



Intercultural cities

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



Västerås: Results of the Intercultural Cities Index

Date: 10 August 2011

A comparison between 29 cities

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 29 cities have undergone their intercultural policies analysis using the Intercultural City Index: Amadora (*Portugal*), Barcelona (*Spain*), Copenhagen (*Denmark*), Donostia-San Sebastian¹ (*Spain*), Dublin (*Ireland*), Duisburg (*Germany*), Geneva (*Switzerland*), Izhevsk (*Udmurt Republic, Russia*), Limassol (*Cyprus*), Lisbon (*Portugal*), the London borough of Lewisham (*United Kingdom*), Lublin (*Poland*), Melitopol (*Ukraine*), Mexico City (*Mexico*), Montreal (*Canada*), Munich (*Germany*), Neuchâtel (*Switzerland*), Neukölln (*Berlin, Germany*), Oslo (*Norway*), Patras (*Greece*), Pryluky (*Ukraine*), Reggio Emilia (*Italy*), Rijeka (*Croatia*), Sechenivsky (*District of Kyiv, Ukraine*), Subotica (*Serbia*), Tilburg (*The Netherlands*), Turnhout (*Belgium*), Vasteras (*Sweden*) and Zurich (*Switzerland*).

This document presents the results of the Intercultural City Index analysis for the city of Västerås 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.

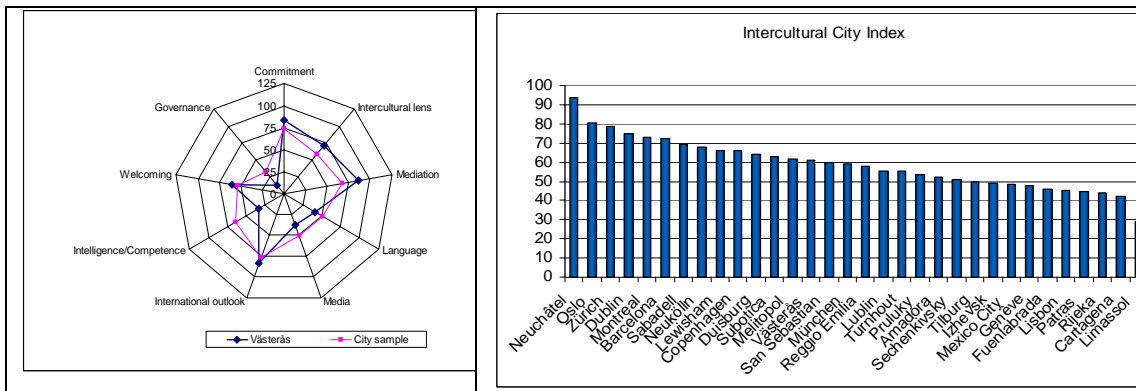
Methodology

The Intercultural City Index analysis is based on a questionnaire involving 66 questions grouped in 14 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 ICC Index).

¹ The Spanish city of Donostia-San Sebastian hereinafter referred to as San Sebastian

These indicators 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. Some of these indicators - education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces are grouped in a composite indicator called “urban policies through the intercultural lens” or simply “intercultural lens”.

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.

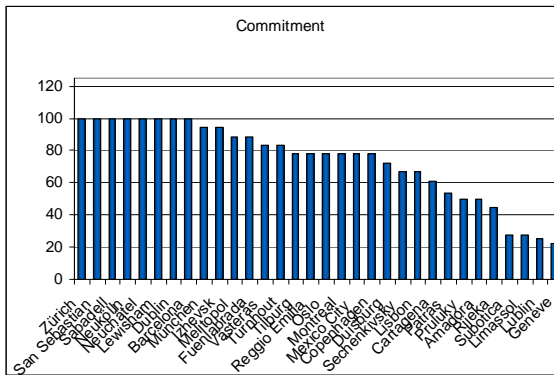


According to the overall Index results, Västerås is positioned 14th among the 29 cities in the sample in relation to the index as it stands at present.

Västerås -An overview

Västerås is a city in central Sweden, located on the shore of Lake Mälaren in the province Västmanland, some 100 km west of Stockholm. The city has a population of 137,200 inhabitants. Non-nationals make up 6.86% of Västerås’s total inhabitants, 17.8% of the city’s population are foreign-born. Second generation migrants make up 6.83% of the city’s population. The largest minority groups are people from Finland (5.18%); Irak- (3.56%); Iran (1.39%); Lebanon and Turkey. In 2008, Västerås’s GDP/capita figures were of 45, 445 Swedish Krona (SEK).

