



ICC/AG(2026)2

17 July 2026

Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme Advisory Group 8th meeting – Report

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1. Participants

Present at the meeting online:

- Bergen, Norway - Mari Garaas Løchen
- Donostia/San Sebastián, Spain - Silvia Carballo Paz
- Neuchâtel Canton, Switzerland - Grégory Jaquet
- Wrocław, Poland - Ewa Magnowska
- Spanish network of Intercultural Cities (RECI) - Gemma Pinyol-Jiménez
- Mexico City, Mexico - Jorge Jimenez Ortega
- Porto, Portugal –Raquel Castello Branco
- ICC Secretariat – Rita Marascalchi, Ben Freeman, Célia Charre, Bente Aretz
- Ophelia Field – ICC expert

The meeting focused on collecting inputs and feedback from the AG regarding the ongoing work on a forthcoming tool on communication of inclusion, diversity and equality, and the promotion of alternative intercultural narratives.

2. Update from the ICC Secretariat

The Secretariat presented changes in the structure of the Anti-discrimination and Inclusion Department, ongoing workstreams of the Intercultural Cities Programme, and upcoming events.

Thematic work is progressing on three priority areas: **communication**, **disinformation** and **placemaking**, with a shared focus on how the intercultural inclusion approach can help member cities address these challenges more effectively. The programme places strong emphasis on ensuring that ICC members' needs, practices and expertise shape the development of each output, so that the resulting tools are directly relevant and usable. Exchanges with the experts leading the work on communication and disinformation and interested ICC members are ongoing, including a series of online workshops dedicated to disinformation. On placemaking, the programme continues to contribute to **Placemaking Week** and will do so again for **Placemaking Week 2026 in Wrocław (Poland)**. This work also intersects with planned **ADI-INT** activities on residential segregation, ensuring coherence across related thematic strands.

Regarding events, a study visit to Bradford is planned on 2-3 June with involvement from 12 or 13 cities, and the annual coordinators' meeting is scheduled for November in Leeds.

Other ongoing developments include very strong participation in webinars organised in co-operation with ICEI since January, and an increasingly dynamic interaction within the network's francophone members.

3. Presentation of ICC work on communication

Ophelia Field presented the 2021 policy brief on alternative narratives and the ongoing work in the field of communication to revise the policy brief.

The 2021 policy brief primarily focused on issues of migration and integration. Notably, it was developed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and even preceded the ICC policy brief on strategic communication, with much of its attention also directed to communication strategies. The brief centred solely on a single set of narrative frames under the theme of SHARED HUMANITY and included a chapter discussing different styles and structures in messaging. However, this analysis was based on practitioner reporting rather than scientific

research. The document concluded with a mention of implicit narratives, particularly those related to arts and culture.

The new title for the updated brief is still under consideration but will most likely be "Intercultural Narratives," as this aligns better with contemporary terminology. There is an ongoing discussion about whether including terms like "equality, diversity, and inclusion" in the title would help reach broader audiences, especially those less familiar with these issues. Feedback from the field has indicated the need for a comprehensive umbrella statement that clarifies how all ICC/Council of Europe documents and communication tools relate to each other.

Currently, the update process involves desk research and interviews, with input from a working group featuring Reggio Emilia, Lyon, Canadian network, Italian network, and Spanish network. Editors with relevant lived experience, including youth media representatives from HEARD (London-based network of young people with migration backgrounds and other intersectionalities), are also contributing.

Field trips during summer are under consideration to places such as Botkyrka or Lublin to observe work in action.

1. A draft outline of the policy brief is now complete, built upon desk research, network feedback, and city examples. Key elements of the outline include: an updated rationale reflecting today's more defensive public attitudes, refined definitions, and realistic guidance on the limits of persuasion and the duty to inform. The outline also maps the current communication environment, sets out a coherent narrative strategy, advances work on intercultural narrative frames with stronger gender and LGBTI perspectives, and provides practical intercultural communication approaches. It further details methods for co-developing narratives with civil society, clarifies the role of local authorities, and includes conclusions, recommendations, a do's-and-don'ts section, and an updated resource list.
2. **Partnership Narrative Development:** Details methods for co-creating narratives with civil society and affected groups.
3. **Role of Local Government:** Outlines keyways local governments can act most effectively.
4. **Conclusions and Recommendations**
5. **Do's and Don'ts Section**
6. **Resource List:** Compilation of resources produced since 2021.

This structured approach aims to ensure the updated policy brief is practical, inclusive, and relevant to today's evolving intercultural communication landscape.

4. Exchange on communication of equality, diversity and inclusion

General feedback emphasised the critical importance of clearly defining key concepts within the policy brief.

Reflecting on which strategies or intercultural narratives have failed, members:

- suggested consulting local working groups and cities to identify any interventions they may have regarded as unsuccessful. For instance, lessons from a "rumours campaign" indicated the necessity of maintaining a consistent frame rather than shifting the messaging focus mid-campaign.
- Provided an example where a councillor's statement that "immigration is not a problem" was flipped by the media into "immigration is a problem," illustrating how easily narratives can be undermined.
- Highlighted the risk of mismatched narratives for specific target groups, sharing an example where a health brochure for seniors featured only images of white people in active, mountainous settings—lacking ethnic diversity and not resonating with less active individuals.

