

INTERCULTURAL CITIES PROGRAMME

Building bridges, breaking walls



ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT

2026





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Executive summary

The work of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme is based on thorough research, a range of international legal instruments, the experiences and collective insights of the whole ICC community of some 160 cities since 2008. The annual survey, conducted between 16 December 2025 and 23 January 2026, collected responses from 40 members spanning 17 countries, offering valuable insight into evolving priorities and persistent challenges surrounding intercultural integration.

Key Findings:

- **Growth and Engagement:** In 2025, the network welcomed **four new members** from Europe and abroad. Members **widely used ICC's core instruments**, particularly the **ICC Index** and **Anti-rumours** methodology, for self-assessment and strategic planning. Half of respondents currently use the ICC Index, while a further quarter plan future adoption, indicating steady engagement with ICC tools.
- **Priorities and Practice:** Members reported **continued focus on mainstreaming intercultural inclusion**, strengthening **intercultural competence**, drafting and renewing **strategies**, developing alternative **narratives**, promoting **refugee inclusion**, and advancing **gender equality**. Collaborative projects, service and policy innovation, and widespread embedding of key priorities, such as gender and youth, demonstrate the Programme's systemic influence at the local level.
- **Policy Commitment:** Nearly all respondents indicated they have developed, are developing or plan to adopt an intercultural, diversity or inclusion strategy. **Strategies are mostly multi-annual, reflecting institutionalisation, adaptation and renewal over time.**
- **Impact and Change:** Two-thirds of cities reported policy and organisational **changes directly influenced or inspired by their involvement in the ICC Programme**, such as the creation of dedicated helpdesks, formalised training, new partnerships and revised policies.
- **Programme Value:** Members place **high value on the ICC** as a platform for peer support, sharing good practice and capacity building. 85% of respondents report **actively applying knowledge** gained through ICC activities, and 60% contributed examples of good practice to the network.
- **Challenges and Needs:** Key challenges identified for 2026 include disinformation, hostile political environments, constrained resources and multi-level governance gaps. Members expressed particular need for support on data collection and analysis to tackle systemic discrimination, training on alternative narratives, and deeper intercultural competence development.

The ICC Annual Survey 2025 demonstrates **sustained commitment among member cities to furthering intercultural inclusion, despite an increasingly complex and challenging operational context**. The Programme's approach, emphasising peer learning, locally adapted tools, and evidence-based strategies, remains both relevant and valued. Continued dialogue, practical support and innovation will be critical as members work to overcome future challenges.



Introduction

From 16 December 2025 to 23 January 2026, the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Programme of the Council of Europe conducted a survey among its members to collect information about the intercultural work they are currently carrying out or planning for the future. Through the survey, members could express their expectations of the Programme and reflect on what worked well for them. The survey is also a means for respondents to share their views, proposals and examples of their experiences with the wider network.

The results presented below are a summary of the data collected from the following 40 respondents out of 169 ICC members¹: Asan (Republic of Korea), Ansan (Republic of Korea); Barcelos (Portugal); Besançon (France) Camdem (UK); Canton of Neuchâtel (Switzerland); Casalecchio di Reno (Italy); Cascais (Portugal); Department of Seine-Saint-Denis (France); Donostia/San Sebastian (Spain); Drummondville (Canada); Gimpo (Republic of Korea); Iztapalapa (Mexico); Krakow (Poland); Leeds (UK); Lisbon (Portugal); Loures (Portugal); Lublin (Poland); Manlleu (Spain); Milan (Italy); Neumarkt (Germany); Oeiras (Portugal); Oslo (Norway); Paris (France); Parma (Italy); Patras (Greece); Porto (Portugal); Ravenna (Italy); RECI (Spain); Reggio Emilia (Italy); Riga (Latvia); Salisbury (Australia); Sherbrooke (Canada); Shizuoka Prefecture (Japan); Strasbourg (France); Vila Verde (Portugal); Viseu (Portugal); Wroclaw (Poland); Zagreb (Croatia); Zagarolo (Italy). These 40 respondents come from 18 countries out of 36².

The ICC Programme Secretariat would like to warmly thank all respondents that took the time to reply to this survey.

In 2025, the ICC Programme expanded its network by welcoming four new members³ from Europe and overseas. It also continued to assess cities' progress in managing diversity through the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Index, with seventeen cities⁴ completing the Index and six expert visits⁵ taking place. Capacity building and peer exchanges among members covered areas such as intercultural integration and welcoming, placemaking, intercultural and inclusive communication, anti-rumour, and intercultural competence. In addition, Council of Europe standards and ICC Programme tools on intercultural inclusion were made available in new languages (Serbian and Finnish) to further their use and dissemination.

¹ At the time of the survey.

² Overview of the members demographics in annex

³ Gimpo (Republic of Korea), Iztapalapa (Mexico), Shizuoka Prefecture (Japan), Vila Nova De Gaia (Portugal)

⁴ [Asan](#) (Republic of Korea), [Arandjelovac](#) (Serbia), [Famagusta](#) (Cyprus), [Krakow](#) (Poland), [Larnaca](#) (Cyprus), [Limassol](#) (Cyprus), [Manlleu](#) (Spain), [Montesilvano](#) (Italy), [Nicosia](#) (Cyprus), [Oeiras](#) (Portugal), [Paphos](#) (Cyprus), [Pontedera](#) (Italy), [Prijeopolje](#) (Serbia), [Seine-Saint-Denis](#) (France), [Sjenica](#) (Serbia), and [Tenerife](#) (Spain).

⁵ [Asan](#) (Republic of Korea), [Krakow](#) (Poland), [Manlleu](#) (Spain), [Pontedera](#) (Italy), [Reggio Emilia](#) (Italy), and [Oeiras](#) (Portugal)

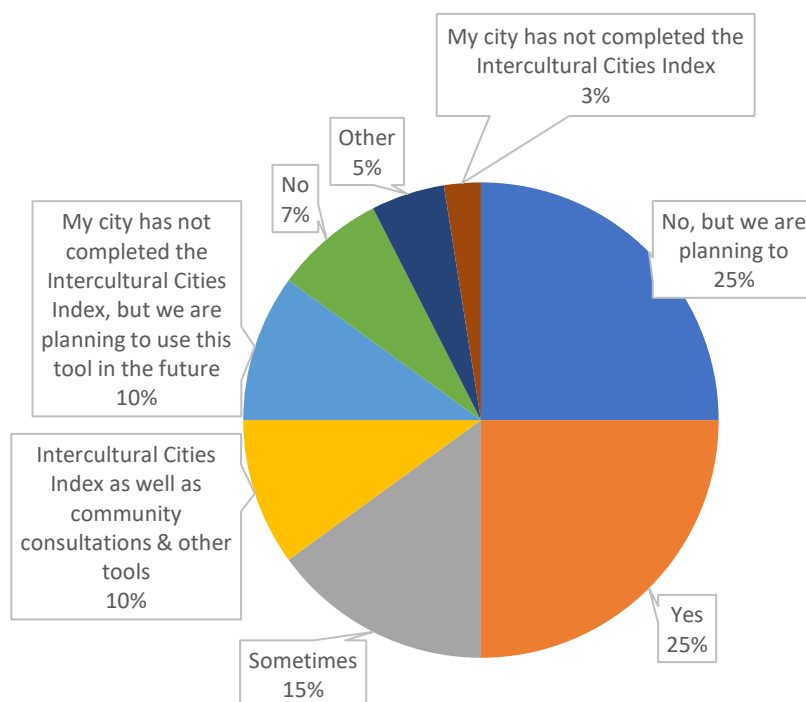


1. ICC members and intercultural instruments

The ICC Programme provides several intercultural tools and instruments to its members and supports them in devising their own, in particular intercultural strategies and action plans. ICC tools include the Index and the Anti-rumours methodology.

The following replies show the ongoing intercultural work among members, the use they make of ICC tools and instruments and how relevant they are for their work.

Use of the Intercultural Cities Index (questionnaire and analysis) to measure progress on intercultural policies



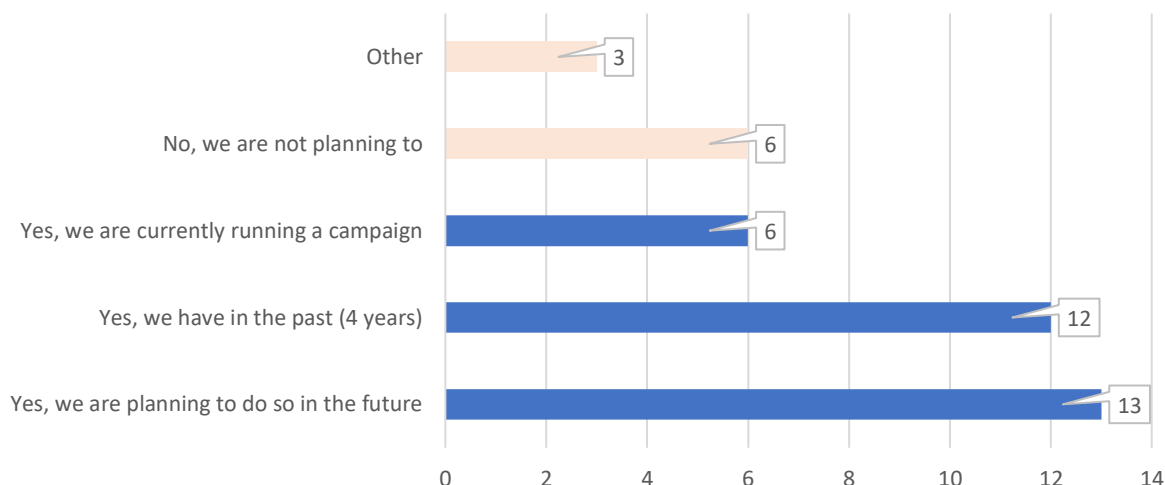
When joining the ICC Programme, members take stock of their achievements and challenges as a point of departure for the development of their intercultural strategies. The ICC Index allows members to discern upward or downward patterns in the key indices and, consequently, make much more informed judgements about the long-term impact of their policies and investment.