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 Västerås's commitment policy goals is higher than the city sample's²: 83% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample's rate for commitment policy is 74%.

Västerås has adopted a number of initiatives which demonstrate its commitment to the intercultural approach. The city council has formally adopted a public statement in favour of diversity, peace and co-existence. The local government has designed an intercultural strategy and has developed an action plan to put it into practice. It has allocated a budget for the implementation of its intercultural strategy and action plan. The city council also has an evaluation process for its intercultural strategy. It has launched an official webpage for diversity and interculturality. Västerås has a dedicated cross-departmental co-ordination structure which is responsible for its intercultural strategy and action plan. According to the answers provided in the survey, the region acknowledges local citizens who have done an exceptional thing to encourage interculturalism in the local community.

The city council might consider ameliorating its commitment initiatives, for instance by making clear reference to Västerås's intercultural commitment more frequently in the city's speeches and communication.

2. Education³ 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 Västerås's education policy achievement rate is lower (60%) than the city sample's rate (65%).

Västerås has implemented a policy which promotes intercultural mixing in schools. For instance, a local project called IDA, "Inclusion, participation and activity" aims at raising the attractiveness of a number of the city's schools and preschools.

² The term "city sample" refers to the weighted average of the 21 cities included in the Index at this moment in each of the fourteen areas of intercultural governance.

³ 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)

In some of the local primary schools almost all pupils do come from the same ethnic background. Västerås could consider the following case of good practice. In the British city of Bradford, the education authority found that in some neighbourhoods, schools were increasingly polarising into become all white or all non-white. This was allowing little opportunity for children to learn more about each other. A process of linking between over 70 local schools has now led to much closer cooperation and joint working between staff and pupils. Pupils have, on average, made 2.6 new cross-cultural friendships since the project began.

According to the answers provided in the survey, only very few schools involve parents from migrant/minority backgrounds in daily school life. The following is an interesting example to bring about change in this area. The Rådmandsgade School located in the Copenhagen (Denmark) invites parents to an open school day twice a month. They are given a free dinner and have the opportunity to talk to psychologists, nurses, teachers, as well as local associations.

Making reference to the answers provided, the city rarely promotes local schools which carry out intercultural projects. Västerås could learn from the Ukrainian city of Melitopol. Here schools promote writing projects about living stories on mutual aid of people from different origins and special lessons dedicated to other cultures.

Västerås might also consider ameliorating its intercultural education approach by ensuring that the ethnic background of teachers mirrors the diverse population in a larger proportion of local schools.

3. Neighbourhood policies through an intercultural lens⁴

An intercultural city does not require a "perfect statistical mix" of people and recognises the value of geographical proximity and bonding between people of the same ethnic background. However, it also recognises that spatial ethnic segregation creates risks of exclusion and can act as a barrier to an inward and outward free flow of people, ideas and opportunities.

Västerås's neighbourhood policy indicators are higher (65%) than the city sample's rate (61%).

In nine out of 22 of Västerås's neighbourhoods a vast majority⁵ of residents comes from the same ethnic background. In one of the city's neighbourhoods a vast majority of inhabitants comes from minority ethnic groups⁶.

Västerås does encourage residents from one neighbourhood to meet and interact with residents from another from different ethnic/cultural backgrounds. Put simply, the city does promote interaction between neighbourhoods. For instance, "culture in the districts" is a cooperation initiative enshrined in all of the city's districts operations. This includes the provision of family and child-care centres, youth officers and recreational activities, as well as crime prevention advice groups in a large proportion of the city's districts.

Västerås also promotes interaction within neighbourhoods. For instance, different cultural centres present in the city are hosting various events in order to educate residents about minorities' cultures and customs

⁴ 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 on the average.

⁵ 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.

⁶ By "minority group" we understand a subordinate group whose members have significantly less control or power over their own lives than the members of a dominant or majority group have over theirs. (ref. http://higherred.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student_view0/glossary.html)

Västerås may wish to consider building upon its existing policy which avoids ethnic concentration. The city has set quotas for future housing developments: 30% of property should be rented, 30% should be owned and 3% shall be developed as privately owned homes and villas. However, the city of Zurich may be a source of further inspiration and learning for the future. Here, a large proportion of the city's inhabitants lives in rented accommodation. 25% of the rented flats are provided by the city or through housing associations which have implemented an allocation policy. The city's allocation scheme includes achieving a "good mix" between different social groups as one of the initiatives criteria.

