



## Intercultural cities

Joint action of the Council of Europe and of the European Commission



## Oslo: Results of the Intercultural Cities Index

### Introduction

The Intercultural Cities programme is a joint initiative between the Council of Europe and the European Commission. 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 is rich in content and detail. However, it is relatively weak as a tool to monitor and communicate progress. The new intercultural city index has been designed as a new benchmarking tool for the cities taking part in the pilot phase of the programme as well as future participants.

As of today 12 cities have undergone their intercultural policies analysis using the Intercultural City Index: Oslo (*Norway*), Neukölln (*Berlin, Germany*), Izhevsk (*Udmurt Republic, Russia*), Melitopol (*Ukraine*), Neuchâtel (*Switzerland*), Patras (*Greece*), Reggio Emilia (*Italy*), Sechenivsky (*Discrit of Kyiv, Ukraine*), Duisburg (*Germany*), Mexico City (*Mexico*), and Lublin (*Poland*).

This document presents the results of the International City Index analysis for the city of Oslo and provides related intercultural policy conclusions and recommendations.

### Intercultural city definition

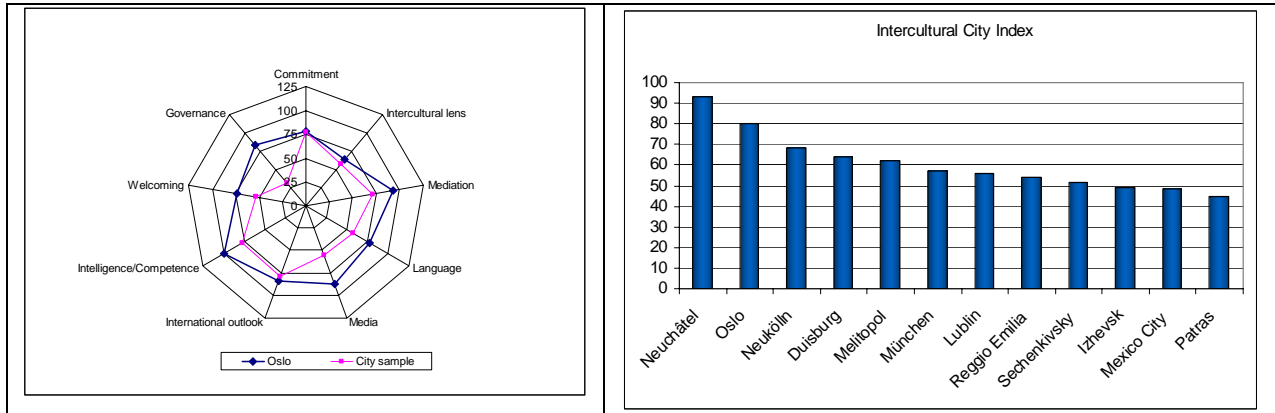
The intercultural city has people with different nationality, origin, language or religion/belief. Political leaders and most citizens regard diversity positively, as a resource. The city actively combats discrimination and adapts its governance, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population.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

### Methodology

A questionnaire was prepared and sent to the 12 cities. It provided 14 points for evaluating their intercultural strategy. These comprise: commitment; education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces; mediation and conflict resolution; language; media; international outlook; intelligence/competence; welcoming and governance.

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, to motivate cities to learn from good practice.



According to the results, Oslo is positioned second among the 12 cities in the sample in relation to the index as it stands at present.

## OSLO-An overview

Oslo is the capital of Norway. It has a population of 580,000. The majority group makes up 74% of the city's inhabitants. This group can be further divided by place of birth: 40% were born in Oslo, 40% were born in another part of Norway and moved to Oslo, whilst only 20% were born abroad. 26% of the city's total population are foreign-born. Out of these 19% are first-generation, whilst second generation make up 7%. The ethnic composition of the city's population in descending order comprises: Pakistani-3.60%; Pakistani descendent-3.6%; Somali-2%; Swedish-1.5%; Polish-1.5%; Tamil-1.2%; Iraqi-1%; Turkish-1%; Marrocan-0.9%; Vietnamese-0.9%; and Iranian-0.9%. The most up-to-date GPD/capita figures for Oslo are of €74,000.

