



UN!TE 2023 - Digitally



SDG-Partnership Conference

Report



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1. Foreword by Mayor Jürgen Krogmann



Foto: Hauke-Christian Dittrich

With great joy, I reflect upon the recent gathering of our partner municipalities at the UN!TE conference held digitally in November and December 2023. This era demands global collaboration, and all participants have shown that distances and borders cannot hinder our shared mission.

The COVID pandemic has significantly changed our ways of connecting, collaborating, and facing global challenges. Yet, our commitment to fostering a peaceful future and addressing pressing challenges at all levels remains undiminished. Discussions naturally gravitated towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

with a special focus on SDG 4's advancements in Digital Learning and SDG 11's emphasis on Sustainable Cities and Communities, especially in Mobility. The outcomes of this conference, marked by the enthusiastic participation and high-quality discussions of many partner municipalities, reinforce that we can achieve remarkable results through digital collaboration.

I extend my deepest thanks to all partner municipalities for their active involvement and enriching contributions.

2. Introduction

On November 30 and December 1, 2023, the City of Oldenburg hosted the third UN!TE conference, extending a warm digital welcome to its international partners. The conference centered on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda adopted by the United Nations in 2015 – specifically targeting SDG 4 (Quality Education and Lifelong Learning) with a focus on Digital Learning and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), emphasizing Mobility. The 17 goals and 169 targets are to be achieved by 2030.

About 20 delegates from diverse locations around the world including Groningen (Netherlands), Høje-Taastrup (Denmark), Vorpommern-Rügen (Germany), Cholet (France), Xi'an and Qingdao (China), and Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (South Africa) joined the conference, some of them sent video messages. The gathering was not just an exchange of valuable experiences and strategies but also a platform for identifying shared challenges and uncovering opportunities. The conference emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing global challenges, as Oldenburg and its partners continue to seek broader cooperation based on shared knowledge and experiences.

This report provides a summary of the presentations and discussions from the conference.

3. Quality education (SDG 4) with focus on Digital Learning



Workshop on Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Focus: Digital Learning

Digital Learning is pivotal in achieving SDG 4's aim of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. What insights and lessons can be gleaned from the experiences of utilizing digital learning during the Covid-19 pandemic? What challenges were faced, and what measures were implemented in response?

3.1 Keynote: The SDG 4 and the GEM 2023 “Technology and Education”

Margarita Langthaler, Austrian Foundation for Development Research, Vienna, Austria

SDG 4 has a broad agenda with seven targets: primary and secondary education; early childhood care and education; technical, vocational, and tertiary education; skills for work; equal access; youth and adult literacy; and education for sustainable development and global citizenship. These goals encompass three crosscutting issues: building and upgrading appropriate facilities; increasing the number of scholarships; and increasing the number of qualified teachers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, particularly in education. The Global Education Monitoring Report (GEM), published annually by UNESCO, tracks SDG 4 progress. The 2023 report, themed "Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms", highlights the rapid growth of technology use, accelerated by COVID-19, but notes the disparity in access based on income and educational levels.

Furthermore, children can and do learn without technology, leading to the question: 'Can technology solve key education challenges as equity, quality or efficiency?' Regarding equity, technology offers an educational lifeline for millions but excludes many more. In terms of quality, *some* educational technologies can improve *some* types of learning in *some* contexts. The recommendations by this GEM are: Before adopting technologies in education, key actors should use a compass that encompasses the following question: Is the technology equitable, sustainable, appropriate and scalable?

3.2 School system in a digital frenzy: Pandemic Turbulence and the Way forward in Oldenburg

Gert Mora Motta, Principal, Education Centre for Technology and Design Oldenburg (BZTG), Oldenburg, Germany

The BZTG is a grammar, technical secondary and vocational entry school with 3,850 pupils aged between 15 and 25, 180 teachers and employees, 1,000 PCs, 30 servers, and many other machines. After the initial shock of schools being closed due to the lockdown in spring 2020, several challenges emerged. There was a period of

two weeks without teaching, followed by a vacation, after which homeschooling commenced. It became necessary to purchase hardware and configure materials for teachers to facilitate remote teaching. Training for teachers to adapt to software and teaching from home was also implemented. Additional challenges included purchasing server computing power, ensuring broadband internet access, and addressing data security/cybersecurity concerns.