50% of the respondents are currently using the ICC Index to monitor their progress, while another 25%, even though they are not using the Index for the time being, plan to do so in the future. The two members grouped under “other” have either used their own questionnaire based on the ICC index or are currently in the process of filling it in.

Compared to previous years, the situation seems to have remained stable with a slight increase in the future use of the Index.



Running of an anti-rumours campaign (or similar)



The results indicate many cities are planning on acting within this area during the upcoming year(s). As the past two years, the highest number of respondents is either running a campaign, has run a campaign or plans to run one in the future. 15% of the respondents affirm not to be running a campaign nor planning to. This percentage dropped by 12 points since last year confirming that anti-rumours is a relevant and important topic for ICC network members.

Among the 3 respondents having provided another explanation, one national network (RECI) is supporting members of the Spanish ICC network in running campaigns but not actively involved in one itself. The other two members are concentrating their effort on disinformation rather than anti-rumours while using the ICC tools of anti-rumours and ongoing work on disinformation to help them organise specific actions.

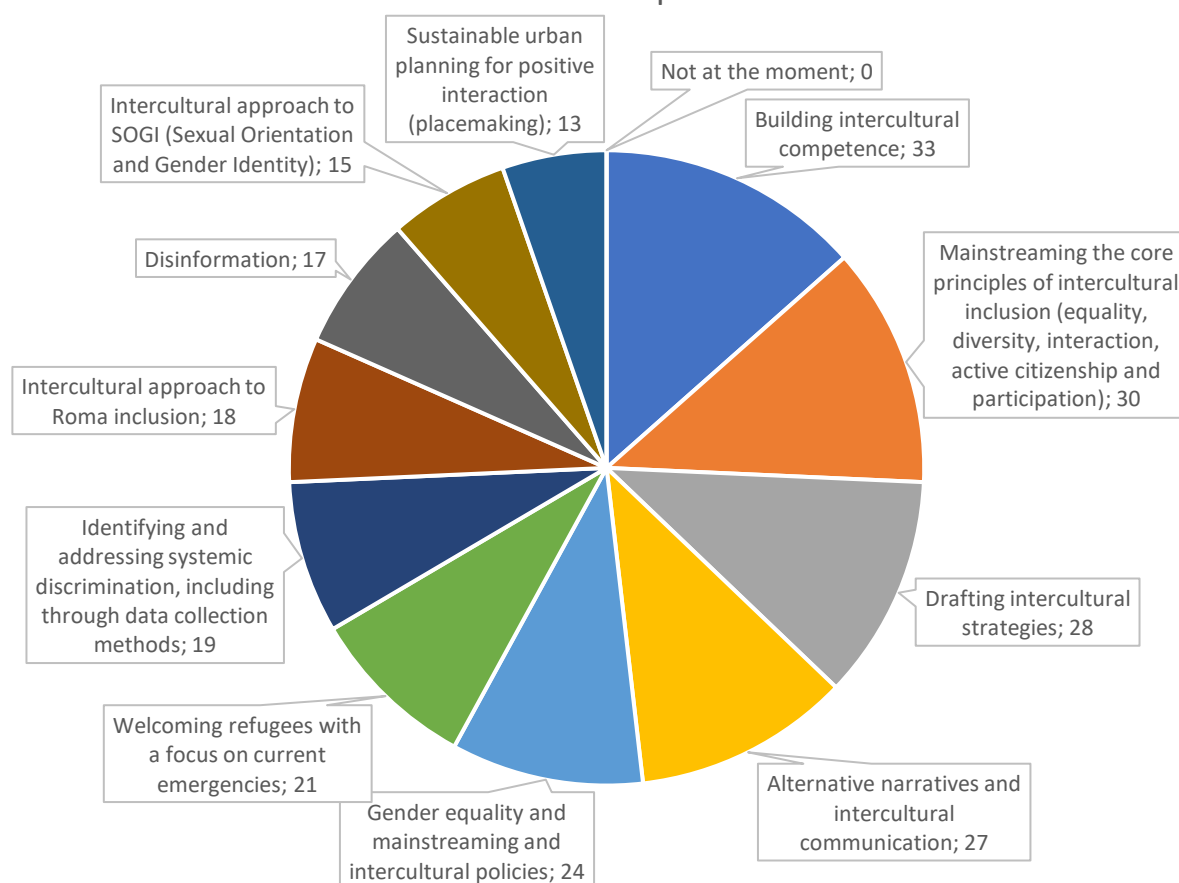
The city of Sherbrooke (Canada) is currently planning the implementation of its anti-rumour strategy, a first in Canada, to be launched in February 2026 in presence of local elected officials. The launch will be followed by trainings for civil servants in charge of applying the strategy and then for other stakeholders and general public.

While anti-rumours can be seen as an activity for and by the municipality, Manlleu (Spain) decided to involve its youth. For over four years, the city Council has had a youth anti-rumour group that organises activities and which is currently in the process of developing the Manlleu Anti-Rumour Plan. The topic of youth and anti-rumours is also an important component of the work done by the Department of Seine-Sanit-Denis (France).

Based on the results of the survey, the ICC Programme stands ready to provide support to its members in the incoming years in running an anti-rumours strategy.



Specific work carried out by the city in one or more of the following ICC core topics



The areas of work of ICC members in 2025 appear to be similar to previous years, with the six main topics being mainstreaming the core principles of intercultural inclusion, building intercultural competence, drafting intercultural strategies, alternative narratives and intercultural communication, welcoming refugees and gender equality. From last year, we can see that drafting an intercultural strategy is back among the main topics of work for ICC members, we can be easily explained with many of them being in the process of renewing their strategies or building a new one.

It should be noted, however, that the difference in scores between most cited topics and less cited topics is rather small with most members working on at least three ICC core topics at local level.

Concerning the type of work which members carry out around these ICC core topics, most respondents use different actions that can be summarised as follow:

- Creation of a specific service / entity / local centre
- Projects (either at local level or even at European level)
- Support to civil society organisations working in a specific field
- Workshops and training courses for civil servants
- Consultation actions with the residents
- Cultural activities



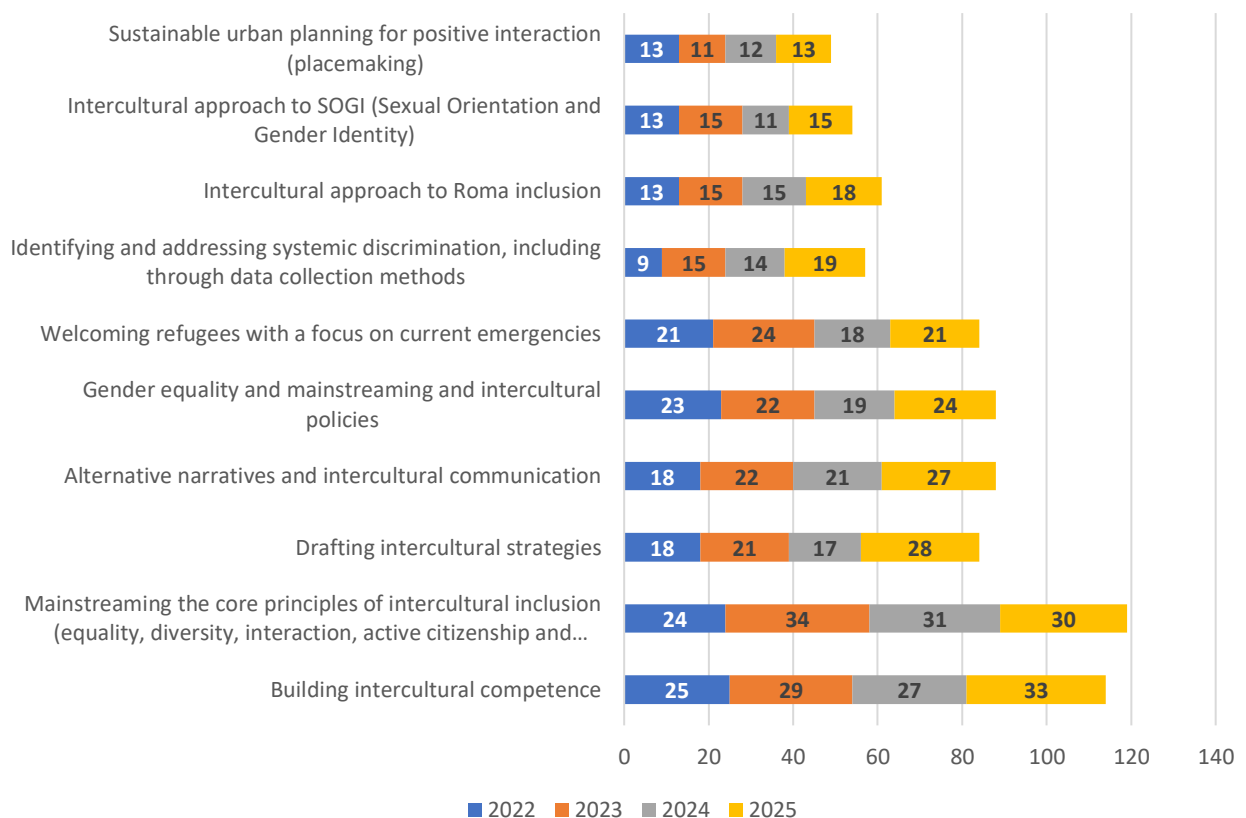
Furthermore, several respondents have indicated that some of the work is carried out together through European projects (either funded by the Council of Europe or the European Union), allowing them to share practices and work together. We can cite the example the STAND projects in Barcelos, Loures and Vila Verde (Portugal) together with Viseu and RECI (Spain) on the topic of alternative narratives.

