



## Concept Note: Thematic Seminar

### Living together in inclusive democracies: how can the intercultural approach promote participation in diverse societies?

Members of the Intercultural Cities network have expressed an interest in prioritising actions on democratic and inclusive participation in 2018 and beyond<sup>1</sup>.

In line with the views of the wider Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities (ICC) are encouraged to build an effective culture of participation which is based on 'respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law'<sup>2</sup>. At the ICC Milestone event in Lisbon (November 2017), members discussed and agreed on an expanded ICC narrative and policy model to include participatory democracy<sup>3</sup>.

A separate scoping paper summarises some of the network's recent discussions around ideas to develop participation.

#### Details of the seminar

The seminar will take place from 26<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

The first day (26<sup>th</sup>) will involve talks, stories and case-studies, presentations and discussions to inform and inspire participants before they begin collaborative work later in the afternoon. Participants will explore the role of active participation in promoting human rights and democracy; overcoming the obstacles to inclusive participation; and inclusive participation in Tenerife. Given the nature of the seminar, it seemed appropriate to include a participatory session - everyone will have the chance to share and learn in a 'fishbowl' session exploring some key topics.

The second day (27<sup>th</sup>) will begin with local field visits that give participants the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the connection between theory and practice. Following lunch, participants will reconnect with our groups to continue the collaborative work.

By the end of the seminar, participants will have produced action points and guidelines for the Intercultural Cities network to develop and take forward in 2018.

#### Participation: engaging with migrants and minority groups

The Council of Europe defines 'participation' as being:

*"... about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due*

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<sup>1</sup> See the conclusions of the ICC Milestone Event, Lisbon, 28-29 November 2017: <https://rm.coe.int/icc-milestone-event-10-years-of-inclusive-integration-urban-policies-f/1680774d13>

<sup>2</sup> See Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making, Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017: [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd)

<sup>3</sup><https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-cities-bridging-the-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-age/1680766bd8>

*weight in accordance with their age and maturity*<sup>4</sup>

The Council of Europe has broadly expressed its support for strengthening participatory democracy, including through the adoption of *guidelines for civil participation in political decision making* by the Committee of Ministers in September 2017<sup>5</sup>. ICC members have further expressed the need to develop strategies and action plans on the topic of civil participation within diverse cities, including on how to mobilise and engage a diverse community.

Participatory democracy involves the idea that people should be able to determine or influence the decisions and responsibilities of public authorities beyond voting in elections. Public authorities have the opportunity to put participation at the heart of decision making on a huge range of different issues, and to develop *inclusive* participatory practices.

Through a commitment to participation, public authorities create and enable opportunities for people of different backgrounds and lived experiences to come together to make, shape and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

There's a range of different tools, methods and techniques that can be employed in different contexts to support inclusive practice. The goal is to create cities where people have the skills, knowledge, confidence and opportunities to participate; but also where public authorities are welcoming and encouraging of diverse participation, which opens avenues for people to engage with the issues that affect their everyday lives regardless of their citizenship status and other factors that may often exclude them from more traditional forms of participation, such as voting in elections.

Participation can also foster learning and understanding in the wider community. Through dialogue, people are encouraged to share their perspectives and to listen to others. Through deliberation, people are required to consider other people's perspectives in relation to their own. There is the potential to also cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging to community life, which can extend to people that are more transient or face systematic barriers, including migrant, refugee, Roma and Travellers communities.

## Focus on Roma inclusion

The Council of Europe's monitoring activities uncover evidence of widespread prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping of Roma communities across Europe. There's a need for stronger policies and strategies at the local and regional level to address issues around marginalisation and exclusion from civil participation, with a particular need for focused support to bring about the realisation of fundamental rights.

In 2010, the Council of Europe strengthened its commitment to the inclusion of Roma<sup>1</sup> through the adoption of the '*Strasbourg Declaration on Roma*'. It has since adopted a '*thematic action plan on the inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019)*<sup>6</sup> which outlines three main priorities, namely:

1. to tackle anti-Gypsyism, discrimination and crimes against Roma and Travellers<sup>7</sup>;

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<sup>4</sup> See CM Recommendation (2012)2 on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18 <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=1927229&Site=CM&direct=true> [Appendix Section I]

<sup>5</sup> [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509dd)

<sup>7</sup> See: 1) ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on Combating Anti-Gypsyism and Discrimination against Roma: [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation\\_N13/e-](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GPR/EN/Recommendation_N13/e-)

2. to demonstrate innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable<sup>8</sup>;
3. to promote innovative models for local-level solutions<sup>9</sup>

On this latter point, it is worth noting the work of the [European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion](#), set up by the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities with the support of Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. 130 cities and regions from 29 countries are now participating in the Alliance and reaffirmed their commitment to the fight against anti-Gypsyism by adopting a "Declaration of Mayors and Elected Local and Regional Representatives of Council of Europe Member States against anti-Gypsyism"<sup>10</sup>. The Declaration is open for further signature.