During the transition to homeschooling, it was noted that not all students had access to the internet and necessary devices. Efforts were made to organize notebooks for students. To manage bandwidth limitations and data protection concerns, video functions had to be switched off, significantly reducing the possibilities for one-to-one communication. The teachers operated at their limits. Through the shift to internet-based learning, the relational aspect of education was diminished. Subsequently, reinstating a social structure in the classroom became challenging due to the prior period of social isolation. Mental health problems have increased.

From the experiences of utilizing digital learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, key insights include significant improvements in hardware and software equipment, enhanced digital training for teachers, and the successful introduction of the Moodle learning platform. Additionally, the experience underscored the need for a reorientation in teaching methods, moving towards open learning approaches due to the diverse needs of students, positioning teachers more as coaches for learning.

„Homeschooling should only be an exception for my pupils, as at this age, learning primarily occurs through relationships.“

Gert Mora Motta

3.3 Building of a Digitally Capable State, Economy and Society in South Africa

Lwazi Ndzena, Head of Department, Information and Communication Technology Division, Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa

In South Africa, education falls under the jurisdiction of both national and provincial governments, not at the municipal level. From a national perspective, the government's approval of the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy, along with the provision of additional spectrum for mobile operators and the zero-rating of educational websites and digital platforms, marked significant steps towards enhancing digital accessibility.

In terms of local interventions, Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality improved internal team collaboration by migrating to a cloud platform and introducing online meetings. The city also focused on enhancing digital literacy among councillors by providing them with computer literacy training, laptops, and data for connectivity. Additionally, the digitization of supply chain management records and the rollout of a robust fibre network just before the onset of COVID-19 ensured resilient connectivity and continuous productivity during and after the pandemic.

3.4 Remote Learning During COVID-19 in the Xi'an No.89 Middle School

Zhengping Li, Vice Principal, Xi'an No.89 Middle School, Xi'an, China

Xi'an No. 89 Middle School is a provincial modern educational institution, serving 2,860 pupils aged between 12 and 18 years, with a staff of 212 teachers. Since 2010,

the school has consistently taught German to 60 students each year. The school has also established partnerships with three German high schools, facilitating educational and cultural exchange.

The challenges arising from the outbreak of COVID-19 included transitioning to online teaching and the need to quickly develop methods for virtual instruction. This was particularly challenging for educators with limited experience in using digital technologies. Online teaching required clear and well-structured content, ensuring it was neither too difficult nor too fast to maintain student engagement. Another challenge was keeping students interested and motivated despite distractions from digital devices. Teachers developed new strategies to create an inclusive and interactive virtual learning environment that mimicked a real classroom setting.

In response to these challenges, teachers collaborated with fellow educators and school administrators to streamline their teaching approaches and shared best practices. Training sessions were provided to equip teachers with new skills and knowledge. Lessons were conducted via internet platforms and apps, with teachers arranging classes online and students registering attendance digitally. Real-time interaction was facilitated using the voice functions of the apps, and lessons were uploaded to websites for later viewing by students who could not attend live sessions. To ensure students' learning outcomes, teachers tracked each student's online listening time and provided feedback on homework online.

3.5 Digital learning in adult education: benefits and challenges in Vorpommern-Rügen *Dr. Sabine Koppe, Principal, Adult Education Centre, Vorpommern-Rügen (District), Germany*

Students at Volkshochschule range from 14 years to adults of various ages. Before the pandemic, a secure cloud system with conference capabilities was available but underutilized, similar to the smartboards and computers. The lockdown initiated a shift in teaching methods. A significant challenge was aiding young people in preparing for their school leaving certificates, as they were familiar with smartphones but their digital learning skills required improvement. To keep education going, the cloud system was used to hire teachers from different federal states. This was vital for teaching German to immigrants online. Many participants lacked digital equipment for home learning. Getting more money for digital resources in adult education was tough. But when this funding was obtained, it solved many problems.

Post-pandemic developments have highlighted several benefits: Hybrid teaching has become a practical solution, advantageous for individuals such as elderly people who may wish to avoid adverse weather conditions or are unable to attend due to physical limitations. Adapting to hybrid classroom settings, however, has been challenging, requiring efforts to persuade students, particularly older adults, to confidently use available technology.