4. Public service policies through an intercultural lens

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

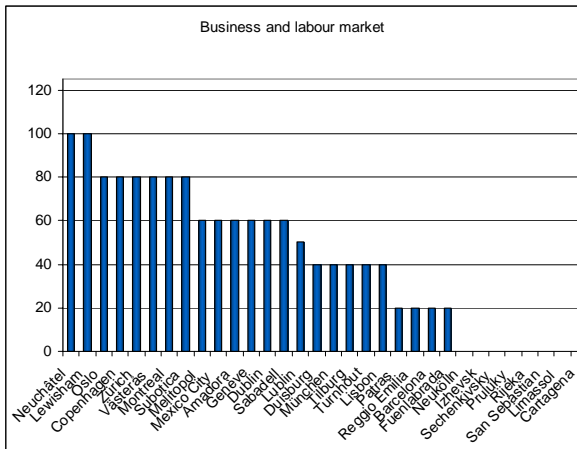
The analysis shows that Västerås's public services policy achievement rate is higher (55%) than the city sample's rate (43%).

Even though the ethnic background of Västerås's public employees does not mirror that of the city's inhabitants, various policies are in place to bring about change in this area. The city's recruitment policy openly seeks to attract candidates from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to improve the quality of the service provided. People who have been granted a residence permit but not citizenship can seek employment in the local public administration. This is regulated by national legislation.

The local government may wish to ameliorate its diversity and equality policies in the future, for instance by encouraging intercultural mixing in the private labour market. We invite the city of Västerås to consider the following initiative launched by the London Borough of Lewisham in this area. The Council's procurement policies and contracts include an Equalities Statement that bidding companies need to show they meet as part of their application. Another useful case of good practice is to be found in Copenhagen. Here intercultural mixing in the private labour market is encouraged through the city's "Engage in the City Board" and "Engage in the Work Life Network" initiatives.

Finally, Västerås city council provides two out of the five services in the index which are tailored to the needs of the ethnic/cultural background of its citizens. The city's schools offer a vegetarian dish and one for children who suffer from allergies. The city also offers specific sections and times for women in sport facilities.

5. Business and labour market policies through an intercultural lens



Västerås's business and labour market policy indicators are much 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 43%.

The city council has adopted the following best practice recommendations in its business and labour market initiatives. Västerås has signed a charter which outlaws discrimination in employment. The city encourages "business districts/incubators" to facilitate inhabitants from different cultures to mix more easily. The city council gives priority to companies which implement a diversity strategy when procuring their goods and services.

Västerås may benefit from encouraging the creation of a business umbrella organization which promotes diversity and non-discrimination in the workplace. An example of setting up such an organization comes from the London Borough of Lewisham. Here the Chamber of Commerce has recently agreed with Lewisham to work on increasing their membership and particularly Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BME) representation. In Lewisham the Regeneration and Community Strategies promote cohesion through the benefits of a diverse and representative SME base. Current figures show that 70% of people attending pre-start business training are from BME communities.

6. Cultural and civil life policies through an intercultural lens

Västerås's cultural and civil life policy goal achievement rate is higher (81%) than the city sample's rate (78%).

Västerås has implemented the following policies in cultural and civil life. It does use interculturalism as a criterion when allocating grants to associations. For instance, any cultural or sports club with a minimum of 15 paying members is eligible to apply for grants. The city also provides targeted grants to specific projects. The city council does organize events and activities in the fields of arts, culture and sport to encourage inhabitants from different ethnic groups to mix. For example "Try-It" is an annual activity which the city organizes in collaboration with local sports clubs. This project allows children to try out new sports and make social contacts. In addition the city organizes an annual Multicultural festival which is held in the city's cultural venues as well as in residential areas. The city also promotes cultural organizations which deal with diversity and intercultural relations in their productions. This is enshrined in the city's guidelines for providing grants to associations. They state that the association must promote gender equality, transparency and accessibility regardless of ethnicity and disability.

Västerås may benefit from organising public debates and campaigns around the topics of diversity and living together more frequently. An interesting example of such an initiative was launched by the town of Oldham. It was introduced after ethnic riots broke out and has successfully brought together children from different ethnicities through sporting activities.

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 Västerås's public space policy goals is considerably higher than the sample city's: 85% of these goals were achieved, while the sample city rate for public space policy is 69%.

