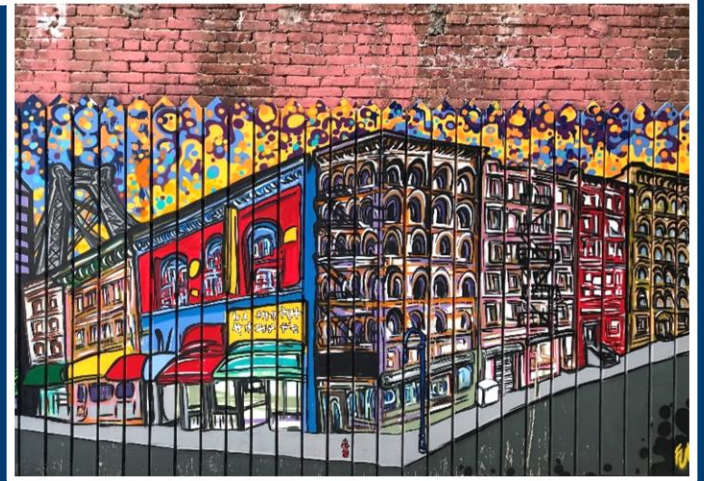




# RIGA

# INTERCULTURAL CITIES INDEX ANALYSIS 2023



Diversity, Equality, Interaction

## BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING WALLS



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RIGA  
INTERCULTURAL CITIES INDEX ANALYSIS

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## INTRODUCTION

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Intercultural Cities is a Council of Europe flagship programme. It seeks to explore the potential of an intercultural approach to integration in communities with culturally diverse populations. The cities participating in the programme are reviewing their governance, policies, discourse and practices from an intercultural point of view.

In the past, this review has taken the form of narrative reports and city profiles – a form which was rich in content and detail. However, narrative reports alone were relatively weak as tools to monitor and communicate progress. Thus, an “Intercultural Cities Index” has been designed as a benchmarking tool for the cities taking part in the programme as well as for future participants.

While this report is being written (October 2023) 162 cities embraced the ICC programme and approach, and 125 (including Riga) have analysed their intercultural policies using the Intercultural Cities Index. The respective reports can be found [here](#).

Among these cities, 28 cities (including Riga) have more than 500,000 inhabitants and 39 (including Riga) have between 10% and 15% of foreign-born residents.

This document presents the results of the Intercultural Cities Index analysis for Riga, Latvia, in 2023, and provides related intercultural policy conclusions and recommendations.

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## INTERCULTURAL CITY DEFINITION

The intercultural city has people with different nationalities, origins, languages or religions/beliefs. Political leaders and most citizens regard diversity positively, as a resource. The city actively combats discrimination and adapts its governance, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population. The city has a strategy and tools to deal with diversity and cultural conflict and to enhance participation. It encourages greater mixing and interaction between diverse groups in the public spaces.

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## METHODOLOGY

The Intercultural Cities Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 86 questions (73 of which are mandatory) grouped in 12 indicators with three distinct types of data. Indicators have been weighed for relative importance. For each indicator, the participating cities can reach up to 100 points (which are consolidated for the general Intercultural Cities Index).

These indicators comprise the following (including the two new indicators in bold):

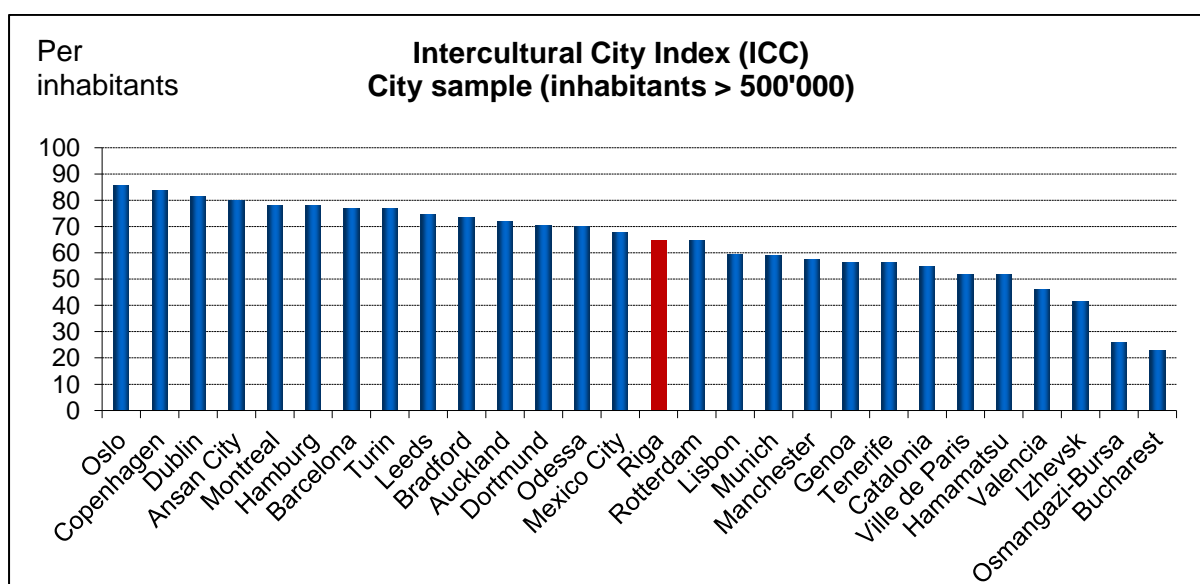
1. Commitment	
2. Intercultural lens	Education
3. Mediation and conflict resolution	Neighbourhoods
4. Language	Public services
5. Media and communication	Business and the labour market
6. International outlook	Cultural and social life
7. Intercultural intelligence and competence	Public space
8. Welcoming newcomers	
9. Leadership and citizenship	
10. Anti-discrimination	
<b>11. Participation</b>	
<b>12. Interaction</b>	

The comparison between cities is strictly indicative, given the large difference between cities in terms of historical development, type and scale of diversity, governance models and level of economic development. The comparison is based on a set of formal criteria related to the intercultural approach in urban policies and intended **only as a tool for benchmarking/benchlearning**, to motivate cities to learn from good practice.

Taking into account the above-mentioned differences between the cities and a growing number of new cities willing to join the Intercultural Cities Index, it has been decided to compare the cities not only within the entire sample, but also according to specific criteria. Two of these have been singled out insofar: the size (below 100,000 inhabitants; between 100,000 and 200,000; between 200,000 and 500,000; and above 500,000 inhabitants) and the percentage of foreign-born residents (lower than 10 per cent; between 10 and 15 per cent; between 15 and 20 per cent; and higher than 20 per cent). It is believed that this approach would allow for more valid and useful comparison, visual presentation and filtering of the results.

So far, 42 cities have used the Intercultural Cities Index containing the new indicators in their evaluations, including Riga. Thus, the city will be compared to the entire sample for all the indicators, and to the new sample for the new indicators relating to participation and interaction.

According to the overall Intercultural Cities Index results, Riga has an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index result of 65 (out of 100 possible points). The details of this result will be explained below.<sup>1</sup>

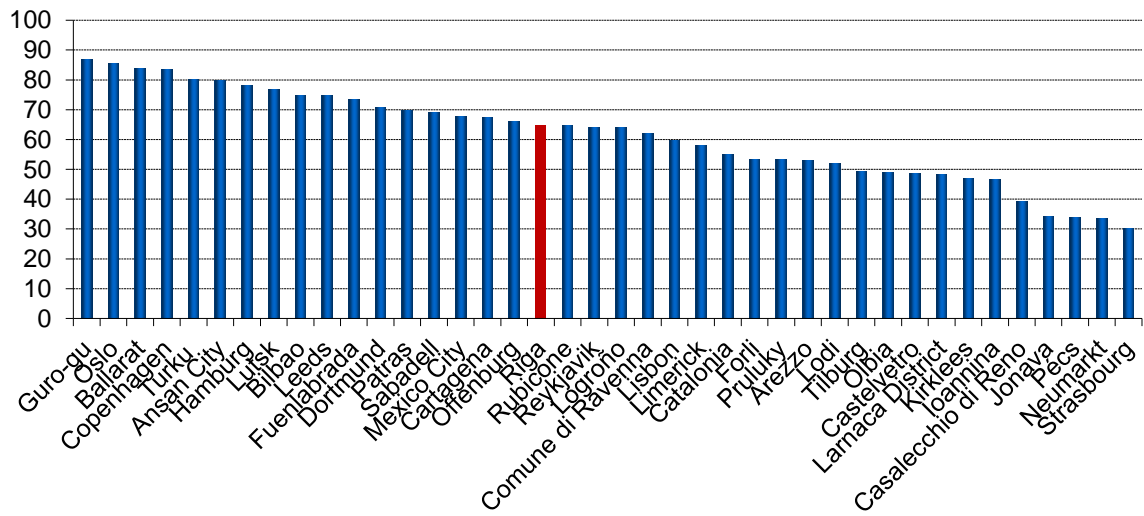


<sup>1</sup> The original Intercultural Cities Index contained 69 questions. The Intercultural Cities Index was updated in 2019, when additional questions were added, some questions were removed and completely new indicators were added (anti-discrimination, interaction and participation), resulting in the extended Intercultural Cities Index with 86 questions. As a main rule, the Intercultural Cities Index report applies the scoring from the original Intercultural Cities Index, to ensure the broadest possible comparison group in the global achievement rate.

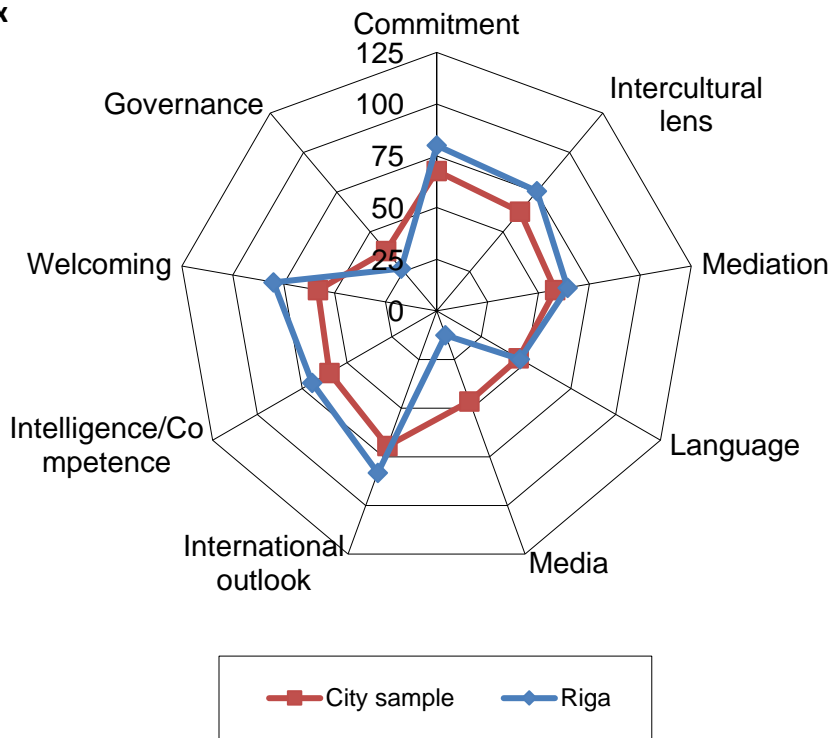
In addition, the scoring from the extended Intercultural Cities Index is provided in an explanatory footnote for all indicators where it is relevant. This scoring encompasses the assessment of the questions of the original Intercultural Cities Index as well as the new questions of the extended Intercultural Cities Index for each specific indicator. The scoring of the original Intercultural Cities Index and extended Intercultural Cities Index for the same indicator may hence differ based on the differing number of questions. Finally, the indicators which are completely new to the extended Intercultural Cities Index only include the scoring from the extended Intercultural Cities Index. This scoring for these indicators hence shows directly in the text and not in a footnote.

Per diversity

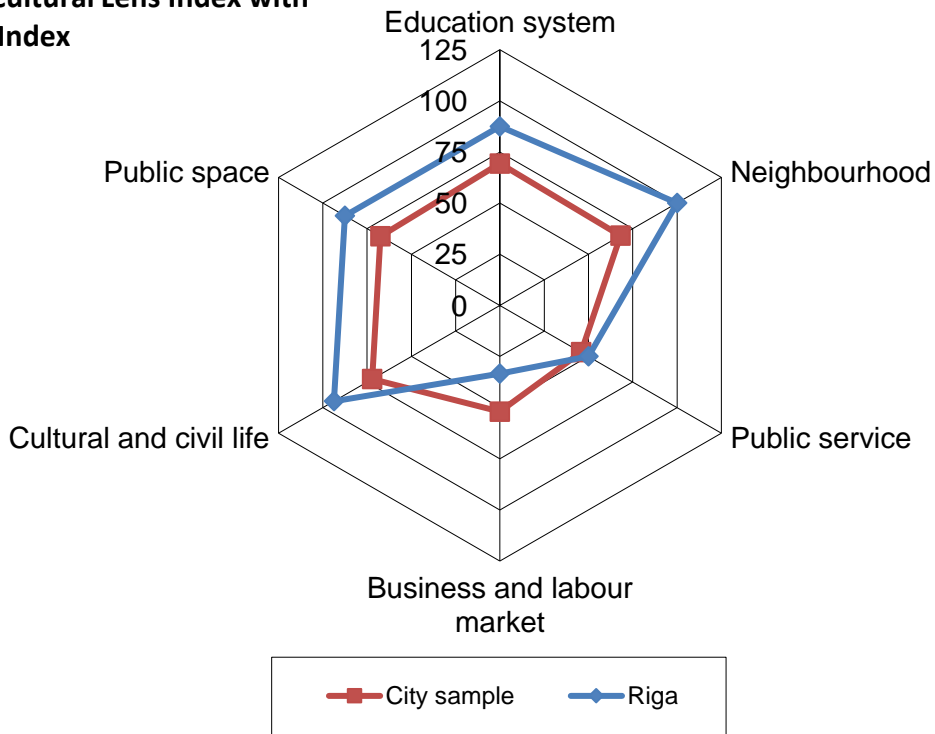
### Intercultural City Index (ICC) City sample (non-nationals/foreign borns 10% - 15%)



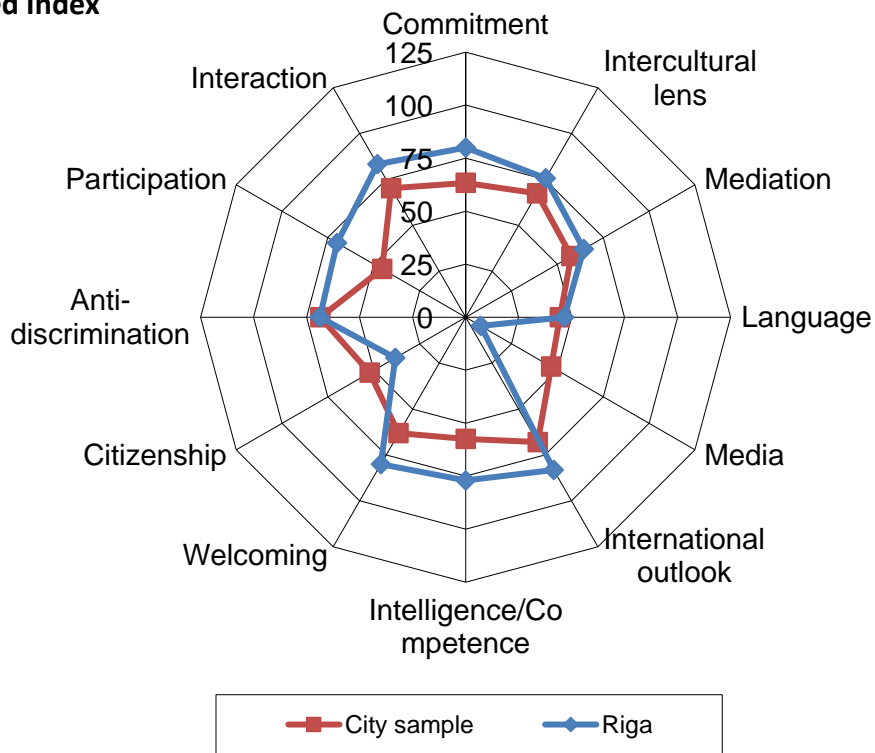
### Core Index

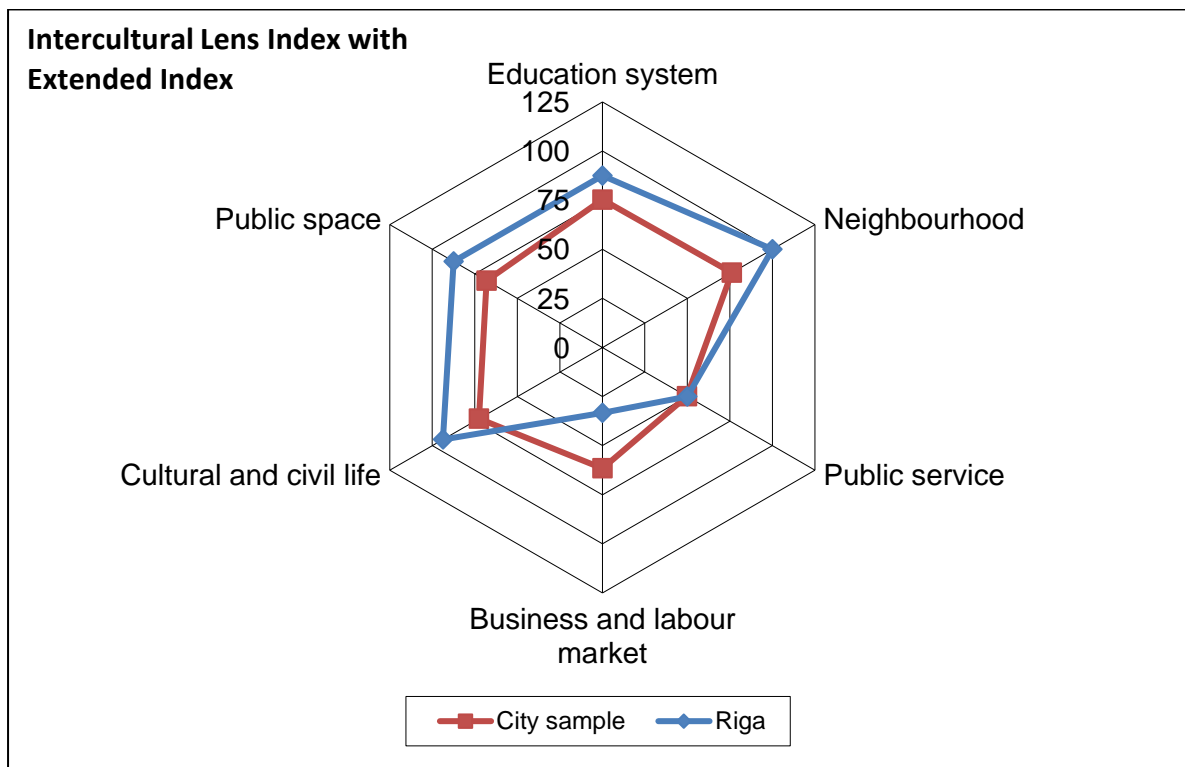


**Intercultural Lens Index with Core Index**



**Extended Index**





## RIGA: AN OVERVIEW

Riga is the capital of the Republic of Latvia and the largest city in the Baltics. Riga was granted its city charter in 1201 and in 2001 celebrated its 800th anniversary. Historically Riga has always been a crossroads, a melting pot of various nations and cultures. The unique character of the city has also been formed its proximity to water – the Daugava River and the Gulf of Riga – that has played an important role in Riga being known as a city of merchants and international trade.

This city of more than 600,000 inhabitants has a diverse ethnic makeup. Traditional ethnic minority groups historically residing in the territory of Latvia include Russians, Poles, Belarussians, Lithuanians, Roma and Jews. The largest ethnic groups in Riga in 2023 are: ethnic Latvians (44%), Russians (35%), Ukrainians (5%), Belarussians (3%), Poles (2%)<sup>2</sup>. Ethnic diversity in Riga has been increasing during the last few years. In addition to the historic minorities, people from different countries chose Riga as the place of their residence. More than half of newcomers who have come to Latvia reside in the capital city Riga and there has been a steady increase in foreign nationals from around 30 000 in 2012 to 75 513 in 2023.<sup>3</sup> The number of Ukrainians has increased since 2022 when Riga provided shelter and support to thousands of Ukrainians who fled their homes due to the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine.<sup>4</sup>

Riga has six administrative units: Centre District, Kurzeme District, Northern District, Vidzeme Suburb, Latgale Suburb, and Zemgale Suburb. Riga is also divided into 58 neighbourhoods, which are not administrative territories. Each neighbourhood has a residential environment with its own services, identity and character, which derives from the types of building, physical boundaries, landscape and sense of community. Among the main reasons behind the creation of the neighbourhoods as units in Riga have been the efforts to improve urban development planning and the quality of life of the residents.

Riga is experiencing trends that are similar to those faced by other capital cities in Eastern Europe – a decrease in the population, emigration, an increase in the number of foreigners residing in Riga, aging residents, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Information of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, <https://www.pmlp.gov.lv/lv/media/9741/download?attachment> (data from 01.01.2023).

<sup>3</sup> Information of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs (data from 05.06.2023 and from 01.01.2012).

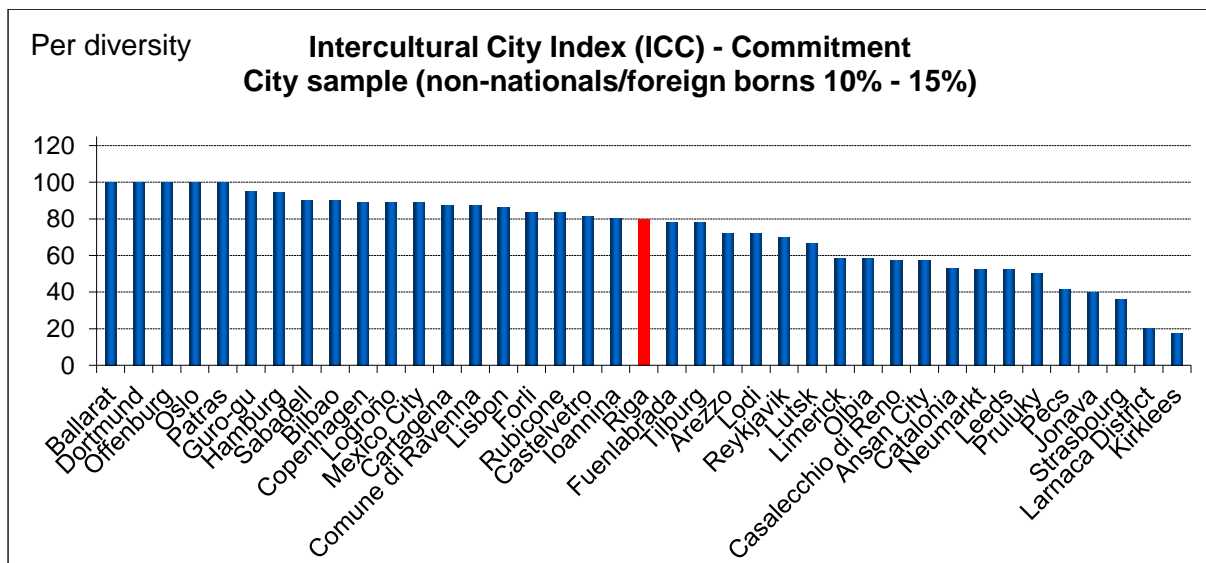
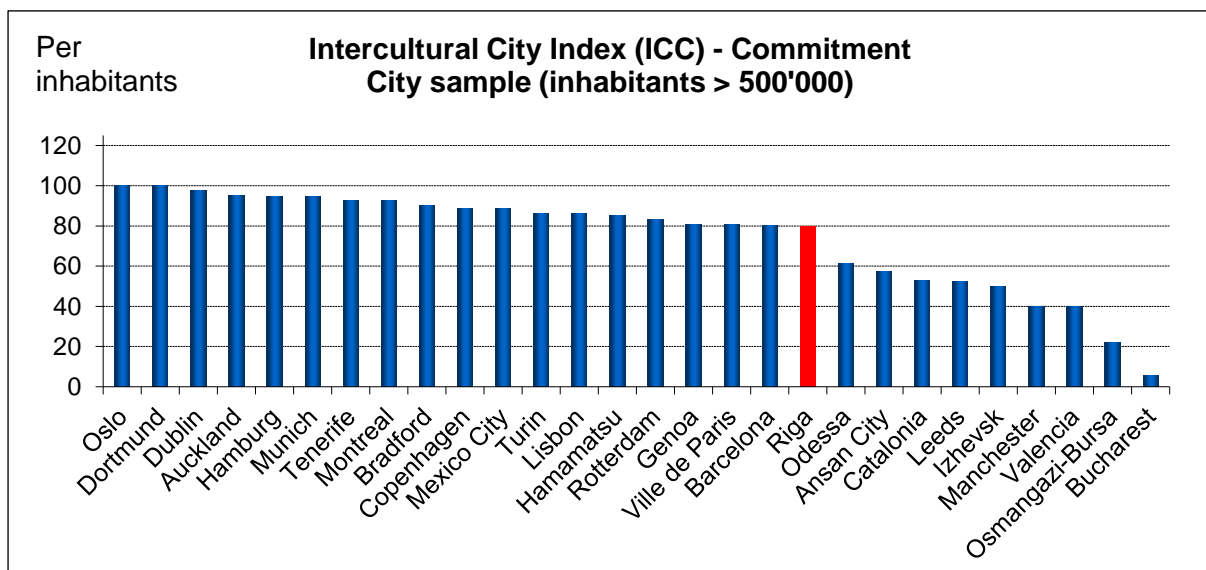
<sup>4</sup> At 17.05.2023, 21 879 Ukrainian civilians have registered at the Riga support Centre for Ukrainian Residents (Data source - Register of information necessary for providing support to Ukrainian civilians).



