

An aerial photograph of Larissa, Greece, showing a dense urban landscape with a mix of residential and commercial buildings. A prominent green park area is visible in the lower center, surrounded by a road and parking lots. The city extends to the coast in the background.

*"Larissa-Learning City:
The challenges of the
future for a sustainable
and democratic learning
city in times of crisis"*

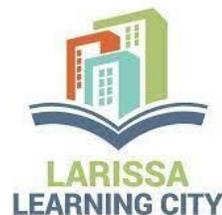
Dimitris Deligiannis
Deputy Mayor for Administration,
Education and Lifelong Learning



Larissa, a city of 200.000 inhabitants, is the capital of Thessaly in Central Greece. Larissa, known from the ancient years, is located nearby the ancient Phthia, the home country of Achilleus.

Larissa was also the city of Hippocrates, a few kilometers away from the Olympus Mountain, known as the residence of 12 Greek gods.

Larissa is a city where history meets the modern way of living. The First Ancient Theatre of Larissa situated in the centre of the city, a symbol of Democracy reminding the citizens of the importance to actively protect its basic principles .



<http://www.larissa-culturestories.gr/en/>

The future of Democracy?

- Noam Chomsky (2017) “the world has taken a path that threatens democratic normality. Power is transferred from public institutions to companies in which voters have no saying”.
- Habermas (2012) “the democratic deficit of modern Europe and the transformation of policies into an executive elite that is not prepared for a political way of shaping mindsets”

The years of crisis...

- Financial problems
- refugees' and earthquake crises
- War and pandemic
- domination of fear and anger
- the rhetoric of ever-growing hate
- the rise of neo-Nazi parties
- Racism

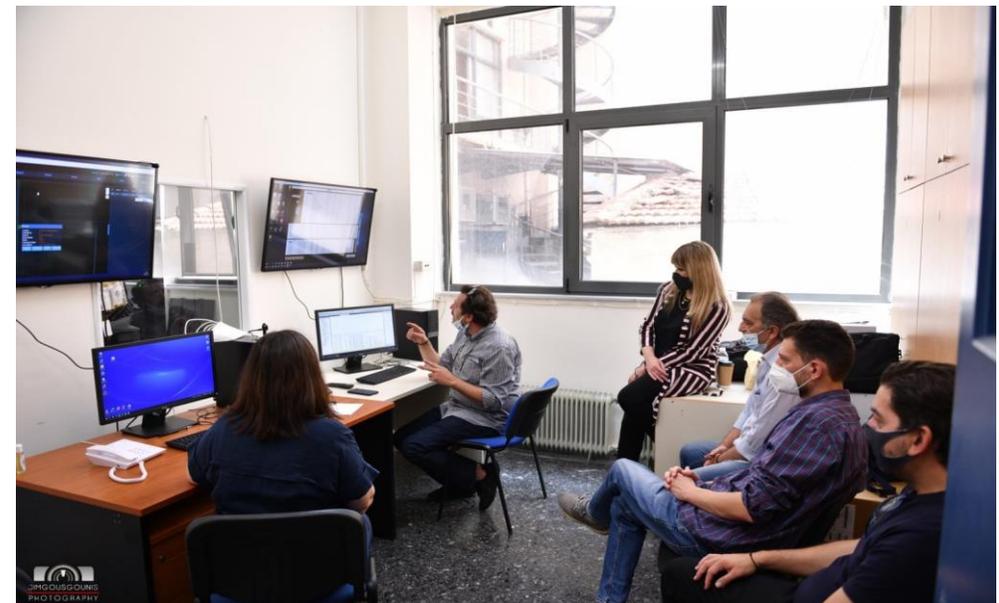


Smart city : a solution to urban problems and an alternative to austerity ?

The installation of cameras, barriers for the cars in pedestrian area in the center of the city, investment in energy-efficient street lighting, systems for online applications in Municipality are tangible benefits of a Future City

But...

The great challenge is to mobilize civil society, the citizens.



Building a Learning City

- Since 2015 Larissa – Learning City, as a member of the UNESCO Network of Learning Cities, is promoting actions based on the humanitarian principles of Lifelong Learning. Our main aim is to foster the dialogue between city stakeholders and citizens, encourage partnerships, critical thinking and active citizenship
- Larissa – Learning City” committee, has 75 stakeholders from the civil society



Building a Learning City

- In the period 2015-2019, dozens of workshops, three international conferences, educational programs and innovative actions targeting specific social groups were organized
- 2017 UNESCO AWARD
- The problems, of course, are not lacking. Limited resources, lack of trained staff, suspicion and doubts are issues we are often called to face.



