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**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE INTERCULTURAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS (ADI-INT)**

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**Information note on the Intercultural Cities Programme**

## INTERCULTURAL CITIES –INFORMATION NOTE

### Background

Making migrant integration work, enabling societies to prosper with diversity and build inclusive societies that are resilient to ethnic, social, and religious conflict and violence, are major challenges of our time. European cities are growing more diverse than ever: refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and their families, foreign students and professionals make their cosmopolitan texture.

Yet, building on public anxieties generated by economic and geopolitical instability, xenophobic populism continues to fuel anti-immigrant rhetoric and a discourse based on rejection of diversity and divisions along identity lines. Both nourish growing opposition to the previously generally accepted principle of pluralism as a positive and desirable aspect for our societies.

Research shows that public policies and public opinion are inter-dependent and that countries with more inclusive integration policies have lower levels of perceived threat and, to some extent, lower levels of negative attitudes towards immigrants and diversity. An independent study conducted by the Migration Policy Group to assess the validity of the approach of the Intercultural Cities Index shows that intercultural integration policies help societies to trust immigrants and see the benefits of immigration, leading to a better quality of life in diverse cities<sup>1</sup>.

The Council of Europe has developed, tested, and validated the intercultural integration approach to migrant integration and diversity management by conjugating the human rights dimension (equal rights, duties and opportunities for all, dignity, and non-discrimination) and the social trust dimension (acknowledging diversity as a positive factor for societal development, participation, interethnic mixing and positive interaction), as a way to create a sense of belonging, foster pluralism, and a collective identity based on shared values.

Endorsed for the first time by [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)1 on intercultural integration](#), and further expanded by [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)10 on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration](#) the intercultural integration policy model promotes a two-way process consisting of the effective, positive and sustainable management of diversity, through the active involvement of communities, organisations and businesses, on the basis of reciprocal and symmetrical recognition. Its implementation via a multilevel governance approach allows to coordinate actions of central, regional and local governments and authorities, as well as to involve civil society organisations through participatory processes for policy co-creation and co-operation in areas of shared competence or common interest.

### The Intercultural Cities programme

Launched in 2008 on the occasion of the European Year on Intercultural Dialogue, the Intercultural Cities programme (ICC) supports local and regional authorities worldwide in reviewing their policies

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<sup>1</sup> See: [“How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities”](#).

through an intercultural and intersectional lens. The programme proposes a set of analytical, methodological and practical tools to help local stakeholders through the various stages of the process of developing and implementing comprehensive intercultural strategies that include everyone.

The cornerstone of the ICC policy model is the concept of the “Diversity Advantage”, i.e. the fact/conviction that diversity can be an asset for communities, organisations and businesses when managed with competence and in the spirit of inclusion. Intercultural integration policies are therefore devised through an “intercultural lens”, i.e. taking into account people’s individual talents, skills and potential (rather than their vulnerability and basic needs), with a whole-society approach<sup>2</sup>.

In practice, the key elements for the implementation of the intercultural policy model are:

- A framework of rights and responsibilities;
- Preparing all sides / to change, communicating a goal of an open society built on common values and a shared vision;
- Acknowledging cultural pluralism and the complexity of identities through leadership discourse and symbolic actions;
- Preventing discrimination and adapting cities’ governance, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population;
- Involving people of diverse origins in decision-making in public institutions, be they political, educational, social, economic or cultural, as a way to foster ownership, belonging, and cultural reciprocity;
- Engineering meaningful intercultural interaction in the public space and within the society through public policies that promote active citizenship and participation;
- Fostering intercultural competence in public, private and civil-society organisations to empower them to manage conflict positively, busting stereotypes and engaging in a debate about the impact and potential of diversity for societal development.

The ICC programme helps cities to:

- Minimise tensions and conflicts associated with ethno-cultural and social diversity;
- Set up a governance model empowering all members of the community, regardless of their origin or status, to develop their potential and contribute to local prosperity;
- Break the walls between groups, building trust, and ensuring community cohesion;
- Make the public space and services accessible to all, ending the vicious circle of exclusion which goes hand in hand with segregation;
- Create opportunities for deep interaction between people of different origins and backgrounds;
- Empower intercultural innovators in public institutions and civil society;
- Build positive political discourse and narratives to accompany public policies, celebrating the cosmopolitan fabric of today’s societies, and encouraging a balanced approach to diversity in media for a positive perception of migrant and minority groups.