Among members practices, we could note the principle of “Sanctuary” in the UK where a city (Leeds) or a Borough (Camden) are committed to helping refugees and asylum seekers living or arriving in the city to rebuilding their lives. This concept is complementary to the work of the ICC Programme on welcoming migrants at local level.

The relatively consistent share of work being done on mainstreaming core intercultural principles is encouraging as it shows a trend towards making intercultural inclusion systemic and breaking fragmentation within administrations.

Comparing results from the last four years, we can note a more harmonious distribution of topics among members.

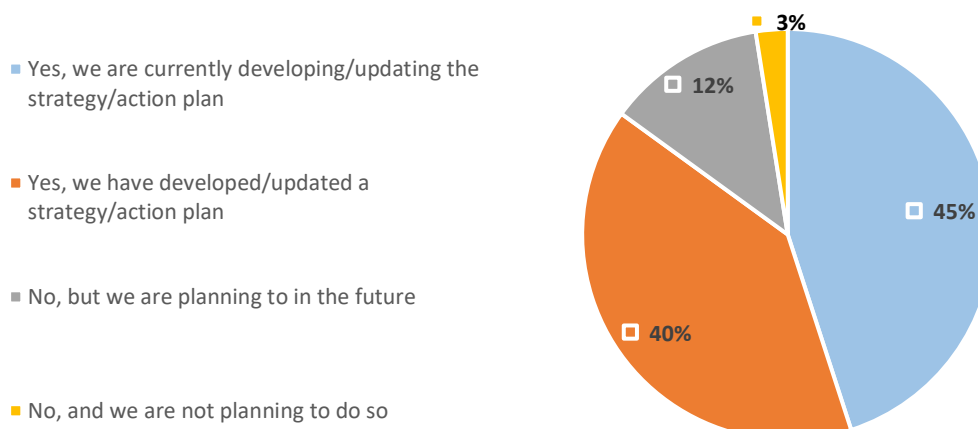
Comparison of areas of work of ICC members in the last 4 years



The transversal approach to implementing actions on those topics is well demonstrated in Ravenna (Italy) through the “Casa delle Culture” (house of cultures) which played and continues to play a pivotal role: first and foremost, between institutions and migrant communities, between services, the association and the cultural dimension, and between emerging needs and shared planning.



Development, implementation or updating of an intercultural strategy/action plan or a diversity/integration/inclusion strategy with intercultural elements



97.5% of the respondents replied having already developed and adopted an intercultural strategy, an action plan, or a diversity/integration strategy with intercultural elements, are in the process of doing so or plan to do it in the future.

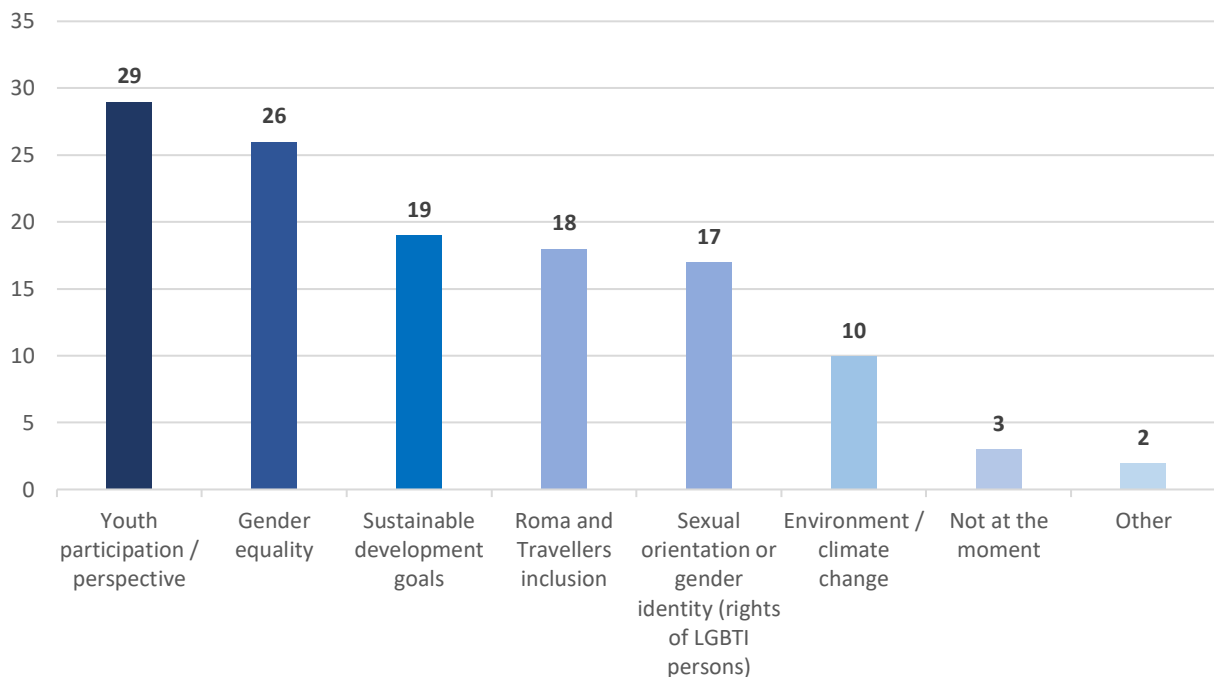
This number is slightly less than last year but can be easily explained as the respondent not planning on developing an intercultural strategy is the coordination entity of the ICC national network in Spain (RECI). All local authorities replied yes to the question, showing their commitment to foster intercultural inclusion through policies and strategies.

Among answers received, most strategies or action plans developed have a duration that ranges between two to five years with most of them being a renewal or adaptation of former actions. This demonstrates the use of ICC tools at local level.

It can be noted that among the 16 members having indicated that they had developed/updated a strategy or action plan (Ansan, Barcelos, Canton of Neuchâtel, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Leeds, Lisbon, Manlleu, Paris, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Salisbury, Sherbrooke, Viseu, Zagreb, Zagarolo), all of them are still in the implementing period of their current policy or in the process of renewing the strategies. None of the respondent decided (or had to) stop implementing such policies in 2025.



Inclusion of any of the following mainstreaming components in your intercultural strategy/action plan/policy



34 out of the 40 respondents indicated that they had included at least one of the mentioned mainstreaming components (Gender equality, Youth participation/perspective, Sexual orientation or gender identity (rights of LGBTI persons), Roma and Travellers inclusion, Sustainable development goals and Environment / climate change) in their intercultural strategy.

Three respondents indicated that they do not have an intercultural policy in place yet. Two are considering starting the process of drafting it while the third respondent is RECI, an entity that support local authorities in Spain in drafting the policies.

Gender equality and youth are topics receiving greatest attention from the respondents, same as in 2024. It is noticeable that respondents usually do not concentrate their policies on one topic but on several at the same time. In most cases, an intercultural strategy has several main components which reflect the principles being intercultural inclusion.

The respondents which have included **Youth participation / perspective** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategy are: Asan, Ansan, Casalecchio di Reno, Cascais, Department of Seine-Saint-Denis, Drummondville, Gimpo, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Leeds, Lisbon, Loures, Lublin, Manlleu, Milan, Oeiras, Oslo, Parma, Ravenna, RECI, Reggio Emilia, Riga, Salisbury, Sherbrooke, Shizuoka Prefecture, Vila Verde, Viseu, Wroclaw, Zagarolo.