Building a Learning City



Building a Learning City: Innovative projects



1. “Summer Camp in the City”
2. 9 Creativity Occupational Centres
3. 2 Creativity Centres for disabled
4. White Taxi – Free transportation project

Citizens' University of Larissa

- The new institution refers to the progressive tradition of the humanitarian view of adult education. Collaborations, the organization of well-structured educational programs and their connection with actions and the promotion of the concept of active citizenship are the basic criteria for shaping learning cycles.
- European Association for the Education of Adults - Grundtvig Award 2020 for good practices on outreach and access in adult education



"Citizens' University" – 12 Learning Cycles



- Parents' Schools
- language courses for refugees and immigrants
- disability awareness program for municipal councilors and services
- computer courses for the third age
- our holistic intervention in the Roma population
- the training of teachers for the use of art in education







City of Larissa, Greece

The nomination of our city, as the co-coordinating city on the subject of Citizenship Education of UNESCO in September of 2019, created new priorities

The outbreak of the pandemic at the beginning of 2020, as expected, affected the basic planning of the Municipal Authority at almost all levels. Operations were adapted to the new data, important initiatives of the past were stopped while new actions, often online, were organized.

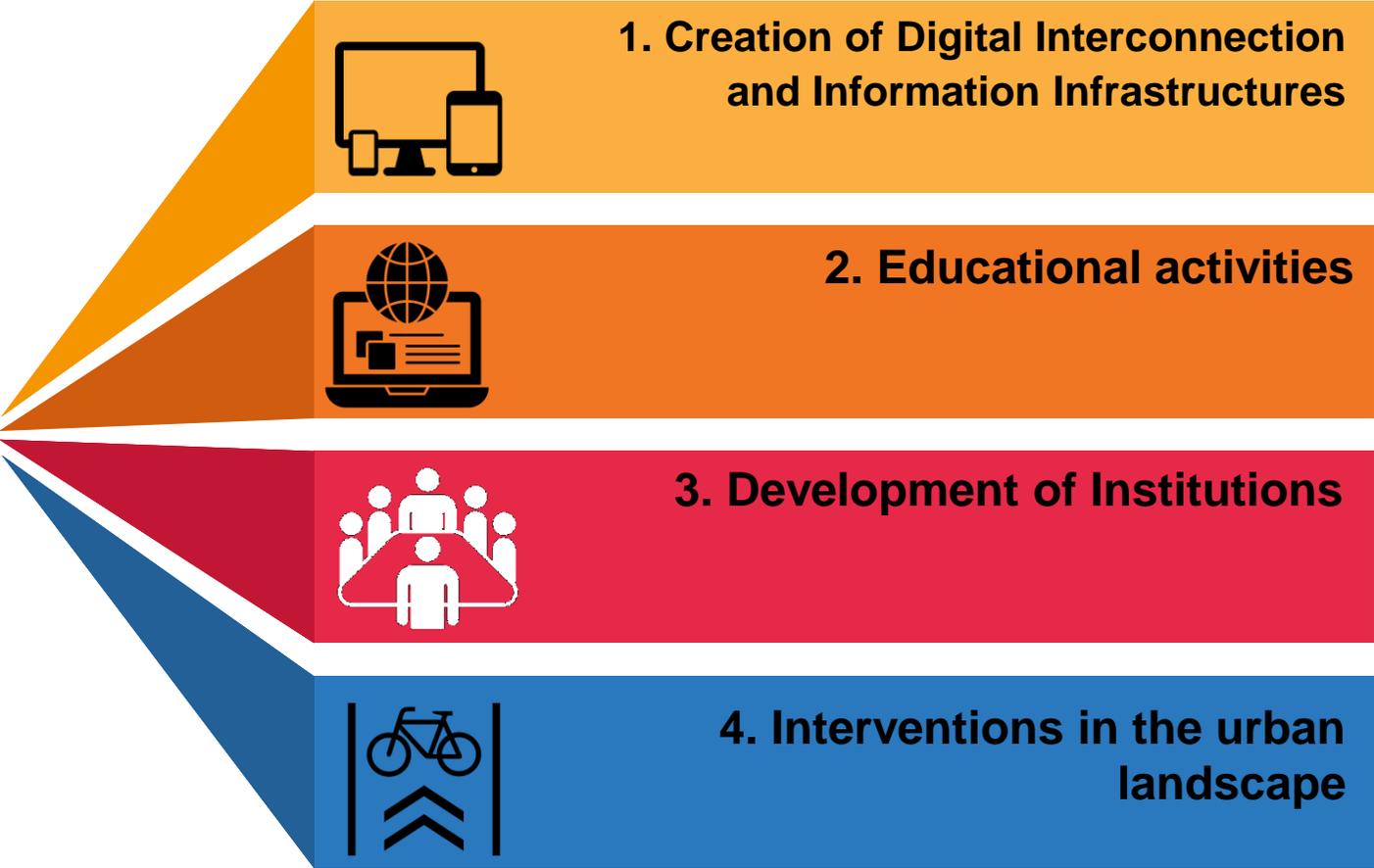


City of Larissa, Greece



unesco

Global Network of Learning Cities



Citizenship Education, Health & Well Being

City of Larissa, Greece



1. Creation of Digital Interconnection and Information Infrastructures



An electronic information portal (platform) was created entitled "Larissa Together" for the registration and coordination of actions of organizations and teams in the city (March, 2020).





