



5th Portuguese Intercultural Cities Network Meeting

Loures, Palácio dos Marqueses da Praia e Monforte, November 13, 2015

(SUMMARY)

Framework

Opening

Maria Eugénia Coelho (Social Cohesion and Housing Deputy Mayor, CMLoures) and Rui Monteiro (Mayor's Office, CMLoures), opened the event, welcoming all participants, putting forth all points in the agenda and presenting the support materials provided.

Agenda

1. Presentation of the Action Plan for 2015/2016
2. Discussion about the network formalization (Statutes and governing bodies)
3. Other issues

1. Presentation of the Action Plan for 2015/2016

André Carmo (Council of Europe representative) presented the 2015/2016 Action Plan, while also providing some additional information considered relevant. Before that, he made some introductory remarks, given the presence of some municipalities as observers that have less knowledge about the RPCI. After presenting the general goals of the RPCI and its current members, three main goals for the 2015/2016 biennium were presented, namely: i) consolidation; ii) new activities; iii) communication. Regarding the first goal, five priorities were mentioned: i) filling of the ICC index by current member cities (8) until the end of the 1st semester of 2016; ii) schedule an expert visit to Loures during the 1st semester of 2016; iii) undertake a meeting between the ACM and the CoE representative during the 2nd semester of 2015; iv) elaborate an RPCI toolkit during the 1st semester of 2016 with the goal of facilitating the enlargement process of the network; v) do the 6th RPCI meeting in Santa Maria da Feira. Concerning new activities, the following priorities were underlined: i) launch the RPCI until the end of 2015; ii) start an anti-rumours campaign during 2016; iii) promote a reflection around refugee integration within the RPCI during 2016. Finally, regarding communication, three priorities were defined: i) review and update the information made available by member cities at the RPCI website; ii)

promote information sending for the ICC Newsletter (giving priority to Beja, Cascais and Setúbal); iii) establish privileged communication channels with local/regional media. Additional notes, focused on the current situation in other national intercultural cities networks (Italy, Spain and Ukraine) and some outcomes of the last coordination meeting of the ICC Network that took place during the past month of September, in Lisbon. Finally, it was also pointed out that the 2016 budget for the RPCI is around 5.000€.

Afterwards, André Carmo (CoE) and Manuela Júdice (GLEM director, CMLisboa) provided some additional framing remarks related, on the one side, with the advantages that municipalities have from participating in the RPCI, on the other, with the trajectory followed by the RPCI since its origin.

João Afonso (Social Rights Deputy Mayor, CMLisboa), draw the attention for the need to include, in the consolidation goal, the formalization of the RPCI as association of municipalities, a step that necessarily increases responsibility of partner cities. In his view, the question of refugee reception became a priority in the field of interculturality and, in that sense, the development of an anti-rumour campaign would be a very useful experience. Finally, he highlighted the need for, after its formalization, the RPCI to assume the role of interlocutor near the National Association of Municipalities, enhancing the visibility of interculturality at the national level.

Cristina Farinha (Education and Social Action Deputy Mayor, CMAmada) manifested availability to share the experience of Amadora in the anti-rumour campaign, project that came out of its engagement in the RPCI. In fact, networking boosts the sharing of good practices and experiences implemented on other places. The recent approval of an URBACT III project with Amadora as lead partner that was originally in the field of migrant integration but rapidly reoriented towards the question of refugees was also mentioned. This is also an experience that can be shared and promoted within the RPCI. She raised some doubts about the existence of a sufficient number of municipalities for one to advance with the network formalization and, lastly, underlined the need to rethink the enlargement strategy of the RPCI, a task that should be mainly carried out by current member cities.

Maria Eugénia Coelho (CMLoures) subscribed the aforementioned reflection, pointing out the importance of working within a network and, regarding RPCI's enlargement, the need to adopt a more personal stance, potentially more effective.