The respondents which have included **Gender Equality** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategy are: Asan, Barcelos, Casalecchio di Reno, Cascais, Canton of Neuchâtel, Donostia/San Sebastian, Gimpo, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Lisbon, Loures, Manlleu, Milan, Neumarkt, Oslo, Patras, Parma, Porto, Ravenna, RECI, Reggio Emilia, Salisbury, Strasbourg, Vila Verde, Viseu, Wroclaw.

The respondents which have included the **Sustainable Development Goals** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategies are: Asan, Ansan, Besançon, Cascais, Donostia/San



Sebastian, Gimpo, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Lisbon, Lublin, Manlleu, Oeiras, Parma, Patras, RECI, Reggio Emilia, Strasbourg, Vila Verde, Wroclaw.

The respondents which have included **Roma and Travellers inclusion** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategies are: Barcelos, Besançon, Casalecchio di Reno, Cascais, Donostia/San Sebastian, Krakow, Leeds, Lisbon, Milan, Oeiras, Patras, Porto, Reggio Emilia, Strasbourg, Vila Verde, Viseu, Wroclaw, Zagarolo.

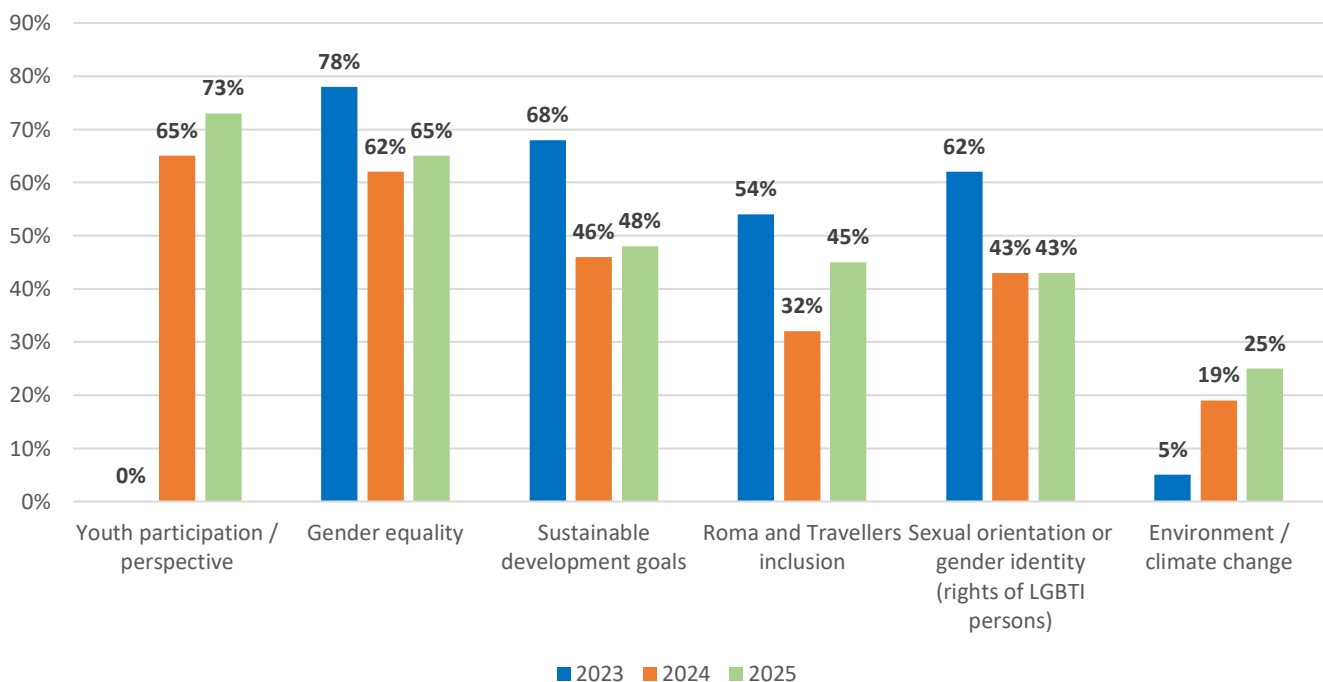
The respondents which have included **Sexual orientation or gender identity (rights of LGBTI persons)** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategy are: Casalecchio di Reno, Department of Seine-Saint-Denis, Donostia/San Sebastian, Gimpo, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Lisbon, Loures, Milan, Oeiras, Oslo, Parma, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Salisbury, Strasbourg, Wroclaw.

The respondents which have included the **Environment/Climate change** as a mainstreaming component in their intercultural strategies are: Asan, Cascais, Department of Seine-Saint-Denis, Drummondville, Gimpo, Iztapalapa, Krakow, Oeiras, Salisbury, Wroclaw.

Among the other components named in addition by respondents, we can include health, human being exploitation, and anti-discrimination understood as combatting all forms of discrimination (disability, race, religion, age, ethnic minorities, skin colour....).

While some cities have designed specific policies to cover the above-mentioned areas, for most of them these topics are embedded in a broader, multi-annual strategy or plan for the city taking into consideration many components and not specific to one or two. This can be demonstrated by the comparison of mainstream components in the last three years, showing broader inclusion of topics in strategies. It should be noted that youth participation / perspective has been added as a component in 2024 only.

Comparison of mainstream components in an intercultural strategy

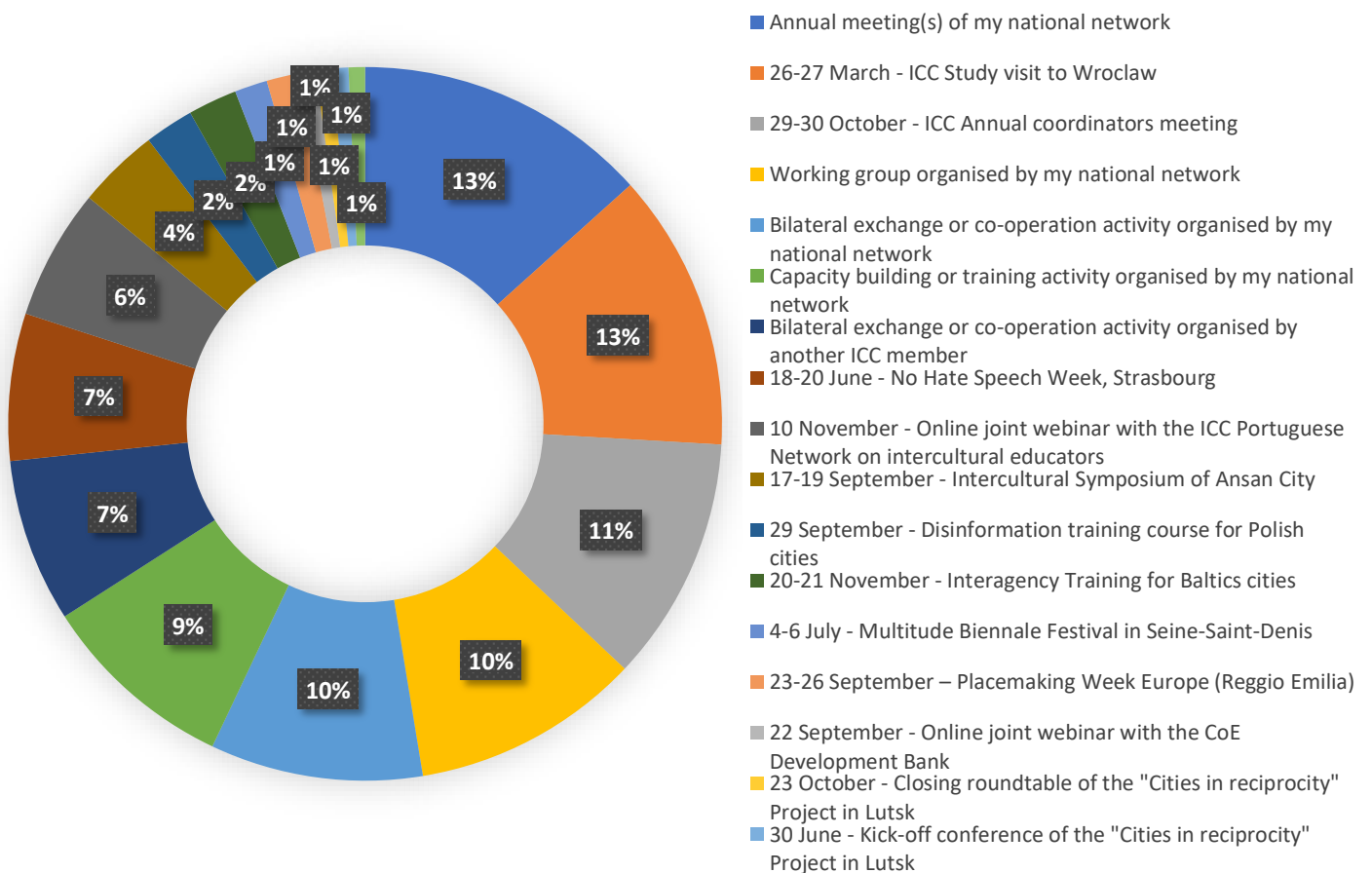




2. ICC members' engagement with the ICC Programme

The survey also serves as a way for the ICC Programme Secretariat to keep a record of participation to its activities, to monitor the knowledge gained by participants and to measure its outcomes. The ICC Programme wished to gain further insight into how the knowledge acquired by participants to ICC activities was used (or planned to be used). The replies will allow the Programme to better tailor any future activities and gain insights into the benefits of activities.