According to the answer given in the survey, there are no areas in the city which have a reputation of being "dangerous". None of the areas in the city is dominated by one ethnic group and makes other inhabitants feel unwelcome.

The city has implemented a public spaces policy instrument. The local government promotes intercultural mixing in public libraries, museums, squares and playgrounds. For example, the city's libraries allocate funds to ensure that books and films are available in various languages. The city also collaborates with local cultural organizations, as well as stakeholders and encourages them to organise seminars and lectures in the city's libraries. Playgrounds are also built in each housing area to ensure that they are easily accessible. Västerås also subsidizes leisure activities including municipal baths and a children's festival. The city's inhabitants can partake in these events free of charge. When reconstructing an area, Västerås proposes different forms and places of consultation to reach out to its ethnically and culturally diverse inhabitants. For example, the city is currently investing in the residential area of Backby after a year of consultation with all local inhabitants.

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.

The analysis shows that Västerås's mediation and conflict resolution policy achievement rate is much higher (86%) than the city sample's rate (67%).

The city has set up "Migrationsverket" which is a state-run mediation service. Västerås also provides mediation services in places such as hospitals, in the city's administration, as well as in neighbourhoods and on the streets. The city hires interpreters to intervene in specific meetings in order to minimize misunderstanding and maximize the level of participation. In addition, the city council recruits people with specific language skills when the demand for the language is justifiable. Finally, crime prevention advice is offered in all of the city's neighbourhoods.

9. Language⁷

Västerås's language policy achievement rate is lower (41%) than the city sample's rate (50%).

⁷ By language we understand an abstract system of word meanings and symbols for all aspects of culture. The term also includes gestures and other nonverbal communication. (ref- http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072435569/student_view0/glossary.html)

The city provides migrant minority language courses as a mother tongue for migrant children. Västerås also offers all newly arrived migrants "Swedish for immigrants" at four different levels. Participants are able to continue at no cost a course entitled "Swedish as a second language".

Västerås may wish to provide specific language training in the official languages for hard-to-reach groups⁸. Zurich may be a source of inspiration and learning for Västerås's future language initiatives. Zurich city council encourages projects which develop a positive image of minority/migrant languages. For example, the city's representatives recommend to parents to raise their children, prior to them attending schooling, either in their mother tongue or as bilingual (their mother tongue and German).

Zurich also supports private/ civil sector institutions which offer language training in migrant/minority languages. Additional curriculum courses, called HSK Courses, are offered by embassies, consulates as well as private organisations. These courses cover a range of topics including languages, history, geography, as well as minority cultures.

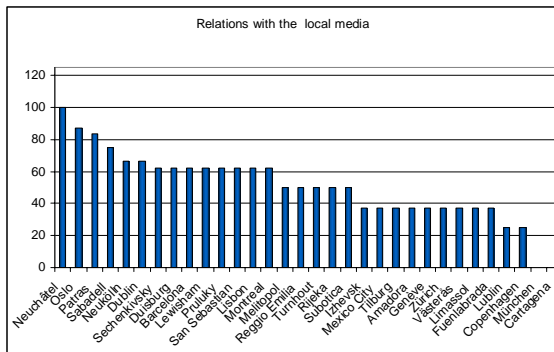
We invite Västerås to consider the following language initiative as implemented by the Swiss canton of Neuchâtel. In 2009 32 language courses allowed 360 foreign residents to learn French. Since 2007 foreign citizens who take beginner and intermediary French language training can sit a recognized exam. These courses are designed to facilitate foreign citizens' integration into the local community and promote social cohesion.

The Swiss canton of Geneva has also introduced a similar initiative. Here, French language courses are open to all, without discrimination, and are tailored to meet the needs of specific members of the local community, for instance migrant women. They are offered by various public and private organizations which operate in the canton. For instance, in 2009 the canton's Office for the Integration of Foreigners provided financial support to 32 French language projects. They were operated by 19 local associations. The global objective is to ensure that newly arrived foreign citizens are able to reach the level of language fluency that is required in daily situations. This includes for instance to be able to ask for directions, engage in conversations, as well as seek employment and work in French. Language training constitutes one of the most important tools in order to integrate newly arrived migrant communities in Geneva's daily life

The city of Västerås offers financial support to minority radio programmes. According to the answers provided in survey, community radio broadcasts are available in four languages in addition to the Swedish programme. The city also supported for a three year period a local integration newspaper. Interesting examples of initiatives in this area, which Västerås could also consider, have been introduced in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia. They are joint projects between the municipality of Reggio Emilia and the Centro Interculturale Mondinsieme, an intercultural training centre. They include Reggio 3.0, a monthly publication which is translated into Russian, Arabic and Urdu. This is distributed both in a traditional magazine format and in an online newsletter. It covers a wide range of issues concerning migrants' lives, work, education, training and community well-being. Furthermore, a national and international media organization broadcasts TV programmes in other languages than the majority ethnic language

⁸ The term makes specific reference to non-working mothers, the unemployed, as well as retired people

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.

