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Presentation on 'Universities' role in building learning cities'

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Given the ongoing trend of demographic shifts and urbanization, cities have increasingly gained importance as collective spheres of learning. More and more cities around the globe have started to adopt and implement the concept of learning cities to promote learning opportunities for all members of society. Since centuries, universities – as hubs of knowledge and learning – have shaped cities and supported urban development in social, cultural and economic terms. In recent decades, there has been a shift from elite to mass universities and an increasing demand for the higher education sector to widen access to tertiary programmes, to develop open and flexible learning formats that address the needs of adult learners, and to engage with local communities.

Universities, which respond to their third mission and become lifelong learning institutions, can play a crucial role in transforming urban communities into thriving learning cities. In fact, in many member cities of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, universities have been strong proponents and supporters of the learning cities concept.

The presentation will draw on the results of a case studies research, exploring practical examples of how universities have been contributing to the building of learning cities.