Participation in ICC events in 2025

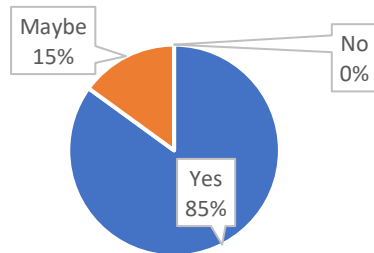


Over 2025, 9 activities were organised or co-organised by the ICC Programme, including a study visit and one annual coordination meeting. In addition, ICC members and national networks organised different activities throughout the year.

The participation throughout activities can be summarised into two categories, participation to ICC lead activities and activities organised by a national network. As last year, all respondents did attend at least one activity, either in person or online. Despite indicating an interest in active participation, when participation was not possible, members indicated that it was due to geographical distance (overseas members), time zones differences, and lack of time.



Use of the knowledge gained through ICC programme activities

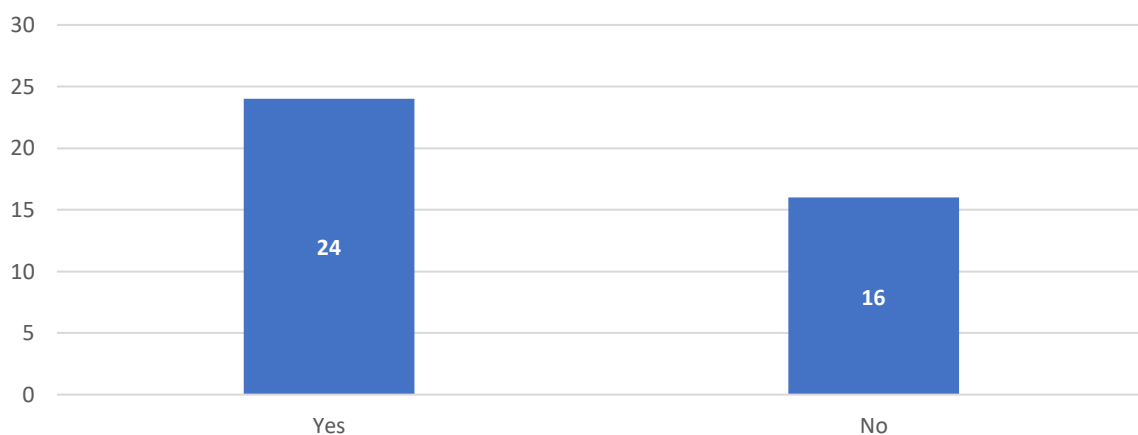


As indicated in this graph, a vast majority of the respondents indicated that they have used or will use the knowledge gained through the ICC Programme activities in 2025.

The reasons given in case of only a possible use of material and knowledge were mostly changes in the team, 2025 being an election year or having recently joined.

While training and tools produced by the ICC network are important, a key component of the ICC Programme is the possibility for members to share their good practices. As shown below, 60% of the respondents have shared at least one example of good practice over the past year with the ICC network. The percentage is slightly down prior to previous years, which is explained by lack of time and internal restructuring but four respondents mentioned that as they were planning to send a practice early 2026.

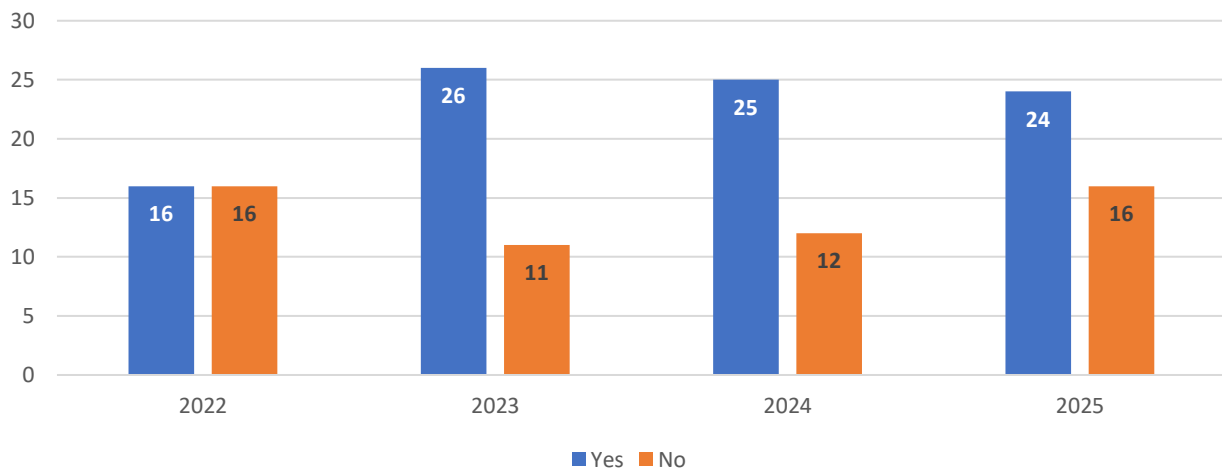
Sending of at least one good practice to the Council of Europe or national network in 2025



While the percentage of received good practices in 2025 is lower than the two previous years, as shown clearly in the graph hereafter, it can be easily explained by an increase of responses received to the annual survey. As it appears from comments included in the survey, practice sharing is seen by members as an important added value of the Programme even if they did not actively participate in it.



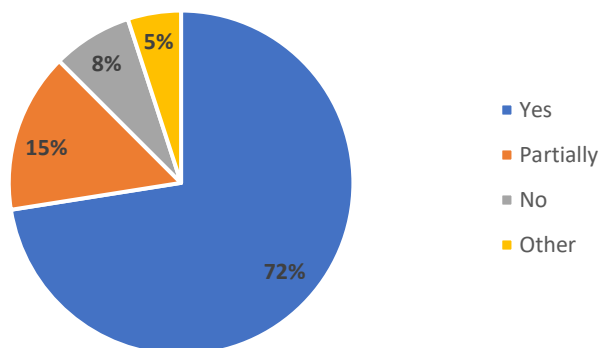
Comparison of sharing of good practices in the last 4 years



3. ICC Coordinators and the ICC Programme

The ICC Programme is designed to provide its members with the chance to benefit from the knowledge of international experts and to learn from one another. Members can build upon proven experiences and develop innovative policies to address the challenges that arise in diverse societies worldwide. To support collaboration, each member city assigns an individual or team as the ICC coordinator, responsible for involving all city departments in evaluating policies from an intercultural perspective and encouraging the adoption of new practices. In practical terms, ICC coordinators serve as the main point of contact with the ICC Programme.

ICC coordinator(s) - Alignment of the job description with the tasks carried out



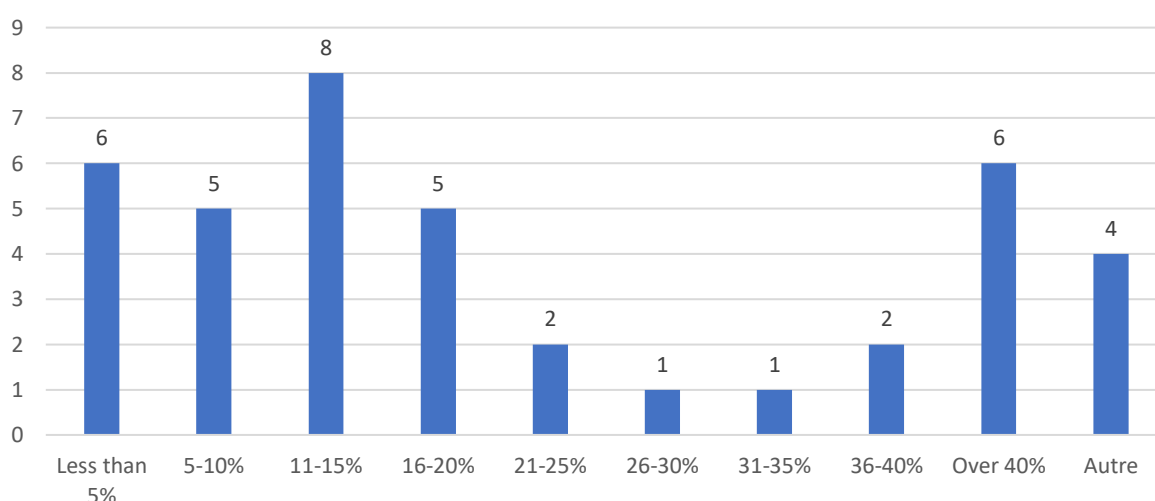
While 72% of respondents confirmed that their role as ICC coordinator is included in the job description within the local authority, for some it is more nuanced.