38% of Västerås's media policy goals were achieved while the city sample's attainment rate for these goals is 51%.

The municipality has implemented a media policy instrument. For instance, the city's information services are instructed to promote harmonious intercultural relations.

Making reference to the answers provided, one specific policy is adhered to only 'occasionally'. This consists of promoting a positive image of migrants and minorities in the media through targeted press meetings and dedicated newspaper columns. Västerås could find interesting examples of this type of initiatives in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia. Reggio Emilia has run several pro-diversity workshops involving special editions of local newspapers and TV Sports. They have created a directory of media reference persons to enlarge the view points expressed in the media.

Västerås may wish to take note of another initiative launched by the Danish city of Copenhagen. This has carried out a 3-year campaign (We Copenhagener), among others with the aim of acknowledging and celebrating diversity. A part of this campaign has been directed towards the media and there has been substantial press coverage.

The Swiss canton of Neuchâtel may also be a source of learning and inspiration in this respect. "Vivre ici en venant d'ailleurs" is an initiative which promotes migrant groups participation in their communities. It seeks to promote a more positive image of migrant communities than achieved through normal media channels. A double media strategy is implemented through written press and a radio station. Articles as well as broadcasted shows are produced on the life a local migrant, his/her migratory journey or the political and historical situation of the foreigner's country of origin.

The city of Västerås may wish to further explore possible media policies, for instance by providing advocacy/media training/mentorships for journalists from minority backgrounds. A useful example of such an initiative has been implemented by Oslo city council. Among journalists, editors, and media researches, there is a growing awareness about the role of the media in promoting cohesion and presenting news in a responsible and intercultural way. This has resulted in a stronger focus on the recruitment of journalists with an ethnic minority background.

Finally, Västerås may benefit from monitoring the way in which minorities are portrayed in the local media. The Spanish city of Barcelona may provide a useful example in this respect. Barcelona has launched a website, in collaboration with 60 city organizations, to combat clichés and stereotypes about cultural diversity. False stereotypes and rumours, such as immigrants abusing public spaces or not paying taxes, are just some of the perceptions the city council wishes to eliminate through its programme to fight cultural diversity stereotypes. The programme, which comes under the Barcelona Intercultural Plan, envisages creating an anti-rumours website along with a first of its kind Anti-Rumors Manual featuring useful data and information to debunk these ideas. The website will publicize awareness-raising material, organize participatory activities for people to reflect on the concepts of rumours and stereotypes and analyse how the media treat cultural diversity.

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.

Västerås's international outlook policy indicators are higher (83%) than the city sample's (77%).

According to the answers provided in the survey, Västerås has not implemented a policy which explicitly encourages international cooperation. However, this is an important theme in the city's future vision "Västerås Visionen 2026". This document makes reference to Västerås as "the city without borders" and to "Västerås in the world, the world in Västerås." A specific financial provision has been introduced to achieve this. All of the city's departments are responsible for allocating a budget to promote an international outlook in line with the guidelines laid out in the "city's vision 2026". An agency has been set up to monitor and develop Västerås's openness to international connections. This is achieved by an International Coordinator and Diversity Strategist in the city's Welfare and Labour Unit which is part of the City's management office. The city provides support to local universities in order to attract foreign students. In addition, Västerås ensures that foreign student populations take an active part in the city life.

The city may wish to further explore possible international outlook policies, for instance by ensuring that the city develops projects and policies for economic relations with its migrant populations' countries of origin. In doing so, it could refer to what is happening in Lewisham. Even though the London borough of Lewisham has not introduced specific policies or projects, it does provide particular business advice and links to the UK Chamber of Commerce are established to encourage co-development with Lewisham'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 Västerås's intelligence competence policy goals is lower than the city sample's: 33% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample rate for intelligence competence policy is 64%.

The city has adopted the following best practice recommendations in its intelligence competence initiatives. Information regarding diversity and intercultural relations is mainstreamed to inform the city when formulating new initiatives. According to the answers provided in the survey, the city also conducts intercultural workshops and training courses.

