



International Association of

# Educating Cities

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EDUCATING CITIES  
FOR A BETTER WORLD

## Educating Cities Award on Good Practices on Living Together in Cities



Globalization and urban growth bring with them the challenge of ensuring equitable access to basic services and responding to growing inequalities. UN-Habitat has warned that if this growth is not accompanied by proper urban planning it could lead to social and spatial segregation, contribute to rootlessness and individualism, thus dehumanizing cities and negatively impacting their governance. In order to counter these effects and foster social bonds, the need to make the citizenry co-participants in defining development strategies and the design, implementation and evaluation of urban transformation activities, is becoming increasingly important.

Indeed, the **Educating Cities Award on Good Practices on Living Together in Cities** responds to the wish of the International Association of Educating Cities to highlight planning, management and intervention models that can contribute to the elimination of physical, social and communication barriers, reduce urban conflicts and avoid segregation, by fostering the creation of new social bonds and a sense of belonging to the city, a city that requires the contribution of each and every citizen.

Through this award, the IAEC seeks to grow appreciation for and give international recognition to the work carried out by the cities in the Association while inspiring other cities to build more educating, inclusive and cohesive environments where people of different ages, cultures and creeds can live together in harmony.

An international jury, made up of academics, representatives of the IAEC Executive Committee and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), studied the **57 candidacies from 45 cities, from 11 countries in 3 continents**. The diversity and richness of the experiences analyzed highlights the educating potential of cities as active agents of social transformation. After a rigorous work of analysis of the initiatives received and a debate rich in nuances, 3 winning good practices were chosen for this First edition of the Educating Cities' Award for their contribution to better living together in the city.

The jury underscored the importance of education for active citizenship, through firm pedagogical and awareness actions aimed at learning to get involved in one's environment and to better living together,

at developing empathy and acquiring social conscience. Furthermore, the jury concluded that creating spaces that promote cross-cultural and cross-generational dialogue, that foster the exchange of knowledge, as well as the setting up of joint projects and conflict management from the perspective of respect for the values of cultural diversity, mutual understanding and peace, surely favors coexistence. Opening the schools to their environment and turning communities into open classrooms allows the members of those communities to forge bonds of complicity for that holistic lifelong education that the Educating City seeks.

We sincerely congratulate to Espoo, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat and Saha-gu, the winning cities of the 2016 Award, along with our thanks to all the cities that participated!

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# Espoo

## Opinmäki Learning Centre

**Espoo, located in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, has a population of 280,000 inhabitants, and is the second most populated city in Finland and the one with the highest growth rate. Thus, it is expected to grow by 24% over the next 15 years. Home to international companies and high tech businesses, Espoo is one of the largest innovation hub in northern Europe.**

In 2005, the City Council of Espoo put forward the idea of creating the Opinmäki Learning Centre in the Suurpelto district, a newly built residential area, making it a new pole of attraction in the city.

Opinmäki is a municipal facility designed to operate as a formal education center and also as a venue for educative and cultural activities and services for all the citizenry. A meeting place which has been designed and planned with the active participation of the inhabitants.

For this purpose, a Users Group was created, made up of neighbors and representatives of different cultural and educational institutions and services in the city, which put forward suggestions on the shared use of the facilities and its main operating principles, which were incorporated into its design.

Opinmäki was thus built as a cluster of open spaces partially wall-less and highly flexible. Concrete, wood and brick were the main materials used in its construction. The scope and simplification of the spaces foster an open learning environment and encourage the interaction of people of different ages and cultures.

Amongst the services that are provided we find: a day-care center, a primary school, the Espoo International School with its curriculum in English, a sports facility, an adult education center, as well as a wide variety of cultural

activities organized by different institutions, clubs and associations.

Moreover, it hosts the Active Learning Centre (AKKU, acronym in Finnish), which includes the services of a modern library open every day from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm, pioneer in offering self-service book loans, and a Makerspace, where users of all ages can experiment, share and learn new things, ranging from 3-D printing to sewing.

Thus, the classrooms, which in the mornings are used for school children and teenagers in the afternoon are used by the adult education center and different cultural entities and organizations, while the hall, auditorium and restaurant are used for lectures and seminars as well as theatre, dance and musical performances.

This facility, opened in 2015, is doing an important work in the creation of community feeling and the generation of social bonds amongst the inhabitants of this new residential area. It is a place that fosters dialogue, stimulates participation and provides new experiences to people of different ages and cultures.

In addition to being at the heart of the Suurpelto district, this education and cultural center has been consolidated as a reference point for the entire city. Proof of this is the fact that the Active Learning Centre has become in just a few months one of the most used libraries in Espoo.



**Municipal facility designed with the active participation of the citizenry that provides a wide range of educative activities and opportunities for people from 0 to 100 years old.**

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# L'Hospitalet de Llobregat

## Boosting Learning–Service as a tool of living together, social cohesion and participation

**With a population of more than 260,000 living in just 12.4Km<sup>2</sup>, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat is the second most populated city in Catalonia. It borders on Barcelona and is characterized by being a city that has welcomed large numbers of immigrants. 19% of its population is of foreign origin, mainly from North Africa, Latin America and Asia. The immigrant population is unevenly distributed and exceeds 35% in some neighborhoods. The unemployment rate is 16.5% and gross family income is 18% lower than the Catalan average.**

In 2007, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat decided to focus on the improvement of education as a city strategy. Thus, the City Council set a number of targets, including enhancing success at school, preventing early school dropout, truancy, decreasing conflicts at high schools, fostering inclusion of immigrant students in the schools and the city, opening the schools to the community by creating broad educational networks, and bringing young people more in touch with their immediate environment in order for them to feel proud of it and get involved in its transformation.

