



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

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Contribution by the Intercultural Cities Division

Intercultural cities

INTERCULTURAL CITIES (ICC) is a capacity-building and policy development programme implemented by the Council of Europe to support local authorities across Europe and beyond to design inclusive integration policies and strategies built on the application of a diversity management model called Intercultural Integration. Based on the notion of “diversity advantage”, these strategies are founded on the assumption that diversity can be an asset for communities if managed in a positive and competent way; they mobilise leaders, policy officials, professionals, businesses and civil society towards re-shaping city policies and services to make them more effective and engage citizens in building an understanding of their society’s diversity as a competitive advantage.

The Intercultural Cities’ programme offers a comprehensive methodology for city leaders and a range of analytical and assessment tools, including the Intercultural Cities Index, that municipalities can use to evaluate the success of their integration strategies.

Recent developments

The ICC has grown exponentially in the past two years and has a current membership of 120 cities, taking in five continents. There are also active national networks in Italy, Jordan, Norway, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Ukraine. Moreover, the intercultural integration policy paradigm has been endorsed by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers through the adoption, in 2015, of a specific Recommendation addressed to the 47 Member States, recognising intercultural integration as an effective policy approach managing the growing cultural diversity of European societies as a resource, amplifying its socio-economic benefits and minimising its potential negative effects. Ten years after its launch, the ICC programme is working at developing new perspectives, approaches and partnerships in order to shape inclusive societies in the decade to come.

➤ Inclusive Integration Policy Lab

One of the crucial challenges that both cities and states need to address in the coming years is the development of an effective framework for dialogue and co-action between local, regional, national and European authorities in order to ensure that migrant inclusion policies at all levels reinforce each other. The underlying principles of intercultural integration (equality, diversity, interaction, within an overarching human rights framework) take inclusive

integration beyond anti-discrimination and require active intervention by public authorities. There is much that can be achieved at the local level but at the national level some enabling conditions (legal and policy frameworks) need to be in place. To this end, the ICC has launched an Inclusive Integration Policy Lab, that aims to ensure policy consistency and complementarity and enable transfer of innovation and good practice from local to regional and national levels and vice-versa, in view of a management of migration that complies with human rights standards and reaps the benefits and minimise the risks related to human mobility and diversity.

➤ **Human Rights and inclusive integration**

A thematic seminar on “Human Rights in the Intercultural City”, organised in Oslo in June 2017, has highlighted the strong links between the Intercultural integration approach and human rights, showcasing examples of good practices from ICC members in this field and pointing out at the key principles that enable full enjoyment of human rights in the city. The outcomes will be integrated in the ICC new policy paradigm that will be launched at the ICC Milestone event (Lisbon, November 2017), and contribute to the strategic development of the programme.

➤ **Prevention of discrimination: Anti-Rumours Methodology**

Successful intercultural strategies require changes in the mind-set, attitudes and behaviour of both migrants and receiving communities. Building trust and a feeling of belonging to a pluralistic community with shared fundamental principles is key to achieving cohesion. The difficulty of gaining access to reliable information or grasp the real impact (both negative and positive) of migration on communities is a major obstacle in achieving this goal. As a matter of fact, people often tend to form their views on the basis of unfounded “myths”, on wrong or partial information. These myths are often very specific to a certain locality (e.g. lack of places in kindergartens or social housing because of priority given to migrants).

The “Anti-rumour methodology” has been developed precisely to counter diversity-related prejudices and rumours that hamper positive interaction and social cohesion and that lay the foundations of discriminatory and racist attitudes. The Anti-rumour methodology promoted by the ICC programme, and understood as a public policy, is composed of a number of elements: identifying major rumours existing in a city; collecting objective data and also emotional arguments to dismantle false rumours; creating an anti-rumour network of local actors from civil society; empowering and training “anti-rumour agents”; and designing and implementing anti-rumour campaigns to raise awareness.

Following a first pilot action launched and tested by the ICC programme in some cities, the interest and demand for the Anti-rumour training is growing and thus the programme is developing an Anti-rumours Manual as a tool that cities and other stakeholders can use to ensure the proper and harmonised development of the standardised Anti-rumours methodology. It will also include an evaluation/assessment guide, as well as a set of examples of best and innovative practices, chosen after the mapping of the anti-rumours projects run so far. The publication of the Manual is foreseen by November 2017.

➤ **Migrant entrepreneurship**

Besides, the Intercultural Cities Programme also aims to elaborate and enact strategies and policies that can help cities work with diversity as a factor of development. This is strongly linked to the full inclusion of migrants in the local economy. That is why last year the ICC programme launched a Pilot Project to design a new type of business incubators which connect underrepresented (migrants/refugees, as well as women, LGBTI, people with disabilities) and mainstream entrepreneurs, across industry sectors, to maximise the innovation potential of diversity. The diversity connectors will provide general services such as technical training, access to potential funders, meeting spaces etc., as well as specific

services for under-represented start-ups. The project will end in November 2017 and deliver Guidelines for diversity connectors.

➤ **Religious minorities**

Held over two days, the seminar on “Tackling Prejudice and Engaging with Religious Minorities: the role of cities” (October 2016) explored local policy responses to tackling prejudice and discrimination against religious minorities, including anti-Muslim hatred, through an intercultural approach. The foundation for this approach is to acknowledge the rights of all individuals and groups, whether religious or not, under the European Convention on Human Rights, and to positively engage with faith communities alongside those with other beliefs, including secular worldviews, for the purpose of building trust cohesion and positive intercultural interactions within the city as a whole. It starts from the position of exploring how public discourse, policies, procedures and practices can have a significant impact in exacerbating and/or reducing experiences of prejudice and discrimination within local communities.

In the conclusions participants identified a wide range of potential ways of taking action, including: (i) the need for a robust legal framework for supporting the rights of all; (ii) challenging hate crime and discrimination across a range of fields and promoting more thorough and widespread collection of data; (iii) raising mutual awareness of different religions and beliefs; (iv) reasonable adaptation of public service delivery; (v) promoting positive interactions which build trust and involve interconvictional dialogue and/or working together on shared social issues to break down divides; (vi) engaging critically with political and media discourses, including seeking to counteract those which exacerbate division, and be aware of how other policy agendas can interact with and undermine attempts to challenge prejudice and discrimination; (vii) supporting and training people who can enable dialogue and build bridges between individuals and groups, including on issues where there is disagreement.

➤ **Diverse cultural heritage**

Urban heritage is the expression of a city’s identity. Different to national identities, urban identities can be inclusive to everyone living in a city, across national borders or citizenships. An intercultural approach to its heritage sector allows a city to actively open up the urban identity to all communities, increasing trust, mutual recognition and eventually community cohesion through an identity inclusive to all. STEPS is a EU-CoE Joint pilot project which aims at building and strengthening community cohesion, promoting trust, dialogue and mutual understanding across diverse societies, through participatory heritage-based action plans. Building on the experience and achievements of the Council of Europe and the cities of the ICC Network in the field of cultural heritage, as well as culturally diverse societies, STEPS will develop and test a methodological framework for the use of heritage at the local level, based on (I) Participatory heritage-mapping and need assessment in relation to community cohesion, (II) network mobilisation, training and heritage-based strategic planning, (III) developing of perception change indicators and monitoring of results through an initial and final survey. Launched in February 2017 STEPS will run until end of 2018.

A complete overview of the ICC activities can be found on the ICC website: www.coe.int/interculturalcities. Also, the 2016 Annual report is available [online](#).

Contacts:

Email: intercultural.cities@coe.int