We invite Västerås to consider building upon the city's existing intelligence competence policies by conducting surveys concerning local inhabitants' perceptions of migrants. Barcelona city council

may be a source of learning and inspiration in this respect. Barcelona City Council has identified prejudices and stereotypes that are commonly associated with local communities. This project is part of Barcelona City Council's Intercultural Plan. Barcelona city council's initiative includes the provision of free training for local actors who work with migrant communities; the dissemination of an educational comic book illustrated by a local artist; the distribution of an handbook written for local actors who work in the field of social cohesion and intercultural integration; as well as a website which serves as a resource centre on policies implemented to combat prejudices and stereotypes.

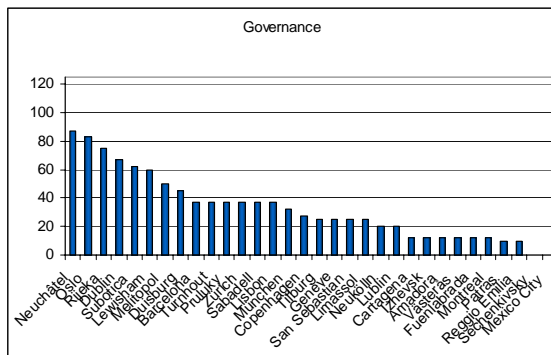
13. Welcoming policies

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.

The attainment rate of Västerås's welcoming policy goals is higher than the city sample's: 60% of these goals were achieved, while the city sample rate is 54%.

Västerås has implemented several welcoming initiatives which help explain its benchmarking results pertaining to welcoming. For instance, the city council has set up a designated agency to welcome newcomers. Västerås has published a comprehensive package of information to aid newly arrived foreign residents. Finally, the city has launched services and agencies which provide support tailored specifically for students- through local universities, family members and refugees- through the city's integration department.

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.

13% of Västerås's governance policy goals were achieved while the city sample's attainment rate for these goals is 33%.

In Västerås newcomers are eligible to vote in local election after "a certain period of time of being regular residence in the city".

The local government may wish to further explore possible governance policies by ensuring the ethnic background of the city's elected politicians reflects to a greater extent the composition of the city's population. Copenhagen has taken a number of actions to improve the representation of migrants in the city administration and can be a source of inspiration and learning. The city's local government offers paid internships specifically targeted at people with minority backgrounds, for instance by requiring they should be able to speak a certain language. It also offers training

possibilities for its interns so they can acquire permanent positions. The city council advertises its vacancies through community media groups, as well as universities with a high proportion of students from minority backgrounds.

Västerås's local government may wish to further explore possible governance policies by ensuring that the ethnic background of the city's elected politicians reflects to a greater extent the composition of the city's population; setting up an independent political body to represent all ethnic minorities living in the city; as well as establishing standards in the representation of migrant minorities in mandatory bodies which supervise schools and public bodies.

15. Conclusions

In the majority of intercultural strategy areas, Västerås does better than most other cities in the sample. Its leading practices can provide useful insights and examples to other cities in the fields of: commitment, neighbourhoods, public services, cultural and civil life, public spaces, mediation and conflict resolution, international outlook and welcoming policies. The region acknowledges local citizens who have done an exceptional thing to encourage interculturalism in the local community. "Culture in the districts" is a cooperation initiative enshrined in all of the city's districts operations to promote interaction between neighbourhoods. Västerås's recruitment policy openly seeks to attract candidates from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to improve the quality of the service provided. "Try it" is an annual activity which the city jointly organizes with local sports clubs. This project allows children to try out new sports and make new cross cultural friends. An interesting example of the city's public space initiatives includes subsidizing leisure activities so that inhabitants can partake in these activities free of charge. The city hires interpreters to intervene in specific encounters in order to minimize misunderstanding and maximize the level of participation as part of its mediation and conflict resolution practices. All of the city's departments allocate a budget to promote international outlook in line with the city's 2026 strategy. Finally, the city has launched services and agencies which provide support tailored specifically for students, through local universities as well as for family members and refugees through the city's integration department.

16. Recommendations

Västerås needs to make progress in relation to its education, language, media, intelligence competence and governance initiatives. The city may wish to look into some of the examples implemented by other Intercultural Cities as a source of learning and inspiration to guide future initiatives. Such examples are provided in the Intercultural cities database⁹.

⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Cities/guidance_en.asp