### 1. Commitment

The optimal intercultural city strategy would involve a formal statement by local authorities sending an unambiguous message of the city's commitment to intercultural principles as well as actively engaging and persuading other key local stakeholders to do likewise.

The rate of achievement of Oslo's commitment policy goals is slightly higher than the city sample's<sup>1</sup>: only 78% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample's rate for commitment policy is 77%.

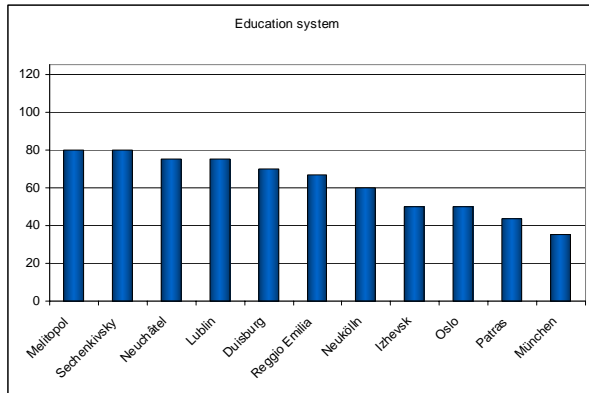
Oslo City Council has adopted a number of initiatives which demonstrate its commitment to the intercultural approach. The local authorities have implemented an intercultural strategy. The city has formally adopted a public statement. Oslo also has an evaluation process for its intercultural strategy. Oslo makes clear reference to its commitment in public speeches as well as in communications. The local government has a dedicated cross-departmental co-ordination structure which is responsible for its intercultural strategy and action plan. Local

<sup>1</sup> The term " city sample " refers to the weighted average of the twelve intercultural cities in each of the fourteen areas of intercultural governance.

citizens who have done an exceptional thing to encourage intercultural in the local community are acknowledged.

However, Oslo's municipality does have an opportunity to increase its commitment to its intercultural approach. For instance, the city has not yet adopted an intercultural action plan. The City Council has not yet allocated a budget for the implementation of its intercultural strategy and action plan.

## **2. Education<sup>2</sup> policies through an intercultural lens**



School has a powerful influence in society and has the potential to either reinforce or challenge prejudices in a number of ways through the social environment it creates, the guidance it provides and the values it nurtures.

The analysis shows that Oslo's education policy achievement rate is considerably lower (50%) than the city sample's rate (59%).

However, the City Council has introduced various education policies which have fulfilled their desired outcomes. Local schools make considerable efforts to involve parents from migrant/minority backgrounds in daily school life. For instance, at Gamlebyen, a local school, they exhibit pupils' art work in order to attract parents to meetings. Linderud, another school in Oslo, hosts the "Minority Parents Resource Network". Only in certain local primary schools all the pupils come from the same ethnic background.

However, various policies in the education system need to be improved in the future. For instance, the ethnic background of teachers rarely reflects the composition of the diverse population. The local authorities have implemented few initiatives to increase the level of ethnic cultural mixing in schools.

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<sup>2</sup> The term "Education" refers to a formal process of learning in which some people consciously teach while others adopt the social role of learner - (ref. [http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student\\_view0/glossary.html](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student_view0/glossary.html))

### **3. Neighbourhood policies through an intercultural lens**<sup>3</sup>

An optimal intercultural city does not require a "perfect statistical mix" of people and recognizes the value of ethnic enclaves. It is important that residential areas do not act as barriers to an inward and outward free flow of people, ideas and opportunities

Oslo's neighbourhood policy indicators are slightly higher (60%) than the city sample's rate (58%).

In 25% of Oslo's neighbourhoods a vast majority<sup>4</sup> of residents come from the same ethnic background. In a couple of the city's neighbourhoods a vast majority of inhabitants come from minority ethnic groups. It is worth noting however that the local City Council is currently devising new policies to increase the diversity of residents in neighbourhoods. This is to avoid ethnic concentration.

The local government could further improve its performance in this area by encouraging interaction between neighbourhoods. This is a policy which Oslo does not yet pursue at present.