## COMMITMENT

For intercultural inclusion to occur, city authorities need to send out a clear and well-publicised message emphasising their commitment to intercultural principles, i.e. diversity, equality and interaction. Ideally, a majority of elected officials and senior policy officers will have a clear understanding of these core principles and their implications for policy-making. City authorities also need to initiate an institutional process to translate the principles of interculturality into concrete policies and actions. Most importantly, an intercultural city actively seeks to include residents of all nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups in the policy-making process. The authorities also highlight and nurture any intercultural practices that may already exist in the city.

Riga achieved a rate of 80%, which is higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 68%. This was achieved as a result of Riga's clear commitment towards achieving intercultural inclusion, demonstrated through its relevant strategies, action plans, coordination structures and public statements.



Riga does not have a formally adopted public statement that it is an Intercultural City.

Since 2012, the city of Riga has adopted two integration strategies: *Riga City Integration Programme* (2012-2017) and [Riga City Integration Programme "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga" \(2019-2024\)](#), as well as the

action plans for the latter document covering the periods [2019-2021](#) and [2022-2024](#). Both integration programmes include intercultural dialogue and tolerance as a policy direction.

The action plans define objectives and activities related to interculturalism, such as the protection of identity of different ethnic groups; support for amateur art groups, including those representing national minorities; activities aimed at enhancing the intercultural competences of teachers; support for teachers teaching in diverse classes; trainings for municipal employees on migration issues, diversity management and intercultural communication; support activities for the relocation and integration of newcomers and returning emigrants; and other activities.

In order to substantiate its commitment towards inclusiveness, in 2012 Riga signed the Integrating Cities Charter of EUROCITIES. The Charter harnesses the duties and responsibilities of European cities in their roles as policy makers, service providers, employers and buyers of goods and services to provide equal opportunities for all residents, to integrate migrants, and to embrace the diversity of their population. Riga regularly reports on its commitments under the charter.

Riga has allocated a budget for the implementation of the intercultural strategy and action plan. Resources were made available for the implementation of activities included in the Riga City Integration programme, implemented by various departments and units of Riga Municipality. At least 476 690 EUR (for 2022) and 556 690 EUR (for 2023) were allocated in the budget of the Neighbourhood Residents Centre for the implementation of the strategy. In addition, external financing has been provided by an international EU-funded project which is being implemented by the city: "Migrant integration through locally designed experience (MILE)" with a budget of 35 952 EUR for 2022-2023 from the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs).

The city systematically engages in co-design of policies by involving people with diverse backgrounds in policy formulation. In 2010, the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council was established, consisting of representatives of the Riga Municipality, representatives of NGOs (including those representing national minorities and immigrants). During the elaboration of the integration strategies (Riga City Integration Programme (2012-2017) and Riga City Integration Programme "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga" (2019-2024)) and their respective action plans, the representatives of NGOs and grassroots organisations were invited through public consultations to contribute to the elaboration of these documents. The consultation process also involved representatives of the organisations who are members of the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council.

An evaluation and updating process has been put in place for the intercultural strategy and action plan. The evaluation of the Riga City Integration Programme (2012-2017) has already been completed. The results of this evaluation were taken into account during the elaboration of the next integration strategy for 2019-2024. As part of the annual monitoring efforts, a compilation of the results of the activities conducted within the action plan in a given year is prepared and presented to the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council. The results are analysed and mitigation measures are considered and discussed for the objectives which could not be fully achieved, together with planning the next years' activities.

Official communications by the city of Riga rarely make clear reference to the city's intercultural commitment. However, on a political level, the Riga City Council management, when representing Riga during political debates and at international conferences, provides information about Riga's diversity and its intercultural commitments. The message of intercultural dialogue appears throughout various activities conducted by the Education, Culture and Sports Department, as well as the Neighbourhood Residents Centre and is a part of their official communication. In its communication with private investors, the Riga Investment and Tourism Agency presents Riga as an international and intercultural city. Last but not least, there are also specific actions that Riga Municipality takes to show its intercultural commitment in practice. Since 2022, Riga has shown its commitment to welcoming and supporting Ukrainian refugees with a multi-layered message that also includes the city's intercultural commitment. For example, the City Council decided to provide space in the Town Hall free of charge for several NGOs that provide support for Ukraine. As of October 2023, the space was being used as a Ukrainian community centre and a cafeteria where Ukrainian refugees serve Ukrainian food.

The city has an official webpage that communicates its intercultural strategy and action plan, which is accessible in 2 clicks. There is also a [section](#) related to integration on the website of the Neighbourhood Residents Centre of Riga City (available only in Latvian).

The city of Riga has a dedicated body responsible for implementing the intercultural strategy. The Society Integration and Participation Division at the Neighbourhood Residents Centre is responsible for setting priorities and developing policy documents in the area of integration, as well as for monitoring the implementation of these

policies. The Division ensures cooperation with the residents of Riga, NGOs and religious organisations, as well as citizen initiative groups on questions related to integration issues. The Division is also involved in the elaboration and development of various tools related to the participation of residents of Riga in the decision-making process. Last but not least, it also coordinates responses to the feedback provided by NGOs and residents of Riga in relation to the area of inclusion and integration and ensures cooperation with state and municipal institutions on the abovementioned issues.

The previously mentioned Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council is the consultative body of the Riga City Council created to ensure the participation of non-governmental organisations in integration policy planning, implementation and evaluation. Moreover, there is a very well-established informal cooperation and coordination between the departments involved in the implementation of the Riga City Integration Programme "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga" (2019-2024), such as the Neighbourhood Residents Centre of Riga City, Education, Culture and Sports Department, Welfare Department and City Development Department.

Riga acknowledges and honours local residents and organisations that have done exceptional things to encourage interculturalism in the local community. There are different awards given by Riga Municipality for different target groups, such as teachers in schools, kindergartens and hobby groups, cultural workers, sportsmen. There is annual award for teachers which includes a category for inclusive education. In addition, the traditional Riga City Council award "[Gada rīdzinieks](#)" ("The Rigan of the Year") and the Certificate of Honour were awarded in 2022 to the association "[Tavi draugi](#)" ("Your Friends") for actively uniting society and coordinating support provided to Ukrainian refugees. The association accepts donations from Riga residents, helps refugees with everyday life items, organises sending aid to Ukraine and implements other support activities.

Since 2013, there is an annual award for "Volunteer of the Year", both at the state and municipal level. In 2022 [several organisations and one volunteer](#) received awards for their voluntary work with Ukrainian refugees.

### Suggestions

The city of Riga shows a high-level of commitment towards intercultural inclusion, demonstrated in relevant strategies, action plans and coordination structures and through public statements. The city may wish to show this commitment in a more visible way on the city's website and by formally adopting a public statement that it is an Intercultural City.

One city that has made a long-term effort to communicate its intercultural commitment is [Bilbao](#) (Spain), with its "Bilbao, City of Values" project. After a process of citizen participation, the Plenary of the City Council approved the [Bilbao Charter of Values](#) on 22 March 2018. The Bilbao Charter of Values encompasses the following individual and collective values:

- Respect for human rights, social justice, gender equality, solidarity;
- Diversity/inclusion, commitment, environmental sustainability;
- Participation, trust, creativity, coexistence, identity, effort;
- Co-responsibility, honesty, enthusiasm, health.

The Charter includes the possibility for neighbours, as well as institutions, companies, and entities, to join. This adhesion implies a commitment to maintain and promote attitudes and behaviours following the spirit and content of the Charter.

The city of Riga may wish to make an official statement regarding its membership in the Intercultural Cities programme, as well as its commitment towards interculturalism and inclusiveness, as for instance [Sabadell](#) (Spain) did. Sabadell's commitment to the intercultural approach was demonstrated through the adoption of various public statements, such as the institutional declaration "Sabadell free of racism, xenophobia and homophobia" (January 2014); the approval of the mayor's office proposal to encourage awareness policies in favour of living together and to dismantle rumours against diversity (December 2014). More recently, the regional government board declared Sabadell a city free of fascism and racism and in favour of living together in diversity (February 2019).

## THE CITY THROUGH AN INTERCULTURAL LENS

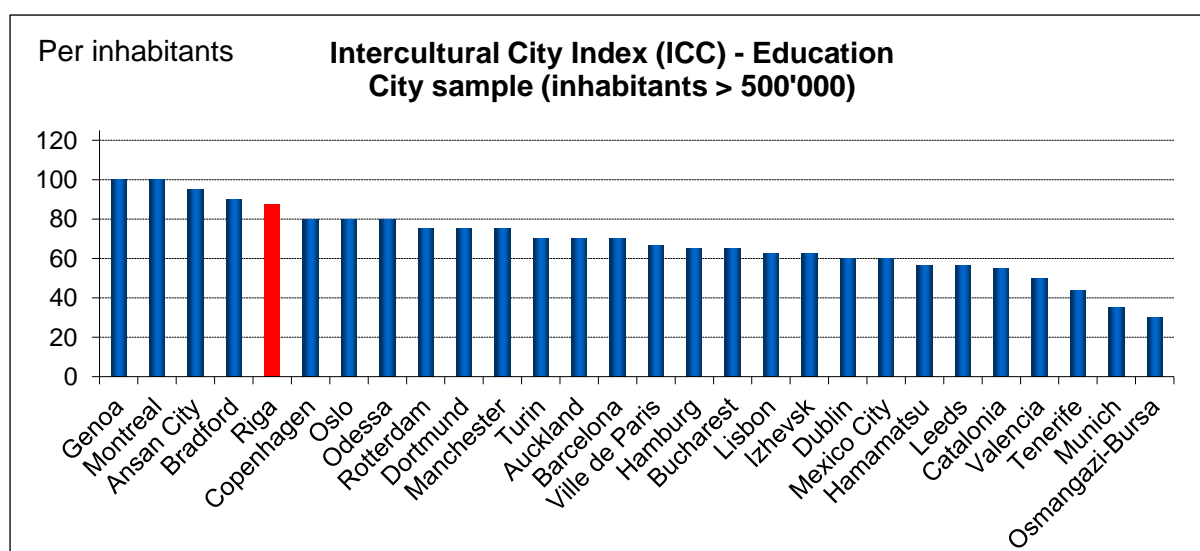
Although the formal functions cities and other local authorities assume vary considerably from one country to another, all cities have the primary responsibility for maintaining social cohesion and preserving the quality of life in the city. The policies designed to achieve these goals will therefore be re-conceived and re-configured in order to assure they provide adequate service to all residents regardless of their nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientation and age group. This is most notably the case for policies concerning education, neighbourhoods, public services, business and the labour market, cultural and social life, and public space.

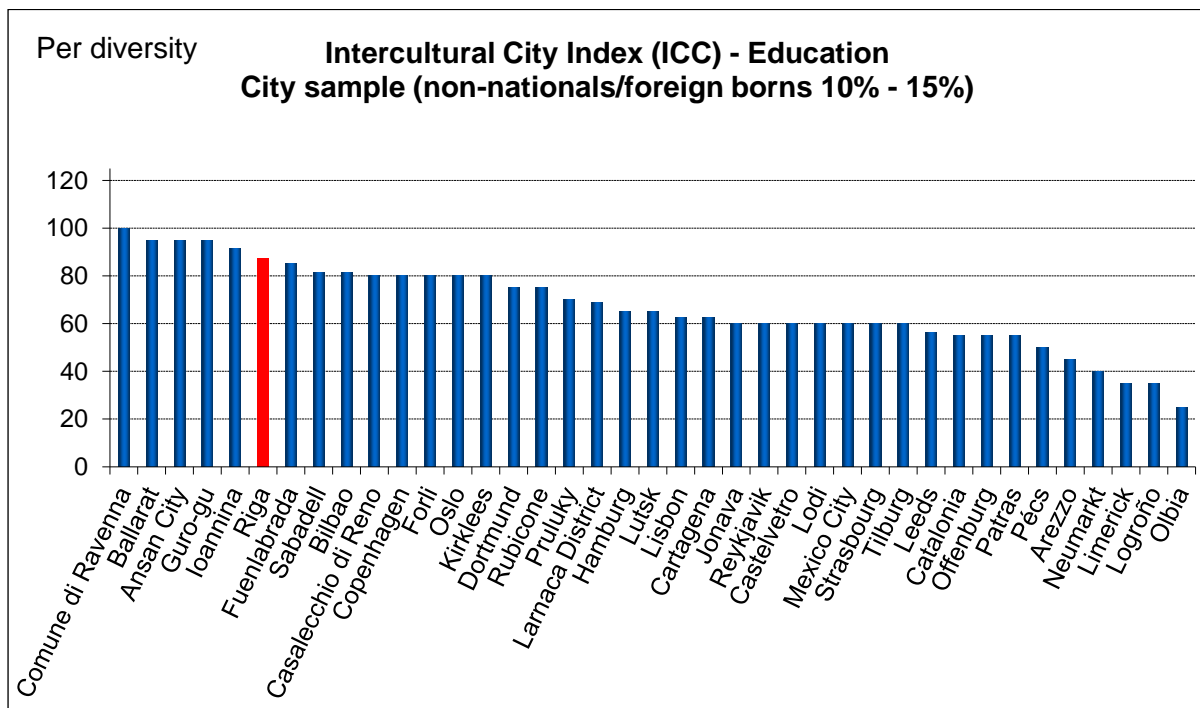
The overall rate of achievement of the urban policies of Riga, assessed as a whole through an "intercultural lens" is higher to that of the model city: 76% of these objectives were achieved while the rate of achievement of the model city reaches 63%.

### EDUCATION

*Formal education and extracurricular activities have a powerful influence on how children will perceive diversity as they grow up. Schools therefore have a strong potential to reinforce or, on the contrary, challenge prejudices and negative stereotyping. Although school programmes are defined primarily at the national or regional level, local schools can look at alternative and innovative ways of providing opportunities for children of different cultures to build trust and mutual respect, and create thereby favourable learning conditions for all pupils, irrespective of their nationalities, origins, languages, sexual orientation or gender identity, religions/beliefs. From the intercultural perspective, cultural and other diversities, including multilingualism are treated as positive opportunities and are nurtured accordingly. Intercultural schools also consider parents of pupils with migrant/minority backgrounds on an equal basis as other parents. They take steps to ensure that all parents overcome any reluctance they may have in engaging with the school and give them in this way the possibility of playing the educational role usually expected from parents.*

Riga achieved a rate of 88%, which is higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 69%. This above-average result is due to the city's efforts to enhance the diversity of pupils and staff in schools, cooperate closely with parents of children of different cultures and to promote inclusion and anti-discrimination through various projects implemented in schools and kindergartens.





In Riga, children in primary schools are from different ethnic or cultural background and the ethnic or cultural background of teachers in schools often reflects the composition of the city's population.

In 2021, the Education, Culture and Sports Department of Riga City Council conducted [research](#) about the children of newcomers and returning emigrants. According to the research, more than 80% of Riga schools had contact with a child – newcomers and returning emigrants within the last 3 years. About 50% of schools had such children in their schools at the time of the research and 21% of these schools indicated that close cooperation with the parents of these children is one of the most important support mechanisms for the pupils.

Only a few schools make strong efforts to involve parents with migrant or minority backgrounds in school life. In cases when there are children of migrant backgrounds in the class, the school cooperates with the parents to ensure full inclusion of children into the school life. Currently there are 1,941 pupils of migrant/minority background attending schools of Riga - coming from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Vietnam, China, Lithuania, and other countries. In addition, since March 2022, the Education, Culture and Sports Department of the Riga City Council received 3,944 applications from parents of Ukrainian children who fled the war in Ukraine (2,498 for schools and 1,446 for kindergartens). At the moment, 7 Ukrainian groups for Ukrainian children, where the teachers are Ukrainians, are operating. One of the schools (school No. 93) established a methodological support centre for educational staff who work with migrant children, by providing consultations for school staff, organising seminars and exchanges of experience.

Schools often carry out international projects. Riga schools regularly implement Erasmus+ and Nordplus projects, one of the most common topics being intercultural dialogue through international cooperation and student exchanges. Cross-cultural events, exchange trips, cooperation events are organised in schools (for example, Riga State German Gymnasium cooperation in the field of education and culture with German schools).

Riga Municipality launches different project [competitions](#) to provide financial support for the projects aimed at promoting the integration of society in Riga. One such competition is the society integration project for subordinate institutions of Riga City Council (such as schools and kindergartens). Promotion of tolerance and prevention of all kinds of discrimination (intercultural dialogue, protection of ethnic identity) is one of the areas, in which the projects are awarded. Numerous projects have been approved and implemented by subordinate institutions of Riga City Council since this competition was launched in 2011.

No segregation has been observed in schools, therefore there is no need for policies to increase ethnic/cultural mixing.

## Suggestions

The city of Riga shows very good results in this area. Although it has a very good cooperation with the parents of children of different cultures attending the city's educational facilities, it may wish to draw further inspiration from other cities of the Intercultural Cities programme in this regard.

In this regard, [Salisbury](#) (Australia) provides a good example, as some local schools run programmes for parents in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. Furthermore, these schools have access to translators so parents can communicate in their own language.

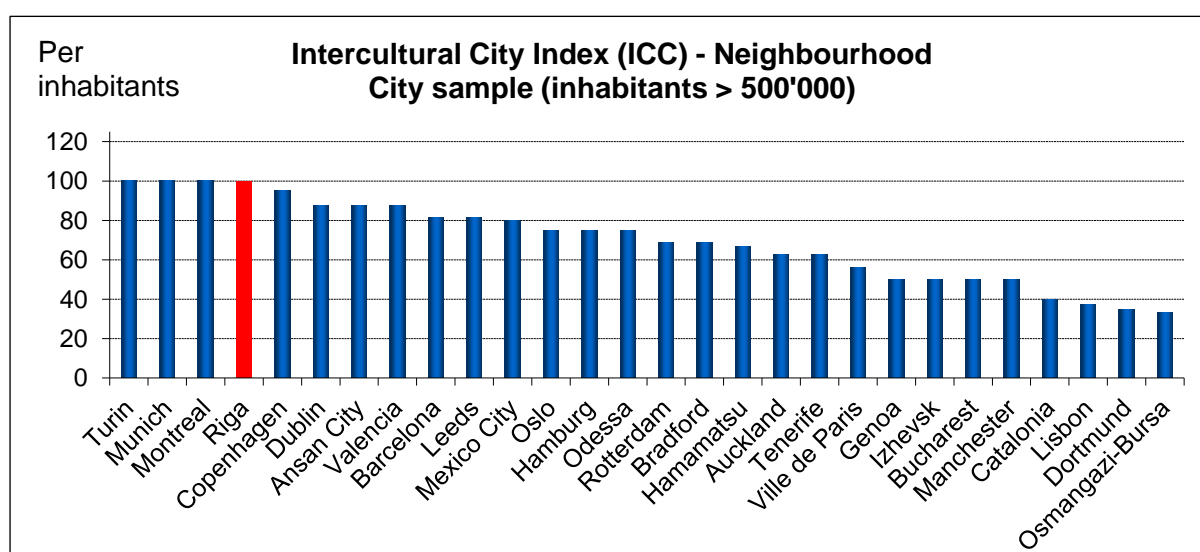
The example of [Montreal](#) (Canada) can also be inspiring. The city carries out activities aimed at encouraging parent involvement, intercultural mediation, advocating respect for and appreciating cultural diversity, and teaching intercultural dialogue in partnership with other bodies and institutions. For example, the Montreal History Centre, a city-run body, conducts various major intercultural projects in co-operation with schools, which may be of interest. In particular, "You're part of the story" is an educational programme conducted between the city of Montreal and the Quebec Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion aimed at secondary school reception classes. It aims to build bridges between the past of newly arrived pupils and their new lives through the telling of personal stories and recording of personal "treasures" which the pupils share with Montrealers through a museum. The programme fosters the learning of the host country's languages, as well as self-esteem and interaction between the new pupils and other citizens.

ICC programme resources on education are also available [here](#).

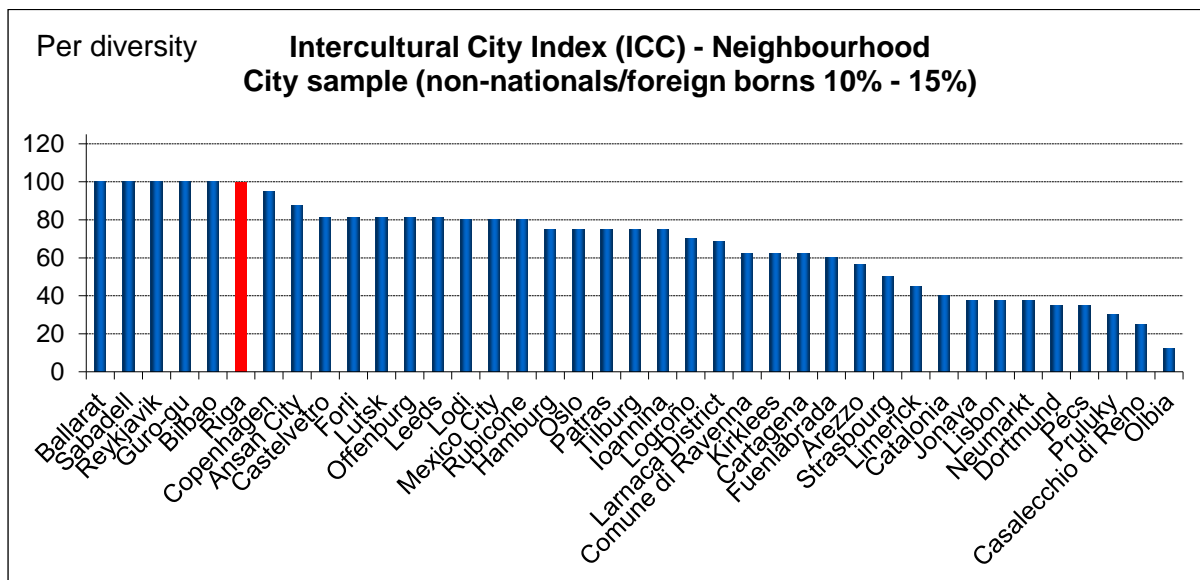
## NEIGHBOURHOODS

*Within a city, districts, neighbourhoods, or other territorial sub-units, can be more or less culturally/ethnically diverse. People are indeed free to move and settle in the neighbourhood of their choice. To be intercultural, a city does not require a 'perfect' statistical mix of people in all neighbourhoods. It will however make sure that ethnic concentration in a neighbourhood does not convert into socio-cultural segregation, and does not act as a barrier to the inward and outward flow of people, ideas and opportunities. In particular, the intercultural city ensures the same quality of public service delivery in all the neighbourhoods and plans public space, infrastructures, social, cultural and sport activities to encourage intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction.*

Riga achieved a rate of 100%, which is considerably higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 68%. This is an excellent outcome. The city's continuous efforts to prevent ethnic concentrations in neighbourhoods, to actively promote inclusion and interactions between and within neighbourhoods have contributed to this outstanding result.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Riga's achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 100%, while the city sample achievement rate is 77%.



Most districts/neighbourhoods of the city of Riga are culturally and ethnically diverse.

The city does not face problems of ethnic concentration; therefore, it does not need nor have a policy for increasing the diversity of residents in the neighbourhoods and avoiding ethnic concentration.

The city encourages actions where residents of one neighbourhood meet and interact with residents with different migrant/minority backgrounds from other neighbourhoods.

There are no ethnically segregated neighbourhoods in Riga but there are many cultural, educational and integration type of activities aimed at bringing together inhabitants both within one neighbourhood as well as from different neighbourhoods.

Riga Municipality provides financial support for meetings and interaction of all residents without particular focus on migrant/minority background. Financing is made available by the city through open [calls](#) for community associations, NGOs and entrepreneurs to organise events in city's neighbourhoods. Events for the Riga Summer Culture programme are mainly carried out in neighbourhoods (11 locations all over the city in 2022). Riga City Culture institutions organise regular concerts, theatre, educational and discussion programmes in mobile culture spaces "Stropi" in four neighbourhoods. Branches of Riga Central Library cooperate actively with local community centres in organising events. There are also thematic Advent, Christmas and New Year events organised in public space all over the city (70 events in 23 neighbourhoods of Riga in 2022).

Every summer, the Riga City festival is held. On this occasion, different celebrations/festivals are organised also in the neighbourhoods of Riga. Neighbourhood Coordinators are involved in this process. These celebrations or festivals are targeted to a specific neighbourhood and are partially organised by different neighbourhood organisations with the financing from the Municipality. These celebrations bring all residents, irrespective of their origin or ethnicity, to celebrate, to be together and enjoy the summertime. This strengthens the sense of local belonging and helps social interactions. In 2023 there will be 11 celebrations/festivals in different neighbourhoods, targeted to engage citizens in neighbourhoods further from the city centre.

Three types of subordinate institutions of Welfare Department work with adults, young people and children in different neighbourhoods of Riga: one community centre, six day centres and two day centres for children. The main aim of these centres is to help the residents to get involved and participate in community life, develop social skills and abilities, and spend free time meaningfully. In 2022, 2,502 Ukrainian residents (children and adults) also received day centre services. Children were helped in the education process and in building relationships with other children, while adults came to day centres to receive psychological support, attend Latvian language classes or to attended lectures, etc.