The high share of members having formalised the role of ICC coordinator can be regarded as an encouraging sign of the progressive institutionalisation and recognition of the ICC approach.

For individuals whose official job descriptions include their role as coordinators (or coordination team members) only partially or not at all, the main reasons are either a general task description set by their local authority's regulations, or the need to reassess and clarify the responsibilities of a coordinator. In such cases, updating the job description—in collaboration with relevant departments and the ICC Secretariat—to formally include coordination duties may be necessary.

Time devoted by the ICC coordinator to the coordination of its member's participation in the ICC Programme



65% of the respondents spent less than 25% of their yearly working time on tasks related to their ICC coordinator role. For some, the role is often perceived as a transversal one, embedded in their day-to-day job and not as something specific which makes it difficult to be quantified. Also, to note, the question only addresses the amount of time invested directly with/for the Programme, not on intercultural inclusion related work as such.

It is important to note that the amount devoted by the coordinator(s) to the Programme can vary immensely within a year and the internal organisation of each member. Some respondents indicated that they cannot quantify the time spent as the role is split across several colleagues within a coordination group. One member also indicated that the time spent on working for the Expert Committee on intercultural inclusion of the Council of Europe (ADI-INT), as advisor to the city representative, is seen as part of the role as ICC coordinator by her municipality.

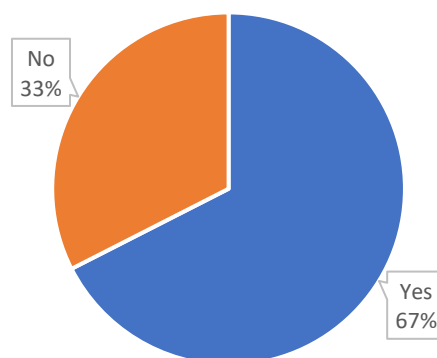
Another question was included in the survey on the implementation of a team-approach to intercultural inclusion in the administrations. While the number of responses does not allow for a conclusive result, two respondents explained why it is not yet implemented in their localities. While intercultural inclusion is not a political priority yet for the municipal council, the second respondent indicated that the lack of knowledge on the intercultural inclusion approach was the biggest hindrance.



4. Needs and impact

Following the introduction of the assessment of members' needs in the annual survey in 2022, it was decided to collect information on the impact of the Programme at local level. The following survey questions refer to these goals.

Changes in the city influenced and/or inspired
by the ICC Programme in 2025



67% of the respondents indicated that changes in their cities were influenced or inspired by the ICC Programme and its activities.

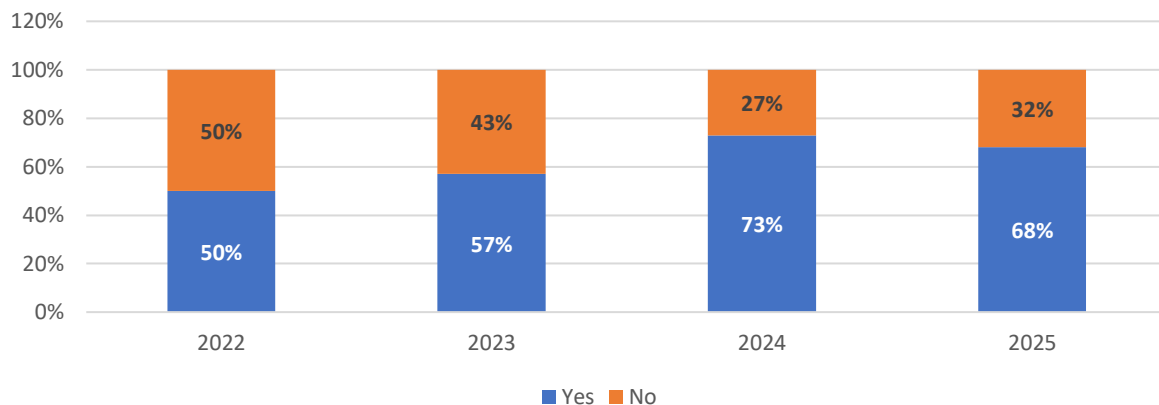
These changes include:

- Creation of new structures, for example a dedicated helpdesk;
- New or revised policy documents;
- New partnerships at national and international level and subsequently the creation of working groups on specific topics;
- Strengthening and formalisation of intercultural competence training within municipal structures.

Respondents having replied “No” mention reasons such as a lack of resources or recent adhesion to the ICC Programme, while others were unable to answer the question.



Comparison of reported changes in cities inspired by the ICC Programme



The impact at local level of the Programme, while increasing in the past three years, might seem to slightly decrease in 2025. A simple explanation lies in the number of responses received, while more ICC coordinators answered the annual survey the percentages are bound to vary.

Overall, members seem to agree that the ICC Programme offers benefits such as peer-to-peer learning and support, as well as increased legitimacy. Some examples of changes incurred are available below.

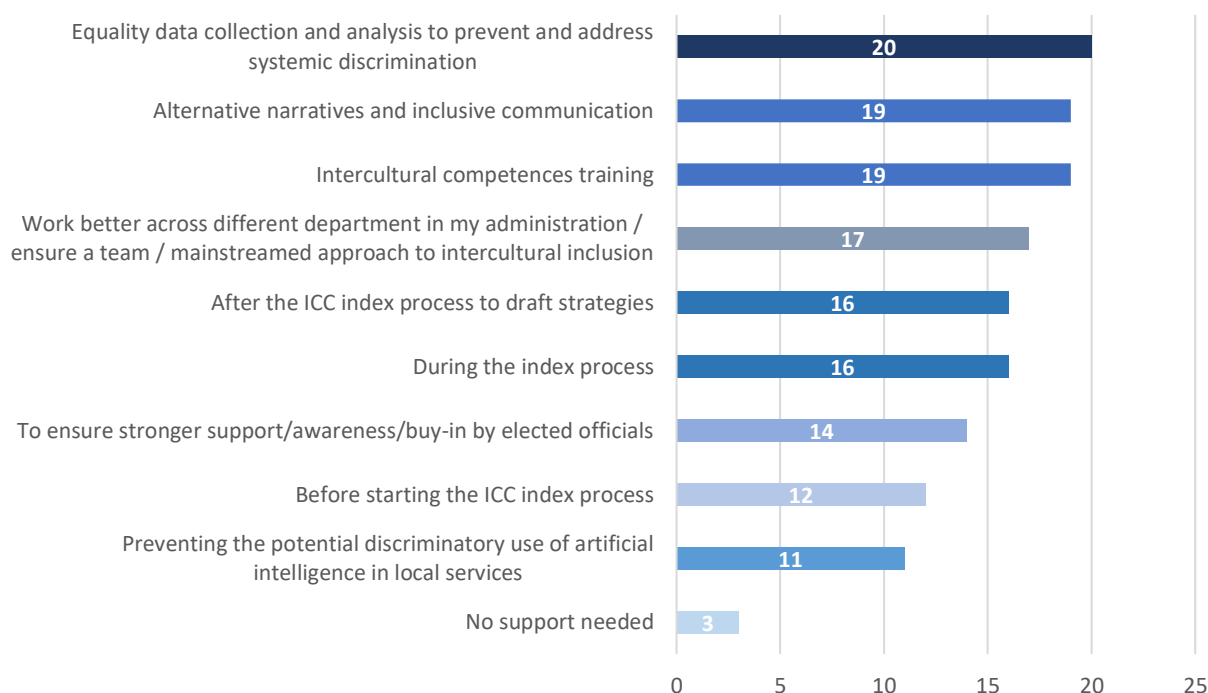
Below are presented some examples shared by respondents:

- In Porto (Portugal), one key change was the strengthening and formalisation of intercultural competence training within municipal structures. Building on ICC principles and tools, the city consolidated a 90-hour specialised training programme in Intercultural Mediation and intercultural competences, delivered in partnership with the Universidade Lusófona. This training incorporates ICC concepts such as intercultural governance, equality mainstreaming, anti-discrimination and participatory approaches, and is aimed at intercultural mediators, municipal staff and frontline professionals. As a result, intercultural competence has become a more structured and recognised component of local capacity-building and service delivery.
- As the first city in Canada, Sherbrooke has begun implementing an anti-rumour strategy, directly inspired by the guidelines and tools of the ICC programme. This initiative aims to challenge prejudices and serves as a key long-term tool in the fight against racism and discrimination.
- The “Intercultural Dialogue on a bench” was introduced by Kraków (Poland) in 2025 as a new participatory format, inspired by ICC recommendations on participation and dialogue. The method involves the Mayor and senior city officials in direct meetings with foreign residents and minority representatives. These meetings created an open space for dialogue, trust-building and consultation on key urban and social challenges.
- "I am amazed at how many people from such different backgrounds shared their experiences openly and honestly, people have spoken, and I've found that really inspiring and hopeful." Stated a local resident of Camden (UK) during one session of the Brave Space Café in 2025.



While exchange of practices is an important component of being a member of the ICC Programme, the Secretariat still remains active in providing required help to its members.