### **4 Public service policies through an intercultural lens**

An optimal intercultural approach remains open to new ideas and innovation brought by minority groups, rather than imposing a "one size fits all" approach to public services and actions.

The analysis shows that Oslo's public services policy achievement rate is considerably higher (75%) than the city sample's rate (46%).

The local authorities have put into practice several public service initiatives. The ethnic background of Oslo's public employees mirrors that of the city's inhabitants. This is achieved through a specific recruitment strategy. Non-Norwegian citizens can seek employment in the local public administration. The city provides four out of the five services in the index which are tailored to the needs of the ethnic/cultural background of its citizens. The municipality offers funeral/burial services, specific sections and times for women in sports facilities, as well as senior centres which provide activities and food catered to the needs of specific groups.

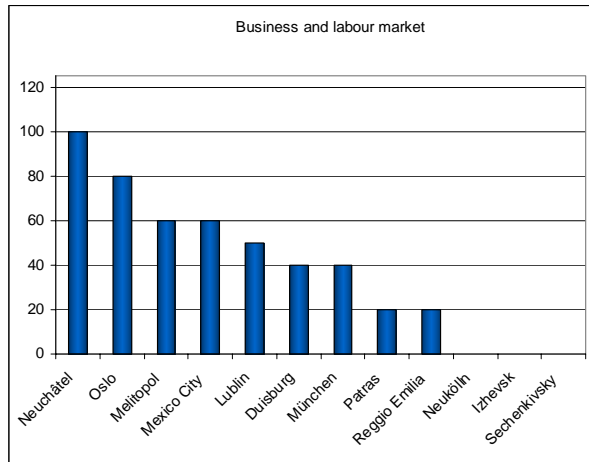
However, Oslo City Council could increase its future commitment to providing public services. The city could achieve this by encouraging intercultural mixing in the private labour market, a policy approach which it does not implement at present. Furthermore, the local government provides restrictive services for citizens from ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It does not cater for culturally/ethnically diverse pupils school meals. Implementing these two policy recommendations would strengthen not only Oslo's public services but also its overall intercultural strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> By "neighbourhood" we understand a unit within a city which has a certain level of administrative autonomy (or sometimes also certain political governance structures) and is considered as a unit with regard to city planning. In larger cities districts (boroughs) have several neighbourhoods. The statistical definition of "neighbourhood" varies from one country to another. Generally, it includes groups of population between 5,000 and 20,000 people.

<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this report, a "vast majority" refers to a situation where more than 80% of residents come from the same ethnic background.

## **5. Business and labour market policies through an intercultural lens**



Oslo's business and labour market policy indicators are considerably higher than the city sample's: 80% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample's rate for business and labour market policy is 39%.

The municipality has adopted the following best practice recommendations in its business and labour market initiatives. An umbrella organization has been set up to promote diversity and non-discrimination in the workplace. The local government has signed a charter which outlaws discrimination in employment. Oslo encourages ethnic/cultural minorities businesses to move beyond localized economies to enter into the main stream and higher value added sectors. The local City Council does encourage "business districts/incubators" to facilitate inhabitants from different cultures to mix more easily.

However, Oslo City Council can introduce other initiatives to further strengthen its business and labour market policy. The city could give priority to companies which implement a diversity strategy when procuring its goods and services. This is policy which Oslo may consider adopting in the future .

## **6. Cultural and civil life policies through an intercultural lens**

The time which people allocate to their leisure may often be the best opportunity for them to encounter and engage with inhabitants from a different culture. The city can influence this through its own activities and through the way it distributes resources to other organizations.

Oslo's cultural and civil life policy goal achievement rate is considerably higher (100%) than the city sample's rate (78%).

Oslo City Council has implemented the following policies in cultural and civil life. It does use interculturalism as a criterion when allocating grants to associations. A survey is being carried out to find out how much of all grants go to associations and initiatives based on the interculturalism criterion. The municipality does organize events and activities in the fields of arts, culture and sport to encourage inhabitants from different ethnic groups to mix. Cultural organizations which deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions are also promoted. Finally, Oslo's local government organizes public debates and campaigns around the topics of diversity and living together.