Riga NGO House is an important initiative in this context. It was set up by Riga Municipality in 2013. It is a space maintained by the municipality, in which all premises are provided for non-governmental organisations free of charge. Set in a refurbished school building, the NGO House is a place where organisations can develop sustainable cooperation with the municipality, receive educational, technical, and administrative support and organise various events and activities. It is also a place for raising and debating issues that are topical for civil

society. In 2017, Riga NGO House received [Good Practice status](#) of URBACT programme. The NGO House proved to be a valuable partner for minority organisations operating in Riga. 14 national minority NGOs have regular rehearsals in the premises: Russians, Belarusians, Slavic, Kazakhs, Moldavian, Bulgarians, Ukrainians, and Poles. 20 national minority NGOs have conducted different activities on regular basis (seminars, conferences, concerts): Bulgarians, Belarusians, Slavic Buryat, Ukrainians, Jewish, Germans, Poles, Bashkirs and Russians. NGO House also cooperates with a number of NGOs that represent the interests of migrants and helps them to set up meaningful interactions with the host society. For example, in the last year, migrant communities have been brought together by the associations "Tīne", "Free Belarus", "JCI Latvia", "Baltic-Chinese Business, Culture and Education Cooperation Agency", "Grīziņa attīstībai" and "Malta Orders Aid Service".

Riga Municipality launches different [calls](#) for proposals to provide financial support for the projects aimed at promoting the integration of society in Riga City. One such competition is "The neighbourhood initiatives to promote participation and sense of belonging". The aim of the competition is to promote civic participation of the inhabitants of Riga, as well as to educate and inform the residents about this topic, including promoting volunteering and sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, city and state, defending the interests of the local community, exploring the problems of the residents and seeking solutions for mutual cooperation between the residents and the municipality, as well as ensuring the personal participation of the inhabitants in improving the living environment of the community.

The city has a policy in place to encourage residents with migrant/minority backgrounds to meet and interact with other people living in the same neighbourhood.

One of the aims of Riga City Development Programme 2022-2027 is the development of diverse cultural spaces, encouraging community engagement in creative cultural processes and access to culture for everybody. The city of Riga supports cultural diversity and community activities in the neighbourhoods and encourages participation in cultural processes, extending the public library network in residential areas, providing for competitive services in cultural institutions and developing their cooperation with local communities.

Riga City Integration Programme "Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga" (2019-2024) foresees ensuring cultural events and cultural processes in the neighbourhoods, including the organisation of multicultural holidays, festivals and other mass events, creating an opportunity for all groups of society to be socially active and creating a platform for mutual interaction of different ethnic, age and social groups.

### [Suggestions](#)

This is an area of strength for Riga as it shows many good practices which can be an inspiration for others. In the spirit of learning, the city may wish to consult good practices of other cities to seek new ideas for encouraging intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction at the level of neighbourhoods.

The neighbourhood plan created by [Barcelona](#) (Spain) has actively contributed to their diversification of neighbourhoods in the city and could be of interest, particularly given Botkyrka's innovative work at district level. The Barcelona Neighbourhood Plan (Pla de Barris) is a municipal initiative that implements social, economic, and urban actions to improve the neighbourhoods that need it most, in collaboration with local residents. The Directorate of Community Action Services, Neighbourhood Plan and the city's districts work together to create links and good neighbourhood relations. They consider the intercultural perspective which includes combatting segregation and fostering positive interaction. In addition, a person from the Intercultural team works on the Neighbourhood Plan, bringing cross fertilisation of experience. District personnel are even taking the initiative to design their own Intercultural Action Plans. The "territorialisation" of the intercultural perspective through the involvement and connections between different districts and neighbourhoods shows how embedded interculturalism is in the city.

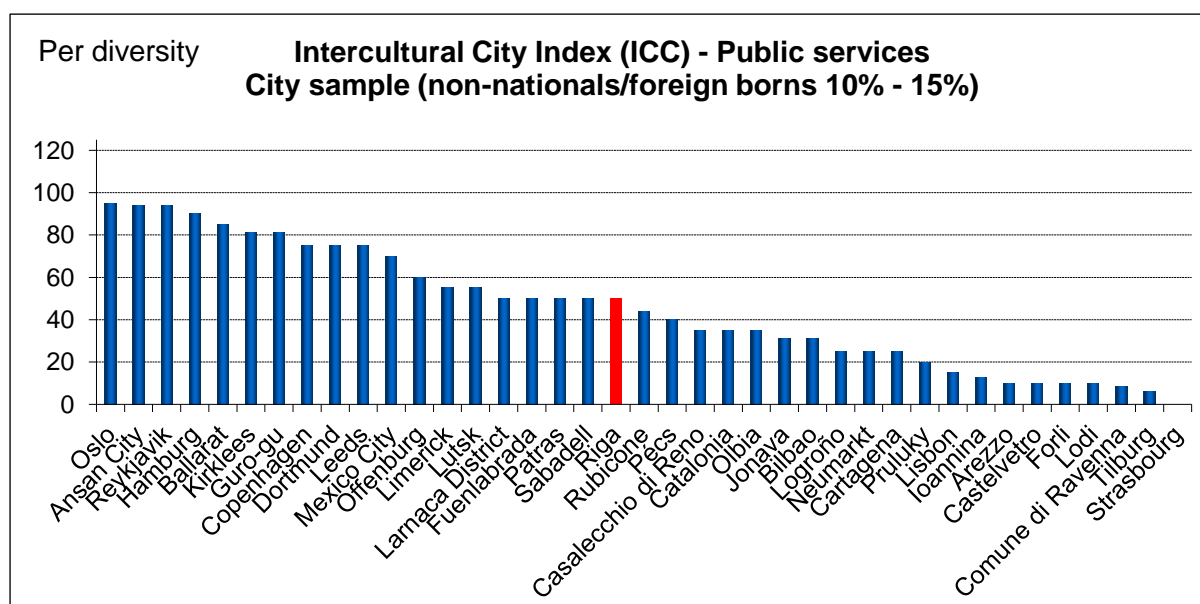
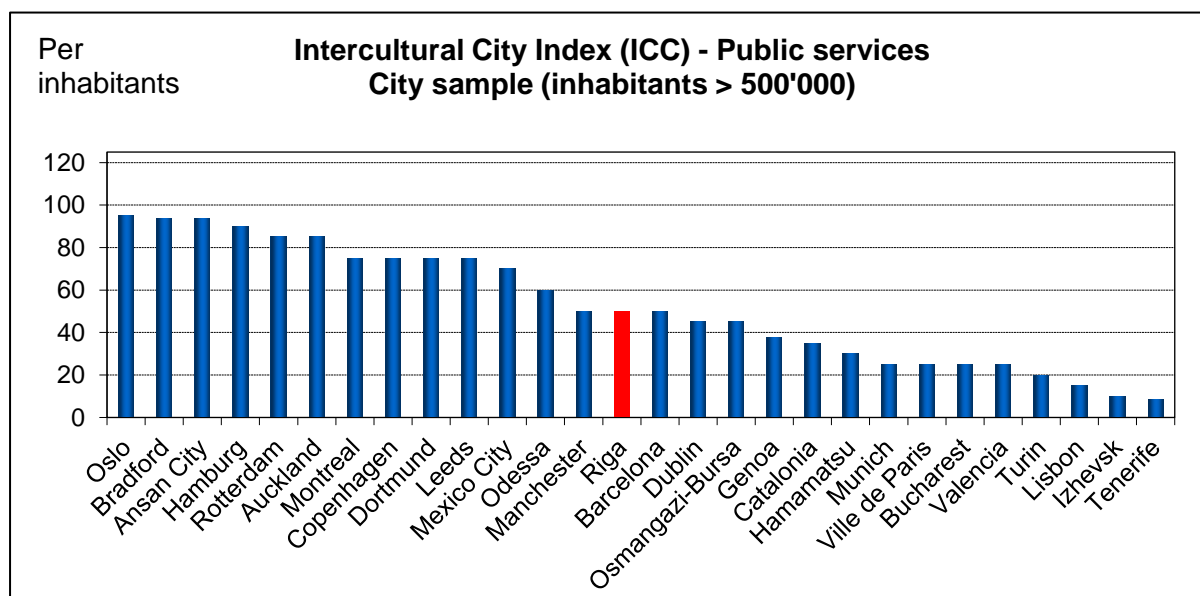
[Zambujal](#) (Portugal) may also provide some inspiration for smaller scale meetings of individuals who work together at district level. The Zambujal Melhora Programme established the "facilitators neighbourhood" idea which is the joining of two people with different ethnic backgrounds who receive training at the same time in a specific area. They then go on to work together in their own neighbourhood or others.



## PUBLIC SERVICES

As their very name implies, public services work for the benefit of the public as a whole. If the population is diverse, public services will be more efficient in delivering adequate benefits and information if city officers, at all levels of seniority, are as diverse as the population in general. This requires much more than simply ensuring equal opportunities to access public service employment. When taking action to encourage a diverse municipal workforce, an intercultural city acknowledges that a 'one size fits all' approach to public services and actions does not guarantee equal access to public benefits. The city also recognises that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds should never be treated as passive consumers of public benefits but can contribute actively by suggesting new ideas and innovative solutions to public problems.

Riga achieved a rate of 50%, which is slightly higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 45%. This is a result of Riga's actions to encourage a diverse workforce, intercultural mixing and competence in private sector enterprises and to encourage international talents to move to and work in Riga.



There is no data available on whether the migrant/minority background of public employees reflects the composition of the city's population.

Also, the city does not have a recruitment plan to ensure an adequate rate of diversity within its workforce. Knowledge of Latvian language is one of requirements to become employee of the Riga Municipality, which to a certain degree has an impact on the rate of diversity within the staff. However, there were some exceptions, e.g. for employees of the Territorial Improvement structural Unit and of the Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents, where knowledge of Latvian was initially not required.

Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents employs several citizens of Ukraine, who have arrived in Latvia as refugees because of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Some of them initially acted as volunteers at the ad hoc Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents, which opened on 7 March 2022. Later, when the centre became an official structure of the municipality, they were hired by the municipality. Non-Latvian-speaking employees of the centre attend Latvian language courses as language knowledge has become required to carry out duties.

According to the Law on Police, only persons with Latvian citizenship can work in police forces. For this reason it is impossible for non-citizens to be recruited by the Riga Municipal Police.

The city of Riga takes action to encourage diverse workforce, intercultural mixing and competence in private sector enterprises.

The "[Sustainable Development Strategy of Riga until 2030](#)" and the "Development Programme of Riga for 2022-2027", as approved by the decision of Riga City Council No. 1284 dated 23 February 2022, both describe how the local authority's ongoing policies and initiatives already contribute to intercultural integration and point to the areas where the city could do more. Riga Municipality places a strong emphasis on ensuring that by 2030 the city of Riga should become multicultural and tolerant. One of the long-term development objectives is "Skilful, provided, and active society". The local authority is working closely with local stakeholders so that the multicultural society of Riga respects the history of the country and the city, national values, and the national language, and at the same time embraces the value of societal diversity. The local authority is working continuously to create a tolerant atmosphere and relations in the city.

Since 2023, the city implements a [programme](#) which aims at encouraging international talent to move and work in Riga. The programme is implemented in collaboration with private, mainly high-tech and other innovative companies, that wish to attract and employ highly qualified foreign specialists.

The city takes into consideration the migrant/minority backgrounds of all residents when providing the services related to school meals and other services. The dietary needs of the persons in care facilities are observed. Also vegetarian and lactose-free meals are available for pupils at schools. If there are specific dietary needs connected to a cultural aspect, the parents of such child can agree with the school canteen to cook specific food for such pupil. If such service cannot be ensured, then home cooked food can be brought to the educational institution and the staff of school canteen can warm it up.

### Suggestions

While Riga takes actions to promote a diverse workforce, intercultural mixing and competence in private sector enterprises, it has limited legal and actual possibilities of encouraging diversity among its own staff. Still some actions can be taken in this regard within the competences of the city and certain inspiration can be drawn from other ICC Cities.

In general, in an intercultural city, for the sake of the public service's efficiency and good outreach to the local population, it is recommended that city officers, at all levels, are as diverse as the population in general.

For this reason, the city could consider promoting diversity in their employment in all services of public administration as well as collecting relevant data on the employment.

The Future Workplace action plan in [Bergen](#) (Norway) could be an interesting example. It includes actions to encourage minority ethnic job applicants in the public administration and intercultural competence in the private sector. [Montreal](#) (Canada) also applies a good practice that can be interesting. Minorities account for some 20% of the workforce in the city. The city's recruitment policy is inspired by the concept of promoting diversity and is geared towards talent of all kinds in terms of gender, age, background, experience, and culture. Specific measures and programmes are implemented to ensure employment equality, with a specific focus on under-represented groups such as women, persons with disabilities, indigenous groups, visible minorities, and ethnic minorities.

An interesting example in this regard is also the collaboration between Lincoln Green in [Leeds](#) (United Kingdom) - which is one of the priority neighbourhoods with a significant migrant community - and the Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust (LTHT), one of Leeds' Anchor Institutions. Core team partners (employment and skills, statutory

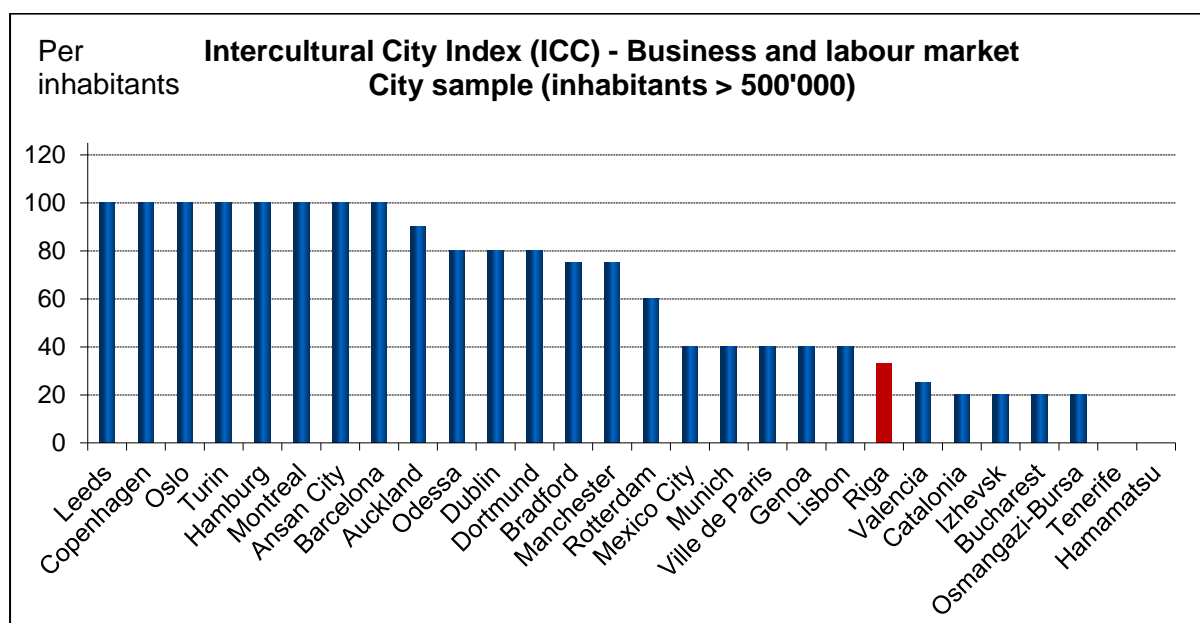
partners and local third sector organisations) worked closely with LTHT to develop a targeted recruitment programme to support people into jobs within the facilities and estates department. This approach has been successful and from the pilot, 29 people from target wards were successful in securing employment and a second cohort on programme saw 20 people recruited. This way of working has been identified at a national level as good practice and is cited in the NHS Long Term Plan. Work is underway to connect Anchor institutions in other neighbourhoods around Leeds.

ICC programme resources on public and community services are available [here](#).

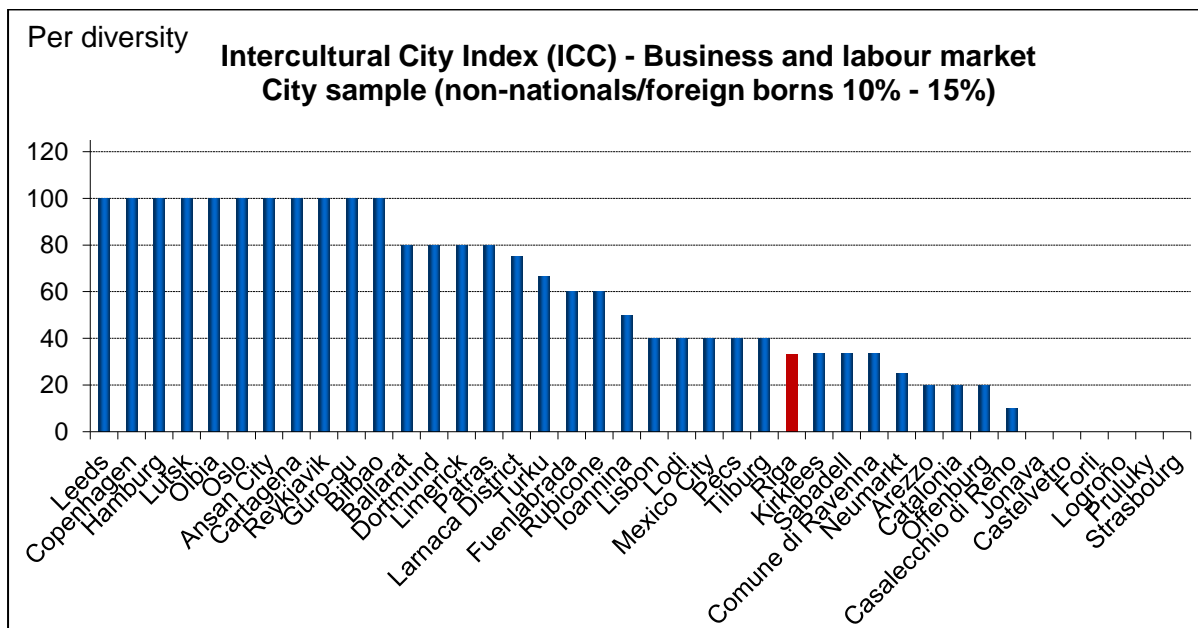
## BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Access to the public sector labour markets is often restricted by national or regional legislation. When this is the case, the private sector may provide an easier route for people with migrant or diverse backgrounds to engage in economic activity. As a result, private companies and activities tend to offer much more diverse working environments than the public sector. Research has also proved that it is cultural diversity in private companies, and not homogeneity, which fosters creativity and innovation. By constantly highlighting the diversity advantage in business, and partnering with their chambers of commerce and entrepreneurs, cities can influence how diversity is perceived in the private sector in such diverse sectors as shops, clubs, restaurants, industry, technical services and science.

Riga achieved a rate of 33, which is lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 52%. Riga is hosting numerous local, regional and national business umbrella organisations, which have among their objectives promotion of diversity and non-discrimination in the labour market.<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Riga's achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 33%, while the city sample achievement rate is 62%.



Local, regional and national business umbrella organisations, which have among their objectives the promotion of diversity and non-discrimination in the labour market, are based in the city of Riga. For example, the following authorities have their headquarters in the city: the [Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia](#); the [Latvian Municipal Employee's Trade Union](#); and the [Employers' Confederation of Latvia](#).

The city does not take action to encourage businesses from ethnic minorities to move beyond the ethnic economy and enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors.

The city does not take action to encourage 'business districts/incubators' to involve entrepreneurs with migrant/minority backgrounds and does not offer activities which encourage them and mainstream entrepreneurs to engage and develop new products/services together. This question is out of the competence of the municipality, and it is regulated by national laws.

In decisions relating to the procurement of goods and services, the municipal council does not favour companies with an intercultural inclusion/diversity strategy, as regional/national regulations do not foresee it.

#### Suggestions

The city of Riga may wish to consider implementing additional measures to collaborate more with the private sector which creates opportunities for people with migrant or ethnic backgrounds to engage in economic activity. In addition, encouraging businesses from ethnic minorities to enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors is a useful tool to promote better economic inclusion.

As an example, the cities [Amadora, Loures, and Oeiras](#) (Portugal) recognised the disparity of equity and inclusion in employment and have created a guidebook for employers which emphasises the importance of interculturalism and inclusion. Their "Inclusive Recruitment" project has also worked on ways and means to encourage Portuguese employers to hire migrants and newcomers, taking advantage from diversity. Sponsored through an ICC intercity grant, the project mapped the obstacles to smoother inclusive recruitment in Portugal, to map knowledge and know-how gaps among employers. They developed an inclusive recruitment guide called "Employers' starter pack", to provide information on labour laws for Portuguese companies, on areas such as migration legislation and workplace inclusion. Specific information was further developed to target and empower jobseekers. The project was implemented in a participatory manner, involving the relevant local authorities, representatives of the workers and employers, including big companies such as Ikea and Portugalia. Thanks to the success of the guide and with the help of the Portuguese Network of Intercultural Cities (RPCI Cooperative) some additional multimedia material has been produced including short videos and a series of podcasts. The report can be easily replicated by other ICC members through adaptation to their legal and administrative contexts.

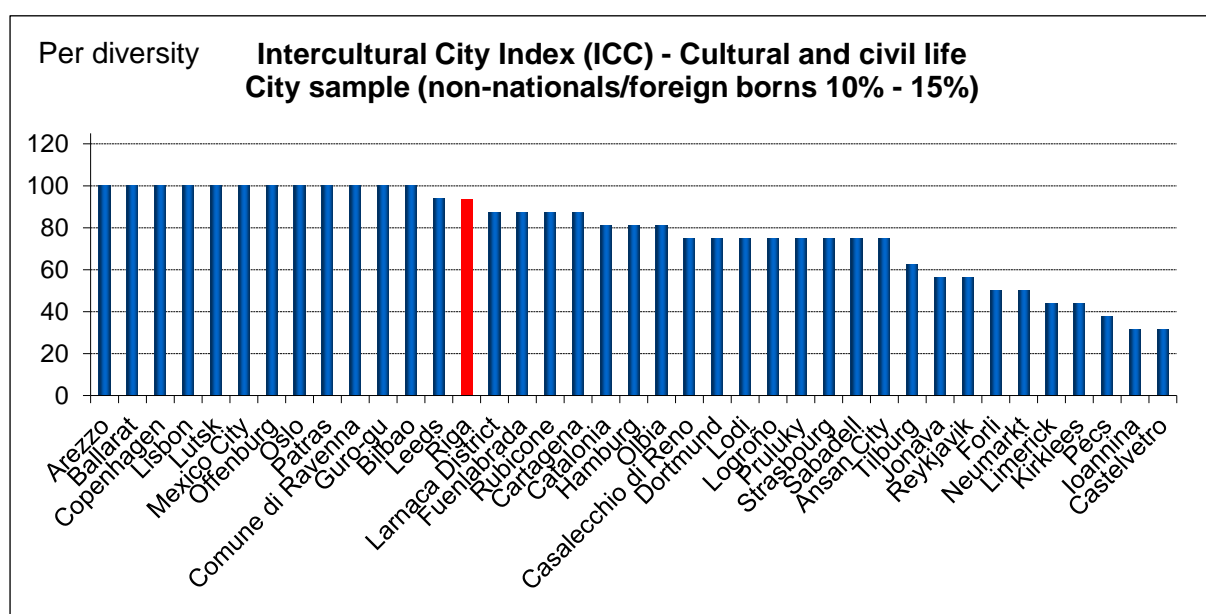
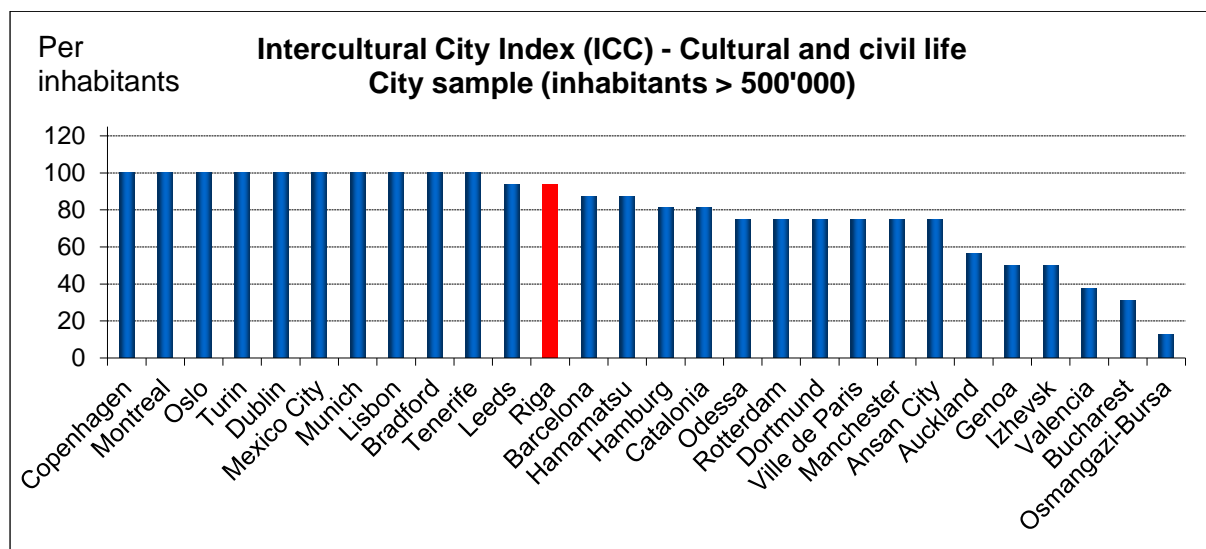
[Camden](#) (United Kingdom) also shows inspiring practices, related in particular to encouraging businesses and residents from ethnic minorities to move beyond the ethnic economy and enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors. These initiatives target, among others, under-served communities, aspiring

entrepreneurs, pupils and private-sector enterprises, and consist of partnerships with community-level actors, incubators and neighbouring local authorities, as well as grants and contract opportunities and awareness-raising. ICC programme resources on business and employment are available [here](#).

## CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE

Whereas people living in a city may have different migrant/minority or other backgrounds, they very often share the same interests and satisfaction when engaging in leisure activities, especially in the fields of arts, culture and sports. Such activities are sometimes structured along ethnic lines. That is quite understandable when they aim to preserve folklore traditions or the language and history of countries of origin. What is problematic is when cross-cultural leisure activities are organised along ethnic lines, for example when a football team only accepts players from one ethnic group. The intercultural city can encourage cultural openness through its own activities and by introducing intercultural criteria when allocating resources to artistic, cultural and sports organisations.

Riga achieved a rate of 94%, which is considerably higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 72%. This excellent outcome is a result of a rich cultural offer and different solutions implemented by the city of Riga to encourage cultural openness and inclusion through its cultural life.



Riga Municipality uses interculturalism and involvement of different ethnic, social and minority groups as a criterion when allocating funds to non-governmental organisations and other organisations and institutions.

For example, the [project competitions](#) for NGOs and subordinate institutions of the Riga City Council (such as schools and kindergartens) which provide financial support for projects aimed at promoting inclusive society have interculturalism as an element to be taken into account for a project to gain approval. While evaluating these proposals, the evaluation committee considers whether different groups of the society will be involved in the implementation, and if the projects promote inclusion and integration. Projects with a higher level of intercultural elements receive a higher number of points and have more chances to be approved.

Grant competitions organised by Riga City Council in the field of youth promote inclusion and intercultural dialogue. According to [Annex 3 of Regulations](#) for co-financing of children and youth camps and leisure time activities, camps that receive municipal funding are expected to: be implemented in inclusive manner, activities planned in the programme should provide equal opportunities for all children and youth of Riga regardless of their abilities, needs, culture, language, health and other social and economic barriers; particularly address inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, including children and youth from Ukraine. Similar criteria are assessed when funding is granted for other leisure activities.

A wide range of municipal [grant competitions](#) for sports clubs to organise sports events and competitions have accessibility for different target groups as one of the evaluation criteria. In addition, the city of Riga provides [financing](#) for activities which promote active cultural life and diversity, encourage participation and access of all residents and guests. Last but not least, the Riga City Festival programme promotes international cooperation and aims to attract international artists, culture institutions and spectators.

The city regularly organises events and activities in the fields of arts, culture and sport that aim to encourage people from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds to interact.

Moreover, the message of intercultural dialogue appears through different activities conducted by the municipality.

Riga City co-financing programmes for culture and arts events organised by the private sector are foreseen for a wide target audience (including people of different ethnic and religious background, all ages, special needs, etc.), facilitating access to culture and creating events and infrastructure for communities to meet and engage in cultural activities. These events are included in the programme of the Riga Summer festival and are promoted via the official municipal communication channels. Since 2022, particular attention is paid to supporting Ukrainian refugees in the major public events in Riga.

Riga City provides financial support to 21 minority amateur artistic groups with the aim to protect their ethnic identity and promote cultural diversity during different public events. The municipality also helps by providing premises for rehearsals to seven minority amateur groups.

National minority NGOs actively participate in different activities conducted in Riga NGO House, such as the International Day for Promotion of Tolerance, International Women's Day, UNESCO World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, Children's Day, charity events, events dedicated to national holidays, concerts and discussions. Various joint events were organised over the years with national minority NGOs: German, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Slavic, Georgian, Tatar and Bashkir, Bulgarian, Kazakh, Lithuanian, Estonian, Livonian, Arab and Polish. Regular exhibitions of national minority artists are available for visitors to the NGO House. The NGO House serves as a place where minority NGOs have the opportunity to organise cultural activities, networking events in order to preserve their traditions, cultural and historical heritage, and to share their culture with others. For example, to celebrate Bulgaria's Liberation Day, the Slavic Music Society "Sozvuciye" in cooperation with the Bulgarian Song Ensemble "Sedyanka" organised a concert at the NGO House on 4 March 2023. On the occasion of the Bulgarian Liberation Day, an exhibition of authentic Bulgarian national costumes and handicrafts of Bulgarian women, organised by the "Cyril and Methodius" Latvian-Bulgarian Cultural Society, was held at the NGO House in March 2023.

Municipal Youth Centre "Kanieris" regularly organises events related to international opportunities for young people and to intercultural dialogue. These [events](#) are widely attended by volunteers of European Solidary Corps, now residing in Riga, and provide opportunities for local young people to experience intercultural dialogue (often, for the first time) in a safe and inclusive environment.

Riga City Council has established Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian residents, where many events are held, like labour market, language courses, seminars and lectures about various topics regarding important life aspects, such as children's education in Latvia etc. Moreover, different social inclusion events are organised by NGOs that

work at the premises of Riga Support Centre for the Ukrainian residents. This includes English language courses for Ukrainian residents, some excursions in mixed groups with Latvians, as well as Latvian traditional event celebration (Easter, Christmas, Summer solstice etc.). A drawing group and other events are available for children every week, a child psychologist works permanently in the centre. For Ukrainians who want to learn Latvian, in addition to training courses, it is possible to attend an informal language group, as well as to use Latvian language books available in the centre.

Since May 2023, Riga Municipality provides premises of 720 square meters, free of charge, for the functioning of the Centre of Non-Governmental Organisations "Rīgas sirds" ("Heart of Riga"), where non-governmental organisations regularly organise various creative and cultural activities for Ukrainian refugees - children and adults. The aim of all the activities is to promote and improve the inclusion of Ukrainian refugees, to reduce the negative effects of loneliness and stress, as well as to create a supportive and high-quality environment for refugees living in Riga. Local residents are invited to participate as volunteers and participants. Latvian language classes are held every day, and leisure activities for children, yoga classes for adults, concerts in support of Ukraine and Ukrainians are organized. Approximately 200 volunteers work in the [centre](#).

The city encourages cultural organisations to deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions.

Riga Municipality provides co-financing to 21 minority amateur culture groups to practice, preserve and promote their cultural heritage (Lithuanian, Jewish, Russian, Belarusian, German) and for remuneration of some of the staff of these groups. The municipality also helps seven minority amateur culture groups by providing premises for their practice.

The city occasionally cooperates with non-governmental organisations that work with minorities, migrants and other vulnerable groups to organise public debates, campaigns and other activities in order to develop mutual understanding and promote cultural diversity as a resource. Such activities have been conducted both as part of different international projects and as part of the "[Society integration](#)" call for projects, launched for the first time in 2010. The most recent projects implemented under the "Society integration" call for projects include, among others:

- Discussions at St Luke's" (2022) – implemented by St. Luke's Support Society. Public discussions about the war in Ukraine through Ukrainian, Russian and Latvian perspectives to promote mutual understanding.
- "Remembering the Future: Russian-Ukrainian Refugee Talks" (2023) – implemented by St Saviour's Anglican Church in Riga. The aim of the project is to promote the integration and mutual dialogue of Russian and Ukrainian newcomers. Public discussions about the war in Ukraine were organised, with the aim to integrate Ukrainian and Russian newcomers into the local society, and involved experts - journalists, theologians, cultural and social workers - refugees from Ukraine and Russia who currently live in Latvia, as well as local experts in these fields.

### Suggestions

The city of Riga is achieving a lot in this area and shows a number of good practices within the field of culture. It may still wish to look into the practices of other ICC cities to seek additional inspiration.

Encouraging cultural organisations to deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions can be an example of a useful action. It was successfully implemented in [Copenhagen](#) (Denmark). The DCAI (the Danish Centre for Arts & Interculture) based in Copenhagen acts as a 'centre of the mind' or think-tank for the intercultural transformation of the cultural sector, rather than as a physical public space of meeting, although it is housed in a centre of global culture and world music. Its aim is to create a national platform which reflects the diversity of Danish society in the cultural sector, by building intercultural competence. The means to achieve this are through working with partners to make the presence felt of a new generation of Danish artists of immigrant background, who have grown up on the periphery of the five major cities of Denmark.

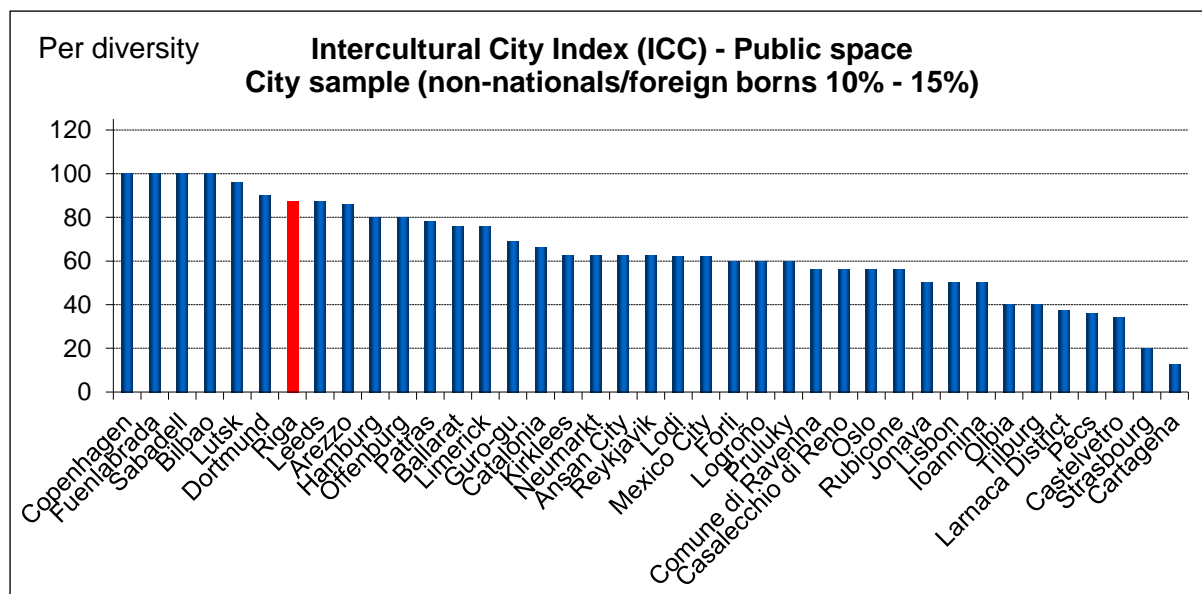
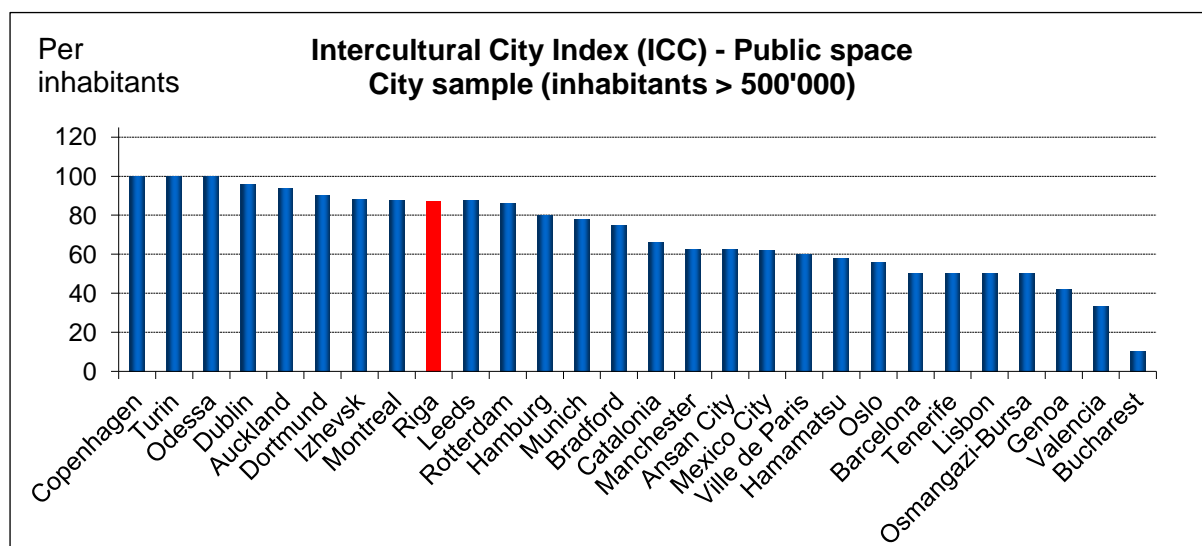
As Riga does not organise its own public debates on intercultural issues, it could be interested in [Bergen's](#) (Norway) experience, where a report on structural racism sparked useful public debate. The research initiative was undertaken by Bergen Municipality to establish how minority ethnic populations perceived the way they were treated by the city's services and how they experienced living in Bergen. There was an interest to capture the narratives of minority ethnic people and to hear their critique. The research report enabled understanding of the issue of structural racism, and it has become a reference point for the issue. A specific and accessible theoretical chapter on the issue was included in the report on what the concept of structural racism means in the Norwegian context. This has enabled city officials to operationalise the concept in plans and actions. In addition, the research

report provoked debate. Politicians on the City Council took it seriously, and a number of public meetings on the report were held. There was good media coverage and debate of the report.

## PUBLIC SPACE

Public spaces (streets, squares, parks, etc.) and facilities (public buildings, day centres, schools, health centres, etc.) are places which most citizens are obliged to use. They offer the possibility of meeting people of different nationalities, origins, languages, religions/beliefs, sexual orientations and age groups. For encounters between diverse people to actually occur, such spaces and facilities should be designed and animated in a way that all residents feel comfortable when using them. Conversely badly-managed spaces can become places of suspicion and fear of the “other”. When this is the case, the intercultural city actively engages with all the people concerned, firstly to understand the local context from their perspective, and secondly to identify solutions largely support by them.

Riga achieved a rate of 88%, which is considerably higher than the city sample’s achievement rate of 67%. The city of Riga is already doing an excellent work in designing and reconstructing in a participatory manner public spaces which serve the purpose of enhancing meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Riga’s achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 88%, while the city sample achievement rate is 68%.



The city of Riga takes action to encourage meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction in public space, such as public libraries, museums, playgrounds, parks, squares, and other public spaces.

The city of Riga works actively with neighbourhood associations, and it supports organisation of neighbourhood festivals, concerts, creative workshops and events which provide opportunities for local community to meet and exchange ideas.

Access to public institutions under the supervision of Riga Municipality, such as public libraries, museums and cultural centres, is open for all residents without discrimination. There are 26 branches of Riga Central Library and 3 additional locations with the books spread around the city. Representatives of different ethnic groups attend libraries both for borrowing the books, getting access to the Internet and for different activities aimed at integration and promotion of cultural diversity of the city of Riga. Some of these activities are organised in cooperation with different NGOs.

Access to playgrounds, parks, squares and public spaces is available to all without discrimination. One can observe children of different migrant/minority backgrounds playing in the playgrounds, for example in the central parks of Riga, together with local kids while their parents mingle with each other.

Since spatial ethnic segregation does not occur in Riga and the residents of different ethnic backgrounds are scattered around the city, they use infrastructure which is closest to their place of residence. Therefore, it comes naturally that, for example, an ethnic Latvian family and ethnic Russian family meet together in public space in their neighbourhood and interact.

The city sometimes takes into account the diversity of the population in the design, renovation and management of new public buildings or spaces.

Riga Municipality has a long history in practical implementation of public participation in spatial development planning. During the elaboration of the "Sustainable Development Strategy of Riga until 2030" and the "Development Programme of Riga for 2022-2027", meetings with public organisations, non-governmental organisations, and residents have been held. During public consultation, more than 900 proposals from both individuals and legal entities have been received.

During the public consultations, Riga Municipality balances the interests of private individuals and public interests with sustainable spatial development. To consider the diversity of the population in the design, renovation and management of new public buildings and spaces, in the spatial development planning Riga Municipality sets out the following [principles](#):

- The principle of equal opportunities – sectoral and territorial interests, as well as interests of private individuals and public interests are assessed jointly to promote sustainable development of the relevant territory.
- The principle of transparency – the public involvement and transparency of information and decision-making in spatial development planning and development of documents is ensured.
- The principle of diversity – spatial development is planned considering the diversity of natural and cultural environment, human and material resources, and economic activity.

Riga Municipality works mostly with renovation processes of existing buildings, such as schools, kindergartens, cultural institutions, and other municipal buildings. During the renovation processes, physical accessibility to the building and its premises is usually improved for the persons with movement impairments. The specific needs of the users of the premises are considered, for example, age (at schools). When designing or renovating buildings, [special Rules](#) of Cabinet of Ministers are observed, which stipulate that while planning the environmental accessibility aspects, numerous sources of information are explored (such as studies on the use of universal design, as well as the guidelines, methodological recommendations and standards developed and approved in Latvia and other countries). Moreover, consultations with main stakeholders take place, such as Association of Persons with Disabilities and their Friends "Apeirons" and the Association "Latvian Movement for Independent Life".

Since the first days of the war in Ukraine, Riga Municipality has been actively searching for solutions to provide for the primary needs of the refugees fleeing war in Ukraine. For example, considering the desire of Ukrainians to study at the Riga Ukrainian Secondary School (the only Ukrainian school in Latvia), which has quite limited capacity in terms of space, an agreement was concluded with the State University of Latvia for the lease of a building next to the Riga Ukrainian Secondary School to increase its capacity.

When the city decides to reconstruct an area, it uses different methods and places for consultation to ensure the meaningful involvement of people with different migrant/minority backgrounds.

All residents, irrespective of their ethnic origin, are invited to take part in the public discussions and elaboration of spatial planning documents. The consultations are conducted in Latvian language, therefore the participants should demonstrate at least some knowledge of the state language in order to participate and to understand the essence of the documentation under discussion.

Since 2014 Riga Municipality implements a programme within the framework of which sports and recreation complexes are being built near general educational institutions. Since 2014, 16 such sports and recreation complexes have been created. While designing sports and recreation complexes, meetings are organised with school pupils and neighbourhood residents, and their wishes are heard and duly considered. As a result of those meetings, 3 skate parks and 4 bicycle parks have been set up.

Due to the historical developments, certain neighbourhoods of Riga have a diverse population, with Latvian-speaking or Russian-speaking ethnic groups prevailing in some of them. These ethnic groups suggest different kinds of infrastructure to be developed in their neighbourhood, which is usually considered. For example, as trend the Russian-speakers choose football fields to be created, while the native Latvians prefer basketball and volleyball fields to be developed in the area.

There are no spaces or areas the city that are dominated by one ethnic group (majority or minority) and where other people feel unwelcome or unsafe, and hence there is no need for de-segregation policies which would deal with such situation.

### Suggestions

Riga is already doing an excellent work in this area. The city may still consider looking for inspiration from other cities for new ideas related to designing and reconstructing public spaces which serve the purpose of enhancing meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction.

Montreal (Canada) has several good practices in this area. Through intercultural events and initiatives geared towards integration, Montreal helps to ensure mixing between the various communities present within its boundaries.

Every year for the past five years, under a partnership with the Quartier des spectacles entertainment district, the city has run an open-air event called “Les Jardins Gamelin” designed to encourage living together in public spaces through an extensive cultural programme.

All neighbourhood library services are designed to take account of the diversity of the local communities and run their collections (print, audiovisual, digital) and mediation activities in such a way as to turn libraries into places where all cultures can exchange with one another and learn without criticism. Of particular note here, the “Living library: borrow a life” programme takes up a Council of Europe good practice by inviting representatives of Montreal’s cultural communities to turn themselves into “human books” and talk about their life stories. They can be “borrowed” to find out about the worlds of Indigenous peoples or migrants in one-to-one exchanges that offer ideal opportunities for fighting prejudices and building bridges between cultures.

In addition, as part of cultural trail activities, the city runs a tour of Montreal Island from the Indigenous perspective, consisting of a bus tour in which participants visit various neighbourhoods to find out about the history of Indigenous peoples in urban areas down through the centuries.

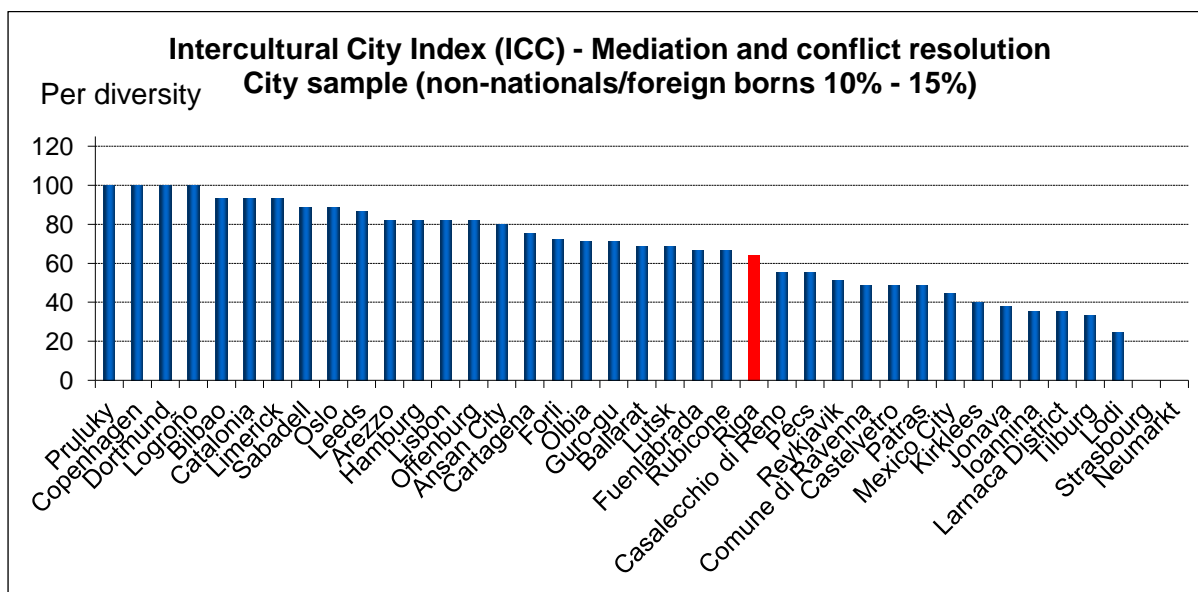
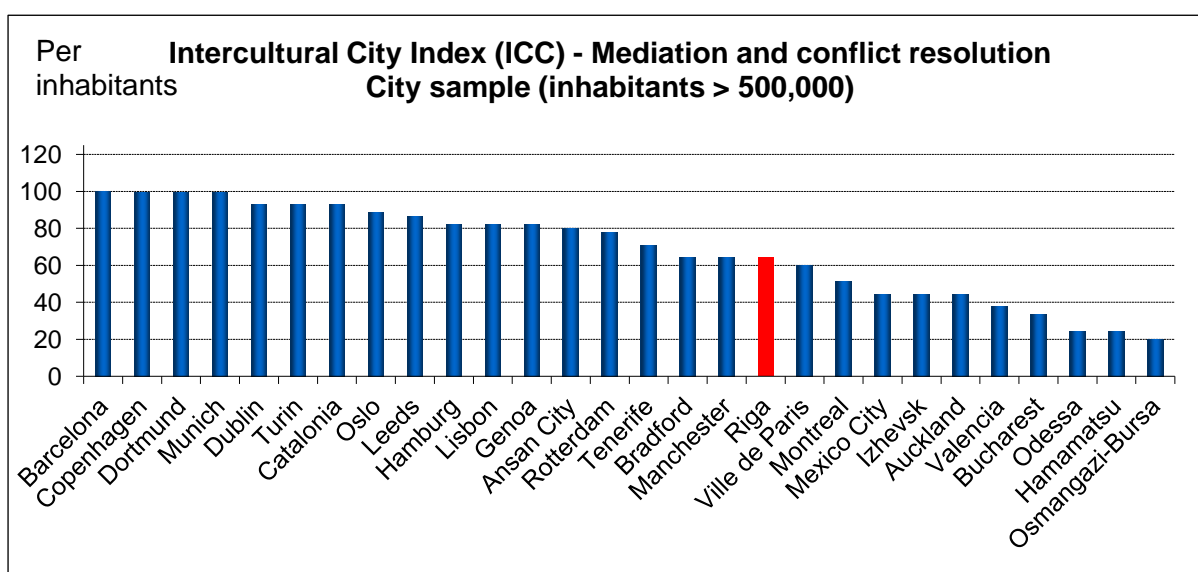
A useful idea is to take diversity into account in the design, renovation and management of public buildings or spaces. One idea could be to renovate or turn already existing public spaces into major intercultural assets with the involvement of arts and cultural practitioners. For example, a multi-ethnic market can help refresh an anonymous or insecure public space, as in Rotterdam (Netherlands), or an old tobacco factory can be turned into a centre in which young migrants can be involved in various arts projects, as in Donostia – San Sebastian (Spain).

ICC programme resources on housing, public spaces and urban planning are available [here](#).

## MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

*In diverse societies there is always the potential for misunderstanding and conflict over values, behaviour or resources. In cities, where people with different cultural backgrounds and socio-economic statuses live together in close proximity, such tensions are natural and indeed part of everyday life. Instead of denying, ignoring, or repressing conflict, the intercultural city seeks to anticipate, identify, address and resolve issues to the satisfaction of all protagonists without compromising the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The intercultural city views conflict as a normal feature of free, dynamic and communicative communities and sees the very process of conflict mediation and resolution as an opportunity for innovation and sustainable social cohesion.*

Riga achieved a rate of 64%, which is slightly higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 59%. This result is higher than the average as the city offers a variety of mediation services, mainly through collaboration with non-governmental organisations and at schools.



An intercultural mediation service run by a civil society organisation provides a professional service for mediation of intercultural communication and conflict in the city of Riga. For example, “Mediation and ADR” (Biedrība Mediācija un ADR) is one of them. This NGO has signed the Memorandum of cooperation between the Riga Municipality and NGOs in 2013 - a cooperation agreement, which was developed to promote the involvement of

society and its active participation in decision-making and policy implementation in the city of Riga by developing a permanent cooperation between NGOs and the municipality in certain areas.

In addition, intercultural mediation is provided at schools. Moreover, schools have support personnel – psychologist and social pedagogue who solve different conflicts at schools.