„After the pandemic, people were very eager to get back to the classroom to have social contacts.“

Dr. Sabine Koppe

The cloud system provides accessible training for teachers in new methodologies at no cost, yet funding remains a persistent issue. The future aspiration is for adult education to be fully recognized and valued as a crucial aspect of lifelong learning,

deserving of equitable funding compared to other educational institutions. Teaching the value of democracy in education is also seen as essential, with a strong need for the exchange of diverse views to foster peace and democracy. Facilitating connections between learners and teachers globally is regarded as a key element in the evolution of education.

3.6 Via Video-message: Experience Sharing on Digital Learning in Qingdao and Communication with Vocational Training Centre for Business Studies, Law and Administration (BBS Wechloy) in Oldenburg

Lin Zhang, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Department, Qingdao West Coast New Area Sino-German Applied Technology School, Qingdao, China

The initiation of online communication and learning activities with BBS Wechloy in 2021 marked a significant development. A key feature of these activities was the normalization of online communication. Various platforms were utilized, transitioning from time-delayed communication through email to real-time interactions via WeChat groups between Chinese-German pupils. Another tool, Padlet, was used for exchanging daily life content, posing questions, sharing materials, and uploading content. For instance, students created posters to showcase cultural differences and uploaded them, which fostered a deeper mutual understanding.

However, several challenges were encountered in this process. These included network and equipment problems, the time difference between China and Germany, and organizational difficulties due to the large number of participants. Additionally, there were language barriers, as students from both sides were in the initial stages of language learning. Challenges were addressed through various means, including equipment debugging updates, advance rehearsals, and grouping participants according to their language proficiency and the themes of the communication activities.

Discussion

In **Xi'an**, significant benefits were gained from the internet and digital campus during the pandemic.

In **Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality**, challenges with funding and infrastructure were primarily managed through their own revenue, as support from national programs was limited. A significant idea to improve work practices, inspired by the discussions, is the implementation of social media platforms for digital learning.

In **Vorpommern-Rügen** and **Oldenburg**, the pandemic highlighted the need to prepare for emergencies such as power outages and internet failures. Although such a situation had not yet occurred, the pandemic raised awareness about the importance of being prepared for such scenarios. The reliance on the digital world underscored the urgency of developing both digital and non-digital backup systems for teaching and work. This realization has emphasized the need to explore new ways to adequately respond to potential future crises.

In **Oldenburg**, hybrid teaching methods were successfully implemented, particularly aiding long-term ill students. The municipality is planning to innovatively redesign school spaces to improve learning environments and adapt to fast-paced technological changes.

4. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) with focus on Mobility



Workshop on Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Focus: Mobility

Implementing sustainable mobility solutions is a key aspect for local governments and their stakeholders in striving towards SDG 11. What specific challenges are faced in achieving climate neutrality in mobility, and what effective solutions have been identified?

4.1 Keynote: Urban Mobility

Sebastian Bührmann, Deputy Head, Department Mobility, City of Oldenburg

While the concept of climate protection often seems abstract and distant in people's daily lives, it's a pressing issue in urban development. Historically, many cities were designed around cars, but this car-oriented approach is increasingly seen as outdated in Europe. The focus has shifted to how cities can be reshaped sustainably, with transport being a central concern.

„Everyone agrees on the importance of climate protection, but integrating it into daily routines proves difficult for most people. How can this be solved?“

Sebastian Bührmann

Sustainable mobility is a key global challenge, particularly as the transport sector struggles with climate goals. While electric cars may be part of the solution, they still contribute to traffic congestion and require significant resources for production and recycling. People's desires for safe, green, and accessible urban spaces where children can safely go to school and shops are conveniently located, are driving a reimagining of city layouts. This calls for a comprehensive strategy integrating mobility with broader urban development goals, aiming for climate-friendly, livable, and economically viable cities with streets that are welcoming for walking and cycling.

The implementation of these changes faces practical considerations, including technical solutions, planning processes, and participatory structures to involve citizens early on. Communication and decision-making within public administration are crucial, acknowledging that not every solution will please everyone, but decisions must be made in the best interest of the majority.

