

Kaunas as a learning city

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1. Launching of the learning city initiative

„Learning city - the vision for Kaunas“ conference RESOLUTION

1. To agree on the concept of the learning city; to define the following as the main characteristics of the learning city:
 - Striving for the continuous learning of the citizens;
 - Establishing the learning partnership networks in the city by uniting the different communities and the whole city into the local and city-wide networks, open to the national, European and global partnerships;
 - Enabling the modern information communication technologies in the city;
 - Learning from own and each other's experience; acquiring new knowledge, technologies and transferable skills;
 - Creating the learning organizations;
 - Recognizing the experiential learning.

„Learning city - the vision for Kaunas“ conference
RESOLUTION

2. To declare that Kaunas has sufficient human and material resources to develop into the learning city.
3. The tradition of communitarian partnership is particularly important for the development of the learning city in Kaunas.
4. To invite the mayor of Kaunas to sign the declaration of the Learning city and to request the Council to establish the committee of the learning city and the centre of the Learning city.
5. To invite the leaders of municipality, industry, business, education, media, culture, sports, medicine, non-governmental organizations, as well as teachers, professors, personnel specialists, librarians, information centre employees, media professionals, all citizens of the city and their families to be those “active radicals” that would help Kaunas development into the learning city.

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RESOLUTION

6. While developing the learning city the greatest attention should be paid to:
- The partnership networks of citizens and organizations and their development;
 - Acquiring the modern learning competence;
 - Dissemination of innovations of science and practice;
 - The common activities of industry, business, education, judiciary, healthcare, NGOs;
 - The best practices of the learning cities and their associations in the world;
 - Creation of the bank of ideas of the citizens of the city and their dissemination;
 - Dissemination of the ideas of learning city and modern learning initiatives in the media, especially in the city newspaper, and other forms of media;
 - Learning festivals and paying tribute to best learners among the citizens of the city and their families.

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RESOLUTION

7. To declare that the union of education and business is necessary for the increased competitiveness of the Kaunas employees in the global markets.

Kaunas as an educating city

*3 out of 10 has a secondary education (29,9 %),
Almost 2 out of 10 – professional high school (17,9 %),
2 out of 10 – university level education (20,7 %.);*

Other levels of education:

*Basic education – 13,3 %;
Primary – 15,2 %.,
Without primary education - 2,4 %.;
Did not indicate – 0,6 %.*

Kaunas as an educating city

Inhabitants - 356 701:

- 53 000 school children,
 - 39 767 students,
- 11 000 of pedagogical staff.

Kaunas as an educating city

The percentage of 20 – 24 years old graduates from secondary schools is higher than the average in the EU

- 2000 – 77,9 %. (EU -76,4 %);
- 2004 – 86,1 %. (EU – 76,4 %);
- 2015 – envisaged 90 %.

2. The following steps

3. SWOT analysis of Kaunas as a learning city

3. SWOT of Kaunas

Individual level– STRENGTHS:

- Sufficiently high level of education of the citizens;
- Citizens show willingness to develop themselves, to learn (in a traditional way), but not at their own expense; the main interests for learning – basics of law, computer literacy, foreign languages;
- Citizens want to participate in the networks of interpersonal communication, activity and its development, but this activity is not identified as a learning partnership activity;
- The persons that participate in the network, want to learn (but not from each other), in solving the emerging problems;
- The citizens want information activities that would reveal the new opportunities for economic activity;
- The citizens have a positive approach towards the integration of the handicapped by providing financial means for their education.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

Individual level– WEAKNESSES:

- The traditional “frame” of understanding („I learn as long as I am taught”), lack of competence in self-directed learning.
- Adaptive, rather than innovative model of behaviour prevails, i.e. people tend to implement other people’s ideas rather than generate their own.
- Standard frame of thinking “I learn as long as I am taught” prevails.
- Low tolerance of risk.
- Lack of creativity, entrepreneurship and innovativeness
- Tendency to postpone the activities even when the vision is more or less clear.
- The individuals that participate in the network are not willing to exchange the information and ideas. They prefer to get rather than to give.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

Organizational level – STRENGTHS:

- Some organizations carry out the activities on their own initiative that contribute to the development of the learning city.
- Some organizations (especially – the educational organizations) have certain traits of the learning organization.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

Organizational level – WEAKNESSES:

- Low tolerance of risk in the organization, leadership culture, cooperation opportunities in the organization, the traits of learning organization are rare.
- The organizational efforts to develop the learning city are fragmented and not coordinated on the city level, so they contribute little to the implementation of the learning city idea.
- Managers lack educational competence.
- The organizations lack the teamwork traditions, while their employees lack teamwork competences.
- There is little or almost no connection between the organizations that function in the city (especially business) and people who feel social exclusion.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

City level – STRENGTHS:

- There are basic economic preconditions for the learning city development (basic market institutions, low level of unemployment, widely accessible system of education, high percentage of educated people, relatively high level of start-ups).
- The municipal institutions are interested in developing the learning city: the Council of Kaunas as a learning city has been established; Kaunas city strategy envisages the further development of this initiative.
- The theoretical basis for the learning city development has been created.
- Membership in the European network of learning cities.
- E-city is being developed.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

City level – WEAKNESSES:

- Insufficient investment into personal development.
- The learning is traditionally perceived in narrow terms without taking into consideration the self-directed (especially, experiential) learning opportunities, overemphasising the teaching and formal education.
- Although the basic economic preconditions for the learning city development exist, they are not sufficient for ensuring the effective innovative activities of citizens and organizations.
- Lack of systemic information about the learning opportunities.
- Lack of *systemic* approach on the municipal level to solving the problems of citizens, organizations and city;
- Failures of learning partnership networking

3. SWOT of Kaunas

OPPORTUNITIES:

- To make use of the increasing EU attention to intellectual activities, learning and innovations.
- Participation in the European and global learning city networks.
- To make use of the assistance of structural funds and other EU programmes, including the currently implemented project for developing the European learning city network.
- To make use of the UN strategy for sustainable development and increased attention to sustainable development in Lithuania.
- The producing knowledge about the development of the learning city.
- To make use of the emerging opportunities of the currently developed bipolar city Vilnius-Kaunas by accumulating the needed resources.
- The increasing interest from other Lithuanian cities in learning initiatives may lead to the knowledge and experience sharing.

3. SWOT of Kaunas

THREATS:

- The Western countries and capital city Vilnius may drain the best intellectual potential of Kaunas and the city may start lacking the most active actors of the learning city.
- Some Kaunas business enterprises may continue the trend of moving towards the East and to Vilnius, so the economic city potential may drain.
- Kaunas as the first-mover in implementing the learning city initiative may make mistakes due to insufficient experience.
- As the country has no regional policy measures to assist the cities develop into the learning cities, it may happen that receives no necessary support for developing into the learning city.

4. Strategic insights into the future

The main preconditions for success:

- Learning is no goal *per se*, but an important means for achieving the goals of city development;
- The *general measures* are important for the creation of learning processes in the city, however, *specific spheres* of social life will obtain the qualities of development through learning at *different time and different speed*;

The main preconditions for success:

- **The learning partnership networks emerge when there is a perceived need by the interest groups to cooperate;**
- **Market and self-organization will not necessarily lead to the expected results; the function of initiating and coordinating the learning processes is very important;**
- **It is hard to expect substantial results without proper financial investment and political support;**

The main preconditions for success:

More substantial financial investments matter a lot in the initial stages of the strategy implementation.

In the *latter stages* when the initiative cores emerge in various subsystems of the learning city, the main resources will be accumulated by the interest groups, though continuous participation of the municipality will remain an important factor

The strategy will be successfully implemented only in the case if the initiatives are harmoniously coordinated in two directions: *municipality and citizens / organizations.*

There are two priorities for the initiatives on the municipal level:

- a) **creation of the systemic conditions for the emergence of the learning networks by solving the *critical problems* of the city,**
- b) **attention to the priority problems of the city, which can be solved by the partnerships between the inhabitants as well as between organizations.**

On the *citizen and organization level* the initiatives should be undertaken to address *their* problems and interests.

**Let us wish Kaunas all the best luck
in this long way !**