## **7. Public space policies through an intercultural lens**

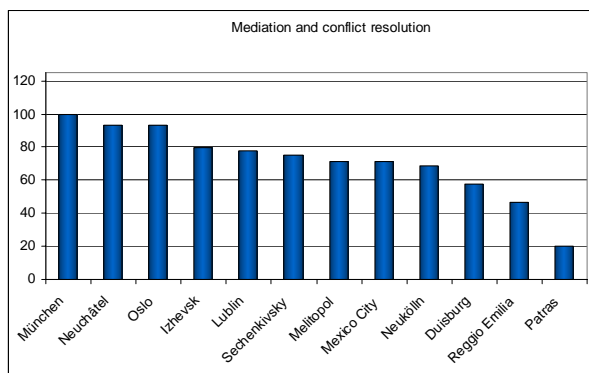
Well managed and animated public spaces can become beacons of the city's intercultural intentions. However, badly managed spaces can become places of suspicion and fear of the stranger.

The rate of achievement of Oslo's public space policy goals is considerably higher than the sample city's: 86% of these goals were achieved, while the sample city rate for public space policy is 72%.

Oslo's City Council high benchmarking scores can be attributed to the many initiatives it has implemented in public spaces. The local government promotes intercultural mixing in public libraries, museums and squares. Oslo also encourages this in the State Opera and the Nordic Black Theatre. When designing and managing new public spaces and libraries, the local authorities take into consideration the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of the city's citizens. For example, the urban regeneration plan for the Grorud Valley<sup>5</sup> does take into account a combination of physical, cultural and social initiatives in its efforts. The Grorud Valley is a well kept and lively residential area, offering a wide variety of services and activities for its diverse inhabitants. When reconstructing an area, Oslo's City Council proposes different forms and places of consultation to reach out to its ethnically and culturally diverse inhabitants. For instance, the municipality organizes neighbourhood meetings, where they invite residents and local immigration associations to consult them on child welfare, safe playgrounds and education. According to the answer given in the survey, there are no areas in the city which have a reputation of being "dangerous".

However, Oslo City Council has not implemented all the "best practice" recommendations in public spaces. For instance it does not encourage intercultural mixing in playgrounds. One or two areas in the city are dominated by one ethnic group and make other inhabitants feel unwelcome. If the City Council put into action policies to address these issues, Oslo would improve its performance in public spaces. The city's overall intercultural strategy would also benefit from this.

## **8. Mediation and conflict resolution policies**



The optimal intercultural city sees the opportunity for innovation and greater cohesion emerging from the very process of conflict mediation and resolution.

<sup>5</sup> The Grorud Valley area covers 37 square km, about 8% of Oslo's building zone, and includes four of the city's fifteen districts (Alna, Bjerke, Grorud, and Stovners). It totals 125,000 inhabitants i.e. around 22% of the city's population (reference October 2004, "The City of Oslo: Urban development").

The analysis shows that Oslo's mediation and conflict resolution policy achievement rate is much higher (93%) than the city sample's rate (71%).

The local municipality's high mediation and conflict resolution policy goals achievement rate can be attributed to Oslo's proactive mediation policies. The city has set up an organization which deals specifically with inter-religious relations. Oslo's local government also provides mediation services in places such as hospitals, in the city's administration, as well as in neighbourhoods, on the streets. The local City Council has initiated a mediation service with intercultural competences which is run by an autonomous humanitarian organization.

To date, Oslo City Council has not implemented a number of mediation and conflict resolution policies. For instance, the local government does not provide professional services for mediation of intercultural communication or conflict. It does not offer this either in the form of a general mediation service with intercultural competences and specialized staff, or as a dedicated service which deals exclusively with intercultural issues. These should not be viewed as weaknesses of Oslo's mediation policies, rather as opportunities and recommendations to guide future initiatives.

## **9. Language<sup>6</sup>**

Oslo's language policy achievement rate is considerably higher (77%) than the city sample's rate (57%).

