



DVV International

Imagine a city that offers you unlimited learning opportunities. It doesn't matter how old you are, what education and income level you have – the only thing that matters is your wish.

Everyone in such a city is imbued with the idea of self-development, everyone is learning something. Master classes, lectures, on-the-job training, short-term courses, sightseeing tours – the formats are numerous. Moreover, everyone who knows how to do something better than the others can teach. Here, learning takes place everywhere: in cafes, libraries, parks; people can learn close to home, wherever is most convenient.

Do you find it utopian? Yes, probably. However, utopias are known to be the starting point for all development projects.

Would you like to live in a city like this? Would you like to make your dreams come true?

Then you need a learning city.

LEARNING CITIES



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Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development



What is a Learning City?

According to UNESCO, the learning city:

- Promotes lifelong learning for all;
- Effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to promote inclusive learning at all levels, from basic to higher education;
- Revitalizes learning in families and communities;
- Facilitates learning for and in the workplace;
- Extends the use of modern learning technologies;
- Enhances quality and excellence in learning;
- Fosters a culture of learning throughout life;
- Enhances individual empowerment and social inclusion, economic development and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development.

The learning cities movement currently unites 230 cities around the world, both large and small. They make the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, and their main distinctive feature is aspiration to offer every inhabitant an opportunity to meet their learning needs.

The DVV International office supports this movement in Belarus and helps cities become the learning ones.

Why is it Important for DVV International?

Expanding access to adult education is one of the main objectives of DVV International. The concept of learning cities is based on the idea of equal access to education for all, including the social groups that, for some reason, happen to be excluded from the lifelong learning process or have limited access thereto. DVV International supports city administrations and civil society in many countries in their efforts to make learning a priority value and develop infrastructure for formal and non-formal learning. DVV International helps to find people and organizations holding the same views and join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the PASCAL Learning Cities Networks.

In Belarus, we strive to inspire initiative groups and local authorities to create and develop learning cities, offer them participation in training, and support their capacity building.

A city shall meet several principal conditions to become a learning one. First, strong political will and commitment from local authorities are indispensable. Second, a learning city is not conceivable without the engagement of all stakeholders and involvement of the maximum number of local players in the process. Third, the attraction and use of resources already existing in the city for educational purposes play an important role.

Cities that enjoy all of the above have the potential to become the learning ones.

SUCCESS STORY

Vitebsk – a City for Life, Work and Study

The idea to make Vitebsk a learning city dates back to 2012/13, when the Learning Region: Education for All Generations project was implemented there. The project brought together organizations that support the idea of lifelong learning: government agencies, universities, businesses, public organizations. All of them were interested in Vitebsk receiving the status of a learning city.

The next step was the establishment of the Coordination Board that included representatives of the city executive committee, deputies, representatives of providers of additional adult education services. A study of the educational needs of the city residents was carried out, a database of providers and their offers was created; the website of the Vitebsk City Executive Committee got a tab named "The Learning City of Vitebsk".

All these targeted efforts have yielded fruit. In 2018, Vitebsk received the status of a learning city.

What secured success?

Evgeniya Pochepko (member of the Council of the YMCA Belarus NGO) says, "In Vitebsk, the decisive factors were the initiative of Tatyana Starinskaya, who at that time was a Deputy at the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and took the task of coordinating communication with officials who supported the idea, as well as the presence of an informal network of providers that had been formed within the framework of earlier projects aimed at promoting the idea of a learning region and had been later developed through the efforts of the Resource Center of the Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment. We still have a lot to do and I hope that the activities implemented during the learning city development will be useful for its residents!"



VITEBSK IN UNESCO
GLOBAL NETWORK OF
LEARNING CITIES

How Vitebsk residents see the future of their learning city?

It will be: :

- A city convenient for life;
- A city where favourable conditions have been created for learning at any age for the sake of personal growth, work and business;
- A city where competent and creative citizens can unlock their potential and contribute to community development.

The number of projects aimed at non-formal education of adults has increased in recent years. In fact, education has gone beyond the limits of traditional institutions. There are currently many educational facilities in Vitebsk: universities offer short-term courses in addition to their main curricula, cultural institutions allow city residents to improve their level of proficiency in culture and art. Vitebsk organizations strive to reach as many target groups as they can. For example, Vitebsk United Organization of the Public Association "Republican Association of Wheelchair Handicapped Persons", a partner organization of DVV International Belarus, focuses on educating people with disabilities.

In addition, 2019 saw the first celebration of the Learning City Day. This is an opportunity for both the providers to present their training courses and events and for the city residents to learn something and discover new fields of personal development.

The plans include even wider engagement of libraries, cultural, educational and social institutions in the popularization of learning, creation of adult education centres in colleges and universities, creation of an online platform presenting all kinds of intramural and distance courses.



PARTNERS AND OUTCOMES

The DVV International office supports Belarusian cities and towns in their aspiration to become the learning ones, to join the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and to develop as such: the initiative groups from 6 settlements (Vitebsk, Gomel, Minsk, Smorgon, Korma, Zelva) have been involved in the Learning Cities and Organizations Program aimed at strengthening their capacity since 2019. The program facilitates these initiative groups in developing their competencies in different fields: strategic planning, analysis of the educational needs of the target groups, cooperation with qualified trainers, resource mobilization and finance, project management, etc.

Here are several outcomes achieved by partners together with DVV International Belarus within the Learning Cities direction by 2020:

1. In 2018, Vitebsk received the status of a learning city.
2. Over 50 representatives of local authorities, government agencies, commercial organizations and NGOs are involved in creation and development of learning cities, being members of local initiative groups.
3. In 2019, these initiative groups developed strategies for learning cities. Moreover, the Adult Learning Development Strategy until 2022 in the Zelva district was approved by the Resolution of the Zelva District Council of Deputies. As a result, adult learning has gained recognition as a priority at the district level.
4. All the initiative groups within the DVV International Belarus program are involved in international cooperation and exchange of best practices. One of the most striking examples is the visit to the Republic of Korea, which is the global leader in the number of learning cities, and the return visit of Korean colleagues to Belarus in 2019.
5. Belarus hosts thematic forums and conferences dedicated to the topic of learning cities (in Vitebsk in 2014 and 2018 and in Minsk in 2017).
6. The providers involved in the initiative groups' activities have taken important steps to introduce online learning thanks to the training organized by DVV International Belarus and implement ideas aimed at mitigating the effects of coronavirus in local communities through adult education.

In the framework of the learning cities development, we cooperate with:



UNESCO Institute for
Lifelong Learning, UIL

National Commission of the
Republic of Belarus for UNESCO



PASCAL Learning Cities
Networks

Initiative groups and city executive
committees in Vitebsk, Minsk, Gomel, initiative
groups and district executive committees in
Zelva, Korma and Smorgon

Additional references:



UNESCO Global Network of
Learning Cities

Interview with representatives of
the Coordination Board of the
Learning City of Vitebsk



UNESCO GNLC's Guiding
Documents

The Learning City of
Vitebsk video



How to Build a Learning City
video tutorial

The Learning City of
Vitebsk: priorities and
action plan