Thus, the City Council decided to adopt the Learning–Service methodology and to extend it to all schools, high schools and leisure time educational centers in the city, as part of a global urban strategy with the political support of the entire Council and the involvement of different departments of the municipal government.

The Learning–Service (ApS, original acronym) is a pedagogical methodology that combines, in one concrete action, the learning of a determinate part of the educational curriculum with undertaking a project that benefits the community. The students learn contents and values and acquire skills by developing their social commitment to more vulnerable groups in their environment, by exercising at an early age their right to being active citizens engaged in the transformation of society.

In order to drive forward the Learning–Service initiatives in the city, a permanent working group was created that meets quarterly in order to coordinate, promote and evaluate the proposals. It is made up of 10 persons representing teachers, social partners, the

Learning–Service Development Centre of Catalonia, the regional government and the City Council.

At the same time a municipal team of experts was put in charge of monitoring the projects and offering training and guidance to teachers, educators and social activists who wish to promote this methodology in their schools and associations. This team is also in charge of building bridges between schools and entities willing to welcome students in their social and educational activities.

Every year new schools and social entities join the Learning–Service projects in the city. Nowadays, more than 100 stable projects have been inventoried which involve more than 2,000 students from 44 primary and secondary schools. These students contribute to meet the needs of different groups of approximately 70 social and educative entities.

The Learning–Service activities range from offering services in elderly residences (motor skills exercises, memory games, musical recitals, etc.), to supporting reading–writing learning or digital literacy for adults, welcoming and integrating new students into the schools, story–telling in libraries for children, care and embellishment of the school and its environment, organization of bicycle tours for the disabled, or even contributing to solidarity campaigns, etc. These activities that bring together people of different ages and cultures, become a clear example of fostering cross–generational and cross–cultural relationships, social cohesion, values education and the creation of bonds with the neighborhood.

This is an innovative form of learning that pedagogically renews the curriculum and which has managed to cut down truancy and improve living together in the schools. Proof of this is that conflict mediations in the schools dropped from 52 interventions in the 2009/2010 school year to only 5 last year. This tool, besides raising the image that the community has of both school and the youths, generates the emergence of collaborative networks and strengthens the local associations.

**More than 2,000 students participate in Learning–Service activities for approximately 70 entities in the city.**



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# Saha-Gu

## Gamcheon Cultural Village

**Saha-gu has 375,000 inhabitants and is part of the greater metropolitan area of Busan, Republic of Korea. The history of the Gamcheon Village, located on a city slope, goes back to the 1950s when thousands of refugees from the Korean War from all over the country began living there, making it a large area of hurriedly built houses piled on top of each other on the hillside. Its streets form a labyrinth and the pastel colors of its houses give the village a picturesque look.**

With the rise of industrialization, Gamcheon reached almost 30,000 inhabitants, but afterward most of its population moved to other cities, and the population fell to 8,000. This is an aging population, made up 24% of people over 65. Many of the houses were abandoned, which together with the lack of basic infrastructure (running water, sewer system, etc.), gave it a rundown look, in danger of disappearing over the time.

In 2010, the local Government of Saha-gu, in collaboration with urban planners, artists and the residents, had the idea of regenerating the area and attracting tourism, opting for a sustainable development that would respect its unique character and artistic value.

In order to carry out this urban renewal process, a Residents' Council was set up to promote the quality of life in the village and find solutions to the problems that arise. Organized into different working groups, the residents are involved in areas such as house repairs, opening local businesses, promoting the village, care and cleaning of the streets, etc.

On the one hand, a major effort is being made at renovations in order to improve the infrastructures (retaining walls, running water and sewage system, street paving, parking areas, etc.). On the other hand, artists and residents have begun repairing the homes

of the elderly with low incomes, as well as renovating abandoned houses in order to give them a new community use: museums, art galleries, etc. Thus, for example, an old public house has become a community center where various cultural and educational activities are organized.

At the same time, the opening of village businesses is stimulated: shops, cafés, restaurants, galleries, crafts workshops, hotels, etc. Commercial activities are creating jobs and generating income for the residents, part of which goes back into the community in different ways: distribution of food, organization of festivals and events, reparation of houses, etc.

In order to enhance the residents' capacity and self-management, they are offered courses in several areas, such as, for example, the management of business and sales techniques or the creation of craft workshops for the local craftspeople, etc. Furthermore, volunteers are trained to give guided tours of the village and stimulate the curiosity and creativity of children in this unique area through the "Growing through Art" initiative.

Moreover, sculptures and murals by artists and residents in the narrow streets of the village embellish it and surprise visitors.

The numerous color tones of the homes, the more than 40 works of art exhibited in the village, the craft shops, the art galleries and cafés, together with the programming of different cultural festivals and the participation of the residents in the revitalization, care and promotion of the village, give it a unique appeal.

In 2015, Gamcheon was visited by more than 140,000 people, changing it from a poor marginalized area into a cultural, dynamic village full of life.



**Local government, town planners, artists and residents collaborate on the cultural regeneration of a marginalized area, transforming it into an active village full of life.**

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