Oslo has introduced several initiatives to obtain its language policy objectives. According to the questionnaire, the municipality does provide specific language training in the official languages for hard-to-reach groups<sup>7</sup>. The teaching of migrant/minority languages is also part of the national school curriculum. Migrant/minority languages are taught as a mother tongue for foreign children only. The local authority provides financial support to minority newspapers/journals and radio programmes. The city also encourages projects which give a positive image to minority/migrant languages. These initiatives may comprise a day devoted to migrant languages, readings, poetry evening as well multi-lingual cultural events.

However, Oslo City Council could introduce additional policy mechanisms to ameliorate its language initiatives. For instance, not all of the city's citizens are currently eligible to receive training in immigrant/minority languages. The municipality does not currently support private/civil sector institutions that offer training in migrant/minority languages. TV programmes are only broadcasted in the majority ethnic language.

## **10. Media policies**

The media has a powerful influence on the attitudes to cultural relations and upon the reputations of particular minority and majority groups. Local municipalities can influence and partner with local media agencies to achieve a climate of public opinion more conducive to intercultural relations.

88% of Oslo's media policy goals were achieved, while the city sample's attainment rate for these goals is 55%.

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<sup>6</sup> By language we understand an abstract system of word meanings and symbols for all aspects of culture. It also includes gestures and other nonverbal communication. (ref- [http://highereducation.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student\\_view0/glossary.html](http://highereducation.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student_view0/glossary.html))

<sup>7</sup> The term makes specific reference to non-working mothers, the unemployed, as well as retired people

The municipality has implemented various media policy instruments. For instance, the city's information services are instructed to promote harmonious intercultural relations. Oslo City Council supports advocacy/media training and mentorships for journalists from minority backgrounds. The local government also monitors the way in which minorities are portrayed in the local media

Making reference to the answers provided, one specific policy is adhered to only 'occasionally'. This initiative seeks to promote a positive image of migrants and minorities in the media through targeted press meetings and dedicated newspaper columns. The City Council's media strategy and diversity approach would benefit from ensuring this policy adhered to more often in the future.

### **11. International outlook policies**

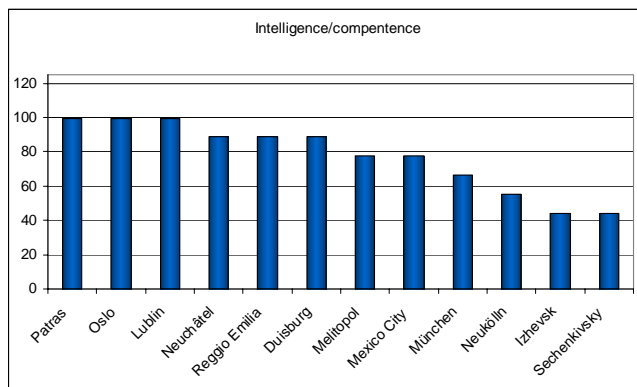
An optimal intercultural city would be a place which actively sought to make new connections with other places for trade, exchange of knowledge, as well as tourism.

Oslo's international outlook policy indicators are slightly higher (83%) than the city sample's indicators (79%).

The local municipality's international outlook policy goals achievement rate can be attributed to the implementation of several international outlook initiatives. The city has put into practice a policy to encourage international co-operation. A specific financial provision has been introduced to achieve this. An agency has been set up to monitor and develop the city's openness to international connections. Oslo City Council provides support to local universities in order to attract foreign students. In addition, the city ensures that foreign student populations take an active part in the city life.

However, the city's local government has not implemented all the best practice recommendations to achieve an international outlook. For instance, no projects or policies encourage co-development with Oslo's migrant groups countries of origin.

### **12. Intelligence competence policies**



A competent public official in an optimal intercultural city should be able to detect and respond to the presence of cultural difference, and modulate his/her approach accordingly rather than seeking to impose one mode of behaviour on all situations.



The attainment rate of Oslo's intelligence competence policy goals is considerably higher than the city sample's: 100% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample rate for intelligence competence policy is 78%.

Oslo City Council was able to respond positively to all the questions regarding intelligence competence. Information regarding diversity and intercultural relations is mainstreamed to inform the local government when formulating new initiatives. The monitoring of integration and diversity targets is benchmarked against targets set out in the City Council's Municipal Long Term Plan 2008- 2025. This data is than mainstreamed in a statistical publication called "Oslo Trends". The municipality also conducts surveys to find out how inhabitants perceive migrants/ minority groups. The city also promotes the intercultural competences of its officials and staff through interdisciplinary seminars, information networks and training courses.

