.

The ever-constant support of Barcelona City Council and regular payment of membership fees by member cities.

Weaknesses: Lack of presence in many countries. Insufficient human team at the Secretariat.

Opportunities: The cities want to be laboratories for innovative solutions

Threats: Belonging to international networks, with their benefits often being questioned. Changes in the authorities hamper the sustainability of membership commitment in many territories.

What do we intend to do?

Together with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), we intend to influence three specific areas: local **governance** of the cities that make up the network, in order to influence **the people** who inhabit these cities and their relationship with **the planet**. We intend to do all this through education and in collaboration with other organisations, agencies and entities with common interests.

Governance

In an increasingly urbanised world, which highlights unequal and unsustainable development models, the Educating Cities defend multilevel governance and effective decentralisation that recognises the value of the proximity and knowledge of the different players in the environment to promote decent livelihoods that meet people's expectations and protect their rights without leaving anyone or anywhere behind, whether rural or urban.

As disinformation expands, so does mistrust of elected officials and governments. However, addressing many of these problems will require courageous and honest work to get to the roots of the varied and complex causes of social injustices and discrimination.

Therefore, the IAEC member cities intend to work locally to generate opportunities which reduce inequalities and build prosperous societies that help recover confidence in their institutions, thereby achieving progress in cohesion, transparency, and accountability. This greater transparency will give us access to greater public and private resources to achieve the social and environmental objectives we set ourselves. All this is with a view to promoting fair, sustainable and equitable cities and territories for a world of peace, justice and solidarity.

This task will require promoting mechanisms for decision-making and transformative practices, based on values of empathy and dialogue, which result in more cohesive and prosperous territories with high levels of quality of life and social well-being.

Training the new generations in engagement and involving them in the public sphere will be key to achieving their involvement in the future of their territories. To this end, we intend to continue to create listening bodies to ensure that their opinion is taken into account.

People

People are the true strength of our communities. Councils can drive and lead processes, but the future of our cities depends to a large extent on knowing how to listen to our residents, how to find out their needs and aspirations, and how to motivate them to get involved in

improving their communities. For this, we will have to consider all generations, entities, and academic and influence groups, and involve them in participatory processes.

We will also promote lifelong learning to provide citizens with the necessary tools and prepare them to develop and adapt to an ever-changing world.

As Educating Cities, we will give priority to public policies that respond to the needs of people, especially the most vulnerable, and to the protection of human rights, memory, dignity, diversity and equal opportunities.

In the next few years, there will be new waves of migration stemming from wars, the need for survival, the precarious economic conditions of many countries, and climate change. Therefore, we will need to work towards developing a notion of citizenship that gives value to diversity as a source of wealth; and towards implementing inclusion policies in coordination with all the stakeholders involved.

On a local level, it will be necessary to recognise all the communities present in the city as residents and, as such, as holders of rights and responsibilities and contributors to the community. To this end, we will take decisive action to ensure that our populations, in addition to having access to quality formal education, develop a taste for lifelong learning from multiple angles and opportunities, and we will promote education for global citizenship, harmonious living, and collective development.

We will also need to find ways to continue protecting fundamental rights, while assessing new rights and new essential needs (such as the right to connectivity and the need to bridge the digital divide), as well as ensuring that all citizens have opportunities to live a dignified life and benefit from advances.

Planet

As the world transforms its relationship with nature in an unprecedented way, local governments must be at the forefront of fostering a new vision of our shared future towards ecological transformation. A transformation that goes beyond extractionist policies and the search for energy efficiency while protecting biodiversity and promoting clean and sustainable production and consumption models that are inclusive and respectful of the environment.

In this context, education must be at the heart of any attempt to adapt and transform. Adaptation involves reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience to impacts. That is why the Educating Cities will continue to raise awareness and promote more sustainable attitudes and lifestyles to offset the drastic consequences of climate change. Raising awareness among the population that with their consumption choices or decisions they can increase or diminish social and environmental inequalities beyond their borders or administrative limits, underlining the interrelationship between humans, generations and the feeling of the common good. The 2024 IAEC Congress, which will be held in the city of Curitiba under the slogan of *Education for Sustainability for the Educating City*, will help advance reflection and explore good practices on innovative climate solutions.