A state-run inter-religious service deals specifically with inter-religious relations. The Consultative Council of Religious Affairs is acting under the authority of the Ministry of Justice and is composed of representatives of the Register of Enterprises and all Religious Unions (Churches) registered in Latvia. The Council's tasks are to analyse and express views to the minister on: the freedom of religion and observance of rights in Latvian society; improvement of national policy and normative regulation in matters of religion and morality; compliance of the activities of religious organisations with the interests of society; requirements of laws and regulations; proposals for informing the public on religious issues; cooperation between State and religious organisations; religion directions, teachings, dogmatics, traditions, theology terminology.

### Suggestions

Although Riga offers certain mediation services, mainly through collaboration with non-governmental organisations and at schools, cities are encouraged to provide such services in a variety of contexts, including through a municipal mediation service.

In this regard, [Bergen](#) (Norway) can serve as an inspiration. Bergen has set up a municipal mediation service committed to interreligious issues specifically. Samarbeidsråd for tros- og livssynssamfunn (Cooperation Council for Religion and Faith) is an interfaith organisation in Bergen. Most faith communities in Bergen are represented in the council, which is supported by the municipality.

An interesting example is also [Barcelona](#) (Spain) which has a wealth of services to ease tensions and provide mediation in the city. The Translation and Intercultural Mediation Service aims to help professionals who work with people of different origins to adopt an intercultural perspective. It is divided into three areas: translation; interpersonal mediation; and group and community mediation. The Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution Service of the Office for Non-Discrimination (OND) and the Office for Religious Affairs (ORA) deals with situations of violation or discrimination on the grounds of gender, religious choice, origin or other particular or collective rights. Intercultural mediation is provided in specialised institutions such as hospitals, police, youth clubs, mediation centres, retirement homes, etc. It is also provided in the city administration for general purposes; in neighbourhoods, on the streets, where the city actively seeks to meet residents and discuss problems.

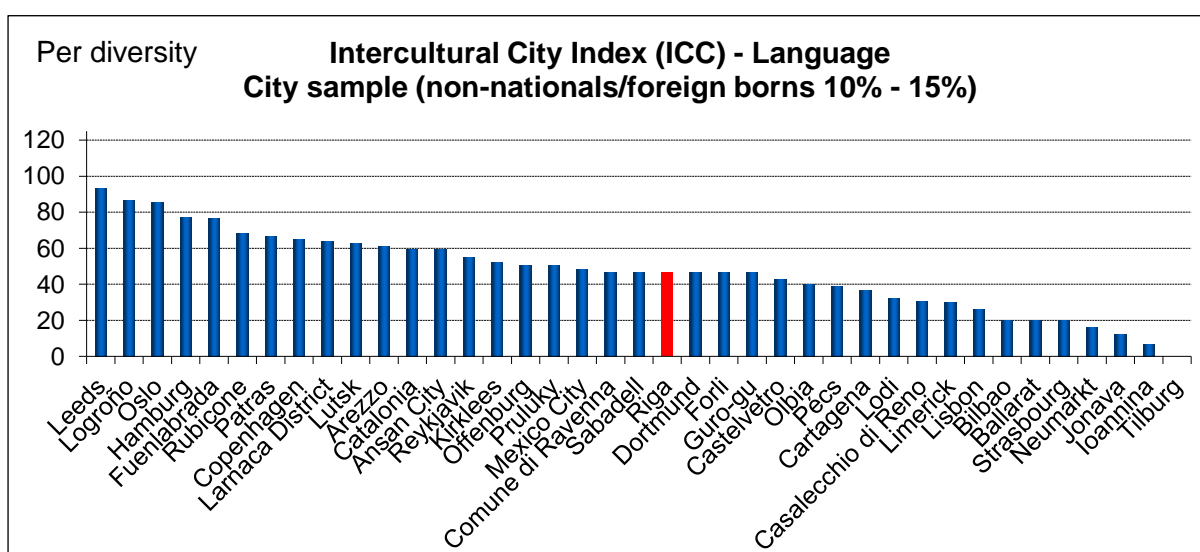
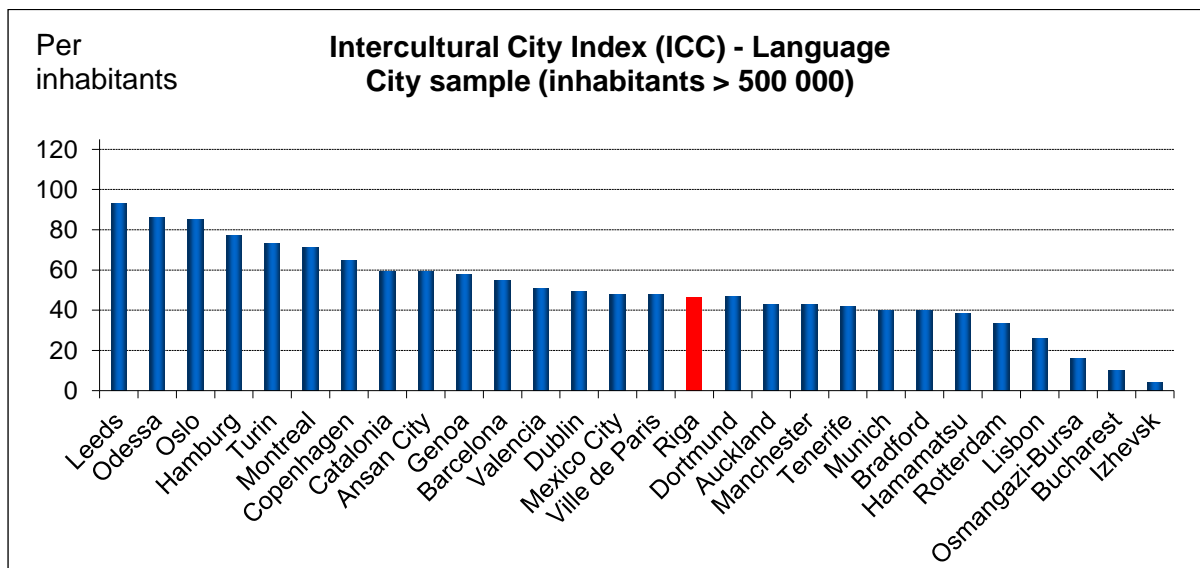
ICC programme resources on intercultural competence and mediation are available [here](#).

## **LANGUAGE**

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*The provision of courses and other facilities for people with migrant backgrounds to learn the receiving country's language(s) is important to ensure social and economic integration. It does however need to be supplemented with activities which highlight the value of other languages, and enable people with migrant origins not only to preserve and transmit their languages to their children and other members of the community, but also to take pride in them as a heritage enriching the local community. An intercultural city promotes multilingualism as a resource for education, business, tourism, cultural life, etc. It underlines the value of all languages present in the city, for instance by giving opportunities to diverse language speakers to express themselves in their mother tongue in public and at cultural events and by promoting all events that offer opportunities for linguistic exchanges and mixing.*

Riga achieved a rate of 47%, which is slightly higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 45%. This result is related to long-term support provided by the city of Riga to projects which aim at promoting and creating a positive image of minority languages.



The city of Riga provides teaching of minority languages as part of the regular curriculum at schools.

The city provides comprehensive and extensive educational opportunities to pupils who wish to study in minority languages.

In 2022/2023 school year there were 51 national minority schools in Riga and 17 of them were implementing only minority programmes. In the schools with Latvian as language of instruction, all subjects (except foreign languages) were taught in Latvian. In national minority schools, a part of the curriculum was taught in the respective national minority language (such as Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Polish, Hebrew, Estonian and Lithuanian) and a part of the curriculum was taught in Latvian (or in a bilingual way). The proportion of national minority language/Latvian differed from school to school according to the methodology each school applied, but the proportion of Latvian was gradually increasing from grade 1 when some of the subjects were taught bilingually or in Latvian and the number of such subjects increased to 60% in grade 6 and in grade 8 up to 80% of the curriculum had to be taught in Latvian. All the exams in grade 9 were held in Latvian. In grade 10-12 all curriculum was in Latvian except the subjects related to national minority language and literature, which were also taught as a part of the curriculum.

However, the minority language education will undergo a reform in the next few years. Starting from the school year 2023/2024, minority schools will only have programmes in Latvian language in grades 1, 4, 7 and 10-12. In three years' time, all schools will have one programme, taught in Latvian only, while minority language and culture will be provided as additional and facultative.

The city provides other type of support to raise awareness of migrant and minority languages, for example by financing projects which promote minority or migrant languages, traditions and cultural heritage and give a positive image of migrant/minority languages.

The Municipality of Riga launches different competitions for NGOs to provide financial support for projects aimed at promoting inclusion and integration at the city level. One such competition is called "Society integration" and one of the areas in which projects are awarded is the "promotion of tolerance and prevention of all kinds of discrimination (intercultural dialogue, protection of ethnic identity)". Numerous projects have been approved and implemented by minority NGOs since this call for projects was launched for the first time in 2010, most of them with the aim of preserving the national minorities' culture and raising awareness of the local community of minority languages, traditions and cultural heritage. Books and different publications were also published in minority languages, for example in Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Tatar language. In addition, projects related to the acquisition of Arabic have been supported by the municipality in the framework of this competition.

Examples of the recent projects supported by the municipality in the framework of the public competition "Society integration" include: 1. Seminars "Latvian Jewish Cultural Heritage in the Learning Process" (2021) organised by the "Riga Jewish Community" Society (seminars organised for teachers and employees of educational institutions, providing an opportunity to learn the methods and receive new knowledge regarding the history of the Jewish Community of Latvia, their cultural heritage and language, as well as methods for promoting tolerance and integration development); 2. Memorial Evening of Latvian Roma Poet and Artist Karl Rudevich" (2022) implemented by the "Roma Culture Centre" society (the memorial evening and opening of an exhibition of paintings promoting public education and raising awareness of Roma culture, language, rights, in order to facilitate Roma integration and full participation in the development of civil society); 3. Organisation of the Commemorative Event "The Live March" (2023) by "Shamir" Society (commemoration event that brings together relatives of Jews of the Holocaust victims in Latvia, Germany, Austria, researchers, activists, representatives of international organisations, politicians, officials, ambassadors).

Last but not least, the city of Riga supports 21 minority amateur culture groups, whose work is aimed at safeguarding their ethnic identity (including language and culture), practicing and educating about their traditions in different public events.

### Suggestions

The city of Riga is showcasing many good practices in relation to promoting the use and positive image of the languages of national minorities in Riga. In addition to this work, it might consider looking into practices from other cities which also aim at promoting languages used by migrant populations in the city.

The example of [Limassol](#) (Cyprus) could be interesting in this regard. Limassol raises awareness about migrant or minority languages by providing logistical or financial support to newspapers in English, Russian, Romanian and Bulgarian languages. Their functioning is encouraged and facilitated by the city and the Intercultural Council. The city seeks to give a positive image of migrant or minority languages by supporting various cultural events and projects, including: a municipal website in Greek, English and Russian; intercultural shelves in the Public Municipal Library; World Poetry Day (21 March) created by Cultural Movement Epilogi; the Day of Europe and intercultural festivals such as the "Musical Footprints" festival.

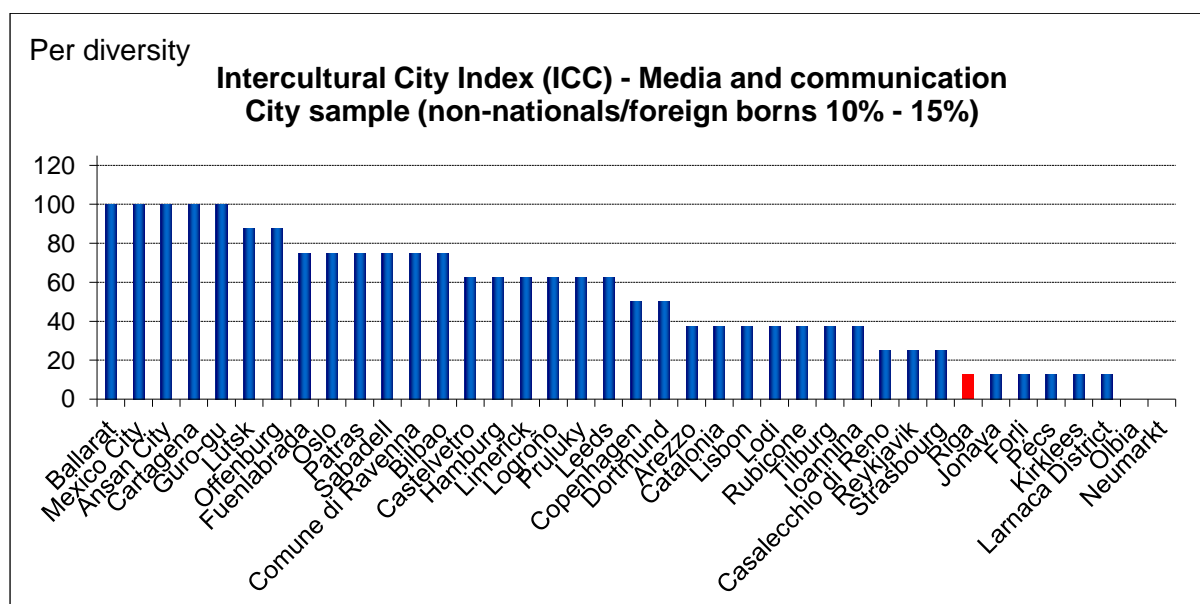
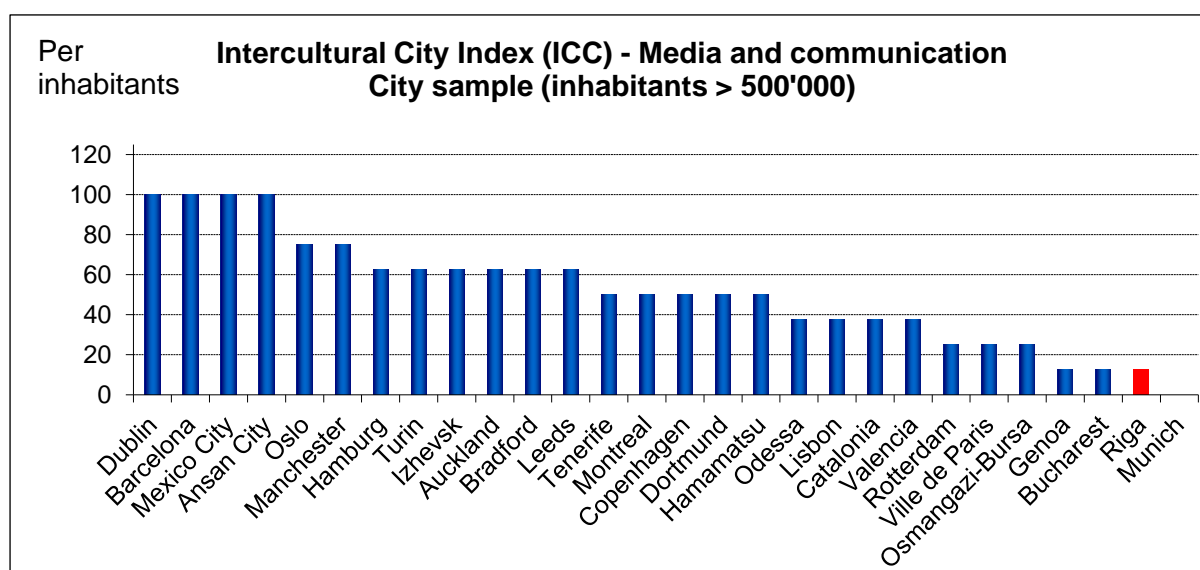
Promoting access to information by providing translations to minority and migrant languages also facilitates inclusion of persons with minority/migrant background. For example the city of [Lisbon](#) (Portugal), in partnership with the Portuguese Ministry of Health, local NGOs and hospitals, created manuals about access to health services in several languages (Portuguese, English, French, Nepali, Bengali and Mandarin). The leaflets were designed in partnership with local groups of migrants who indicated the most pressing topics to discuss, including for example pregnancy, birth and STD control and diabetes. The manual further included images to describe each subject. Mediators from the designated communities were hired to moderate conversations with local groups, develop the texts and translate them, therefore the process of developing the manuals was participatory.

ICC programme resources on multilingualism are available [here](#).

## MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Traditional and social media have a very powerful influence on attitudes towards cultural diversity and other diversities. Much of the information people access is generated by international newsgroups, national media, or by private persons in the case of social media. Nevertheless, there is still much the city authorities can do to achieve a climate of public opinion more conducive to positive intercultural relations. In its communication, an intercultural city constantly highlights the positive contribution of people with migrant/minority backgrounds to the social, cultural and economic development of the city. More importantly, the city partners with local media agencies so that they purvey a similar message and cover events occurring in the city in an objective and unbiased way.

Riga achieved a rate of 13%, which is considerably lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 46%. This is of course only the start of work, and it is applaudable that the city has this topic on its agenda. The city could ideally give more attention to relations with media and influencing, withing the scope of its mandate, how people with migrant/minority backgrounds are portrayed by local media or social media.<sup>8</sup>



The city of Riga does not have a communication strategy to improve the visibility and image of people with migrant/minority backgrounds in the local media, but it takes occasional actions in this regard. For instance, since

<sup>8</sup> Riga's achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 8%, while the city sample achievement rate is 47%.

2022, Riga worked on improving the image of Ukrainian refugees through national media and by using social networks, to portray them as valuable members of local communities. As an example, awareness raising materials (posters displayed in the windows of Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents in the Old Town, video materials) were created for this purpose. The Riga NGO House collects information on public migrant/minority events organised in the premises of the NGO House by publishing it in the communication channels of the NGO House. In order to promote NGOs activities, interviews with representatives of the NGOs are published in the NGO House newsletter. For example, interviews with NGO "Traditional Cultural Centre "Rada" and Latvian-Bulgarian Cultural Society NGO "Kirill and Methodius" have been published in 2022.

The city's communication (PR) department is not instructed to highlight diversity as an advantage regularly and in various types of communication.

Riga does not provide support for advocacy/media training/mentorship/setting up of online media start-ups for journalists with migrant/minority backgrounds.

The city does not monitor the way in which traditional local and/or national media portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds. It also does not monitor the way in which social media portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds. Currently, the daily media monitoring efforts focus on the news relevant for the image of the municipality and the city council. This sometimes includes topics connected to the image of people with migrant and minority backgrounds. There is no comprehensive system for monitoring social media currently in place, but the city follows closely the comments that appear on the city's social media channels and information that is connected to communities in Riga's neighbourhoods. In general, there are plans to review the topics monitored by the city and to possibly include the image of people with migrant and minority backgrounds as a new category for media monitoring.

The city does not engage with the local media when they portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds through negative stereotypes. Although it is worth noting that on certain occasion the city takes a stance in relation to the image of people with minority/migrant background, for example the city spoke up against portraying badly its residents of Ukrainians origin.

### Recommendations

A comprehensive and sustainable approach to promoting the diversity advantage in the local media and through city's communication is advisable. It should ideally envisage having a communications strategy and also for the city's communication department to monitor regularly how local media portray people with minority or migration background.

An example of a comprehensive action can be the approach implemented by the city of [Sabadell](#) (Spain), which has implemented a welcoming programme and a communication campaign that includes images, posters, press releases and social networks. In addition, the communication department is instructed to highlight diversity as an advantage. The city monitors local media and social networks to know how they represent migrants or minority groups. Indeed, when local media portray people with migrant or minority backgrounds through negative stereotypes, the communication department contacts the concerned media to explain the City Council's communication policy. Additionally, the city has carried out training sessions addressed to media to avoid negative stereotypes under the Antirumours Strategy "Sabadell Antirumors". From time to time, public sessions on these topics are also organised. For instance, back in 2017 the City Council organised a round-table in the public library to debate around the impact of the language used by the local media which stigmatises diversity.

[Camden](#) (a borough of London, United Kingdom) is also active in this field. Camden Council has a communication strategy to improve the visibility and image of people with migrant/minority backgrounds in the local media and the communication department is instructed to highlight diversity as an advantage regularly and in various types of communication. With regard to media monitoring, the Council itself monitors the way in which traditional local and/or national media, as well as social media, portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds. When local media portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds through negative stereotypes, the Council engages with them directly. For example, it has discussed instances of perceived unfair treatment.

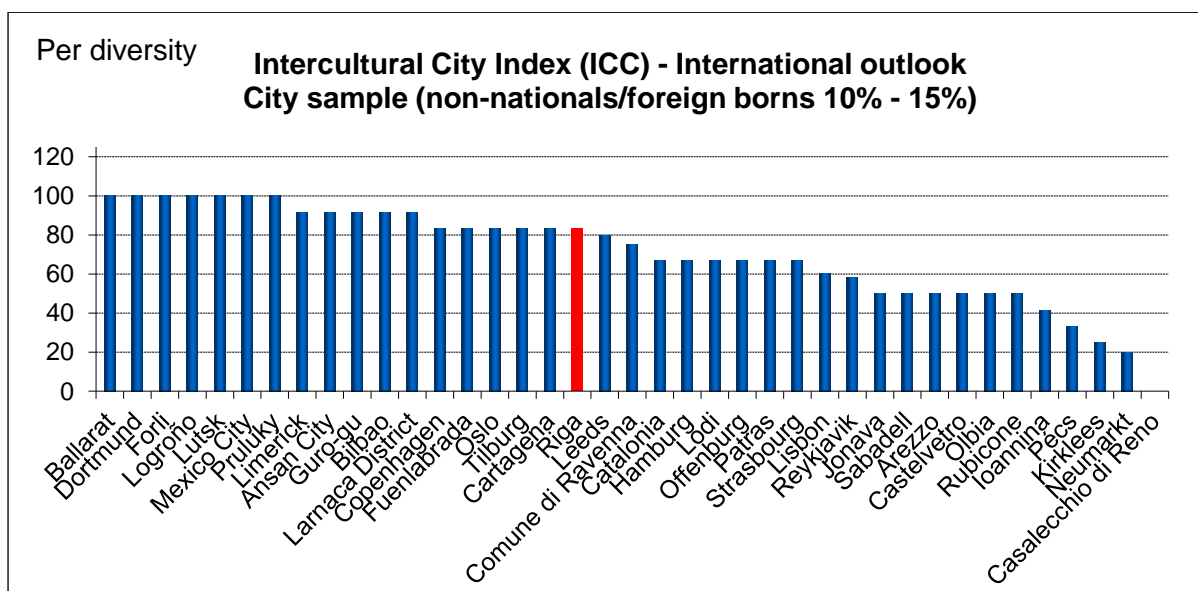
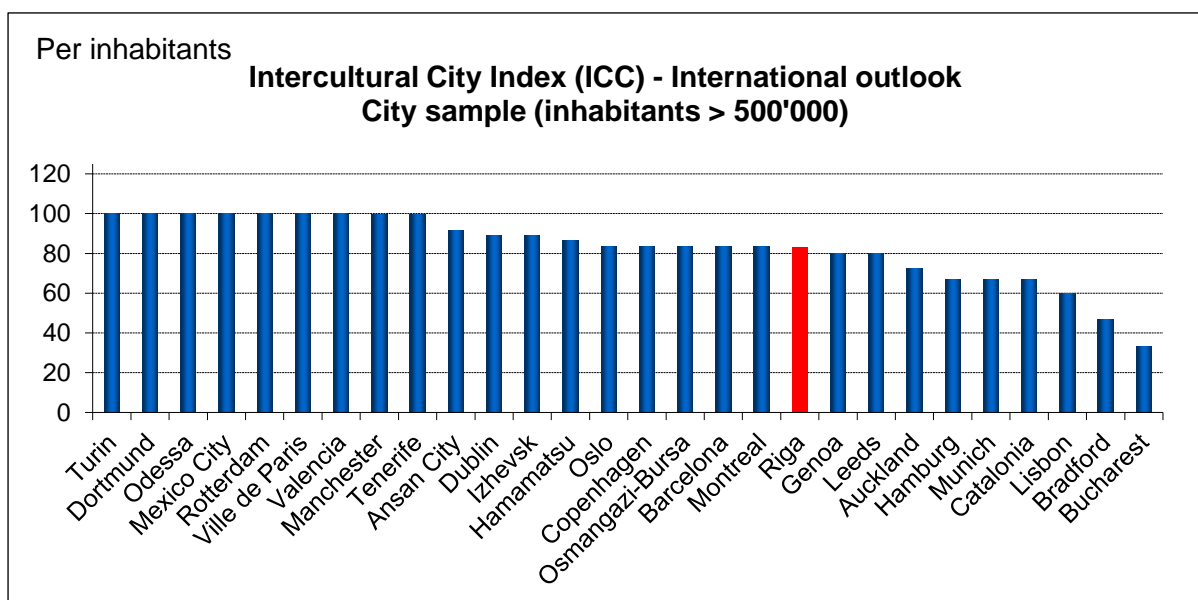
ICC programme resources on communication and public awareness are available [here](#).



## INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK

Although cities have little or no competence in foreign policy, they can actively seek to make connections in other countries to develop business relations, exchange knowledge and know-how, encourage tourism, or simply acknowledge the ties the city may have elsewhere. An intercultural city actively encourages interactions with the outside world and in particular with the cities, regions or countries of origin of its inhabitants.

Riga achieved a rate of 83%, which is higher than the city sample's achievement rate of 69%. This high result is the outcome of Riga's extensive efforts to establish and maintain strong international relations and ties, which is of benefit to the city's residents, including those with minority or migrant backgrounds.<sup>9</sup>



The city of Riga has an explicit and sustainable policy to encourage international cooperation in economic, scientific, cultural, and other areas, and there is a specific financial provision for this policy.

The long-term [Development Strategy of Riga](#) (up to 2030) and the Riga City Development Programme 2022 – 2027 both provide for multiple targets directly connected to the city development, such as economic development based on the East-West relationship, competitive and growing economics, a clean, green, and comfortable city

<sup>9</sup> Riga's achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 83%, while the city sample achievement rate is 68%.

that is easy to access, safe city environment, an educated and culture-cherishing society. One of the long-term development objectives of Riga (LO4) is “Riga – internationally recognisable, important, and competitive Northern European metropolis”, which foresees a strong international cooperation component.

