



Brainstorming meeting

Campaigning together: how to make cities' voices stronger?

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Online

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

For some years now the ICC programme has been inviting its members to celebrate a few International Days together through joint actions on social media. These calls for campaigning together have previously grown organically, being implemented when ideas spring to mind, and sometimes they have also built on plans that cities already had.

The advantages of campaigning together are several, the most important being the possibility of increasing cities' visibility and occupy spaces that are too often loaded with stereotyped communication, rumours, fake news, or even hate speech. There is scope for joining forces and carrying out more positive messaging in a structured way, particularly now that the Council of Europe is backing ICC communication very strongly, by echoing its initiatives through its institutional social media.

Three International Days are particularly relevant for interculturality: the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development; the World Refugee Day; and the International Migrants Day. Joint campaigns for these days need to be prepared well in advance and convey coordinated messages through common tools and brand identity, so to facilitate the participation of member cities, allow for adequate planning, and increase impact.

There will be many initiatives on communication under the ICC 2021 programme of activities, the most important being the Academy on Intercultural Communication and Alternative Narratives that will take place in April. This is a three-day course, designed and prepared in 2020, mainly targeting communication officers of the intercultural cities. The aim is to ensure that the institutional communication of local authorities is built around the three core ICC principles of real equality,



diversity advantage, and meaningful intercultural interaction, no matter what the topic of the communication is.

Such a training course – for which specific training material has been prepared – will also answer to a need strongly pointed out by the ICC members in their replies to the 2020 evaluation survey. In fact, the majority of survey respondents expressed the wish to

participate in joint initiatives aimed at raising awareness on the value of interculturality for diverse societies. This is however not a topic for a one-shot campaign: to achieve changing positively perceptions of diversity, it should be a consistent effort in all institutional communication, something which the ICC Academy will also focus on.

At the same time, joint campaigns for international days can also contribute to the promotion of interculturality as an indispensable state of mind in diverse societies.

The brainstorming meeting was convened to stimulate creativity, collect ideas, and take inspiration from existing successful experiences. Over 60 city officials attended the meeting.

Inspirational session

Intercultural Cities Campaigns

Lilah Gafaar, ICC social media manager, highlighted the benefits of campaigning together with a network of 145 local authorities from all over the world, as a way to harness the power of social media and gather support around key collective messages. She stressed that diversity advantage and inclusion have been the main messages of the past campaigns and that storytelling has worked well in the latest actions; she suggested to make wider use of this technique in future campaigns as it allows to discover cultures from multiple perspectives, offers insights into the complexity of identities, adds an emotional layer to the cognitive lens, and enables the participation of the citizens.



She then illustrated the strengths and weaknesses of the 2020 ICC campaigns.

The “World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development was marked by the ICC programme alone through a short video (around 1 min) conveying powerful single messages. The video had a high global outreach, confirming social media trends that favour quick and imaginative video messages. Similarly, videos on the ICC Test, AI, ICC resources and thematic webinars worked well. In 2021, the ICC social media manager will add “European Day of Languages” and other relevant events and international days as they arise.

The World Refugee Day campaign was organised together with the UNHCR and consisted of a webinar on the role of cities to create inclusive environments (attended by over 700 participants) and of

messages from city mayors on the importance of inclusion and the diversity advantage in a Covid-19 context. While the portrait photos with the mayors' messages worked very well, the videos submitted within the framework of the campaign worked less well, as the messages were too long.

Finally, on the International Migrants Day, the strength was that the campaign allowed for the residents of participating cities to express themselves and communicate their individual messages on a global platform. However, the photos and videos submitted had different lengths and formats which made it difficult to adjust them to a coherent layout. One of the lessons learned from that experience is that the ICC programme should provide clearer instructions for the submissions, and to foresee a longer period for the preparation of the campaign.

The UNHCR #WithRefugees Campaign



Claire Roberts Lamont, Cities Focal Point and Coordinator, UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, presented the UNHCR “Cities #WithRefugees” campaign, which the ICC programme joined in 2020.

Cities are among the main target and partners of UNHCR advocacy and awareness activities as 61% of the refugees and 80% of the internally displaced persons chose urban environments to settle in.

Within cities, Mayors play an important role in celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion. The

#WithRefugees campaign started back in 2018 and has since gathered 263 municipalities from 140 countries that have signed a solidarity statement and committed to welcoming Refugees.

