



## INTERCULTURAL CITIES POLICY BRIEFS

### Intercultural approach to urban safety

While in many countries local authorities do not have competence over the educational content, and sometimes over the recruitment of teachers, there are many actions they can take to foster the role of schools as intercultural spaces. This is an important element of local strategies for diversity and inclusion.

The Council of Europe and its partner cities have developed an intercultural approach to diversity and inclusion (including migrant integration) which enables cities to reap the benefits and minimise the risks related to migration and cultural diversity. Its key elements are:

- Creating spaces and opportunities for deep interaction and co-creation between people of different cultural origins and backgrounds to build trust and realise the creative potential of diversity;
- Power sharing – involving people of diverse origins in decision-making in urban institutions - political, educational, social, economic, cultural;
- Fostering intercultural competence in public, private and civil society organisations;
- Embracing cultural pluralism and multiple identities through leadership discourse and urban pedagogy actions;
- Managing conflict positively, busting stereotypes and engaging in a debate about the impact and potential of diversity for local development;

In the field of urban safety, the intercultural approach focuses on community policing, including of the virtual kind, increasing the efficiency of policing by developing a focused, evidence-based approach to surveillance and prevention, engaging citizens in defining community-based and public space safety solutions, can benefit from 'diversity advantages' in urban safety policies, facing the double challenge of improving feelings of safety, and responding to changing patterns of crime and public disorder. However, such policies could and should meet high standards of accountability, trust and legitimacy.

As a general tendency, Mayors and Municipal Councils are under pressure to invest in repressive or symbolic measures. Despite any lack of evidence, public opinion and policy makers tend to perceive diversity and migration as causes of problems. On the other hand, patterns of crime and public disorder are rapidly changing as a result of ICT and virtual communities, allowing no easy solutions. Unfocused

surveillance, generic crime prevention awareness campaigns and arresting suspects at random have proven to be ineffective.

### **1. Focus on shared safety priorities and adopt problem-oriented policing.**

It is indispensable to analyse the effectiveness of existing methods of policing both from the point of view of their impact on actual crime rates, but also with regard to their impact on residents' perception of safety and trust in police. Experience in cities such as the Hague and Botkyrka show that heavy-handed policing based on random surveillance and arrests, rather than on focus information and responding to clear clues and threats, are counterproductive on both accounts. Ideally, cities should adopt some kind of monitoring tool for local safety interventions (the Rotterdam-Copenhagen Safety index' is a good model) as a method of taking safety concerns of citizens seriously, and enabling both trust-building and enforcement in neighbourhoods.

It is important to underline the difference between community and proximity policing. Proximity policing is characterized by equal and impartial law enforcement, balancing co-ordination between municipal and central police levels but without the close involvement of citizens as safety actors. An illustration: proximity policing would lead to the repression of graffiti, loud music and other cultural expressions whereas with an intercultural community policing strategy, these are negotiated with communities and can be transformed into creative projects, enriching the city.

The police corps of The Hague region was the first in the Netherlands to combine 'the best of three worlds', i.e. problem-oriented policing (POP), intelligence-led policing (ILP) and community policing (CP). This new model is a present being taught at the Dutch police academy. As a first step, crime trends are signalled on the basis of annual police data and reports, using the standardized method of Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment (SARA). Priority problems are defined according to the '80/20 rule' that 80% of problems are due to 20% of causes. These problems are analysed in terms of concentration ('hot spots'), frequency ('hot crimes'), perpetrators ('hot shots') and targets ('hot victims'). The project plan is supported by an intelligence-led model of task forces, partnerships and management, with the Mayor in a key role of prioritizing on police capacities and engaging partner institutions.

This approach is applied in the Hague district Schilderswijk which is notorious with its diversity, segregation and poverty statistics. . Problem-oriented policing showed a top priority of increasing burglaries (hot crimes), concentrated in some particular streets and blocks (hotspots), and committed by frequent offenders, 75% youth in the age of 12 – 17 years and even younger (hotshots). Most vulnerable were elderly migrants, because of lack of social control and poor quality housing (hot victims).

As a response, community policing was reinforced with 42 'bikers', highly mobile and approachable street patrols. In cooperation with social workers and housing corporations, the quality of door locks and of street lights was improved. The partners made a joint list of the 40 most persistent offenders, weekly selecting 5 persons for getting extra attention on multiple police levels. Also former offenders receive frequent visits of community police officers or social workers. Intelligence-led policing is made public, through social media and neighbourhood meetings. Instead of hiding disturbing crime data,

people are fully informed, get advice about burglary prevention, and are encouraged to discuss community efforts.

## **2. Foster citizen engagement in creating safety solutions through the public space.**

Highlight visible improvements in ‘hotspot’ neighbourhoods, (Lisbon Mouraria, Reggio Emilia station district etc.), make safety workshops a regular part of ICC enquiry visits.

In the context of reconstruction of Pepys Park in London Lewisham young people were invited into the process of designing and making a new playground area. A park user group park warden and a ‘Rivers and People Officer’ were put in place in order to oversee the accessibility of the area to for all residents and deal with safety and civility issues.

In Oslo’s Alna and Fureset areas the local administration has committed to a long-term process of engagement with the community in the context of urban regeneration. It has collected residents’ opinion through mapping, workshops and door-to-door surveys in cooperation with minority advisers and field workers. Thus emerged, for example, the idea of a World Park to be designed and maintained by the residents. Consequently, the residents feel greater ownership of the regeneration process and now engage more actively in housing cooperatives and other common ventures. A sharp drop in youth crime incidence between 2008 and 2012 is also partly attributed to the increased participation and ownership.