The group provided inputs on the relevance of evaluating narrative work, including:

- The need to support the local focus and the suggestion to consider digital media and its rapidly evolving

- landscape in the upcoming policy brief;
- Participatory approaches, especially informal ones such as arts-based safe spaces and school games promoting intercultural dialogue, as yielding the best results;
- Involving migrant associations in activity co-creation strengthens engagement and audience reach, while long-term projects foster continued integration.

Two questions were raised by members: whether the research includes the link between migration narratives and the idea of migration as a human right—to pre-empt challenges to the legitimacy of migration—and whether findings could inform updates to intercultural law as they prepare to address future challenges.

Other inputs included differences between evaluating communication strategies or narratives; suggesting the need for a framework or “compass” to distinguish between the two.

A complete draft of the revised policy brief is expected by the next meeting in November, with a pre-draft to be shared beforehand for feedback.

5. Presentation: INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES, STRONGER DEMOCRACIES: Ten Principles to revitalize democracy in diverse societies

The 10 Principles for inclusive societies and stronger democracies were presented as a concise, operational framework grounded in the ICC approach and Council of Europe standards. Developed as ADI-INT’s contribution to the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Principles aim to raise understanding and awareness of intercultural inclusion and its essential role in democratic resilience, while mobilising broader support for inclusive policies. They are designed to be clear, practical, and adaptable across different contexts. A public survey and a series of workshops were organised to validate the text, gather feedback, and collect examples of practical translations at local level. The Principles will be formally launched in Madrid, at a High Level Event scheduled on 15 October, marking the next step in their dissemination.

6. Any other business and next meeting

The next Advisory Group meeting will take place on 17 November in Leeds (UK).

In other business, members reported:

- Switzerland is voting on 14 June regarding an initiative to cap the national population at 10 million. It is believed that the measure is likely to pass due to widespread racism, which would have significant consequences for Switzerland as it would force the country to leave several international agreements.
- Concerns were expressed about similar discourse in Spain where the notion of “national priority” is being advocated. This concept suggests that welfare benefits should be reserved exclusively for citizens, and newspapers are increasingly using the term “national priority” instead of labelling it as ethnic discrimination.

The Secretariat informed about:

- The recent [ministerial Council in Chisinau](#) and related outcome document.
- ICC work in the [latest report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe](#).
- Ongoing work to prepare a study the impact of intercultural inclusion to be showcased during the 2027 ICC 20th anniversary.
- Interest in strengthening engagement with politicians and academics in the framework of the anniversary celebrations.

The next meeting will focus on ICC 20th anniversary celebrations in 2027 and ways to engage elected officials in intercultural inclusion work.

7. Conclusion and follow up actions

The following follow up actions were agreed upon by the group:

- Follow up regarding the invitation from Placemaking Europe;
- Sharing of contact details with the expert to continue the work on communication;
- Inquiring to Spanish municipalities whether they identified any processes as failures, information that will be valuable for the communication's policy brief;
- All members are encouraged to send helpful links to the expert for the policy brief, provide feedback on her pre-draft ahead of the ICC annual coordinators meeting.

Appendix: Agenda of the 8th Advisory Group Meeting.



7 May 2026

ICC/AG(2026)1

Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme Advisory Group
8th meeting
27 May 2026, Online
Draft agenda

Purpose of the meeting: The eighth meeting of the Advisory Group is the third meeting of the present composition of the Advisory Group. In follow up to the last meeting, the Advisory Group will be asked to provide comments to the secretariat and internal consultant regarding the communication of inclusion, diversity and equality, and the promotion of alternative intercultural narratives.

15:00-15:10 **Welcome and updates from the ICC Secretariat**

Structural changes in the Anti-discrimination and Inclusion Department, ongoing workstreams in the Intercultural Cities Programme, and upcoming events.

15:10-15:25 **Presentation of ICC work on communication**

Ophelia Field, ICC consultant will present the 2021 policy brief on alternative narratives, and the current ongoing work in the field of communication to revise the policy brief.

15:25-16:15 **Exchange on communication of equality, diversity and inclusion**

The members are asked to prepare for this session based on the following questions:

- What strategies and intercultural narratives have worked, and how do you reflect on those successes?
- Which strategies or intercultural narratives have failed to work, and why?
- What partnerships have you developed in order to implement these strategies?
How did you mobilise, motivate and maintain engagement?

Questions and discussion

16:15-17:00 **Presentation INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES, STRONGER DEMOCRACIES: Ten Principles to revitalize democracy in diverse societies (Gemma and Rita)**

17:00-17:15 **Any other business and topic and location of next meeting**

The 9th AG meeting will take place in XX on XX before the Annual Coordinator's meeting XXX 2026.