The statement addresses the challenges related to meeting the needs of newcomers but also points out the values of diversity and the contributions that newcomers make in terms of innovation by bringing new skills to the city. It is also a tool for engaging and acknowledging cities that support refugees, encouraging other cities to do so, and creating cooperation opportunities. For instance, one of the UNHCR offices in the Philippines was able to create an agreement with the national government which led to thirteen cities signing the solidarity statement in order to work more closely together in the integration of their refugee population.

The plans for the 2021 celebrations are currently being designed and the cooperation with the ICC programme will be renewed.

Campaigning as a Network

Sara Bonavitacola, Communications Officer & Project Assistant, ICEI - *Istituto Cooperazione Economica Internazionale* (coordinator of Città del Dialogo), shared the experience of the Italian network of Intercultural Cities as both user and contributor to ICC campaigns. She started with a few preliminary thoughts on the why it is important to campaign together. She stressed that campaigning as a network allows for a more efficient “we culture” messaging, and for more meaningful contribution to creating

and spreading an intercultural discourse on the value of diversity. Also, it allows to build new allies by engaging with an active audience.

She then detailed the experience of the Italian network with their own campaign on interculturality. Launched during the second part of the year with support from the ICC programme, the campaign team started by assessing the potential audience and choosing its target group; they further defined the main messages, and set their priorities and goals, taking into account also algorithm objectives.



The network further prepared a detailed plan, including budget allocation, duration, potential formats, tools, and of course an editorial plan. The communication campaign was drawn in consultation with the participating cities as it was thought as a platform where they could share their experiences. A specific layout and visual identity were created by customising the ICC brand pack to the Italian context. This identity has been consistently used in all communication channels (so far mainly Facebook and the website).

Concerning the tools, the Italian network has used videos, cards, gif images, animated info graphics and texts. During the campaign, monitoring and feedback analysis have been regular elements so as to allow the adaptation of scheduled plans to initiatives and content that were not foreseen at the beginning.

A few months after the launch, the community following the activities of Città del Dialogo registered a 1,937 % increase. The cities that are members of the network can now count on a wider audience and greater visibility. Among the positive outcomes, the campaign showed that there is appetite from citizens to get acquainted, engaged and involved in sharing positive messages about diversity and living together. Also, thanks to the campaign, ICEI strengthened its relation and connection with some cities that were less engaged before it, as the campaign brought value to them.

In terms of lessons learned, ICEI realised that there is scope for involving the cities at the earliest stages of planning by asking for input in advance; also, they underestimated the increased workload represented by moderation of the social media, as more interactions also means more monitoring and follow up.

In the second part of her presentation Sara gave feedback on the participation of the Italian network in the ICC campaign for the International Migrants Days. Overall, it was a very positive experience: many citizens participated, including those living in cities which are not part of the network. However, as a coordinator, it was difficult to manage the collection and editing of content in a uniform way.

In this sense, Sara made the following useful recommendations:

- Adopt and share a same profile filter, and more generally provide customisable toolkits with all campaigning material so that the cities can deal with the layout themselves.
- Promote the use of the same hashtags as aggregators and reposting.
- Extend the campaigning period: for example, ICC could call to campaign for the whole concerned month, including actions such as a teasing or a countdown phase and other

strategies to keep up the engagement of the followers. A contest between participating cities could also be organised.

- Keep the spotlight on in the days following the International day, by showcasing single contributions. Another possibility would be to create a final collage with all or most of the submissions.
- Involve allies: although ICC campaigns are institutional, they could engage with a mix of testimonials and influencers from institutions, common citizens and famous personalities that could stand up for the same cause.

Finally, Sara shared a few examples of successful campaigns, including from the private sectors, that succeeded in creative an alternative narrative to discrimination and exclusion, by using powerful but simple and clear messages involving empathy and emotions, irony, or real stories and experiences.

Working Groups

After a questions and answers session, participants split in groups, each dedicated to one of the international days for which joint campaigns will be planned. The groups were asked to answer to the same set of questions:

- What do we want the message of the campaign to be?
- Who do we want to target?
- What can we do to engage with the audience?
- What type of content do we want to use?
- Do we need to engage political leaders/personalities? If so - how?
- What can we do to engage all departments of the city in the campaign?

After the work in groups, they reported to the plenary as detailed below.

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

The group's main assumption is that Covid-19 deprived the society from enjoying the beauty of diversity. Cities across the world have always been melting pots of cultures, ideas and experiences. Offering everything from loud marketplaces to silent parks, cities have become the homes of sensations, allowing residents to experience new sounds, sights and smells every day. As the pandemic struck and streets became silent, the smell of the restaurants and the colors of the shop windows became a memory of the past, and citizens lost touch with parts of the diversity they love.