### **13. Welcoming policies**

People arriving in a city for an extended stay (whatever their circumstances) are likely to find themselves disorientated and in need of multiple forms of support. The degree to which these measures can be co-coordinated and delivered effectively will have a significant impact on how the person settles and integrates.

Oslo's welcoming policy goal achievement rate is considerably higher (73%) than the city sample's attainment rate for these goals is (53%)

Oslo's municipality has implemented several welcoming initiatives which help explain its benchmarking results pertaining to welcoming. For instance, the city has set up a designated agency to welcome newcomers. The City Council has published a comprehensive package of information to aid newly arrived foreign residents. The local government has launched city services and agencies which provide support tailored specifically for refugees.

However, Oslo City Council may consider adopting the following welcoming initiative. The different city services and agencies would benefit from expanding their services to include family members, students, migrant workers and other new comers to the local community

### **14. Governance policies**

Perhaps the most powerful and far-reaching actions which a city can take in making it more intercultural are the processes of democratic representation and decision making.

In the governance domain Oslo's benchmarking results are almost two and half times that of the sample city. 83% of Oslo's governance policy were achieved while the city sample's rate for these goals is 31%.

However, ambiguity lays over Oslo's exact governance initiatives. It is not clear whether the ethnic background of elected politicians mirrors the city's diverse population. Furthermore no answer was given to whether public ceremonies are held to greet newcomers in front of public officials. These specific good governance practices were not elaborated upon by Oslo's officials. The governance policy goals attainment rate may be distorted as a result.

Oslo's local authority has implemented several good governance policies. An independent political body has been created to represent all ethnic minorities living in the city. Standards have been set up in the representation of migrant minorities in mandatory bodies which

supervise schools and public bodies. Newcomers are eligible to vote in local election after three years of regular residence.

## **15 Conclusions**

Oslo City Council **commitment** is slightly higher than that of the city sample. The local government's strengths are: adopting a public statement; implementing an evaluation process for its intercultural strategy/action plan; making clear reference to Oslo's commitment in the city's speeches and communication ; setting up a dedicated body responsible for its intercultural strategy and integration; promoting the intercultural approach in the community by honouring and recognizing individual acts that encourage interculturalism.

Oslo City Council has introduced several best practice recommendation in its **education system**, for example by making considerable efforts to involve parents from migrant/minority backgrounds in daily school life. For instance, at Gamlebyen, a local school, pupils' art work is exhibited to attract parents to meetings; and Linderud, another school in Oslo, hosts the "Minority Parents Resource Network".

The local administration has initiated various **public service** initiatives including: ensuring the ethnic background of public employees mirrors the diverse city's population; implementing a recruitment strategy to ensure this; ensuring that non-Norwegian citizens are eligible for employment in local public administrations; providing services appropriate for all citizens from different ethnic cultural backgrounds including funeral/burial, women-only sections or times in sport facilities; as well as senior centres which provide activities and food catered to the needs of specific groups.

The city has introduced numerous initiatives in the **business and labour market**, including: setting up an umbrella organization which promotes diversity and non discrimination in the workplace; adopting a charter which outlaws discrimination in local businesses/other organizations; as well as encouraging business district/incubators to facilitate mixing between different cultures.

The municipality has implemented various policies in **cultural and civic life** comprising: using interculturalism as a criterion when allocating grants to associations and initiatives; organizing events and activities in the field of arts, culture and sport to encourage cultural mixing between inhabitants; promoting cultural organizations to deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions; as well as organizing public debates and campaigns on diversity and living together.

Its **public spaces** policy includes: encouraging intercultural mixing in public libraries, museums, playgrounds, squares; taking into consideration the ethnic/cultural backgrounds of its citizens when designing and managing new public buildings or spaces; when reconstructing an area proposing different forms and places of consultation to reach out to its diverse inhabitants; and having no areas in the city which are reputed as "dangerous".