4.2 Sustainable transport and mobility in Høje-Taastrup Municipality

Marie-Louise Lemgart, Chief Energy and Climate Advisor, Planning and Environment Department, Høje-Taastrup Municipality, Denmark

Aiming for net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050, the city has a Climate Plan 2030 with goals including a 50% reduction in CO2 emissions compared to 2017, electrifying 30% of passenger car transport, and ensuring 10% of freight and goods transportation uses electricity or green fuels. Over the last five years, progress has been made: the number of electric cars increased from 74 to 2,000, electric vans from 6 to 100, and public charging stations from 10 to 150, with an additional 150 planned. The city council has adopted a bike policy, and from February 2024, buses will run on electricity. Currently, 75% of the municipality's car fleet and 20% of vans are electric, with ongoing cooperation for electric freight and goods vehicles.

Despite growth and advances in the heating and mobility sectors, transport remains a significant challenge due to both through traffic and internal traffic. The city faces the added complexity of two highways, resulting in substantial commuting traffic. Changing transportation habits is difficult, with common global perceptions of cars offering freedom and flexibility.

The benefits of sustainable transport and mobility include improved health, less traffic noise, less traffic jam, and lower CO2 emissions and pollution. Three key areas for promoting sustainable transport in Høje-Taastrup Municipality are electrification, promoting biking, and a 'mobilists' toolbox' to inspire alternatives to car use. This toolbox includes shared local cars, carpooling, speed reductions, micro-mobility, mobility communities, and facilitating appropriate changes between biking, buses and trains.

4.3 Application of Low Carbon Methods in Mobility within the Framework of Urban Renewal Planning in Xi'an

Dr. Xiaobo Shang, Program Manager, Xi'an City Planning Design and Research Institute, Xi'an, China

In Xi'an, the Xingfu Comprehensive Area's urban renewal focuses on transforming a former industrial zone into a functional urban area. The plan includes a forest belt to separate industrial and residential spaces and a revitalization of the area with complex functions like subway, parking, and public services. Key strategies include enhancing traffic planning with a focus on public and slow transport, preserving industrial heritage like the Qinchuan Factory, and improving municipal facilities with a sponge city system to increase resilience and ensure accessibility to essential services.

In Xi'an, the decrease in public transportation usage to 55.6% in 2022 and the increase in car trips indicate a shift in travel preferences post-pandemic. To counter this and promote green travel, Xi'an has implemented a "rail-bus-slow" strategy, including the expansion of subway lines and optimizing bus routes. Despite these efforts, achieving the goal of climate neutrality in mobility remains challenging, with current green travel at 73.2%. The city encounters challenges in integrating low-carbon technologies into urban renewal and constructing zero-carbon buildings. These challenges highlight the critical need for collaborative solutions in the global effort to reduce carbon emissions.

4.4 Sustainable Mobility in Cholet Urban Area

Marc Delayer, Managing Director of Mobility and Public Transport, Cholet, France

Cholet, a town with a population of about 60,000, located at the center of an agglomeration of approximately 100,000 people, attracts around 200,000 people due to its city appeal and surrounding rural areas. The local mobility policy, "Politique Globale de Déplacements," aims to provide public transport solutions to everyone, enhancing sustainable mobility in both urban and rural areas.

The Choletbus network features an urban network with seven bus lines in Cholet and a peri-urban network with eight coach lines operated by private operators through public markets, primarily functioning during peak hours. Additionally, Choletbus offers a special service for disabled individuals and a Transport A la Demande (TAD) service in low-traffic municipalities.

Cholet's cycling policy focuses on infrastructure development, parking solutions, and cycling education. Public cycling services include long-term rentals for electric bikes, a self-service electric bike system with 70 bicycles across 12 stations, and incentives for purchasing bicycles. Furthermore, car sharing is promoted as an alternative when or where there is no public transport solution. Cholet also focuses on integrating transport with city planning and raising awareness of sustainable mobility among various groups, including the youth, corporate employees and the elderly. There are workshops on cycling services and learning to bike.