Support needed at any of the following stages/on the following topics



Out of the 40 respondents, 7.5% (3) considered that no additional support was needed which is lower than the responses from the previous year. This can be explained with the ongoing polarization and hostile political environment ICC coordinators are facing.

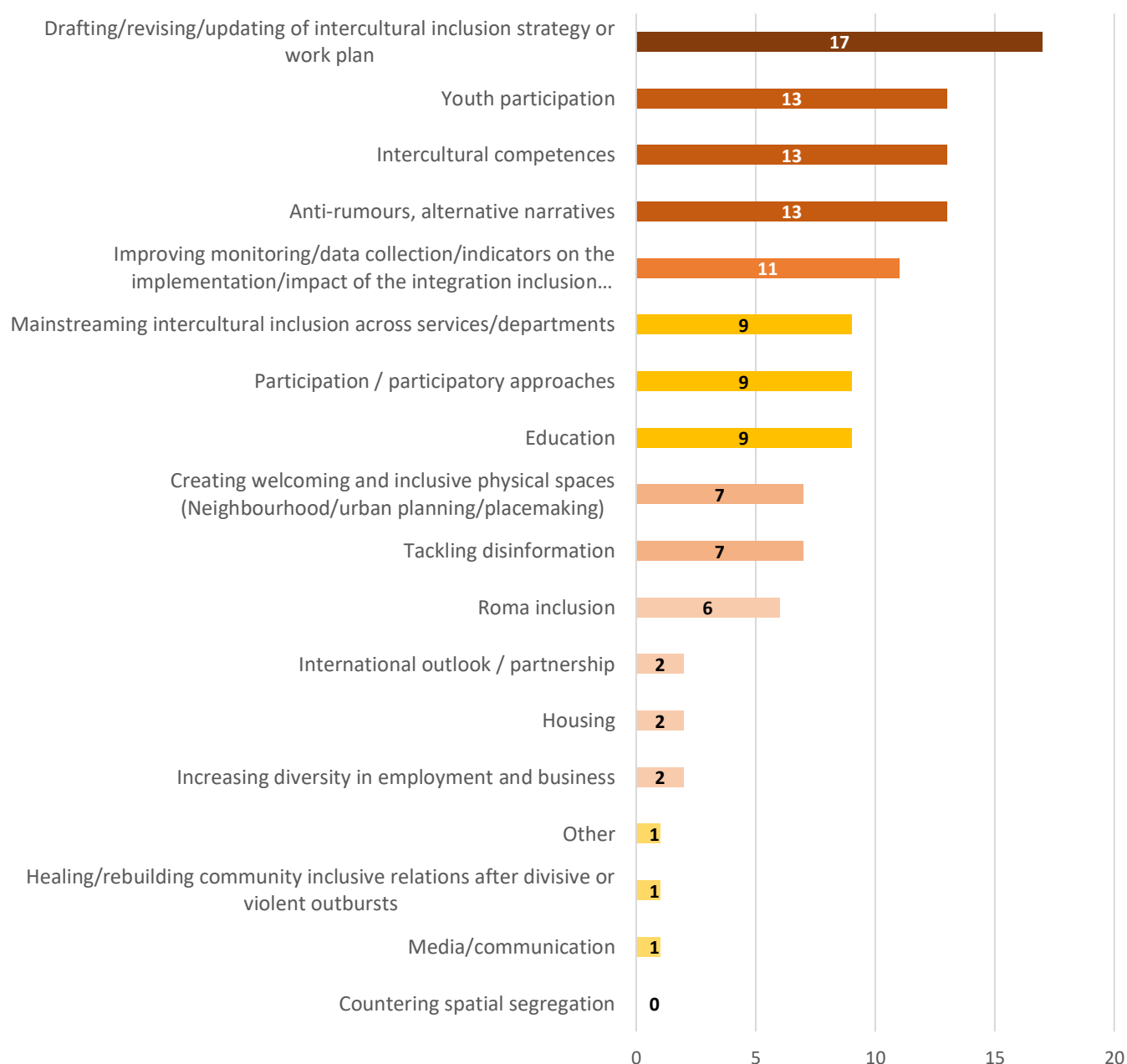
As indicated in the graph, the three areas most frequently mentioned benefitting from secretariat support, namely equality data collection and analysis to prevent and address systemic discrimination (50%), alternative narrative and inclusive communication (47.5%) and intercultural competence training (47.5%) are important for ICC members. These topics have been included as priorities for 2026.

Other areas where members would welcome further support include how to work better across different departments in the administration, and how to ensure a team / mainstreamed approach to intercultural inclusion at local level.

Furthermore, members are still identifying the ICC Index as an area of work where support is needed, especially during the process and once the results are presented. The ICC Index is a tool, not only for new members, but for all members who are invited to periodically take stock of their intercultural achievements and challenges. The process – although deemed very beneficial and inspiring by members – can appear complex and lengthy, for newcomers especially, which can explain the high demand for support here as well. The Secretariat will continue to do its best to identify flexible ways to respond to this need.



Main areas of work cities plan to focus on with regard to intercultural inclusion in 2026



Out of the areas of work suggested for 2026, drafting/revising/updating of intercultural inclusion strategy or work plan, youth participation, intercultural competences, anti-rumours & alternative narratives, improving monitoring/data collection/indicators on the implementation/impact of the integration inclusion strategy/action plan, mainstreaming intercultural inclusion across services/departments, participation / participatory approaches, and education were the most



interesting for the respondents, closely followed by tools on how to create welcoming and inclusive physical spaces, how to tackle disinformation and how to promote Roma inclusion.

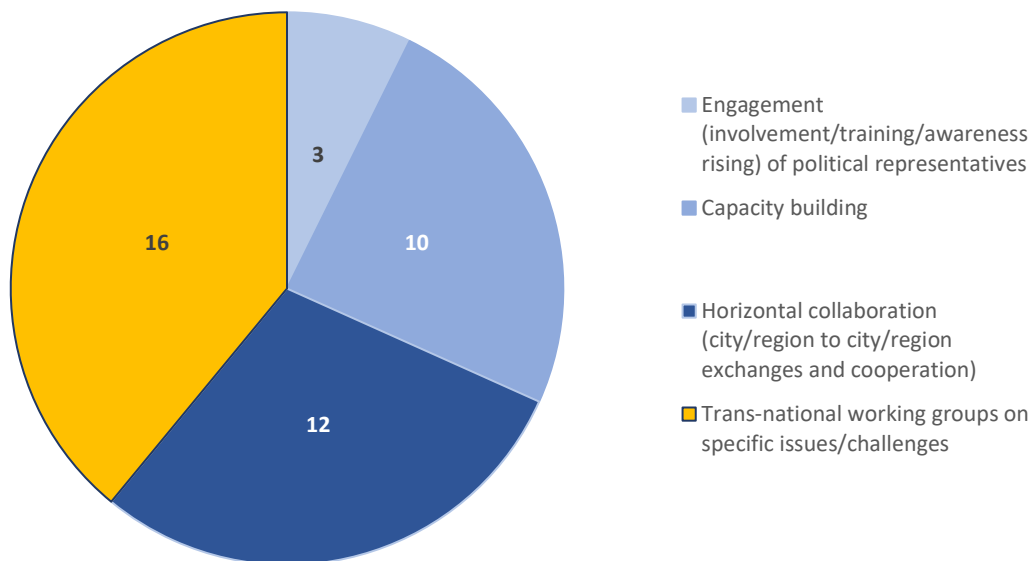
Several members reported preliminary work and interest in the following areas:

- In 2026, the city of Lisbon (Portugal) plans to focus on improving monitoring and data collection to better assess the impact of intercultural inclusion policies, strengthening youth participation through targeted engagement initiatives and participatory mechanisms, and addressing housing as a key area for social cohesion by promoting inclusive access to housing services and neighborhood-based support actions.
- In relation to the ICC indicators on communication and narratives, Sherbrooke (Canada) wishes to incorporate the concept of alternative narratives as a tool for raising awareness and changing perceptions.
- The municipality of Donostia/San Sebastian is planning on opening of a reception office for people moving to the city.
- Through several municipal plans, Loures (Portugal) will support projects that foster intercultural dialogue through cultural events, awareness campaigns, and partnerships with local associations. Its second main area of action will be organising capacity-building activities for municipal staff and stakeholders to improve skills in diversity management and inclusive communication.
- Oslo (Norway) is looking into renewing its action plan "Words matter".
- At policy level, Reggio Emilia (Italy) intends to strengthen its recent dual-track approach, which integrates intercultural policies with anti-discrimination and anti-racism measures, through the adoption of the new Equity Plan, expected in 2026.
- The local administration of Iztapalapa, a borough of Mexico City (Mexico) will implement a specific "Anti-rumor Strategy" designed to dismantle xenophobic practices, discriminatory narratives, and hate speech, thereby fostering a cohesive social environment. To ensure the effectiveness of these inclusion policies, the government plans to design a specialized Intercultural Index and establish a permanent mechanism of "intercultural monitors" to track progress and support the transversal application of these policies.
- In 2026, a total of 37 projects will be implemented across five areas; economy and quality of life, education and research, community, law and institutions, and facilities and spaces, in accordance with the Mid- to Long-Term Development Plan for the Intercultural City of Ansan (Republic of Korea). These include the establishment of the Intercultural Sangnok Center and the development of a smart city in the area of facilities and spaces, as well as support for childcare costs for foreign residents and the operation of Intercultural Harmony Schools in the area of economy and quality of life.