- **Main message:** Diversity is enjoyable, a good that we have to value and cherish.
- **Objective of the campaign:** to offer a feast for the senses through a social media campaign. A feast made up of diverse sounds (languages, music), colours, movements (dance, sport, youth, culture), "tastes" (images of food), smells, that represent the diversity in cities. The campaign should also highlight the contribution that migrants have made to their cities (for instance by helping to handle Covid-19 sanitary emergency).
- **Audience:** the general population, including migrants.
- **Tools:**
 - videos, portraits, and audio conveying the excitement of social interactions in diverse cities. The multimedia content should make the users feel diversity and revive their senses.

- Postcards to be produced by cities and made available for free in city halls, showing the city as a diverse enjoyable place.
- Publication of a cultural diversity calendar.

The content for this campaign should be produced locally; ICC would provide clear instructions, customisable toolkits, and a platform to show that the celebration of diversity is transnational.

World Refugee Day

The starting point is that – although refugees have distinct and stronger protection by law than migrants or other minorities as they endured persecution and other threats to the right to life – they should not be reduced to a vulnerable group inspiring (only) compassion. Therefore, there is a need to find a balance between emotional messages and a representation that is based on dignity, equality, and diversity advantage. They should be invited to take part in the campaign as any other citizen.

- **Main message:** celebrating the Refugee Day in Equality, Diversity and Interaction – “We culture”.
- **Objective of the campaign:** Presenting refugees as a component of the wider society, building the message on commonalities that unite, avoiding heart-breaking approaches presenting them as vulnerable people, rather as an asset.
- **Strategic approach:** work around the meaning of the words “safety” and “refuge”, asking citizens what these mean to them, showing that understanding may be similar despite different life experiences.
- **Audience:** the general population.
- **Actors (to be) engaged:** a mix of institutional and non-institutional communication, with testimonies from citizens (including refugees), and supporting messages by VIP and Politicians. Schools will also be called to join the campaign.
- **Tools:**
 - Video contest for students (university and high school) on the message of valuing refugees as integral part of the society.
 - Video interviews with citizens on their understanding of safety and refugee (possibly to be produced by the Council of Europe) and promoted by CoE and the cities alike (multilingual).
 - Posters with messages from VIPs and politicians: edited in the same format, same length, same core message.
 - A toolkit containing a briefing note, banners, a profile filter, templates for posters, etc.
- **Timeframe:** the whole month of June, with a final collage poster to be released – together with the main video and the announcement of the winner of the students’ contest on 20 June. Communication to be continued after that with highlights.
- **Methodology:** a small working group will gather in end of March beginning of April to define the main message and finalise the campaign preparation.

International Migrants Day

Migration is a fact and a phenomenon that cannot be stopped. It is part of our societies and an intrinsic feature of humanity. All residents of the city, irrespective of their background, contribute and are important for their city. The campaign will focus at showing migrants’ equality in diversity, sharing the message of complex identities – no one can be put in a box, we all have multiple aspects of our identities, this is what creates the richness of the diversity in our cities.

- **Main message:** I am a migrant. I'm an active citizen and contribute to my city.
- **Objective of the campaign:** provide a platform to migrant residents to present themselves through ordinary information related to their job, hobbies, values, to show they are as any other citizen. "I am many things: I am an entrepreneur, I am a mother, I like football, I am a migrant".
- **Audience:** the general population.
- **Actors (to be) engaged:** anyone in the city, including the city's employees who will be also asked to engage other city departments in the campaign. The political level could be engaged by signing a joint statement prepared by the ICC programme.
- **Tools:**
 - Social media campaign with images and text. The images will be turned into a video per each participating city.
 - ICC will provide a toolkit containing a customisable frame for the pictures, a profile filter, Twitter and Facebook banners and an image badge.
 - A countdown clock till the day of the campaign.
 - A common hashtag (proposal, TBC): #NotJustAMigrant

General conclusions

The meeting was very useful for planning, identifying gaps, and to agree on next steps based on new and creative ideas.

The cities committed to campaign together; the ICC programme will ensure that customisable and branded toolkits (as described above) for each of the campaigns will be developed and sent to the cities well in advance, so that they can campaign autonomously; the use of the same hashtag will ensure and mutual reposting will be done on a regular basis; the campaigning period will be extended to three/four weeks before the international day, and some activity will be carried out in the weeks after the day to ensure the spotlight is kept on. Cities shall prepare to mobilise local personalities, politicians and citizens and involve colleagues from other departments in this endeavour.