2. Discussion about the network formalization (Statutes and governing bodies)

Miguel Graça (João Afonso Advisor, CMLisboa) presented the statutes proposal that suggests the creation of an association of municipalities by an indefinite period of time. Financial contributions are open to discussion, with several possible schemes (e.g. contribution proportional to State transfers), and shouldn't be an obstacle to network development. It was stressed that the association governing bodies are relatively simple and the formalization of the RPCI is important, for instance, to apply for projects, associate to other initiatives, and develop autonomous projects.

João Afonso (CMLisboa) suggested the anticipation of the refugee debate for this year. An encounter about refugees should be made as soon as possible. This requires a change in point 2.3 of the action plan.

Maria Eugénia Coelho (CMLoures) described a meeting with the Immigration and Border Services (SEF) about refugees reception, that was characterized by great uncertainty. Hence, it is relevant to have a meeting subordinate to this theme, suggesting immediately the participation of the Portuguese Council for Refugees and expressing availability to assume the responsibility to organize this initiative until the end of the current year. Concerning the action plan, she highlighted the importance of C4i project for the Loures municipality (and Amadora) expressing her availability to share, deepen and develop its results. In her view, the deconstruction of prejudice and rumours is inseparable from refugees reception. Regarding the formalization of the RPCI she considers it to be an urgent matter. It is an obligation of member cities to make others join the RPCI. She questioned the need for a fee. Alternatively, the municipality assuming direction should be responsible for that using its own resources.

João Afonso (CMLisboa) defended that the financial issue shouldn't be a problem. In line with what was previously argued, he also considered that the municipality assuming the direction should assume the financing costs of the RPCI, with no need for fee payment for now. This doesn't mean, however, that there is no budget. One can, for instance, obtain European funding for several initiatives.

Cristina Ribeiro (Social Network Office, CMSMFeira) agreed with the need to enlarge the RPCI, covering the whole country, different realities and populations. The enlargement should be made by each municipality near its network of influence (e.g. when hosting the next RPCI meeting, SMFeira can

invite municipalities of the Porto Metropolitan Area). The RPCI functioning has been very irregular. In the penultimate meeting, in Cascais, municipalities had the chance to present their practices, work in small groups, starting to generate some possibilities of future work. Since there was no continuity, everything was left by the wayside. The need to map municipal good practices in the field of interculturality was underlined, through the creation of an online community of practice. Therefore, municipalities would also become less dependent of RPCI coordination. SMFeira is experienced on this area and is available to share it. This proposal could be included in point 3 of the action plan. She also expressed openness to host the next RPCI meeting, with economic diplomacy being a central matter for the agenda. The communication plan of the RPCI should be more detailed and revised. Regarding the formalization of the RPCI, a suggestion was made to consolidate the work already developed, increase the number of members and strengthen the bonds between those that are already in the network.

Helena Bonzinho (Social Intervention Division, CMCascais) defended the need not to waste resources and double efforts. Furthermore, she added, with this action plan we are in better conditions to define the RPCI path, distinguishing it from other existing networks and structures. The network has to find its focus and explore a wider dimension of interculturality and diversity. A suggestion was also made to have workshop format meetings in which municipalities learn from each other. Regarding the action plan, Cascais will try to fulfil the goals that are inscribed in it. Finally, support was requested to the CoE representative for filling the intercultural city index, namely regarding some of its more subjective questions.

Maria Eugénia Coelho (CMLoures) subscribed some of the prior observations, suggesting the need to create moments of more concrete discussion under the spirit of the RPCI, to debate and understand good practices, replicating and adapting them to different territories.

Cristina Palhares (Mayor's Office, CMBraga) shared the opinion that the notion of interculturality should be as wide as possible, encompassing all cultures and forms of expression. Relatively to statutes, she didn't consider necessary to specify municipalities, as the association should be composed by all deciding to subscribe. Otherwise, every time a new municipality joins the RPCI, statutes would need to be revised. Finally, she expressed agreement with the need to enlarge the network using proximity networks from each municipality.

Miguel Graça (CMLisboa) considered the suggestion just made interesting and easily inscribed in a revised statutes proposal.