Since 2024, the Secretariat has been wishing to gain a better understanding of which types of services and events best serve the members' interests and needs. A number of new methods are under discussion to provide more tailored services to members when needed and a stronger involvement in the Programme's activities.



What type of activities would you like to be promoted more under the ICC Programme?



In terms of sharing of experiences, while the anti-rumours strategy has been used for long, the city of Sherbrooke is happy to organise a meeting to explain how, as the first ICC city in Canada, they have implemented their anti-rumours approach.

Riga offered to share its experience on working with non-governmental organisations in the areas of inclusion and participation (for example, about [Riga NGO House](#), a good practice of the city) while Krakow's Intercultural Dialogue Bench model could be of interest for other ICC members, especially on lessons learned from organising regular dialogue meetings between city leadership and migrant communities as a participatory and trust-building tool.

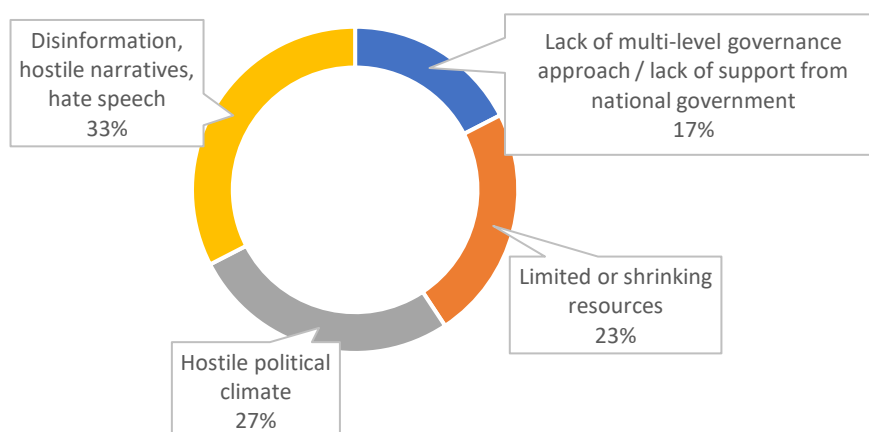
The Intercultural Mediation Project in Porto can be a good example of a structured model for local intercultural governance, including its operational framework, partnerships, referral mechanisms, and cross-sectoral work in education, social services, housing and citizenship. This experience can be shared through peer exchanges, study visits or webinars, hosted by the municipality.

Finally, Iztapalapa is open to present the "Feria de los Colores, Sonidos y Sabores - Interculturality Through Your Senses". By taking place in a festive, open, and community-oriented environment, the fair created favorable conditions for people to be more open to learning, reflection, and cultural sensitivity. Through sensory experiences such as music, gastronomy, art, and traditional expressions, the event promoted intercultural dialogue in a horizontal manner, allowing cultural diversity to be perceived not as a barrier, but as an enriching element of social life.

These examples could lead the discussion around the main challenges the members are facing.



Main challenges for intercultural inclusion in the coming year(s)



As the year before, hostile political climate and limited or shrinking resources represent half of the challenges identified by the respondents, while disinformation, hostile narratives and hate speech is becoming the main challenge.

It shows the link between the identified challenges and ongoing workstream of the ICC Programme as a policy brief on how to tackle disinformation at local level is in preparation.

One respondent indicated that limited or shrinking resources, which may affect the scale, continuity, and sustainability of intercultural initiatives and the capacity to respond effectively to emerging needs. Growing needs linked to demographic change and increased diversity place additional pressure on local services, making it more difficult to ensure continuity, quality, and long-term impact of intercultural actions.

It seems that all listed challenges are relevant for ICC members in the coming years:

- A challenging political environment can impede the advancement of diversity and inclusion, generating opposition to the implementation of intercultural policies.
- Financial constraints and diminishing resources represent obstacles to maintaining and scaling up intercultural initiatives, particularly during periods of economic hardship.
- The ongoing proliferation of disinformation, hostile narratives, and hate speech intensifies prejudice and deepens divisions within communities.

These combined factors represent a complex environment that requires strong local commitment, innovative approaches, and enhanced collaboration between local authorities from around the globe.

5. Conclusions

The 2025 Annual Survey underscores the continued strength, adaptability, and commitment of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) network and its Secretariat. Despite mounting complexities, including political polarisation, rising disinformation, and limited resources, member cities have demonstrated resilience and innovation in advancing the principles of intercultural inclusion, equality, and diversity.

Survey feedback highlights the immense value of peer learning, the provision of practical tools, and the supportive role played by the ICC network in empowering local authorities to adapt and renew



their intercultural strategies. The evidence points to a steadily growing institutionalisation of intercultural policies, with cities mainstreaming these priorities across numerous domains—from governance to urban planning, youth and gender inclusion, and anti-discrimination initiatives. Engagement in ICC-led activities and exchanges has translated into tangible local change, with new policies, partnerships, and practices directly attributable to the Programme’s influence.

Looking forward, it is imperative that the ICC Programme maintains its flexibility, responsiveness, and spirit of co-creation. Inclusive engagement, practical guidance, and sustained dialogue between the ICC and its member cities will be vital to safeguarding, deepening, and expanding the impact of intercultural policies in the years ahead. By positioning diversity as a collective asset and nurturing collaborative solutions, the ICC network can continue to build bridges, break down barriers, and foster communities characterised by resilience, openness and shared prosperity.

An overwhelming number of respondents reiterated their thanks to the ICC Programme Secretariat, for its support and for the benefits of the network.

It is worth noting that 40 out of the 169⁶ ICC members filled in this survey. We therefore acknowledge that the feedback reported here might not be representative of the whole ICC network. However, the 40 respondents geographically cover the whole ICC network territory which in a way strengthens the validity of these results. The ICC Programme Secretariat would like to encourage all ICC members to participate in the next survey.

⁶ At the time of the survey



Being part of the Intercultural Cities Programme [...] provides a comprehensive framework to address cultural diversity as a strength rather than a challenge.

Thank you to the ICC team for their investment :)

We would like to commend the ICC Programme for the valuable and consistent work carried out over the years. Its efforts in promoting intercultural inclusion, providing guidance, tools, and opportunities for knowledge exchange have significantly supported cities and regions in fostering diversity, equality, and active participation within their communities.

Continued dialogue between the ICC and member cities remains essential for sustaining inclusive, evidence-based and resilient intercultural policies.

Annex – Respondents to the survey

COUNTRY	NAME	GOVERNANCE LEVEL	TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP	POPULATION
Australia	Salisbury	Local authority	International network	41 820
Canada	Drummondville	Local authority	National network	79 260
	Sherbrooke	Local authority	International network	17 2950
Croatia	Zagreb	Local authority	International network	767 130
France	Besançon	Local authority	International network	119 200
	Paris	Local authority	International network	2 100 000
	Seine-Saint-Denis	Department (regional authority)	International network	1 670 000
	Strasbourg	Local authority	International network	291 310
Germany	Neumarkt	Local authority	International network	40 810
Greece	Patras	Local authority	International network	215 922
Italy	Casalecchio di Reno	Local authority	National network	35 500
	Milan	Local authority	National network	1 350 000
	Parma	Local authority	National network	202 110
	Ravenna	Local authority	National network	156 480
	Reggio Emilia	Local authority	International network	378 000
	Zagarolo	Local authority	National network	18 480
Japan	Shizuoka Prefecture	Prefecture (regional authority)	International network	3 560 000



BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING WALLS

Latvia	Riga	Local authority	International network	605 000
Mexico	Iztapalapa	Local authority	International network	1 900 000
Norway	Oslo	Local authority	International network	724 290
Poland	Krakov	Local authority	International network	816 610
	Lublin	Local authority	International network	330 000
	Wroclaw	Local authority	International network	674 000
Portugal	Barcelos	Local authority	National network	46 680
	Cascais	Local authority	National network	214 160
	Lisbon	Local authority	International network	567 000
	Loures	Local authority	National network	26 769
	Oeiras	Local authority	National network	172 120
	Porto	Local authority	National network	249 600
	Vila Verde	Local authority	National network	46 446
	Viseu	Local authority	National network	103 500
Republic of Korea	Asan	Local authority	International network	332 000
	Ansan	Local authority	International network	644 000
Spain	Donostia/San Sebastian	Local authority	International network	186 670
	Manlleu	Local authority	National network	21 430
	RECI	CSO – Coordinator of the Spanish network		
Switzerland	Canton of Neuchâtel	Canton (regional authority)	International network	179 450
Ukraine	Vinnytsia	Local authority	International network	352 000



BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING WALLS

United Kingdom	Camden	Local authority	International network	216 940
	Leeds	Local authority	International network	811 950