4.5 Changing cities, changing urban mobility – changes and challenges for the City of Oldenburg

Sebastian Bührmann, Deputy Head, Department Mobility, City of Oldenburg

Oldenburg, with approximately 175,000 inhabitants and around 250,000 bicycles, demonstrates a strong cycling culture. However, the city's infrastructure, including a long pedestrian zone and a historic city center with many green spaces, needs modernization. Oldenburg relies on an urban bus system without metro or train services, which can be inconvenient due to the need to change buses in the center. In the 1960s and 1970s, the city's planning was car-oriented, but now Oldenburg aims for climate neutrality by 2035. The transport sector poses the biggest challenge in reducing CO2 emissions, and even with a robust climate protection plan, achieving zero CO2 by 2035 is unlikely.

The Mobility Plan 2030 represents a new strategic approach, emphasizing the need for both making alternatives to car use more attractive and reducing the attractiveness of car use. This dual strategy involves enhancing biking infrastructure, such as premium cycle routes and a seamless biking system, and improving public transport with dedicated bus lanes. However, challenges include a shortage of bus drivers and rising public transport costs.

Oldenburg's approach to mobility is not just about transport planning; it involves integrating urban development, climate protection, environmental protection, economic development, and social aspects. Technical and planning solutions are well understood, but the implementation is challenging due to complex multi-stakeholder environments. Communication and participation are crucial for success but require significant financial and human resources. Engaging the public effectively remains a challenge, with the need for involvement before construction starts. The city's vision involves rethinking urban development and mobility to shape the kind of city residents want to live in over the next 10 to 20 years.

Discussion

Cholet noted the significant impact of electric bikes as a game-changer for mobility, alongside the common approach among all sister cities to increase public transport use and decrease car usage.

Oldenburg addressed the challenge of accommodating bicycles on narrow streets without specific fast lanes, focusing instead on creating premium routes and balancing bicycle and pedestrian spaces.

Høje-Taastrup Municipality brought up the issue of heavy and cargo transport, contributing significantly to CO2 emissions and noise pollution, and inquired about initiatives to address this.

Groningen mentioned strategies to manage logistics within time windows to avoid heavy transport in the city center. Being brave and pioneering, along with patience and supportive networks, is essential for long-term success in contributing to the shared goal of creating more sustainable and livable urban environments.

Xi'an described restrictions on heavy traffic in the city center, with time limits and license number controls to reduce traffic jams.

The cities discussed various strategies to encourage sustainable mobility, including infrastructure adjustments, speed limits, and cultural shifts to promote cycling and walking. The challenge of extending sustainable mobility solutions beyond city centers to suburbs was also highlighted during discussion.

5. Closing Event



UN!TE 2023 Digitally

International Sister Cities Conference on the SDGs

Closing Event

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

SDG 17 encapsulates the essence of the UN!TE partnership conference, focusing on the vital aspect of cross-border collaboration necessary for addressing global challenges. In the two workshops, representatives, experts and stakeholders from municipalities exchanged their experiences and insights, shared lessons learned, and showcased innovative ideas and local visions for shaping the future of their communities.

At the closing event, a review of the two workshops was provided and participants shared their conference key takeaways and were invited to continue their peer-to-peer learning. An overview of this conference, as noted on Miro Board, follows:

UNITE 2023 Digitally

SDG International Sister Cities Conference

City of Oldenburg, Nov 30 - Dec 1, 2023

Workshop Day 1, Nov 30

- What do you see as similarities and differences between your city and the others?

- Are there any examples that inspire you to do some things differently in your city? What would that be?

- Are there any examples that would not work at all in your city? Why so?

1. Oldenburg, Germany

- **Challenges after "the shock":**

- Hardware procurement and configuration
- Software
- Teacher training
- Data protection & Cybersecurity
- Organisation and communication btw. students and teachers
- Hygiene measures

- **Effects:** Hardware/software equipment is better, teachers are better trained, many new digital materials

- **Introduction** of open and collaborative learning methods to meet changing needs and behaviors of students (f.e. increased mental illness)

Education equity?