The municipality actively cooperates with international partners on various levels: companies and associations, government institutions and ministries, international organisations and networks, and cities of other countries, as well as experts, thus ensuring transfer of best practices related to inclusion and intercultural approaches.

Currently Riga has a [strong international economic cooperation](#) established. The city is a member of at least 16 international organisations and networks, for example: EUROCITIES, Union of the Baltic Cities (UBC), European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS), Union of Cities THE HANSA (Städtebund DIE HANSE), European Social Network, Baltic Metropoles Network (BaltMet) and [others](#).

Moreover, some institutions and departments of the Municipality of Riga coordinate cooperation with the following international organisations and networks: Investment and Tourism Agency of Riga coordinates cooperation also with the following organisations: International Congress and Conference Association (ICCA), Union International Associations (UIA), Nordic Tourism Collective, Union of Congress Bureaus, Choose Europe and European cities marketing. The Board of Education, Culture and Sports Department of the Riga City Council and city’s cultural institutions actively participate in the International Federation of Library Associations and the European Association of Culture Centres. The Department of Welfare is active in the European Public Health Promotion Network EuroHealthNet.

The city takes actions to develop international connections.

The city has an explicit and sustainable policy to encourage international cooperation in economic, scientific, cultural and other areas and it undertakes steps to develop its international connections.

The target of Riga Investment and Tourism Agency’s activities is to attract international investments, international tourism and maintain international communication.

There are different [support programmes](#) available for entrepreneurs (including foreign entrepreneurs) who want to develop business in Riga: e.g. Startup ecosystem support programme, Support programme for business accelerators and incubators, and Workcation Riga programme.

One of the programmes, [Relocation support program for highly qualified specialists](#), is targeted particularly to attract foreign specialists. It is intended for start-ups that want to hire a foreign specialist (who is currently not employed in Latvia) with a gross salary of at least 2,500 euros. As part of the support offered, the company receives a co-financing from Riga Municipality for a salary of such a new employee of 1,500 euros per month. One company can hire no more than 5 new employees and the maximum period of receiving the co-financing is 3 months. The budget of the program this year is 150,000 euros. The program makes it easier for employers to find employees and promotes the influx of new knowledge and experience into the city.

The Riga Investment and Tourism Agency is launching a new program “[Workcation Riga](#)” that will offer foreign companies to spend a week in Riga and learn more about the business opportunities in our city. It is a chance to explore Riga’s investment environment in more detail and receive a tailor-made visit agenda that will include meetings with city leadership, business consultancies and key opinion leaders relevant to the specific industry as well as company visits.

The city of Riga has [25 twin and partnership cities](#) around the world based on different kinds of signed agreements. In connection with the possibilities and interests of Riga and its twin or partnership cities, multiple larger or smaller scale bilateral cooperation events in different fields are implemented every year. Riga Investment and Tourism Agency is the main coordinator of activities with twin and partnership cities of Riga.

The municipality is active at the international level in the youth field, in particular through the Youthful Cities Commission of the Union of the Baltic Cities. It creates an opportunity for experience exchange and development of joint initiatives (for example, joint youth mobility projects under Erasmus+ framework among the cities of the Baltic Sea Region).

The city reaches out to foreign students or other youth groups arriving through exchange programmes.

Riga schools regularly implement Erasmus+ and Nordplus program projects, within which the most common topics are intercultural dialogue, international cooperation and student exchange. For example, Erasmus+ project “Getting to know Europe’s natural and cultural treasures” aims to get to know other European countries and develop

skills to adapt to a new environment and cultural differences. Project “Breathe freely” aims to provide support to schools for the inclusion of migrant students in the learning process and society. Project “Human rights in a dreamland” deals with students’ awareness of human rights issues, to learn to overcome stereotypes in society about different cultures and migration. Project “Citizens in action” promotes awareness of European citizenship, active and proactive citizenship in secondary schools. Project “Social integration – civic awareness” deals with strengthening young people’s civic awareness in the context of their country and Europe and understanding the concept of civil society.

In general, it is the competence of the universities to work with foreign students. Some NGOs, such as “Make Room Europe”, regularly conduct activities targeted at newcomers and their inclusion, and foreign students are a part of it. This NGO also received financial support from Riga Municipality to implement a project aimed at inclusion of foreign students within Society integration project competition for NGOs. This NGO since recently has been an active partner of Riga Municipality also within EU projects aimed at inclusion of newcomers in Riga; within the project “European Pact for Integration (EPI)” they have conducted a series of interactive workshops for foreign students aimed at interaction with local residents in 2021-2022 and currently they are a partner of Riga Municipality in the project “Migrant Integration Through Locally Designed Experience (MILE)”, implemented 2022-2023, aimed at promoting participation of newcomers (including foreign students) in public life and in the consultative mechanisms of municipality.

Riga seeks to develop business relations with countries and cities of origin of its diaspora groups by involving diaspora and mainstream entrepreneurs in international visits and meetings.

The communication with Latvian diaspora is done by Investment and Tourism Agency of Riga in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia and Investment and Development Agency of Latvia (LIAA). The aim of this communication is to promote and develop business opportunities between Riga and Latvia and other countries and cities where representatives of Latvian diaspora reside.

### Suggestions

Riga has many good practices and strong international cooperation established already, especially through participation in the international networks and various international projects. To continue this dynamic, the city may wish to consult the good practice of the municipality of [Reggio Emilia](#) (Italy) which has a wide network of international contacts and projects aiming to share the city’s best practices and opinions worldwide. In 2000, it set up an Agency to sustain the management and improvement of all the city’s international contacts and projects: Reggio Nel Mondo. It acts as a crosscutting tool supporting all municipal departments in developing a continuous international exchange and dialogue.

## **INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE**

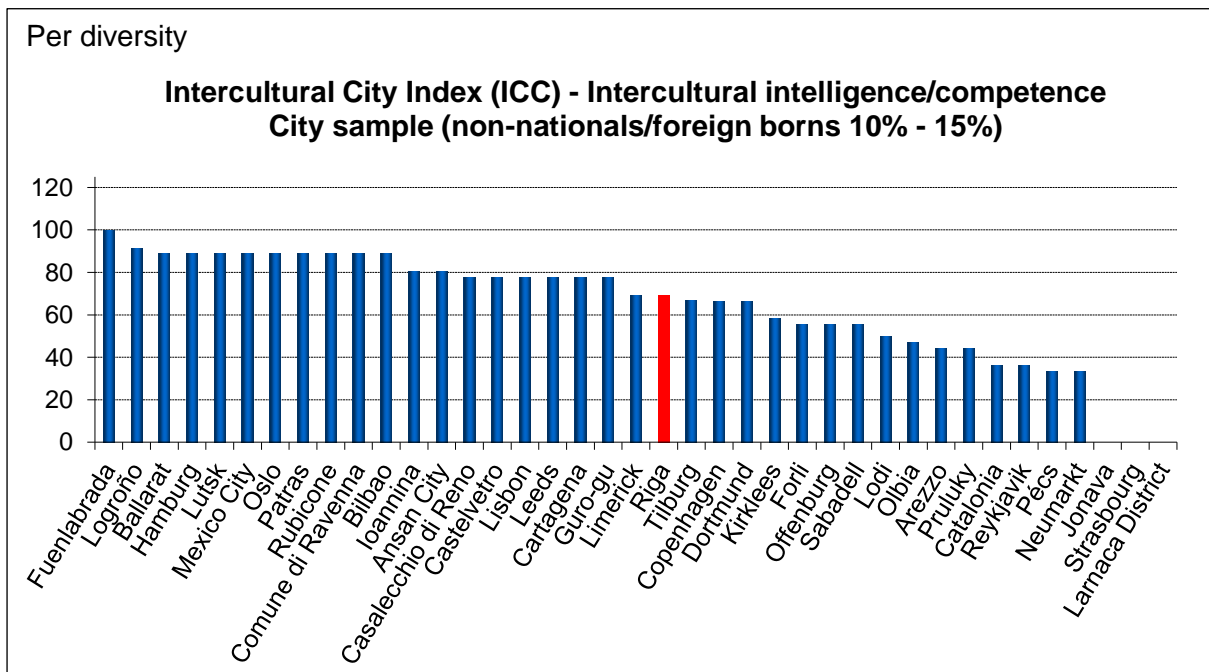
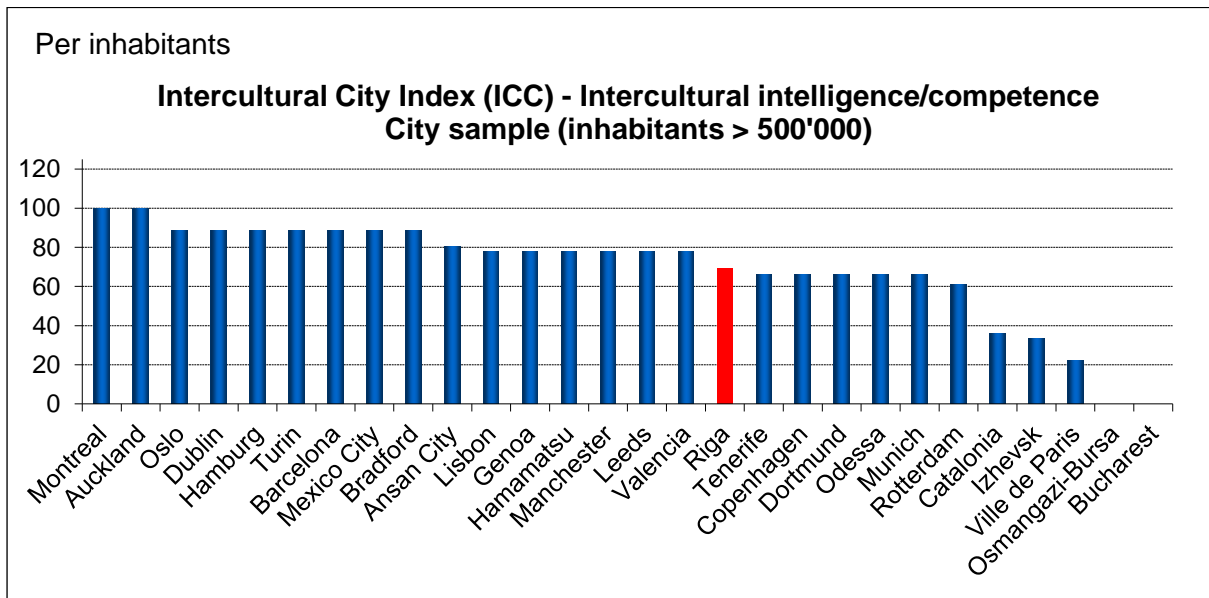
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*Nobody can be an expert in all the languages and cultures that coexist in contemporary cities. Yet, in an intercultural city, officials have an intercultural “mind-set” which enables them to detect cultural differences and modulate their responses accordingly. Intercultural intelligence and competence require a specific know-how when dealing with unfamiliar situations and not an in-depth and often elusive knowledge of all cultures. Such sensitivity and self-confidence is not commonly-seen. It is a technical skill which can be acquired through training and practice. In an intercultural city, the authorities view such skills as equally important and essential to the good functioning of the city as the other professional and technical skills usually expected from public employees.*

Riga achieved a rate of 69%, which is slightly higher than the city sample’s achievement rate of 60%. The city of Riga is showing good practices in this area by collecting relevant data through regular research on society’s integration and by ensuring that its staff, teachers and social workers attend trainings on the issues of diversity and inclusion and regularly strengthen their intercultural competences.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Riga’s achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 77%, while the city sample achievement rate is 57%.



In the case of the city of Riga, statistical and qualitative information about diversity and intercultural relations is sometimes mainstreamed to inform the municipal council's process of policy formulation.

Questions related to interculturalism appear from time to time in the policy planning documents reviewed by the Deputies of the Riga City Council. This aspect is usually considered as background information for planning purposes to understand the general trends.

Deputies of the Riga City Council are included in several advisory councils, together with representatives of non-governmental organisations, discussing various municipal policy planning matters, while into account diversity and intercultural issues, for example, the Advisory Council on Social Integration Issues, the Council of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

The city carries out surveys including questions about the public perception of migrants/minorities. The survey also verifies the feeling of security/safety with respect to people with migrant/minority backgrounds.

Since 2010, Riga Municipality conducts regular and comprehensive [research](#) (including public surveys and focus group discussions) on the society integration issues. Question 7 of the research on the interpersonal interaction, tolerance and attitude towards different groups of the society helps to understand the level of tolerance in Riga towards groups such as national and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, etc. Question 10 is related to

different aspects of migration, including a sub-question about the attitude of the respondents towards migrants. The research was conducted in 2010, 2014, 2017, 2021.

The city of Riga promotes the intercultural competence of its officials and staff, in administration and public services, e.g. through training courses.

Social workers of the Riga Social Service Agency participated in training courses for social work in a diverse society dealing with specifics of professional interaction while working with refugees and asylum seekers, people with various religious beliefs, Roma population and other groups of clients. Trainings were organised by the Ministry of Welfare in 2023 and the intention is to continue providing trainings to other social work professionals. Such trainings are conducted within the activities of EU co-financed project "Development of professional social work in municipalities" which is administered by Ministry of Welfare of Latvia.

In 2022, employees of Society Integration and Participation Division of Neighbourhood Residents Centre participated in a training organised by Ventspils High Technology Park and the Society Integration Foundation in Latvia "Triathlon of Openness. Diversity Inspires". The purpose of this training was to give the participants the opportunity to understand diversity in the cultural context, as well as to recognise the origins of their prejudices and learn practical ways to overcome them. Practical activities promoted participants' understanding of ethnic issues in the context of Latvia and "getting into other person's shoes", thus increasing empathy, acceptance and mutual respect. Meetings were organised with persons representing vulnerable groups or persons at the risk of social exclusion, who despite facing various stereotypes were able to create a space for themselves in Latvia - to study, work and engage in hobbies.

One of the schools (school No. 93) established a methodological support centre, which provides consultations for school staff, organising seminars and exchanges of experience for teachers with regard to the methods of inclusive education and working with children with a migrant background.

### Suggestions

The city of Riga is already putting a lot of effort into acquiring relevant intercultural intelligence. The regular comprehensive research on the society's integration issues conducted by the city of Riga provides very useful information and data for the policy makers. The city might want to look into the practices of other ICC cities on how to on a regular basis collect relevant data which can serve as a solid basis for the evidence-based policy-making.

For example, the Multicultural and Migration Observatory is a joint initiative between the Municipality of Cracow (Poland) and the Krakow University of Economics. Established in 2019, its core work is to produce four reports per year focusing on issues as agreed with the city authority. Besides this data-based picture of migration developments, the Observatory produces analysis of challenges faced by migrants, the host community and policy makers, makes relevant recommendations and creates a space (via workshops and conferences) for dialogue, sharing and problem solving. As an established unit with existing practices, the Observatory has been able to respond swiftly to unforeseen events like the outbreak of war in Ukraine in 2022 and the ensuing mass arrival of Ukrainian refugees. In this emergency, the Observatory was able quickly to change its data plans and provide timely analysis to services and organisations working to support the reception of Ukrainians seeking refuge in Cracow.

Apart from trainings for staff on core intercultural competences, the city may wish to consider other capacity building, for instance training courses on managing communications in a multicultural workplace or on communications skills to organise inclusive outreach campaigns.

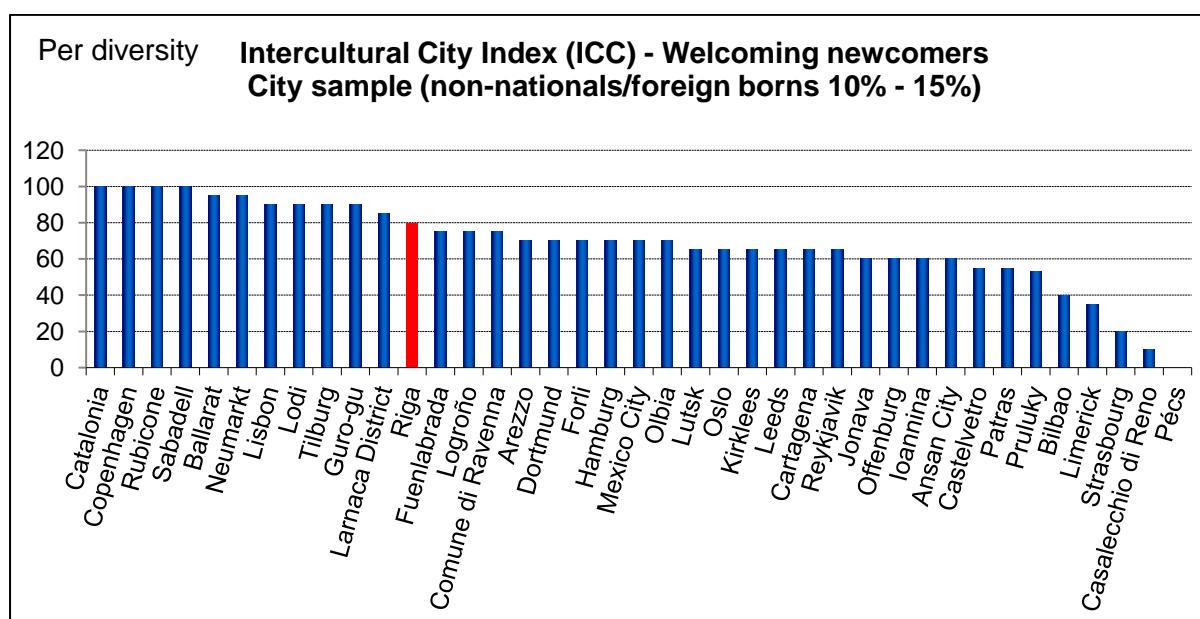
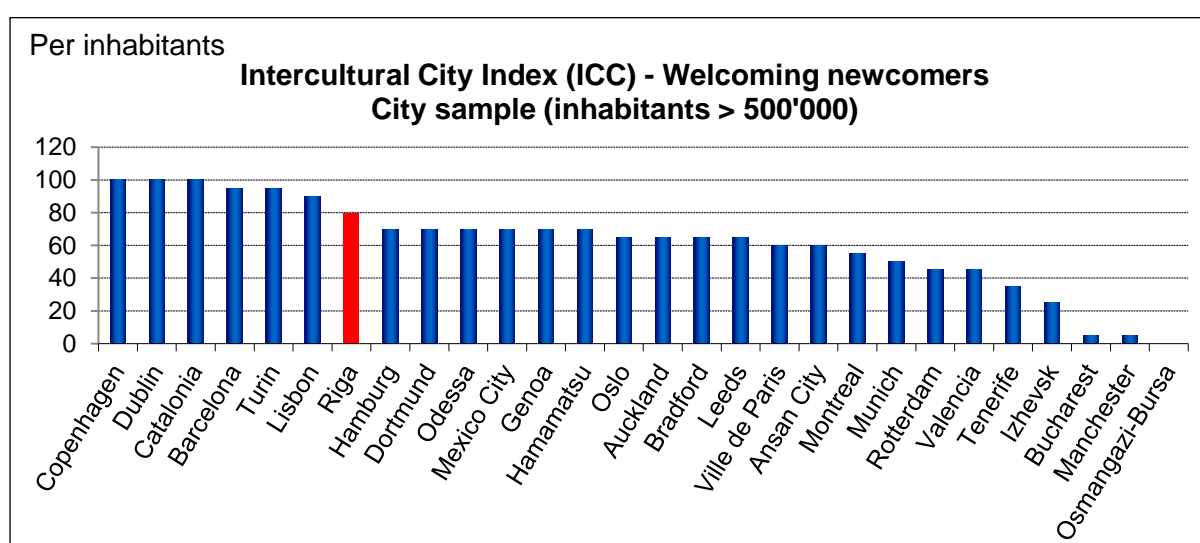
The city of Dudelange (Luxembourg) provides interesting examples of practices, including an awareness-raising training on how to write easy-to-read information. The main objective was to build skills for participants for their communications to reach people with disabilities, as well as all those who have difficulty grasping the content due to gaps in the three languages usually used in the country. Additionally, an internal training "Developing intercultural skills" was organised over three days focusing on critical incidents, intercultural negotiation, and the scope of intercultural competences. The objective was the development of skills to help the person who has experienced a critical problem to overcome it and communicate better with others.

ICC programme resources on intercultural competence are also available [here](#).

## WELCOMING NEWCOMERS

People arriving in a city for an extended stay, whatever their circumstances (expats, migrant workers, spouses, refugees, unaccompanied minors, retired persons, etc.), are likely find themselves disorientated. The less familiar they are with the new environment, the more support they will need to feel comfortable and confident enough to start building a new social and professional network. The way in which the city coordinates and effectively delivers various support measures strongly conditions their capacity to integrate or, conversely, their tendency to remain confined to a cultural “ghetto”. This also depends to a great degree on whether the rest of the city’s population is open to the idea of welcoming newcomers in their capacity as residents and citizens or, on the contrary, is accustomed to viewing newcomers as outsiders who pose a potential threat. Again, it is the message the authorities convey on diversity, in communication or through concrete actions, that determines to a certain degree attitudes towards newcomers.

Riga achieved a rate of 80%, which is considerably higher than the city sample’s achievement rate of 57%. Riga has a lot of good practices to show in this area, due to its extensive and comprehensive city-specific package of information and support for newcomers and its aim to welcome refugees through a coherent one-stop-shop approach.



The city has a comprehensive city-specific package of information and support to welcome newcomers.

A Handbook on services available by the Riga Municipality for Foreigners was produced in 2015 and later updated in 2022. Information was prepared in [English](#), Russian, Latvian and accessible Latvian languages. A handbook for emigrants who are planning to come back to Riga was produced in [English](#), Russian, German and Latvian languages. There is also a ["Step-by-Step" relocation guide](#) available, aimed at different groups of employees willing to relocate to Riga for work purposes.

Riga Municipality launches different project competitions for NGOs to provide financial support for projects aimed at promoting the integration of Riga's society. One such competition is the already mentioned [Society integration project competition for NGOs](#). One of the projects approved recently was aimed at provision of information about Riga in Belarusian language. As part of the project "Strengthening the Belarusian Community - a Bridge to Support Ukrainian Civilians" (2022), implemented by the Society "FreeBelarus", the mobile application "I live in Riga" has been created. It contains information on various practical aspects of life in Riga in Russian and Belarusian languages. It also contains Riga events calendar - a calendar that provides information about free of charge and low-budget events in Riga - concerts, festivals, sports events, events for children, etc.

Different city services and agencies provide welcome support for particular groups of newcomers, such as refugees, asylum-seekers and other groups.

Since 2014, the Riga Municipality grants financing to remunerate teachers who teach the Latvian language to returning emigrant pupils and to newcomers. These pupils may take two additional classes per week to learn the language for one school year in addition to the classes envisaged in the curriculum.

Special steps have been undertaken to rapidly welcome to Riga people fleeing war in Ukraine. A special one-stop agency for Ukrainian refugees was established on 7 March 2022 in Riga Municipality – the Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents, where all the main state and local government services are concentrated. This includes services responsible for the registration in Riga, temporary residence permits, social assistance, services offered by non-governmental organisations, etc. The following state services offer their support in the centre: the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs – processing of visas and residence permits; State Fire and Rescue Service – accommodation in the territory of Latvia; State Employment Agency - job vacancies, unemployment status. The following Riga Municipality services are provided at the Centre: Registration in Riga – SIM cards and registration in database; Riga Social Service – social support, financial support, humanitarian aid packages; guardian court, psychological help; Education, Culture and Sports Department – education; Riga Municipal police – housing in Riga; Riga public transportation – free public transportation.

Numerous NGOs and international organisations are also represented at the premises of the centre (e.g. NGO "Your Friends" ("Tavi draugi"), International Organisation for Migration, NGO "VICHE"), which organise different social inclusion events. For example, English language courses for Ukrainian residents, some excursions in mixed groups with Latvians as well as Latvian traditional celebrations (Easter, Christmas, Summer solstice etc.) are organised.

Universities and other higher education institutions, working with foreign students provide a "welcome pack" for students coming to Latvia from abroad. They help with immigration services, provide accommodation (dormitories), assist in finding a job, and help to solve various everyday issues if necessary (e.g. opening a bank account, renting a flat, addressing religious issues).

Since the beginning of January 2023, the Society Integration Foundation started the development of a new service - [One-stop agency for foreigners](#). The purpose of the one-stop agency is a provision of informational support and services to third country nationals and recipients of international protection in one place, which are necessary for the successful socio-economic inclusion of individuals when moving to Latvia.

Moreover, some companies, e.g. IT company Accenture Latvia, delivery companies Wolt and Bolt, which employ large numbers of foreign nationals offer welcome support to newcomers.

The city does not organise a public ceremony to greet all people arriving to live in the city, regardless of their origin or nationality, but newcomers are welcomed personally by the city in different ways.

Since 2020 a certain group of newcomers has been greeted by Riga Municipality in a special way. These annual welcoming events are organised in the cooperation with the Returning Emigrants Coordinator, a position established in 2018 in the framework of a project of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia. The participants have been welcomed by the Mayor of Riga. The participants of such events are mostly Latvian nationals, who have been living abroad for a while, even as a second generation, as well as their family members – nationals of other countries.

## Suggestions

The city of Riga has a lot of good practices in the area of welcoming newcomers, especially due to its experience in setting up one-stop-shops processes to provide welcome services to the newcomers. In the future, it might consider organising regular public ceremonies to greet all people arriving to live in the city. In addition, it might consider looking into good practices implemented by other ICC cities, in the spirit of mutual learning.