The care dimension that the IACE has been working on, and which we want to further bolster, is based on the conviction that the health of our territories goes beyond healthcare and health education. This should include equal access to healthcare services and the commitment to an ecosystem of basic services that provide equal benefits and accessibility to safe and green public spaces.

We also want to be an environmentally friendly organisation, carrying out actions to slash the environmental impact of holding our events and meetings.

How will we do this?

Objective	Action
To bolster the <u>shared values</u> and capacities of local governments and develop <u>tools</u> that help improve local public policies and services	In-person and virtual <u>training</u> , carrying out consultations and preparing publications.
To promote the <u>educational aspect of public policies</u>	Making recommendations and <u>highlighting good practices</u> , publications, etc.
To publicise and <u>recognise local projects</u> and initiatives on an international level	Organisation of International <u>Congresses</u> in 2024 and 2026, call for the <u>Educating Cities Award</u> every two years, and through other international forums
To create <u>regional and national debate and learning for knowledge generation and transfer</u> and for cities to learn from each other.	
To develop <u>joint projects</u>	Launch of <u>pilot projects</u> that can be modelled and extended to other cities in the network.
To promote <u>study visits</u>	Encouraging field visits in the context of meetings of territorial networks and international congresses.
To create <u>synergies with other stakeholders with similar challenges and interests</u> and with objectives close to the foundational ones.	Signing <u>agreements</u> , looking for intersections to connections thanks to networking.
To make recommendations around key issues	<u>Declarations</u> from the Congresses, International Days, others.
To foster <u>mechanisms for participation and dialogue</u> so to involve members who are interested in identifying problems, and exploring solutions that can be translated into viable policies	Consultations, dialogues, virtual cafes, meetings of territorial and thematic networks.
To boost campaigns	International Day of the Educating City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reinforce communication tools Regarding the Data Bank, the plan is to reform the display by incorporating innovation to achieve a better display of the content. 	Exploring new channels by taking advantage of the opportunities for innovation offered by digitisation, promoting mechanisms for the online dissemination of activities, and innovating in the formats and mechanisms for knowledge transfer.
To increase the <u>links</u> between experts, academics, intellectuals and political decision-makers to discuss major issues of concern to cities and	Dialogues, round tables, article requests, collaboration in publications, joint projects, training, etc.

look for joint solutions.	Agreements do design specialized training and to include the Educating City in existing studies.
To enhance links <u>with academic and research centres</u>	
<u>To give a voice to mayors</u> as key players in local transformations	Incorporating the perspective of mayors in publications, national, regional and international meetings.
To promote greater dialogue and involvement of <u>young people</u> in local issues.	Promoting a greater participation of young people in IAEC activities (in congresses, training sessions, etc.).
To mainstream a <u>gender perspective</u>	Ensuring gender balance and diversity of origins in IAEC activities, whether at events or in publications.
To call for the <u>necessary funding</u> for performing municipal competencies and ensure that local governments are present at decision-making tables	Continuing with and increasing collaboration with UCLG and its members and ensuring dialogue with United Nations agencies and other international bodies.
<u>To communicate</u> the priorities and work of the IAEC, its networks and its members, our vision and our values.	Extending the network to new territories and expanding the network of contacts and scope of proposals and activities beyond the nearly five hundred member cities today in order to boost the impact of actions and gain visibility.
	Planning actions to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Charter of Educating Cities to increase public awareness of it.
To improve <u>governance</u> on an ongoing basis	Convening meetings of the Executive Committee (at least two per year) to follow up on the strategic plan and formulate proposals and promote its partial renewal so that this governing body is representative of the territories that make up the IAEC and ensure its motivation.
	Convening annual meetings of the General Assembly, for accountability and dialogue with member cities.
	Reinforce communication with and within territorial networks.
<u>To evaluate</u> the work done and ensure accountability.	Complying with the accounting and contractual requirements of the public sector by preparing an annual budget balanced between expenses and income, so as not to incur a deficit at the end of each year.

	Being audited and preparing activity reports. Reporting all this in the transparency section of the website.
To improve the <u>service</u> offered by the Secretariat	Reinforcing the composition and training of the Secretariat team in order to better meet the needs of cities and bolster the sustainability of the institution.

How will we know if we're doing it well?

This strategic plan will remain valid until the end of 2026 and will be reviewed annually. At the end of 2024, a consultation will be carried out to make the necessary adjustments and checks to reorient the plan if necessary. Annual reports will also be prepared to report on the progress made.