



ICC/AG/CR(2024)2

17/12/2024

Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme
Advisory Group 4th meeting
13 November 2024, Braga, Portugal
Summary Report

Purpose of the meeting

The fourth meeting of the ICC Advisory Group (AG) was held in Braga, Portugal, on the eve of the ICC coordinators meeting (Braga/Vila Verde, Portugal, 14-15 November 2024). The meeting was held to take stock of the work carried out by the AG in 2024, to discuss the response to the 2022 independent external evaluation of the ICC programme, including the membership reform, and the role of the AG. It also prepared the presentation of the work of the AG to the ICC coordinators meeting.

Present

Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez, Spanish network of Intercultural Cities (RECI)

Gregory Jaquet, Canton de Neuchâtel, Switzerland

Ingrid Hauge Rasmussen, City of Stavanger, Norway

Joanna Marcinkowska, City of Reykjavik, Iceland (outgoing)

Aleksandra Kozimala, City of Reykjavik, Iceland (incoming)

Silvia Carballo Paz, City of Donostia/San Sebastian, Spain

Vesna Haracic, City of Salisbury, Australia

Thorsten Afflerbach, Rita Marasacalchi, Nichola Howson, Ben Freeman, Célia Charre, Council of Europe

2024 in review – update on actions and evaluation response

The AG reviewed the six objectives which are in terms of reference and looked at the progress made on the previously agreed actions.

Work completed

- Team approach in cities
- Use of the annual survey for inputs on priorities
- Use of the annual survey for inputs on needs
- AG public statement – tested twice in 2023 but agreed that it has limited added value and to continue the practice of calling on intercultural coordinators to represent the network at events. Principle of “do no harm” communication, and only communicate as members of the network regarding positive trends or good practices.

Work in progress

- Questionnaire/survey for cities to track progress – to be shared with AG members to see whether and how to continue this work
- Inspirational videos – to be continued and recommended to cities. Reykjavik (IS), Salisbury (AUS) and Stavanger (N) have made them, but need reviewing in some cases. Suggestion to hold training on increasing intercultural visibility within cities, how to make films. Good practices could be shared (also) via video, as a way to make the horizontal sharing more dynamic. The AG also emphasized a need for more visibility items around Intercultural Cities.
- Restructuring of the ICC website – on hold until the return of the webmaster for the Department of Anti-discrimination.
- Template for city strategies – a rough draft will be shared with the AG based on work done by RECI.

Actions pending

- Annual Welcome Session – could be attached to the annual coordinators meeting/held online.
- FAQ/tools (or other support on engaging) politicians – RECI narrative working group are preparing 10 intercultural questions for politicians. Videos could also help meet this aim.

The AG emphasised that it was important to remain humble in what had been achieved and noted that while progress was positive in the actions completed, they should remain under review as ongoing action is needed to ensure their implementation. The group also put emphasis on the need to see the interconnectedness of the different actions assigned to the AG, recognising that some of the actions function as tools to implement other recommendations or actions (e.g. the videos could communicate the results of the surveys/questionnaires).

A workshop on communication (both internal and external) was raised as a possible future area of work for the ICC Coordinators.

The AG agreed that it was important to focus on what is achievable during the remaining time in office and to prioritise.

The priorities for the remaining time until the completion of the term of office are: work on a template for city strategies (as per the terms of reference); develop further work on inspirational videos; consider ways to train ICC coordinators on communication and better communicating the ICC approach to elected representatives; review the terms of reference of the AG for the next composition.

Planned reform of the ICC membership structure

The Secretariat presented a possible direction of travel for the future ICC membership structure and fee system based on the risk assessment carried out with the AG at the last session of the previous (3rd) meeting: a graduated fee system based on multiple criteria, including size of the population and GDP, which would ensure the accessibility of the ICC network to a greater number of municipalities while maintaining a basis of transparency. The aim is also to move towards one category of membership without the divergent categories and fee statuses which are currently possible. The graduated fee system would also help those smaller municipalities which have found their place in the national networks to become members of the so-called “international” ICC network, but for a lower fee.