- Internet access and devices for students
- Social structure in class
 - Social isolation
- 21. Century skills difficult to realise

2. Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, South Africa

- **Digital Learning measurements taken:**

- 2020: "National Digital and Future Skills Strategy"
- Additional spectrum for mobile operators
- Remote collaboration:
- Migration to cloud platform Microsoft 365
- Introduction MS Teams

- Training of councillors on computer literacy
- Digitisation of supply chain management procedures
- Investment in infrastructure: fibre network rollout

3. Xi'An, China

- Digital Campus

- Challenges of online teaching:
- Difficult for those with missing digital skills
- Introduction and usage of digital devices for students

- Approaches:

- Development of inclusive&interactive virtual learning environments
- Collaborative working
- German lesson "My life after" as inspiring tool of connection

4. Vorpommern-Rügen, Germany

- Challenges of participation before the pandemic:

- Vhs cloud and equipment for classrooms (that was not much used)
- Training of staff/teachers how to work and teach digitally
- Challenge of digital working and teaching (f.e. elderly teachers, pupils with migration experience)
- **Introduction of hybrid teaching** (once barriers were crossed - well received by both teachers/students)
- Challenge of funding for more sophisticated teaching equipment
- **Hopes and dreams for the future:** recognition and funding of adult education & value of education for peace and democracy

UN!TE 2023 Digitally

SDG International Sister Cities Conference

City of Oldenburg, Nov 30 - Dec 1, 2023

Workshop Day 2, Dec 1

- What do you see as similarities and differences between your city and the others?

- Are there any examples that inspire you to do some things differently in your city? What would that be?

- Are there any examples that would not work at all in your city? Why so?

1. Oldenburg, Germany

- **Challenges of sustainable mobility:**

- Climate protection: theory vs. practice
- Create cities with accessible *and* climate-friendly mobility
- Transformation of car oriented cities into present/future planning paradigms
- Differences btw. public and expert opinions
- Electric cars present new challenges of sustainability
- Liveable cities vs. economic success?

- **Solutions**

- Technical solutions
- Complex field of planning and implementation processes
- Participation of the population: **challenge to change behaviour (push/pull)**

2. Høje-Taastrup Municipality, Denmark

Climate Plan 2030 adopted in 2021

- **Achievements in the last 5 years:**

- Electric cars: 74 to 2.000, public charging stations from 10 to 150
- Bike policy adopted by the City Council

- **Plans for the future:**

- Electric city buses from 2024 on
- Electric municipality vehicles by 2030

- **Challenge to transform the transport sector**

- 44% transport by cars: **behavioural changes are difficult: global challenge**

- **Values of sustainable transport and mobility:**

- **Health, less noise, less traffic jam, less Co2-emissions and pollution**

- Bike mobility is a key solution: cooperations f.e. with schools

Solutions:

Efficient, pleasant public transport, carpooling, speed reductions, dialogue with politicians, urban planning with focus on biking/walking

3. Xi`an, P.R. China

- **Challenges of Xingfu area:**

- Massive traffic jams
- Overloading of supporting facilities
- Low quality of public services
- Poor living environment

- Improvement of "slow traffic" and heritage protection

- **After the pandemic public transport declined**

- By 2022: green travel in the central urban area of Xi`an: 73%

4. Cholet, France

- Politique Globale de Déplacements:

- Public transportation solutions for everybody (for the town and its rural areas)

- **Solutions:**

- "**Choletbus network**": systematic, accessible, barrier-free correspondence

- **Electric bicycles as a tool to support the use of bicycles**

- Measures: Long-term rent, Self-service, Premium on purchase

- **Car sharing**

- **Awareness** of sustainable mobility - accessible "shops" in the city center, workshops,...

Closing Remarks

"I would like to thank each and every one of you for the successful preparation of this conference and for taking part. Eight cities representing seven countries, each city with its own characteristics. It was both inspiring and rewarding to connect with our sister cities and to learn from your experience. Thank you all for openly sharing your best practices, challenges your cities are facing, and solutions you have found. There is still a long way in front of us in order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. But it's good to know that we are on that path together.

2018 was the last in-person UN!TE Conference here in Oldenburg. In 2020, we met online. Both events were successful. I hope we can see each other again in Oldenburg or anywhere else in the world for another face-to-face conference. Because there are some things you can better do in person, like celebrating together. I wish you all the best, thank you."

Excerpts from the closing remarks by Frank Hinrichs, Head of the Mayor's Office of Oldenburg