Specific objectives of the action plan with direct relevance to civil participation and participatory democracy include strengthening the self-organisation of young Roma and Travellers and their participation in society – including development of democratic leadership (2.1); supporting participation in local decision-making (3.1); and strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities to develop and implement plans, strategies and services for inclusion (3.2).

Intercultural cities have been working in this area and the seminar will include space in the agenda dedicated to focusing on Roma engagement and participation.

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## APPENDIX I - Glossary

As outlined in the CoE's 'Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making' (2017, section II, 2a-e)

- "civil participation": the engagement of individuals, NGOs and civil society at large in decision-making processes by public authorities. Civil participation in political decision-making is distinct from political activities in terms of direct engagement with political parties and from lobbying in relation to business interests;
- "decision-making process": the development, adoption, implementation, evaluation and reformulation of a policy document, a strategy, a law or a regulation at national, regional or local level, or any process where a decision is made that affects the public, or a segment thereof, by a public authority invested with the power to do so;
- "non-governmental organisations" (NGOs): voluntary self-governing bodies or organisations established to pursue the essentially non-profit-making objectives of their founders or members as set out in Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe. They may

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[RPG%2013%20-%20A4.pdf](#) ; 2) the Roma Youth Action Plan: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma/combating-antigypsyism> ; 3) "Mirrors – Manual on combating anti-gypsyism through human rights education: <https://rm.coe.int/1680494094>

<sup>8</sup> See for instance the projects "INSCHOOL" on setting-up mechanisms for more inclusive schools: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/inclusive-education-for-roma-children/home>

<sup>9</sup> See for instance the projects "ROMED", "ROMACT" and "ROMACTED" for improved participation of Roma communities: [www.coe-romact.org](http://www.coe-romact.org) ; [www.coe-romacted.org](http://www.coe-romacted.org)

<sup>10</sup> See the Declaration : <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/declaration-against-anti-gypsyism-the-congress-calls-on-local-and-regional-authorities-to-take-a-stand?desktop=false>

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include, for example, voluntary groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, charities or geographic or interest-based community and advocacy groups;

- “civil society at large”: the ensemble of individuals and organised, less organised and informal groups through which they contribute to society or express their views and opinions, including when raising issues regarding human rights violations, corruption and other misconduct or expressing critical comments. Such organised or less organised groups may include professional and grass-roots organisations, universities and research centres, religious and non-denominational organisations and human rights defenders;
- “public authority”: any executive, legislative or administrative body at national, regional or local level, including individuals, exercising executive power or administrative functions.

## Other definitions

- “participation” is about individuals and groups of individuals having the right, the means, the space, the opportunity and, where necessary, the support to freely express their views, to be heard and to contribute to decision making on matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity (see CoE, 2012, Appendix Section I)
- “Intercultural management of diversity” is based on the equal value of the citizens, and entails putting in place policies that promote cross-cultural exchange of views, interaction and debate, facilitating access to and exercise of citizenship and fostering intercultural competence, particularly at the local level; “culture” includes everything relating to ways of life, customs, beliefs and other things that have been passed on to us for generations, as well as the various forms of artistic creation (see CoE “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living together as equals in dignity”)
- Intercultural Participation Policies refers to policies and actions that enable collecting and channeling the concerns, needs, interests, and values of all residents - directly or via NGOs and/or representatives of civil society - so that these are taken into account and inform the decision-making process so that public needs are met decisions and actions on public matters and issues (see CoE’s “Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making”). Whenever effective participation is subject to nationality or full civil rights, local authorities should seek for other meaningful opportunities for non-nationals to take part in policy-making and thus cultivate a sense of ownership and belonging to the local community (see CoE ICC Policy Brief on “Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Strategies for the Intercultural City - 2017).
- “Citizen / Social / Community Participation” for the purpose of this Seminar, Citizen Participation means the intervention of citizens in the public sphere according to social interests of a particular or general nature through their representative organizations. Social Participation is a broader concept and refers to the grouping of individuals in civil society organizations for the defense and representation of their collective interests (for example immigrant associations, women's associations, functional diversity, etc.). It is also equated with the participation of society in general terms, individually, in groups and / or collectively. Community Participation refers to actions that take place in a specific community, usually linked to a specific territory, to find solutions to a need or organize around a common goal. This work contributes to community development, which is one of the goals we pursue and whose ultimate goal is the improvement of the community and its shared reality.
- “Horizontal approach to decision making” This is a form of work that aims to include all people and groups in the work that is carried out, based on counting, in equal conditions,

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with the participation and points of view of the three "actors" that intervene in the social construction: administrations, technical and professional dimension, together with citizenship. This way of working implies that decisions, objectives and actions are built "from the bottom up", starting from the contributions of the people on foot and reaching the spaces in which decisions are made.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> The terms "Roma" and "Travellers" are being used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "*Gens du voyage*", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The Council of Europe harmonised their terminology on Roma issues in 2006 - for more information, please refer to the can ['Descriptive glossary of terms relating to Roma issues'](#) (Council of Europe, May 2012)