The Secretariat also reported on its meetings with the national network coordinators, held over the weeks since the last session of the third AG meeting. They stressed the need to adapt the solution according to the

diverse needs of the different networks, which each have their own history, specificities and operational modalities. The need to improve and harmonise the system was again emphasised, and that maintaining the status quo is not tenable. The Secretariat clarified that it is its responsibility to implement recommendations of the independent external evaluation, ensure the sustainability of the ICC Programme, and carry forward the reform of the membership system.

The AG held an exchange of views on the Secretariat proposal and expressed some reservation against the use of the GDP as a membership fee criterion.

Role and future of the Advisory Group

The next meeting of AG, the final one in the current composition, will be held in Spring 2025 online, and the members were asked to reflect on their experience so far in the Advisory Group, to consider what changes or improvements could be made in view of the terms of reference expiring in June 2025, whether in terms of mandate, membership, working methods, objectives, or other points. This feedback will be used to inform the next steps for the AG and revise its terms of reference.

AG members said that they felt too much time had been spent on the evaluation and not enough on the content of advising the programme, and that some of the objectives, and their high number, were too ambitious. The short duration of the term of office of two year was also raised as one issue, especially in light of the high number of objectives.

Regarding the composition, members held that about half of the membership should be renewed for the next term; the advisory function of the group should be stressed more as it had been dominated by the evaluation and tasks arising from the reform.

Regarding the membership, members felt that the representativity of the members of the AG should be reviewed – members were not at ease feeling as if they should “represent” other parts of the ICC network, whether it be other cities or other national networks. Experts should continue to be available to contribute to the AG’s work, as the AG sees fit, and in line with the present Terms of Reference. Amending the terms to include a reference to regions was also mentioned. It was also raised as to whether it was necessary to continue having national networks as a statutory part of the AG.

The Secretariat stressed the advisory function of the group, with a composition that reflects the different types of entities involved in the ICC Programme, with no representative function.

On the selection process, the Secretariat was advised to make the process and criteria more transparent and to ensure continuity of the work and institutional memory of the AG to be included as criteria in the selection process.

It was generally felt that the objectives are understandable, but too numerous and with too much emphasis on communication-themed objectives (in part stemming from the evaluation).

In relation to meetings, the added value of in-person meetings was underlined, and whilst the necessity of holding some meetings online was recognised, the AG recommended that these be kept to 1.5 hours maximum and based around 1 theme, which should be prepared beforehand, through sharing of documents and specific questions. The AG highlighted that meetings should only be held if there is something to discuss – not simply to meet a required number of meetings over a given term.

Preparation of the ICC Annual Coordinators meeting

Joanna Marcinkowska, Reykjavik, volunteered as rapporteur of the AG to the annual ICC coordinators meeting, and the key points of the AG's discussion were agreed upon, to be presented to the ICC Coordinators the next day.

Concluding remarks

Priorities for this composition of the AG before the end of their term of office, include working on tools for engaging politicians, templates for cities' strategies, (RECI tools) and working on inspirational videos – the secretariat will launch a call for the expression of interest following the coordinators' meeting. Elements to drop from the AG's workplan include the ICC website. Reviewing the terms of reference for the next mandate will also be an important task. Some consideration and advice on a communication workshop will also be sought at the next meeting.

The Group thanked Joanna Marcinkowska, City of Reykjavik (Iceland), for her active and constructive participation in its work and wished her all the best in her new position to foster intercultural integration at the University of Iceland. It also welcomed Aleksandra Kozimala, City of Reykjavik, as a new member, replacing Joanna.

Next meeting

It was tentatively agreed to hold the final meeting of the AG in this composition in **March 2025**, online (exact date to be agreed through Doodle).