Maria Eugénia Coelho (CMLoures) emphasized the existence of a relative consensus regarding the integration in the action plan of the changes that were suggested throughout the debate. Regarding the statutes and the formal membership of municipalities she proposed all present cities to formalize their subscription until December 10, as well as sending other suggestions of changes to the statutes proposal. During the next RPCI meeting in Santa Maria da Feira (ideally in January/February 2016) its formalization should materialize. Furthermore, a meeting about refugees should be made until the end of the current year with a more informal nature, centred in concrete problems and their resolution.

3. Other issues

João Afonso (CMLisboa) presented the Lisbon city refugees reception municipal program (PMAR LX), pointing out the need to host 500 refugees.

Maria Eugénia Coelho (CMLoures), following a meeting with the SEF, said that she got the impression the financial support (6000euros p/adult and 4000eurosp/child, for a 18month period) wouldn't be given to local authorities but instead to NGOs and private institutions of social solidarity (IPSS), responsible for distributing funds and managing the reception process. In her view, this raises doubts concerning the articulation between these institutions and local authorities and the responsibilities each one should assume in this context.

João Afonso (CMLisboa) showed total discordance with the strategy followed by the SEF, considered to have the potential to generate a humanitarian disaster, by its incapacity to assure equitable conditions for all refugees. As such, Lisbon moves in the opposite direction. The SEF logic is irresponsible and paternalistic, and doesn't empower these people. Instead, makes them dependent of IPSS. In Lisbon we try to make organizations work together. At the end of the day, he concluded, local authorities will be called to solve all problems.

Hugo Cardoso (Equality and Citizenship Unit, CMLoures) presented C4i project, emphasizing the fact that in Loures it was always seen as a project to be continued, deepened and further developed in the future, given its underlying theme.

Deolinda Seno Luís (Social Intervention, Health and Culture Deputy Mayor, CM Odemira) expressed interest in continuing to participate in the RPCI. She underlined the need of a better articulation with the ACM, with the refugee problem being a main concern. On the other way, the existence of moments to share experiences between municipalities was also considered to be fundamental. Odemira, for instance, has an Immigrant Municipal Commission that can share its experience, given the specificities of migrant populations living in the municipality (mainly coming from Asia).

Amadeu Silvestre (Director of the Solidarity and Innovation Department, CM Sintra) assured that, most probably, Sintra will join the network. He also expressed discontent with the position of Lisbon regarding the SEF. In Sintra's case, the budget for refugee reception is around 500 000 Euros and no awareness actions will be made near the population, as refugees are considered to be migrants like all others. Furthermore, they will not be placed in refugee centres but directly rehoused, not in public housing, but rental market houses.

Participants

RPCI Members

CM Loures – Maria Eugénia Coelho (Social Cohesion and Housing Deputy Mayor), Rui Monteiro (Mayor's Office), Carla Barra (DCSH Director), Sandra Almeida (Equality and Citizenship Head of Unit), Hugo Cardoso (Equality and Citizenship Civil Servant)

CM Amadora – Cristina Farinha (Education and Social Action Deputy Mayor)

CM Cascais – Helena Bonzinho (Social Intervention Division)

CM Lisboa – João Afonso (Social Rights Deputy Mayor), Miguel Graça (João Afonso Advisor), Manuela Júdice (GLEM Director)

CM SM Feira – Cristina Ribeiro (Social Network Office), Roberto Carlos (CLAE Mediator)

CM Setúbal – Conceição Loureiro (Social Inclusion Head of Division), Vanda Narciso (DIC Civil Servant)

Observers

CM Braga – Cristina Palhares (Mayor's Office)

CM Fd Foz – Alexandra Nunes, Fátima Teixeira

CM Odemira – Deolinda Seno Luís (Social Action, Health and Culture Deputy Mayor)

CM Odivelas – Paulo Ribeiro (Edgar Valles Secretary), Manuela Henriques (Health, Equality and Citizenship Office Coordinator), Graça Alves (Health, Equality and Citizenship Office Civil Servant)

CM Sintra - Amadeu Silvestre (Director of Solidarity and Innovation Department)

CoE - André Carmo (CoE representative)