The benchmarking results confirm that Oslo City Council out performed the city's sample attainment rate pertaining to **mediation and conflict resolution**. The local government achieved this by: providing intercultural mediation services in hospitals, in the city administration, in neighbourhoods; setting up organizations that deal exclusively with inter-religious relations; as well as by initiating a mediation service with intercultural competence run by an autonomous humanitarian organisation.

Oslo City Council has also adopted several best practice recommendation in **languages**, including: providing specific language training in the official languages tailored for hard-to-reach groups; incorporating migrant/minority languages as part of the regular curriculum at schools; providing migrant minority language courses as a mother tongue for migrant children; offering financial support to minority newspapers/journals and minority radio programmes; supporting projects that give a positive image to migrant/minority languages.

The local government has introduced **media** policies including: providing advocacy/media training/mentorships for journalists from minority backgrounds; as well as monitoring the way in which local media portrays minority groups.

The benchmarking results pertaining to Oslo's **international outlook** policy goal achievement rate confirm that Oslo City Council has introduced more initiatives than the sample city. They include: adopting a specific policy that encourages international co-operation; allocating a specific financial provision for this policy; setting up an agency which monitors and develops the city's openness to international connections; encouraging universities that attract foreign students; as well as ensuring that foreign student populations participate in the city's daily life.

Oslo City Council has adopted several initiatives which promote intelligence **competence**. They comprise: mainstreaming information about diversity and intercultural relations to feed back into the city government's policy formulation; conducting surveys concerning local inhabitants' perceptions of migrants; as well as promoting intercultural competence amongst staff and officials through interdisciplinary seminars, information networks and training courses.

Oslo has initiated several **welcoming** initiatives including: publishing a comprehensive package of information and support for newly arrived residents; setting up different city services and agencies which provide welcome support for refugees; as well as creating a designated agency to welcome newcomers.

The local administration has initiated various **governance** initiatives including: setting up an independent political body to represent all ethnic minorities living in the city; ensuring newcomers are eligible to vote in local elections after three years of regular residence; as well as establishing standards in the representation of migrant minorities in mandatory bodies which supervise schools and public bodies.

## **16. Recommendations**

The Intercultural City Index analysis also indicates that there is some room for improvement in Oslo's approach to intercultural governance.

Oslo may wish to consider the following options to increase its future **commitment** to the city's intercultural approach. It could adopt an intercultural city action plan; and allocate a budget for the implementation of its intercultural strategy and action plan.

Oslo City Council might consider ameliorating its **education** system by: ensuring that the ethnic background of teachers mirrors the diverse population; and implementing further initiatives that increase the level of ethnic/cultural mixing in local schools.

The city's future policy orientations in **neighbourhoods** may benefit from ensuring that residents from one neighbourhood are able to meet and interact with those of another from different ethnic cultural backgrounds.

Oslo's **public service** initiatives would benefit from encouraging intercultural mixing in the private sector labour market; as well as expanding services which are appropriate for all citizens, including school meals.

Oslo City Council may wish to further explore possible **business and the labour market** policies by prioritizing companies which implement a diversity strategy when procuring its goods and services.

The city may wish to further fulfil its **public spaces** policy objectives by encouraging intercultural mixing in playgrounds; as well as by avoiding ethnic clustering in neighbourhoods which makes other inhabitants feel unwelcome.

Oslo's **mediation and conflict resolution** policies may benefit from: initiating a municipal mediation service devoted to intercultural issues; setting up a generalist municipal mediation service that has an intercultural competence as well as specialised staff.

The City Council may wish to explore various **language** initiatives including: supporting private/ civil sector institutions which offer language training in migrant/minority languages; as well as broadcasting TV programmes in minority migrant languages

Oslo's intercultural **media policy** may want to consider ensuring that local media promote a positive image of migrants/minorities on a regular basis. This may involve TV or radio campaigns as well as targeted media meetings.

The local government may seek to improve its benchmarking pertaining to **international outlook** by ensuring that the city develops projects and policies for economic relations with its migrant population's countries of origin.

The municipality may wish to ameliorate its **welcoming** initiatives by setting up city services and agencies which also provide support for family members, students, migrants workers, as well as other citizens which may benefit from them.