For example, cities can implement programmes which make newly arrived persons feel welcomed by the local population. The [Copenhagen](#) (Denmark) Host Programme facilitates encounters between newly arrived migrants and Copenhageners who wish to volunteer as hosts. It is coordinated by the city's Department for Integration and Language which is responsible for administering the Integration Act in the municipality of Copenhagen. The programme is operated in close collaboration with two local organisations. The Danish Refugee Council carries out social activities with newly arrived inhabitants including Danish conversation courses and provides information on the local community, cultural activities and those carried out by local associations. The Foreningen Nydansker helps newly arrived inhabitants integrate into the local education system and job market.

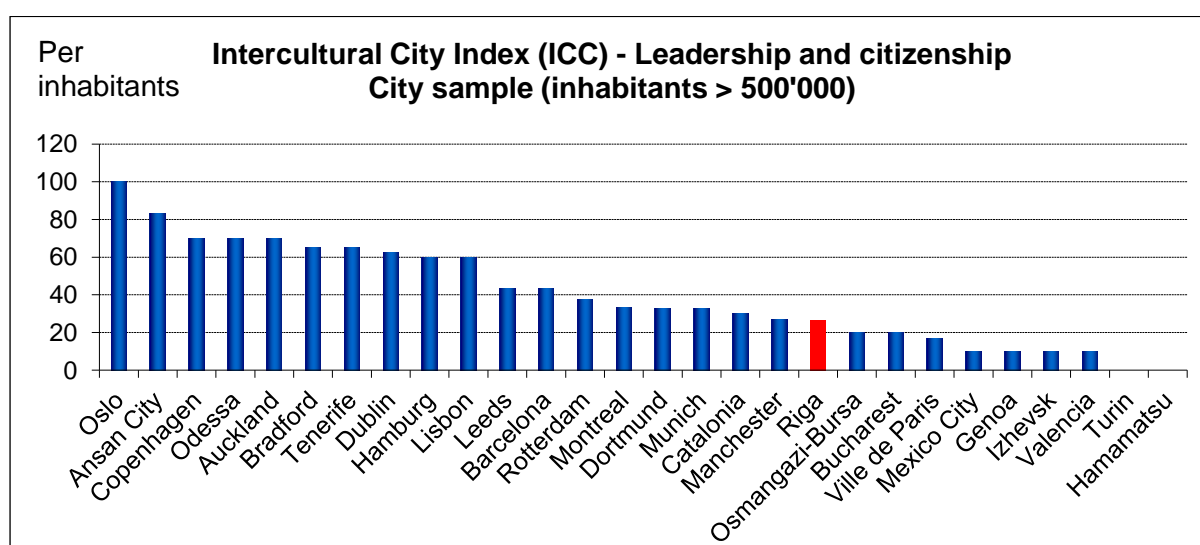
[Neumarkt](#) (Germany) also had a lot of ideas for how to welcome newcomers. There is an annual reception and all newcomers are invited four times per year. Welcome packs and the reception address all aspects of city life including sustainability, fair trade and integration. Surveys are conducted for feedback as to why people move to Neumarkt and the city enjoys hearing the stories of new arrivals.

ICC programme resources on refugees and welcoming policies are also available [here](#).

## LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP

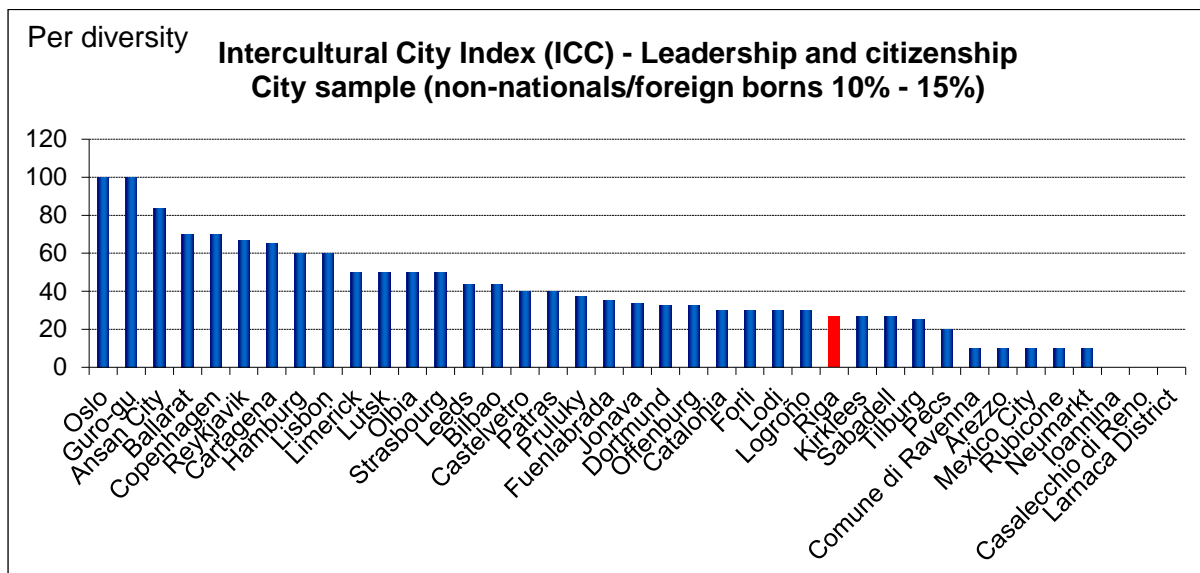
*The most powerful and far-reaching action a city can take to be more intercultural is to open up democratic representation and decision-making to all residents of the city irrespective of their origin, nationality or residence status. Formal political rights at the local level are determined nationally or at the regional level in some federal states. Nonetheless, there is much that a city council can do to influence the way in which diverse groups interact and co-operate around the allocation of power and resources. An intercultural city strives to include all residents in the policy-making process and ensures thereby that public services are provided according to their diverse needs and not according to their cultural or political proximity to public decision-makers.*

Riga achieved a rate of 27%, which is lower than the city sample's achievement rate of 37%. This result is close to the average result of other cities who filled in the ICC Index. Riga has a well-established consultative body (Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council) and it is a very good practice that the city ensures that migrant-led civil society organisations are mandatorily represented.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Riga's achievement rate in the extended Intercultural Cities Index is 38%, while the city sample achievement rate is 50%.





According to the national legislation, in order to stand as a candidate in local elections the person needs to be a citizen of the Republic of Latvia or an EU citizen, registered in the Electoral Register and at least 18 years old on the day of elections. Voters are registered in the Electoral Register according to their registered place of residence 90 days prior to the Election Day.

Candidates might be included in the candidate list in local elections if they comply with at least one of the following conditions:

- 1) have been registered residents in a given location for at least the last 10 months;
- 2) have been working on the territory of a given local government (as an employee or as a self-employed person according to the Law on National Social Insurance) for at least the last 4 months;
- 3) own real estate which is registered in the territory of the respective local government.

Only nationals from certain foreign countries can vote in local elections. Citizens of the Republic of Latvia and citizens of the European Union who have reached the age of 18 are eligible to vote in the elections for the city council. In order to participate in local elections in Latvia, an EU citizen has to be registered in the Population Register of Latvia 90 days prior to the elections. Voters have the right to vote in the local government where their place of residence had been registered 90 days prior to the Election Day or in the local government where they own a real estate.

At the moment there are no foreign-born or dual nationals elected members of city's municipal council.

There are no restrictions for dual nationals or foreign-born persons (if they are citizens of Latvia or the European Union) to be elected to the city's municipal council. However, the data of the Central Election Commission show that there were not dual nationals among the 60 Riga Council members, who were elected on 29 August 2020. There were, however, City Council members with double citizenship elected during previous elections. There is no public data available regarding the place of birth of the Council members. According to the [data](#) of the Central Election Commission, the current ethnic composition of the Riga City Council is as follows: 29 persons (48,3%) Latvians, 1 person (1,7%) Jewish, 5 persons (8,3%) Russians, 1 person (1,7%) Livonian. 24 persons (40,0%) have not indicated their ethnicity.

The city of Riga has a consultative body involving migrants/minorities, other citizens, as well as relevant public institutions, organisations and experts through which people with migrant/minority backgrounds can voice their concerns and advise the municipal council on diversity and integration matters.

The Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council is a consultative institution of the Riga City Council, established in 2011 with the aim to ensure participation of non-governmental organisations in the integration policy planning, implementation and evaluation. The Consultative Board consists of the representatives of the Municipality, deputies of the City Council and representatives of NGOs (including the organisations of national minorities and representing the interests of migrants). Amendments to the statutes of the Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council have been adopted on 24 August 2023 stipulating that

among the representatives of NGOs there should be a representative of at least one organisation set up by newcomers (migrant-led NGO) or of organisation representing the interests of newcomers. The Consultative Board is elected for the term of 3 years. In Autumn 2023, a call for new board members will be launched, highlighting the need to involve NGOs working with migration issues.

There is no standard for the representation of people with migrant/minority backgrounds in mandatory boards supervising schools and/or public services.

The city sometimes takes initiatives to encourage people with migrant/minority backgrounds to engage in political life.

Since 2022, Riga Municipality in cooperation with NGOs working on migration issues (NGO “Make Room Europe” and NGO “Providus”) is implementing a project “Migrant Integration Through Locally Designed Experience (MILE)” (2022-2023), aimed at promotion of participation of newcomers in public life. A series of meetings has been organised, in which migrants had a chance to meet different officials of the Municipality of Riga and NGOs in order to discover different ways of participation at the level of Municipality and beyond.

In general, political parties are responsible for recruiting their members. There are only a couple of NGOs working with migration issues and such NGOs are mostly working with language, culture and basic integration issues. In order to engage in the political life in Latvia, one must have a very good command of Latvian language, which is a problem for most people with migrant backgrounds. On one instance a person of Lebanese origin became a member of Latvian parliament as a result of his active involvement in the life of Latvian society and for being a very well-known doctor in Latvia.

### Recommendations

Riga could further develop initiatives to encourage people with migrant and minority background to engage in political life. Initiatives to improve the knowledge of local politicians and municipal staff jobs among people from diverse cultural origins, could encourage them to engage in politics. Regarding the right to vote and to stand in local elections, the municipality may wish to raise awareness among people who are entitled to these rights. This could be done through personal letters or communication campaigns. [Barcelona](#) and Salt (Spain) organised the campaign ‘La meva Ciutat, el meu vot’ (‘My city, my vote’) to inform people on their rights to vote in local elections and how to register in the census. The campaign included videos with people from different nationalities, information sessions and infographics (see [here](#)). The result was an increase of 53% of people registered for the 2019 municipal elections.

Certain non-formal initiatives can be implemented to enhance the participation in the local political and decision-making processes. The London Borough of [Lewisham](#) (United Kingdom) gives a good example with its Young Mayor initiative - a robust attempt to put real power and responsibility in the hands of young people and treat them seriously. The young mayor is elected by direct ballot every year and – along with a cabinet of young advisors – is given a budget to initiate a programme of work, as well as to scrutinise the work of Lewisham mayor and of the city council.

ICC programme resources on political and public participation are also available [here](#).

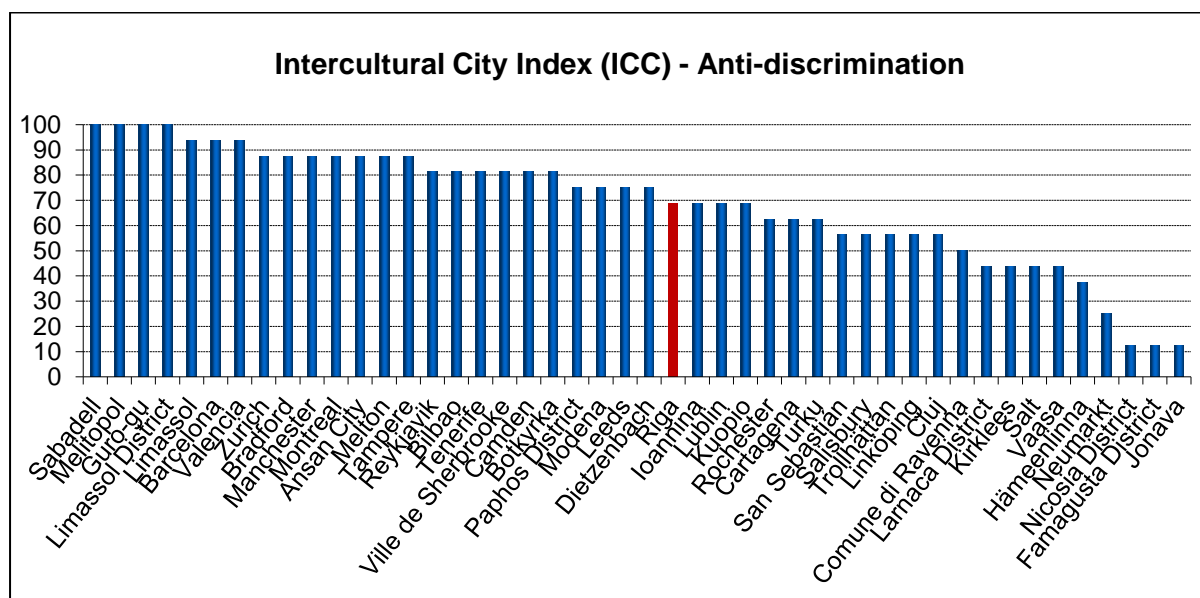
## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION**

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*Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, intolerance against certain religious groups, gender discrimination, prejudice and ethnocentrism, are all conducive to discriminatory attitudes and practices. They often subsist in people’s minds despite laws proscribing discrimination against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation. An intercultural city assures every effort is made to ensure non-discrimination in all of its policies, programmes and activities. The city works in partnership with civil society organisations and other institutions that combat discrimination and offer support and reparation to victims. It also communicates widely on the risks discrimination presents for social cohesion, quality of life and the local economy.*

Indicators on anti-discrimination have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index in 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 42 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Riga’s rate of achievement in the field of anti-discrimination is 69%. The city obtained a good result in this

area due to its extensive collaboration with the civil society organisations, state police and other national actors relevant for the prevention and investigation of discrimination cases and for providing support to the victims.



The city of Riga has carried out a systematic review of all municipal rules and regulations to identify mechanisms that may discriminate residents with migrant/minority backgrounds. The municipal rules and regulations are issued according to the Latvian laws adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia. State-level documents contain necessary provisions related to the transposition of the EU non-discrimination directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC and other relevant legal acts.

The city does not have a charter or another binding document proscribing discrimination against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation in the municipal administration and services, but this is regulated in the national legislation. The legal documents prohibiting discrimination against persons on certain discrimination grounds are in the competence of the national government and the Municipality observes them in its work. Non-discrimination provisions are included in several laws (mostly related to the transposition of the EU non-discrimination directives 2000/43/EC and 2000/78/EC).

The city does not have a dedicated service that advises and supports victims of discrimination, as this is done at the regional and/or national level and by the civil society organisations. Dedicated services at the national level are provided by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Latvia. There is also a number of NGOs advocating for the rights of certain groups. The most prominent of these NGOs is the [Latvian Centre for Human Rights](#).

Social pedagogues working at schools are primary sources of support at schools with the victims of bullying and possible discrimination. Hate crimes and discriminatory actions are criminalised in Latvia. It is the competence of state police to start a criminal proceeding in such situations. Still, the Riga Municipal police provides support to the state police, e.g. by providing first response to prevent or to stop the hate crime if possible, to collect evidence and also to provide support to the victim before the state police officers and other specialists arrive at the scene.

The city provides financial support to civil society organisations that advise and support victims of discrimination. Riga Municipality cooperates with non-governmental organisations that work with citizens' groups at risk of social exclusion and discrimination. For example, as part of the call for projects for NGOs "[Society integration](#)" (already mentioned before), promotion of tolerance and prevention of all kinds of discrimination (intercultural dialogue, protection of ethnic identity) is one of the elements considered for the approval of projects. Multiple projects have been approved and implemented by NGOs since this project competition has been launched in 2010. For example several projects aiming to support victims of discrimination were implemented by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights, NGO "I Want to Help Refugees" and other NGOs working with migration and advocacy. The examples of recently implemented projects supported by the Municipality are: "Riga Does not Discriminate!" (2023) implemented by the Association of LGBT and Their Friends "MOZAIKA" (created and disseminated written and video materials that describe the definition of discrimination in Latvian legislation, its types, practical manifestations, how to recognise it and how to react if someone has become a victim of discrimination or has reported a

discrimination case), or “Reducing of Self-Stigmatisation and Self-Isolation of People Living with HIV” (2023) implemented by the Society “AGIHAS” (provided face-to-face and remote counselling in Latvian, English and Russian languages, organised motivational health seminar and self-support group appointments for people infected with HIV to promote their integration and reduce their discrimination in the society).

The city regularly monitors and researches the extent and the character of discrimination in the city.

Riga Municipality conducts regular research on society cohesion issues since 2010. The latest research was conducted in [2021](#). Question 7 of the research on the interpersonal interaction, tolerance and attitude towards different groups of society helps to understand the level of tolerance in Riga towards certain groups, such as ethnic and religious groups, persons with disabilities, etc.

Monitoring the extent and the character of discrimination in the city is done in cooperation with the State Police and State Security Service in the format of a newly established Council PREVENT bringing together all stakeholders responsible for discrimination prevention. PREVENT consists of State Security Service, state police, Riga Municipal Police, border guards, Ministries of Education, Welfare and Healthcare, Probation Service and other partners. Each stakeholder has its role in conducting monitoring of discrimination cases and the results are presented twice a year during PREVENT meetings.

The city sometimes runs anti-discrimination campaigns or raises awareness on discrimination in other ways.

Awareness-raising activities on migration, diversity and non-discrimination are run on an ad-hoc basis, usually as a part of projects and have been carried out by both NGOs and state institutions and within EU projects implemented by the Education, Culture and Sports Department of Riga City Council. Since 2022, Riga Municipality in cooperation with NGOs working with migration issues “Make Room Europe” and NGO “Providus” is implementing a project “Migrant Integration Through Locally Designed Experience (MILE)” (2022-2023), aimed at promotion of participation of newcomers in public life. A series of meetings has been organised, in which migrants had a chance to meet different officials of Riga Municipality and NGOs. One such meeting was dedicated to the advocacy and protection against discrimination. This event was organised in cooperation with the Latvian Centre for Human Rights and migrants had a chance to learn what is discrimination, what are the different types of discrimination and which institutions to address in case of discrimination.

The city participates in regional organisations that address the issue of discrimination. Riga is represented in the Network of Regional Experts on Roma Integration issues.

The city does not have an anti-rumours strategy, nor does it implement anti-rumours activities following the official Council of Europe methodology.

### Recommendations

Riga already has an impressive catalogue of work, activities, programmes and policies in the field of anti-discrimination and it can be an inspiration to other cities.

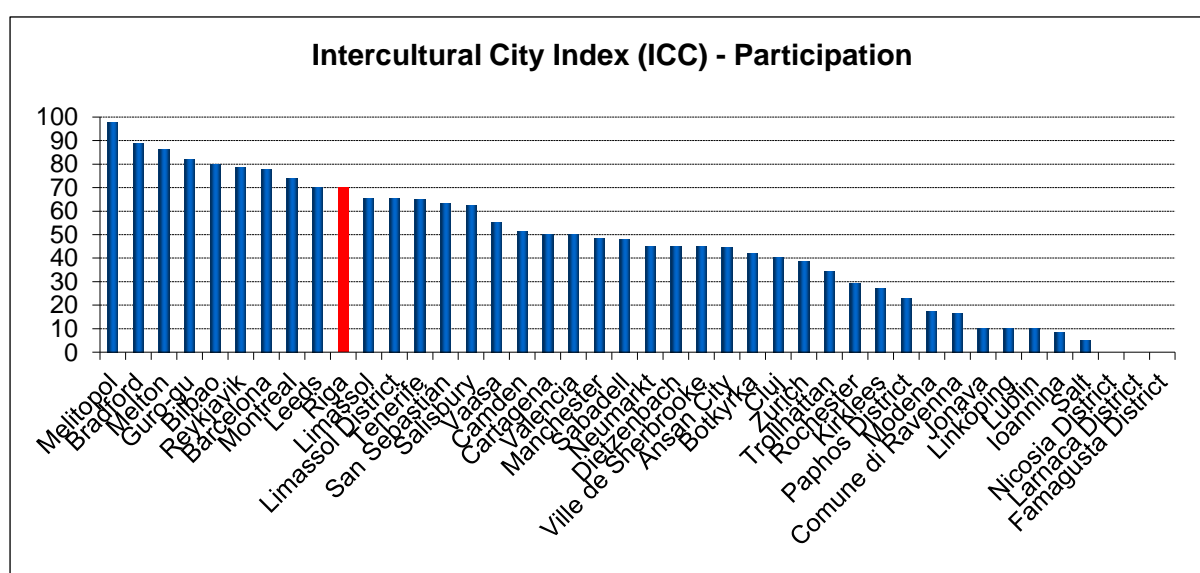
In order to tackle the problems of rumours, which in societies across the world are often based on harmful stereotypes, Riga could consider implementing the “Anti-rumour methodology”. This methodology has been developed to counter diversity-related prejudices and rumours that hamper positive interaction lay the foundations of discriminatory and racist attitudes. Standardised through the publication of a Handbook, the methodology is being now applied by a growing number of cities. Understood as a public policy, the Anti-Rumours strategy, 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, including by creating and disseminating new tools and resources, both creative and rigorous.

ICC programme resources on systemic discrimination are also available [here](#) and resources on anti-rumours are available [here](#).

## PARTICIPATION

*Inclusion, power-sharing and participation are the golden keys of intercultural policy-making. A range of studies have demonstrated that inclusive integration policies produce better outcomes in terms of social cohesion, trust in the administration, safety, quality of services, welfare, good governance and economic growth. People with different backgrounds and experiences can bring innovative solutions to common challenges, as well as anticipate problems that might arise. Conversely, when people encounter barriers to participation, or otherwise choose intentionally not to participate, they may, passively, withdraw from social and public life or choose, actively, to live outside prevailing social customs and law. An intercultural city actively seeks the participation of all residents in the various decision-making processes that affect life in the city. By doing so, it increases support, and thereby the sustainability of local policies, while at the same significantly reducing the economic costs of social exclusion and instability.*

Indicators on participation have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index since 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 42 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Riga's rate of achievement in the field of participation is 70%. The city of Riga has introduced various participatory mechanisms, such as public participation networks, neighbourhood coordinators and participatory budget, to enable all city residents, including those of migrant/minority backgrounds, to participate equally in the decision-making processes.



The Consultative Board on Society Integration Issues of Riga City Council was involved in the elaboration of two policy-planning documents in the area of integration: Riga City Integration Programme (2012-2017) and Riga City Integration Programme “Guidelines on Societal Integration of Riga” (2019-2024). The Consultative Board was also involved in the elaboration of action plans for these two policy-planning documents.

The city has introduced various participatory mechanisms, such as public participation networks and participatory budget, to enable all city residents, irrespective of their migrant/minority backgrounds, to participate equally in the decision-making process. All inhabitants irrespective of their ethnic origin or belonging to any other vulnerable group are invited to take part in the decision-making process in the municipality. There are different forms and mechanisms put in place to facilitate participation. The events are held in Latvian language and the participants should demonstrate at least some command of Latvian language to understand the essence of the documentation discussed. As the practice shows, minority representatives use their mother tongue (Russian, English) while expressing their opinions during public discussions.

Riga Municipality considers the city residents as central partners in achieving long-term development objectives of Sustainable Development Strategy of Riga until 2030 and Development Programme of Riga for 2022-2027. The ongoing participatory policies and initiatives contribute to active public engagement in spatial development planning in Riga. Extensive public consultations with specific target groups are conducted in every planning process, fulfilling both the formal participation needs as well as proactively consulting the issues with the communities. For example,

in 2022, the Municipal Development Department implemented public participatory activities at the early stage of Neighbourhood Centres Development Plan conducting polls, focus groups and individual interviews. In May 2023, the Development Department organised a public discussion round on the strategic guidelines for the conservation and development of the Riga Historic Centre and its Protection Zone. These consultations also take place at a very early stage of the planning process.

[Participatory budgeting](#) was launched in 2019 in Riga with the aim to promote greater involvement of citizens in the development of their neighbourhoods and all residents of Riga over 16 years old, irrespective of their ethnic origins, can vote for the projects proposed to improve the situation in their neighbourhood of Riga.

In addition, the Neighbourhood Residents Centre was established in 2021 by the Municipality of Riga. It aims to serve as a one stop agency for the residents of Riga to facilitate participation in the decision-making processes. Seven [neighbourhood coordinators](#) work in the centre and they are responsible for 58 neighbourhoods of Riga (each coordinator is responsible for certain neighbourhoods). The main task of the coordinators is to be a contact point for any resident of Riga, including newcomers and people from various minority/migrant backgrounds, who wish to reach out to the municipality. Residents put forward any ideas or initiatives for improving their daily lives or other specific issues related to the work of Riga Municipality. The coordinators communicate on a daily basis with residents through social media. Also, as mentioned before, the coordinators participate in organising neighbourhood festivals and other neighbourhood events in cooperation with local NGOs. They also serve as an initial reference point for residents who want to participate in the consultative mechanisms/councils of the municipality (there are several mechanisms in which anyone can participate).

The city does not monitor the participation of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making process, no such data is collected.

The city does not take action to ensure that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds are fairly represented in key institutions and organisations, on boards or ruling bodies of trade unions, public schools, work councils, etc.

There are no official municipal policies targeted at enhancing representation of any group of the society in key institutions and organisations, on boards or ruling bodies of trade unions, public schools, work councils, etc. as the skills and the knowledge of the persons are the sole criteria for selection. Several Ukrainian refugees are employed in the subordinate institutions of Riga Municipality, such as hospitals, polyclinics, schools and kindergartens. There are some examples in the business environment, which have their enterprises open for socially vulnerable groups (such as migrants, elderly people). However, no official data is available on the ethnic origin of the employees.