## **3. Promote trust-building, and change in police culture**

The focused way of policing helps to create a diversity advantage in urban safety, in the sense that migrants are not misperceived as potential criminals but valued as potential allies. In addition, police officers should be trained in intercultural skills, also through informal learning, for instance organising a youth football event together with Mosques and other community groups. “Friendly” police presence in the public space at all times (and not only in response to a problem), and activities which help create trust between the police force and inhabitants, create positive conditions for improving urban safety. The police presence can play an important preventive role even if it is virtual (online).

Montréal has a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, committing itself to improve the police service as well. Distinctive traits are challenging racial profiling of crime, working with social organizations against racism, and fighting poverty in neighbourhoods. The police actively takes part in local round-tables, social projects and local boards of urban safety. For example, police officers are training unemployed young people as social mediators, also diverting them from youth gangs.

The community policing program in Alta de Lisboa (Lisbon) shows how confidence building can work in practice in a district with a high-level of poverty and diversity (81% of residents have a migrant background). Community policing started with meetings in day centers, schools, health centers etc., with a key role of a community-based safety group. The group has attained a range of small but visible successes, such as clearing dark and insecure places of drugs dealing near schools, and removing over 100 abandoned vehicles, that also served as hiding places for drugs trade, but its most important achievement is the perception, among more than 65% of residents, that the neighborhood is safe.

In Helsinki, since 2008, youth violence is being tackled by 'virtual community policing'. A team of NetCops' is making proactive use of social media like Facebook and Twitter. In their professional capacities as uniformed policemen, they discuss with young people, sharing information and advise. An internet survey of 2011 showed that the Net Cops had 172269 fans on Facebook and were easily recognized in regular street patrols. Apart from preventing incidents, this approach helped to improve reporting on issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuses and cybercrime. Trust in the police clearly increased, also among migrant children. The evaluation study suggests that this approach also contributes to preventing radicalization and extremist violence. But the process is delicate, one should avoid that young people are perceived as informants. At present, 30 new Net Cops are being trained at the police academy.

In Reggio Emilia the introduction of community policing resulted in a shift of focus to preventing car theft, traffic accidents, street crime and anti-social behaviour, reflected in the decline of arrests and increased reliance on fines, The local police is investing in intercultural training and learning of migrant languages. The diversity advantage is paying off by the increasing role of volunteers as guardians of the public space, in order to deter antisocial behaviour and elicit police intervention when necessary.

#### **4. Establish a strong connection between safety and care.**

Urban unrest is rarely without reason deeply rooted resentment, frustration and mistrust in society, a lack of feeling of belonging, opportunities and prospects, trigger response to youth violence which draws in criminal gangs. The lesson from the response to recent riots in the banlieux of Paris and London. is that putting in massive police forces only tends to aggravate the problems, attracting mobile youth groups to join the "fun". Repressive responses should be only a last resort and security forces should work hand in hand to develop joint prevention and early warning strategies with social and educational services.

Botkyrka, a city in the outskirts of Stockholm, has developed a rioting prevention strategy , reacting in a 'soft way' to signals that an incident of vandalism and car burning in a shopping center risks to escalate. The key success factor is good communication between local and national police levels, the fire brigade and social workers. This reactive approach is balanced by proactive prevention of youth violence.

Botkyrka facilitates dialogue forums at multiple levels, including the police, social organizations, house owners and local community and faith groups. The police is also building relations of trust with young people directly, with role games at schools and trainings for motivated young unemployed to start a career as private security guards or to enter the police school. Special efforts are made for working with local newspapers and social media to report about incidents in a sober and objective way. Through sms, Facebook etc., young people and informal leaders are also communicating early warning signals. This multi-prong strategy pays off – during riots in cities surrounding Stockholm in 2014, Botkyrka was almost not affected and any sparks were extinguished immediately.

The Tilburg House of care and safety, a model first developed in this city, has become a blueprint for youth crime prevention in the Netherlands. Success factors. First, the partnership, led by the municipality, including the police, the public prosecutor's office and a wide spectre of social organisations, dealing with well-being, prevention of domestic violence, alcohol and drugs abuse, etc. Second, the joint approach of starting with prevention 'behind the front-door', with a focus on families with multiple problems. Third, early intervention on the basis of shared information and joint action plans ('one professional for one family'). These plans offer alternatives and guidance, for instance on debt settlement, as well as clear punitive measures and fast judicial procedures. An indicator of effectiveness is a decline of 50% young repeat offenders. Social exclusion, as a root cause of youth crime, is tackled directly by helping migrant families to find their way in the complex Dutch health and welfare system. Family coaches of different cultural background are acting as intermediaries, linking up with local district networks of community police, house corporations and youth workers.

The London Lewisham approach of balancing care and law enforcement is strongly value-based. The municipality is leading an intercultural civic coalition including the police, professional institutions and community and faith organizations with a shared commitment to stop murder in the neighbourhoods and to save these kids. Falling budgets have been an incentive to highlight the financial returns on investments. Repeated offenders account for 50% of crime and big part of the costs of judicial procedures and detainment. Pooling of budgets and professionals helps to streamline action plans that offer clear choices: either to re-enter society and get educational support, or to stay in the criminal scene and get multi-level police attention. In a proper adaption of probed models such as the 'Boston Cease-fire', the municipality and the police are offering trainings to ex-offenders for acting as 1-to-1 coaches and gaining work experience. Evaluation studies show that this approach has worked miracles, both for the young people themselves and in saving costs.

Based on the report "Intercultural pathways for urban safety", for Intercultural cities, by Martin van Harten. More on intercultural urban policies: [www.coe.int/interculturalcities](http://www.coe.int/interculturalcities)