



## **Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme Advisory Group**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting (online)**

**21-23 May and 30 September 2024**

### **Summary Report**

#### **1. Purpose of the meeting**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Advisory Group meeting was held online in two sessions, on 21-23 May 2024 and 30 September 2024. The meeting was dedicated to discussing the planned reform of the ICC Programme's membership structure. The proposed reform follows the 2022 independent external [evaluation](#). It focuses on identifying areas for enhancement and fine-tuning of the Programme. The evaluation report includes a total of 19 strategic and operational recommendations, of which Recommendation No. 15 concerns enhancing clarity and transparency of the membership fee system. At its 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, the Advisory Group reviewed the risk assessment and potential alternative approaches prepared by the ICC Secretariat with a view to pursuing the restructuring of the ICC Programme's membership structure in compliance with the evaluators' recommendation.

#### **2. State of affairs**

The ICC Programme currently counts 179 members in Europe and Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, the Republic of Korea and the United States of America. These can be grouped into the following (in some cases overlapping) categories.

- 57 so-called "international" ICC members (cities and regions);
- 9 national networks<sup>1</sup> gathering a total of 85 cities (so called "national cities");
- 1 regional network<sup>2</sup> (comprising several countries) representing 6 cities;
- 31 cities which are referred as "Index cities" (i.e. used the ICC Index but are not or no-longer active members).

The current system raises several challenges, linked to the variety and complexity of membership types and status, the ability of current or perspective members to contribute the membership fee, the overall perceived fairness and transparency of the system, which call for action with a view to achieving equality of treatment and opportunity.

To respond to such challenges, the Secretariat looked at the practices regarding membership structure, status, and fees in other comparable international cities' networks. It examined multiple alternative approaches assessing the respective risks and advantages, regarding particularly membership status and categories as well as fee systems. Potential alternative

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<sup>1</sup> The ICC Programme includes 9 national networks in Australia, Italy, Morocco, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Quebec, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> The regional network is the Asia-Pacific Network of Intercultural Cities. It includes Australia, the Republic of Korea, Japan and New Zealand.

approaches regarding the modalities and timing for transitioning to a new system and the role of national networks were also considered.

The Secretariat briefed the ICC Programme Advisory Group on the above and consulted it for inputs to the risk assessment of various options (including maintaining the status quo) related to the necessary reform of the ICC membership structure.

It was explained that the main purpose of the reform was to address shortcomings identified by the 2022 independent evaluation and respond to members' demands for more transparency, fairness, and consistency across the ICC membership.

At the same time, according to the Secretariat, the reform should be seized as an opportunity to reinvigorate the Programme. The approach was described as articulated in three main components:

### **Reform**

Restructuring the membership and fee system to boost financial stability, credibility, and growth, while addressing current inconsistencies and inequalities that cause some member dissatisfaction. In line with feedback and the 2022 evaluation, a clearer payment and membership policy is essential to ensure both financial security and sustained commitment from cities. Simplifying fees could also attract more cities from underrepresented regions, thereby enriching the Programme's diversity.

### **Renewal**

This proposed reform offers the opportunity to renew the relationship between ICC members and the Programme itself in terms of clearer expectations and stronger commitments both from the members and the Programme. Potential new benefits include increased peer-learning, strategic use of expertise, and tailored capacity building. Enhancing communication, members' influence, and involvement in Programme planning could further enrich the ICC network and improve collaboration.

### **Reaching out**

Completing the above-mentioned reform and renewal components will allow the ICC Programme to develop a more pro-active, transparent, and coherent outreach strategy to both increase the number of participating cities and regions as well as the uptake of ICC values, standards, and tools beyond the current reaches of the Programme. Growth would be managed to ensure sustainability and greater visibility, enabling cities and regions to share best practices widely and amplify their collective impact.

In this context, the necessary reform of the membership structure would represent the essential first step of such broader approach. It was stressed that the main objectives of such reform are to ensure consistency, transparency, clarity, and predictability of the membership system; equal treatment between members; longer term financial sustainability; stronger potential for outreach and strategic planning; and stronger and more sustained commitment and ownership of members.

### **3. Advisory Group contribution to the risk assessment**

The Secretariat presented different options that could be considered in reforming the membership structure, the fee system, and the modalities and timing for transitioning to a new system, and its views on the main risks, potential advantages, and possible mitigating measures for each option, including maintaining the status quo.

It was clarified that the main criteria used for the assessment of all options and risks referred to ensuring maximum transparency, fairness, and consistency.

The Advisory Group was asked to contribute to a more in-depth risk assessment and elaboration of potential alternatives concerning membership structure and fee system. It was made clear that no final decisions had been taken or were being taken at this stage and that advice and input from the Advisory Group was welcome to help shape the necessary reform in a way that meets the diverse needs of the network and manage the risks associated with reforming membership modalities. The Advisory Group put particular emphasis on the need for transitional measures, to have fees which remain more or less similar to the current situation and advised further consultations of national network coordinators.

### **4. Next steps**

The ICC Secretariat will continue pursuing the necessary reform of the ICC Programme in compliance with the 2022 independent external evaluation of the ICC Programme and in the light of the advice and feedback received from the ICC Programme's Advisory Group, as well as through discussions with ICC national network coordinators.

The item will be further discussed at the next meeting of the ICC Programme's Advisory Group on 13 November 2024 in Braga, Portugal.