The city introduced mechanisms to make sure that gender equality is respected in organisations that participate in the decision-making process on matters related to the inclusion of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds.

### [Recommendations](#)

Riga already has many ideas and good practices and a very good score in the field of participation. It would be perhaps of interest to learn from the experience of other ICC cities which further steps could be taken to ensure that persons with migrant or minority backgrounds are consulted specifically.

[Camden](#) (United Kingdom) has been at the forefront of developing Neighbourhood and Citizen's Assemblies. A recent example is the Gospel Oak and Haverstock Neighbourhood Assembly. It is a group of 30 people from across the Gospel Oak and Haverstock area who are all interested in the future of their neighbourhood. They have been randomly selected using a method called sortation and are representative of the area in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, and housing tenure. They bring with them a unique set of experiences based on the lives they have lived.

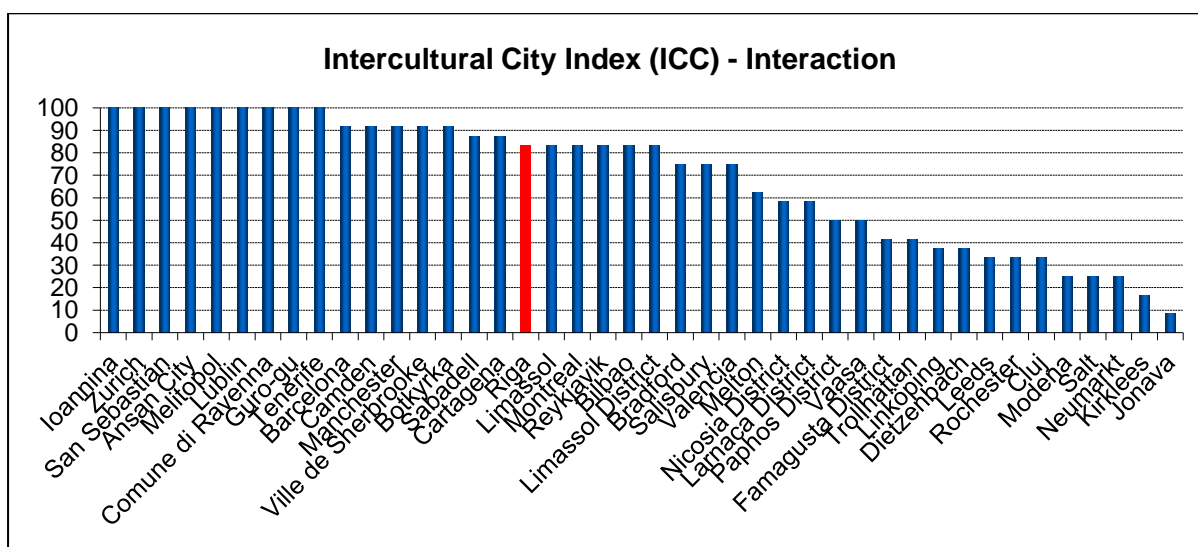
In addition, comprehensive monitoring of the participation of residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making processes is key to designing better strategies to overcome barriers to participation. While acknowledging the difficulties in doing so, one approach could be to start by conducting minor research in particular areas of the city.

ICC programme resources on political and public participation are also available [here](#).

## INTERACTION

*Interaction between people of all kinds is what gives the intercultural city its distinctive value. Identity is not 'given' in a passive sense, but something which is 'enacted' and defined through interaction. In spite of protective laws, prejudice and discrimination can thrive where there is segregation or a lack of contact and dialogue between people. There is ample evidence to prove that, under certain conditions, the more contact people with different backgrounds and lifestyles have with each other, the less likely they are to think and behave in prejudicial ways. Therefore, an intercultural city develops, in partnership with other organisations, a range of policies and actions to encourage more mixing and interaction between diverse groups.*

Indicators on interaction have been included in the Intercultural Cities Index since 2019. The data collected so far is not yet relevant for statistical purposes. So far, 42 cities have replied to this new Intercultural Cities Index chapter. Riga's rate of achievement in the field of interaction is 83%. The city of Riga proactively implements many interesting policies in this area, for example through creating vibrant spaces for interaction between residents of the city of Riga from all backgrounds.



Riga NGO House has a database of non-governmental organisations. The database is created on a voluntary basis including NGOs (among them minority NGOs and NGOs promoting intercultural inclusion), which cooperate with the NGO House and Neighbourhood Residents Centre. More than 1,200 contacts of NGOs have been collected in the database and it is regularly updated in cooperation with the NGOs. The NGO House database includes at least 60 minority organisations and at least 20 organisations working in the field of cultural dialogue.

The city of Riga collaborates with civil society and grassroots organisations that are active in the various fields concerned by intercultural inclusion by holding regular meetings with the organisations and by providing information regularly to the organisations on the city's intercultural inclusion policy.

Riga NGO House regularly cooperates with and supports civil society and local organisations working in various fields related to intercultural inclusion. Several organisations in these fields use the NGO House premises and organise public events involving different types of stakeholders. For example, in 2023 NGO "Tine" organised free seminars on business and tax policy environment in Latvia for Ukrainian refugees, the "Baltic-Chinese Business, Culture and Education Cooperation Agency" organised digital marketing training for migrants, NGO "Grīziņa attīstībai" organised integration classes for Ukrainians, "Malta Orders Relief Service" organised volunteer training for persons working with refugees in social care centres, hospitals, shelters, care facilities, etc.

The city collaborates with NGOs representing minority amateur culture groups who receive funding from the municipality to engage into culture activities organised by culture institutions.

At the Riga Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents several NGOs are represented and are actively involved in the decision-making and practical integration processes – many events are held, like labour markets, language courses, seminars and lectures about various topics regarding important life aspects – children education in Latvia etc. International Organization for Migration (IOM) and association "VICHE" are represented at the Centre. Latvian

and English language courses for Ukrainian residents are provided by association “I Want to Help Refugees” and association “Your Friends” (“Tavi draugi”). NGOs provide individual help and group meetings about social inclusion for Ukrainian residents, some excursions in mixed groups with Latvians as well as Latvian traditional celebrations (Easter, Christmas, Summer solstice etc.) are organised.

As already mentioned, since May 2023, Riga Municipality provides free premises for the functioning of the Centre of Non-Governmental Organisations “Rīgas sirds”(“Heart of Riga”), where non-governmental organisations regularly organise various creative and cultural activities for Ukrainian refugees - children and adults.

Riga Municipal Police officers frequently meet local NGOs and citizens in a format of community policing, they also participate in different public forums and discussions.

Teachers in elementary/primary schools receive training in intercultural communication and pedagogy. Education and Information Services of Riga City (RIIMC) is an educational support municipality institution that manages and organises professional development of teachers in Riga. Every month RIIMC offers lessons, workshops, exchange experiences and courses on various topics related to education, intercultural dialogue and migration on regular basis. RIIMC offers teachers the opportunity to take courses on inclusive education and diversity. After the Russian invasion in Ukraine and the influx of Ukrainian civilians, RIIMC (in 2022) organised an exchange of experiences for preschool and schoolteachers in Riga (total of 192 teachers) “Working with children of immigrants and Ukrainians at preschool and school”. The aim was to share how teachers work with the children of newcomers and especially Ukrainians. These exchanges of experience took place online. In 2023, RIIMC organised the same exchange of experiences through a workshop for preschool and schoolteachers in Riga (total of 118 teachers) but this time it took place in person. As part of the exchanges, preschools and schools created their own lesson plans and suggestions to help develop students' strengths, to help them value diversity and to promote cultural acceptance.

Teachers also receive training in intercultural communication in Riga schools on an ad-hoc basis, both within international projects, as well in cooperation with the State Language Agency. Since recently the focus of such training activities is more on intercultural dialogue and migration as the number of children-newcomers and Latvian children returning to Latvia from abroad is increasing.

### Recommendations

The city of Riga has already put in place many interesting solutions and spaces which facilitate meaningful interaction between residents of Riga of all backgrounds and origins. The city might wish to look into the practices from other ICC cities for additional ideas and inspiration.

Riga already offers training for teachers; however, it can still look into experiences of the other cities. A good example can be found in [Patras](#) (Greece) where new teachers are trained on the intercultural and anti-rumours approach with the aim of implementing the practices once entering the work life. In [Ansan](#) (Republic of Korea), schools offer a range of courses on intercultural understanding targeting multicultural families, students, teachers, and parents, and schools that show outstanding achievements in this regard are designated as intercultural schools and eligible for financial support.

ICC programme resources on anti-rumours are also available [here](#) and resources on intercultural competence and mediation are available [here](#).











## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

According to the overall Intercultural Cities Index results, Riga has an aggregate Intercultural Cities Index achievement rate of 65 (out of 100 possible points), which is a good result for cities that are new to the intercultural integration model. To synthesise the assessment provided throughout the report, the table below lists the strengths (what Riga does) and the weaknesses (what Riga does not yet do).

<p><b>COMMITMENT</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>The city has an integration strategy with intercultural elements adopted.</p> <p>The city has city adopted an intercultural action plan.</p> <p>Riga has allocated a budget for the implementation of the intercultural strategy and the action plan.</p> <p>The city systematically engages in co-design of policies by involving people with diverse backgrounds in policy formulation.</p> <p>An evaluation and updating process has been put in place for the intercultural strategy and the action plan.</p> <p>Official communications by the city of Riga rarely make clear reference to the city's intercultural commitment.</p> <p>The city has an official webpage that communicates its intercultural statement, strategy and action plan, which is accessible with 2 clicks.</p> <p>The city of Riga has a dedicated body responsible for implementing the intercultural strategy.</p> <p>Riga acknowledges and honours local residents /organisations that have done exceptional things to encourage interculturalism in the local community.</p> <p>Riga does not yet have a formally adopted public statement that it is an Intercultural City.</p>
<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>In Riga, children in primary schools are not of the same ethnic or cultural background and the ethnic or cultural background of teachers in schools often reflects the composition of the city's population.</p> <p>Schools often carry out international projects.</p> <p>Only few schools make strong efforts to involve parents with migrant or minority backgrounds in school life.</p> <p>There is no segregation observed in schools, therefore there is no need for policies to increase ethnic/cultural mixing.</p>
<p><b>NEIGHBOURHOODS</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>Most districts/neighbourhoods of the city of Riga are culturally and ethnically diverse.</p> <p>The city does not face problems of ethnic concentration; therefore, it does not have a policy for increasing the diversity of residents in the neighbourhoods and for avoiding ethnic concentration.</p> <p>The city encourages actions where residents of one neighbourhood meet and interact with residents with different migrant/minority backgrounds from other neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The city has a policy to encourage residents with migrant/minority backgrounds to meet and interact with other people living in the same neighbourhood.</p> <p>Riga may wish to consult good practices of other cities to seek new ideas for encouraging intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction at the level of neighbourhoods.</p>
<p><b>PUBLIC SERVICES</b></p>	<p>✓</p>	<p>The city of Riga takes action to encourage diverse workforce, intercultural mixing and competence in private sector enterprises.</p> <p>The city takes into consideration the migrant/minority backgrounds of all residents when providing the services related to school meals and other services.</p>

	✗	<p>There is no data available on whether the migrant/minority background of public employees reflects the composition of the city's population.</p> <p>The city does not have a recruitment plan to ensure an adequate rate of diversity within its workforce.</p>
<b>BUSINESS AND THE LABOUR MARKET</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>In the city of Riga, there are local, regional and national business umbrella organisations, which have among their objectives the promotion of diversity and non-discrimination in the labour market.</p> <p>The city does not take action to encourage businesses from ethnic minorities to move beyond the ethnic economy and enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors.</p> <p>The city does not take action to encourage 'business districts/incubators' to involve entrepreneurs with migrant/minority backgrounds and does not offer activities which encourage mainstream entrepreneurs to engage and develop new products/services together, as it is not in the competence of the city.</p> <p>In decisions relating to the procurement of goods and services, the municipal council does not favour companies with an intercultural inclusion/diversity strategy, as regional/national regulations do not foresee it.</p>
<b>CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LIFE</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>When allocating funds to associations and initiatives, the municipal council uses interculturalism as a criterion.</p> <p>The city regularly organises events and activities in the fields of arts, culture and sport that aim to encourage people from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds to interact.</p> <p>The message of intercultural dialogue appears through different activities conducted by the Municipality.</p> <p>The city encourages cultural organisations to deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions.</p> <p>The city occasionally supports NGOs organising public debates and campaigns on the subject of cultural diversity and living together.</p> <p>The city does not report organising its own public debates and campaigns on the subject of cultural diversity and living together.</p> <p>The frequency of public debates and campaigns on the subject of cultural diversity and living together organised within the city could be more regular.</p>
<b>PUBLIC SPACE</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>The city of Riga takes action to encourage meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction in public space, such as public libraries, museums, playgrounds, parks, squares, and other public spaces.</p> <p>The city sometimes takes into account the diversity of the population in the design, renovation and management of new public buildings or spaces.</p> <p>When the city decides to reconstruct an area, it uses different methods and places for consultation to ensure the meaningful involvement of people with different migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>There are no spaces or areas in the city that are dominated by one ethnic group (majority or minority) and where other people feel unwelcome or unsafe, and hence there is no need for policies which would deal with such situation.</p> <p>The city does not systematically take into account the diversity of the population in the design, renovation and management of new public buildings or spaces.</p> <p>The consultations are conducted in Latvian language, which might prevent some residents to participate.</p>
<b>MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b>	✓	<p>An intercultural mediation service run by a civil society organisation provides a professional service for mediation of intercultural communication and/or conflict in the city of Riga.</p> <p>Intercultural mediation is also provided at schools.</p>

	✗	<p>A state-run inter-religious service deals specifically with inter-religious relations.</p> <p>The city is encouraged to provide mediation services in a variety of contexts, including through a municipal mediation service.</p>
LANGUAGE	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>The city of Riga provides teaching minority languages as part of the regular curriculum at schools.</p> <p>The city provides other type of support to raise awareness of migrant and minority language, for example by financing projects which promote minority or migrant languages, traditions and cultural heritage.</p> <p>The city supports projects that seek to give a positive image of migrant/minority languages.</p> <p>The city does not raise awareness on migrant/minority languages by providing logistical or financial support to local minority newspaper/journals, radio programmes or TV programmes in migrant/minority languages.</p> <p>The reform of minority language education gives predominance to Latvian language and will potentially negatively impact minority language education.</p>
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION	✗	<p>The city of Riga does not have a communication strategy to improve the visibility and image of people with migrant/minority backgrounds in the local media but takes occasional actions in this regard.</p> <p>The city's communication (PR) department is not instructed to highlight diversity as an advantage regularly and in various types of communication.</p> <p>Riga does not provide support for advocacy/media training/mentorship/setting up of online media start-ups for journalists with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city does not monitor the way in which traditional local and/or national media portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city does not monitor the way in which social media portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city does not engage with the local media when they portray people with migrant/minority backgrounds through negative stereotypes.</p>
INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>The city of Riga has an explicit and sustainable policy to encourage international cooperation in economic, scientific, cultural, and other areas, and there is a specific financial provision for this policy.</p> <p>The city takes actions to develop international connections.</p> <p>The city reaches out to foreign students or other youth groups arriving through exchange programmes.</p> <p>Riga seeks to develop business relations with countries and cities of origin of its diaspora groups by involving diaspora and mainstream entrepreneurs in international visits and meetings.</p> <p>Riga has not built partnerships or business agreements with countries or cities of origin of its diaspora groups.</p> <p>Riga does not report supporting organisations seeking to develop business relations with countries/cities of origin of its diaspora groups.</p>
INTERCULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMPETENCE	✓	<p>Statistical and qualitative information about diversity and intercultural relations is sometimes mainstreamed to inform the municipal council's process of policy formulation.</p> <p>The city carries out surveys including questions about the public perception of migrants/minorities.</p> <p>The city carries out surveys on the feeling of security/safety with respect to people with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city of Riga promotes the intercultural competence of its officials and staff, in administration and public services, e.g. through training courses.</p>

		<p>The use of statistical and qualitative information about diversity and intercultural relations is not systematic when it comes to informing policy decision.</p> <p>There is no interdisciplinary network to promote the intercultural competence of its officials and staff throughout the municipality.</p>
<p><b>WELCOMING NEWCOMERS</b></p>	<p></p> <p></p>	<p>The city has a designated agency, unit, person, or procedure to welcome newcomers.</p> <p>It also has a comprehensive city-specific package of information and support for newcomers.</p> <p>Different city services and agencies provide welcome support for particular groups of newcomers, such as refugees, asylum-seekers and other groups.</p> <p>The city does not organise a public ceremony to greet all people arriving to live in the city, regardless of origin or nationality, but newcomers are welcomed personally by the city in different ways.</p>
<p><b>LEADERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP</b></p>	<p></p> <p></p>	<p>The city has a consultative body involving migrants/minorities, other citizens, as well as relevant public institutions, organisations and experts through which people with migrant/minority backgrounds can voice their concerns and advise the municipal council on diversity and integration matters.</p> <p>The city sometimes takes initiatives to encourage people with migrant/minority backgrounds to engage in political life.</p> <p>Only nationals from certain foreign countries can stand as candidates in local elections.</p> <p>Only nationals from certain foreign countries can vote in local elections.</p> <p>At the moment there are no foreign-born or dual nationals elected members of city's municipal council.</p> <p>There is no standard for the representation of people with migrant/minority backgrounds in mandatory boards supervising schools and/or public services.</p>
<p><b>ANTI-DISCRIMINATION</b></p>	<p></p> <p></p>	<p>The city of Riga carried out a systematic review of all municipal rules and regulations to identify mechanisms that may discriminate residents with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city provides financial support to civil society organisations that advise and support victims of discrimination.</p> <p>The city regularly monitors/researches the extent and the character of discrimination in the city.</p> <p>The city sometimes runs anti-discrimination campaigns or raises awareness on discrimination in other ways.</p> <p>The city participates in regional organisations that address the issue of discrimination.</p> <p>The city does not have a charter or another binding document proscribing discrimination against persons or groups of persons on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national/ethnic origin or sexual orientation in the municipal administration and services, but this is regulated in the national legislation.</p> <p>The city does not have a dedicated service that advises and supports victims of discrimination, as this is done at the regional and/or national level and by the civil society organisations.</p> <p>The city does not have an anti-rumours strategy nor implements anti-rumours activities following the official Council of Europe methodology.</p>
<p><b>INTERACTION</b></p>	<p></p>	<p>The city has a list/database of officially recognised civil society organisations that are active in the various fields concerned by intercultural inclusion.</p> <p>The city of Riga collaborates with civil society and grassroots organisations that are active in the various fields concerned by intercultural inclusion by holding regular</p>

	✗	<p>meetings with the organisations and by providing information regularly to the organisations on the city's intercultural inclusion policy.</p> <p>Teachers in elementary/primary schools receive training in intercultural communication and pedagogy.</p> <p>The city does not indicate that the database of civil society organisations is accessible to the public.</p> <p>The database only includes officially recognised organisations.</p>
PARTICIPATION	<p>✓</p> <p>✗</p>	<p>The city of Riga has adopted an intercultural integration strategy, which was a result of a consultation process including people with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city has adopted an intercultural action plan, which was a result of a consultation process including people with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city has introduced various participatory mechanisms, such as public participation networks and participatory budget, to enable all city residents, irrespective of their migrant/minority backgrounds, to participate equally in the decision-making process.</p> <p>The city introduced mechanisms to make sure that gender equality is respected in organisations that participate in the decision-making process on matters related to the inclusion of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds.</p> <p>The city does not monitor the participation of city residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making process, as no such data is available.</p> <p>The city does not take action to ensure that residents with migrant/minority backgrounds are fairly represented in key institutions and organisations, on boards or ruling bodies of trade unions, public schools, work councils, etc.</p>

In view of the above, we wish to congratulate Riga for the efforts made. The city has received an excellent result taking into account that it is new to the intercultural integration model and has joined the Intercultural Cities programme only recently. Still, it already has several good practices put in place which can be an inspiration to other cities in the network and we are confident that if the city follows our guidelines and other Intercultural Cities' practices, even better results will rapidly be visible and tangible.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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When it comes to the intercultural efforts, with reference to the survey, Riga could enhance the sectors below by introducing different initiatives:

**Commitment:** The city of Riga shows a high-level of commitment towards intercultural inclusion, demonstrated in relevant strategies, action plans and coordination structures and through public statements made. The city may wish to show this commitment in a more visible way on the city's website and by formally adopting a public statement that it is an Intercultural City.

**Education:** The city of Riga shows very good results in this area. Although it already has a very good cooperation with the parents of children of different cultures attending the city's educational facilities, it may wish to draw further inspiration from other cities of the Intercultural Cities programme in this regard.

**Neighbourhoods:** This is an area of strength for Riga as it shows many good practices which can be an inspiration for others. In the spirit of learning, the city may wish to consult good practices of other cities to seek new ideas for encouraging intercultural and socio-economic mixing and interaction at the level of neighbourhoods.

**Public services:** While Riga takes actions to promote diverse workforce, intercultural mixing and competence in private sector enterprises, it has limited legal and actual possibilities of encouraging diversity among its own staff. Still some actions can be taken in this regard within the competences of the city and certain inspiration can be drawn from other ICC cities.

**Business and the labour market:** The city of Riga may wish to consider implementing additional measures to collaborate more with the private sector which creates opportunities for people with migrant or diverse backgrounds to engage in economic activity. In addition, encouraging businesses from ethnic minorities to enter the mainstream economy and higher value-added sectors is a useful tool to promote better economic inclusion.

**Cultural and social life:** The city of Riga is achieving a lot in this area and shows a number of good practices within the field of culture. It may still wish to look into the practices of other ICC cities to seek additional inspiration.

**Public space:** Riga is already doing an excellent work in this area. The city may still consider looking for inspiration from other cities for new ideas related to designing and reconstructing public spaces which serve the purpose of enhancing meaningful intercultural mixing and interaction.

**Mediation and conflict resolution:** Cities are encouraged, where possible, to have municipal mediation services focused on intercultural issues and inter-faith relations. It is also worth considering providing mediation in various contexts in specialised institutions (hospitals, police, youth clubs, mediation centres, retirement homes, etc.).

**Language:** The city of Riga is showcasing many good practices in relation to promoting the use and positive image of the languages of national minorities in Riga. In addition to this work, it might consider looking into practices from other cities which also aim at promoting languages used by migrant populations.

**Media and communication:** A comprehensive and sustainable approach to promoting the diversity advantage in the local media and through city's communication is advisable. It should ideally envisage having a communications strategy and that the city's communication department monitors regularly how local media portray people with minority or migration background.

**International outlook:** This is an area of strength for Riga. In the spirit of learning, the city may wish to consult good practices of other cities to seek new ideas for developing partnerships and international connections or for working with diaspora.

**Intercultural intelligence and competence:** The city might want to look into the practices of other ICC cities on how to collect on a regular basis relevant data which can serve as a solid basis for an evidence-based policy-making. Apart from trainings for staff on core intercultural competences, the city may wish to consider other capacity building forms, for instance trainings on managing communications in a multicultural workplace or on communications skills to organise inclusive outreach campaigns.

**Welcoming newcomers:** The city of Riga has a lot of good practices to demonstrate in the area of welcoming newcomers, especially due to its experience in setting up one-stop-shops processes to provide welcome services to the newcomers. In the future, it might consider organising regular public ceremonies to greet all people arriving

to live in the city. In addition, it might consider looking into good practices implemented by other ICC cities, in the spirit of mutual learning.

**Leadership and citizenship:** Riga could further develop initiatives to encourage people with migrant and minority background to engage in political life. Initiatives to improve the knowledge of local politicians and municipal staff jobs among people from diverse cultural origins could encourage them to engage in politics. Regarding the right to vote and to stand in local elections, the Municipality may wish to raise awareness among people who are entitled to these rights.

**Anti-discrimination:** Riga already has an impressive catalogue of work, activities, programmes and policies in the field of anti-discrimination and it can be an inspiration for other cities. In order to tackle the problems of rumours, which are a problem in societies across the world as they are often based on harmful stereotypes, Riga could consider implementing the “Anti-rumour methodology”.

**Interaction:** The city of Riga has already put in place many interesting solutions and spaces which facilitate meaningful interaction between residents of Riga of all backgrounds and origins. The city might wish to look into the practices from other ICC cities for additional ideas and inspiration.

**Participation:** Riga already has many ideas and good practices and a very good score in the field of participation. It would be perhaps of interest to learn from the experience of other ICC cities which further steps can be taken to ensure that the persons with migrant or minority backgrounds are specifically consulted. In addition, comprehensive monitoring of the participation of residents with migrant/minority backgrounds in the decision-making processes is key to design better strategies to overcome barriers to participation. While acknowledging the difficulties in doing so, an approach could be to start by conducting minor research in particular areas of the city.

Riga may wish to consider further examples implemented by other Intercultural Cities as a source of learning and inspiration to guide future initiatives. Such examples are provided above for each sector as well as in the Intercultural cities [database](#).

Diversity has become a key feature of societies today and is particularly tangible in urban centres. While people of diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith backgrounds have immensely contributed to post-war prosperity, inequalities related to origin, culture and skin colour persist, and anxiety about pluralism, identity and shared values is often politically instrumentalised. The challenge of fostering equity and cohesion in culturally diverse societies has become more acute. Cities are uniquely placed to imagine and test responses to this challenge.

The Council of Europe and its partner cities have developed and validated an intercultural approach to integration and inclusion which enables cities to reap the benefits and minimise the risks related to human mobility and cultural diversity. A decade after the start of this work, there is growing evidence that diversity, when recognised and managed as a resource, produces positive outcomes in terms of creativity, wellbeing and economic development.

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme invites cities in Europe and beyond to explore and apply policies that harness diversity for personal and societal development.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