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<sup>2</sup> See the [Intercultural Cities Step-by-Step guide – Updated edition \(2019\)](#).

The programme uses a combination of evaluation tools, innovative methodologies, peer learning, and guidance to accompany local authorities in the implementation of their diversity management and migrant integration strategies and to enable transfer of good practices and innovation.

### **ICC main tools and services**

Diagnostic and profiling: The ICC Index is a benchmarking tool consisting of 83 indicators which allow to assess where a city stands in relation to intercultural integration, where effort should be focused in the future and which other cities can be a source of good practice in each policy areas. Experts' visits are carried out to verify ICC Index results and review city governance and policies from an intercultural perspective, in view of producing recommendations. The ICC Index is not a ranking tool, rather a bench-learning instrument that allows to show successes and gaps, and measure progress over time.

Policy development: Thematic policy development and vision-building events are regularly carried out to enable policy officers and elected officials to gain a deeper understanding of diversity-related challenges and to develop targeted policy solutions. Specific areas of work, where challenges are identified by ICC coordinators in member cities, are also studied and assessed with the view to prepare policy guidance and practical methodologies that are compiled and disseminated in the form of [policy briefs](#), handbooks, and [online trainings](#). Specific methodological guides are for instance available in the field of 1) [building intercultural competence](#); 2) [alternative narratives and inclusive communication](#); 3) [sustainable and inclusive cities](#) and [preventing gentrification](#); 4) [preventing systemic discrimination](#); 5) [community policing](#); 6) [anti-rumours strategies](#)<sup>3</sup>; 7) [participatory processes to map shared cultural heritage](#); 8) [building diversity connectors for start-ups](#).

Peer learning: The ICC International Network is the global community of ICC members that works as a laboratory for policy innovation. It serves as a forum where cities meet and share challenges and best practices, and as the main framework for peer learning. It not only consists of members from Europe, but also from Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, the Republic of Korea, and the United States. There are active national networks of cities in Asia-Pacific, Italy, Morocco, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

In addition, study visits are organised to “mentor” cities having excelled in a specific policy area to enable fellow cities learning from best practices. Specific support is provided by the ICC Secretariat on intercultural strategy design and the ICC Index process, also based on the most successful practices from the local level. The annual meeting of ICC international coordinators provides opportunities for exchange, networking, joint planning and discussing strategic matters such as impact evaluation and sustainability of local intercultural strategies. The ICC Good practice database is another excellent tool for reciprocal inspiration.

### **Policy innovation: Intercultural Cities and the ADI-INT**

Across Europe, competences on immigration and integration policies at state, regional and local governments vary significantly. This complex institutional landscape reflects the transversal and

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<sup>3</sup> This methodology focuses on eliminating the root causes of discrimination. It involves mapping and dismantling diversity-related prejudice and rumours that lay the foundations of discriminatory and racist attitudes.

interdisciplinary nature of integration and, at the same time, makes it particularly challenging to conceive and implement coherent policies between the different policy areas and governance levels.

Against this background, the Council of Europe member states have made a strong case in favour of co-ordinating national, regional and local policies and aligning them towards a more inclusive approach, by adopting [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2022\)10 on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration](#). The Recommendation aims to support member States in improving the elaboration and transversal implementation of migrant and refugee inclusion policies through greater consultation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders. Besides, the success of those policies ultimately depends on ensuring ownership and active engagement by state institutions, regional and local authorities, civil society, and the citizens.

CM/Rec(2022)10 directly addresses the national governments of Council of Europe member states and calls on them to base their national integration strategies on the four key principles of the intercultural integration model. These are: real equality; diversity as a collective advantage; meaningful intercultural interaction; and active citizenship and participation. According to the Recommendation, intercultural integration strategies should be designed based on evidence, in a participatory manner, and implemented in cooperation and coordination with all levels of governments and authorities.

The [Model Framework for an intercultural integration strategy for the national level](#), adopted by the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), serves as a practical tool for public officials in charge of the implementation of the Recommendation.

The adoption of the above standard and guidelines– both co-drafted by representatives of national and local authorities – will have a positive and challenging impact on the ICC programme. Its tools, methodologies and activities will now have to contribute to the multilevel implementation of those newly codified standards on intercultural integration.