ΜΕΝΟΥΜΕ
ΑΣΦΑΛΕΙΣ

Είμαστε **μαζί**



Ψηφιακή Πλατφόρμα
Δήμου Λαρισαίων

Είσοδος

Νέο

City of Larissa, Greece

2. Educational activities



The "Citizens' University" had to adapt to the new context. The first step (May-June 2020) was to organize four online discussions focusing on the new reality in the Covid-19 era.

The second step (February-June, 2021) was the implementation of

- Online programmes for third age online parents schools
- learning cycle for 200 educators for distance learning and critical thinking
- the "Online Training Program for Health" which was developed in three thematic cycles (*healthy cities*)

City of Larissa, Greece



3. Development of Institutions



- By decision of the Municipal Council the Municipal Youth Council (MYC) was created. The Council was established with the aim of educating active and democratic citizens (Citizenship Education). One of the first initiatives of MYC (February, 2021) was launching a series of webinars on “Approaching the next day of the Covid-19 Pandemic”.
- Immigrant and Refugee Integration Council established. An advisory body, working towards the strengthening of the integration of migrants and refugees in the local community







ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΥΑΚΗ ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ:
ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ & ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΕΝ ΜΕΣΩ ΠΑΝΔΗΜΙΑΣ
 ΠΡΟΚΛΗΣΕΙΣ & Η ΕΠΟΜΕΝΗ ΜΕΡΑ

ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 27 ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ
10:45 ΜΕΣΩ ZOOM

Συμμετέχουν: Λαλιώτου Ιωάννα, Κωτούλας Βασίλης, Λιούπας Νικόλαος, Αλεξούλης Γιάννης

Συντονίζουν: Τσιαντού Κυριακή, Χατλάρης Παύλος

Χαιρετίζουν: Δεληγιάννης Δημήτριος, Πρόεδρος Δ.Σ. Δήμου Λαρισαίων, Μιχαήλ Αναστασίου, Αντιδήμαρχος Αθλητισμού

ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΝΕΟΛΙΑΣ
 ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ & ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ

ΣΤΟ ΠΛΑΙΣΙΟ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΚΛΟΥ WEBINARS "COVID-19: ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΖΟΝΤΑΣ ΤΗΝ ΕΠΟΜΕΝΗ ΜΕΡΑ"

ΤΟΠΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΕΝ ΜΕΣΩ ΠΑΝΔΗΜΙΑΣ

ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 13 ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ 2021

ΔΙΑΔΙΚΤΥΑΚΗ ΣΥΖΗΤΗΣΗ:
ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΕΝ ΜΕΣΩ ΠΑΝΔΗΜΙΑΣ
 ΠΡΟΚΛΗΣΕΙΣ & Η ΕΠΟΜΕΝΗ ΜΕΡΑ

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ 28 ΦΕΒΡΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ
10:45 ΜΕΣΩ ZOOM

Συμμετέχουν: Σάπκας Πάνος, Σπανού Κυριακή, Κτιστάκης Χρήστος, Ιακωβίδου Άννα

Συντονίζουν: Χατλάρης Παύλος, Λάζος Ευάγγελος

ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΝΕΟΛΙΑΣ
 ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ & ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ

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City of Larissa, Greece

4. Interventions in the urban landscape



In the midst of the pandemic, the city turned to sustainable mobility policies with new bike lanes and neighborhoods turning into 'light traffic'. The difficulties of the project quickly emerged: the orientation to a new geometry that limits speed and gives space for walking and cycling, came into conflict with traditional beliefs and attitudes and time old policies on strengthening the use of cars.



The creation of traffic education programs, supported and supervised by kindergartens' and school personnel, became a valuable guide: the program "I ride a bike with my child" aimed at parents and their children and the program "Traffic Education for children" aimed at small groups of children from 6 to 12 years old.





City of Larissa, Greece



5. Challenges and future steps



The implementation of all these initiatives faced many challenges.

- a. The pandemic increased fear and with it increased xenophobia and racism.
- b. Limited resources, lack of trained staff, doubts and skepticism are issues that need to be addressed.
- c. Chronic problems, concerning the cooperation between institutions.



The pandemic has shown a new understanding of the importance of government and local government and the way the system responds to crises. Economic and refugee crises, the war, the approaching climate crisis, and any future crisis that may come, add a more serious existential threat to the planet. It is a learning task for cities to continue to press forward, be more resilient, healthy, and support the view that good government is essential.

- When learning adopts the basic principles of adult education, it can be used as a model for citizenship education courses and practices. The focus though, is not only on learning and providing courses, programmes, health care provision and prevention. More than anything, citizenship education is a statement that the city accepts that learning is part of its identity.

Most of all, a core value of a city's identity is democracy, which is a way of living together

“I dream because I aim high: to contribute in the creation of a free citizen, as Aristoteles envisioned. Citizenship requires discipline and freedom. A process that never ends and that we must always strive for. Every democratic education is a citizenship education. Responsible, honest, consistent and therefore a happy citizen!”

Paulo Freire, “Ten letters to those who dare to teach”

