

Meaningful intercultural interaction – Indicator 3: Understanding fears and barriers to interaction

If you have not yet involved your communications or media department, consider consulting them for advice from the experts. You should also try asking other partners or departments who are experienced in this field or who you know have recently published accessible materials. Ideally, you would involve the group the city hopes to engage in discussions on what barriers to interaction could be and how to mitigate them. You may also wish to consult the policy brief [Migration and integration – which alternative narratives work and why?](#).

Inspiration from other cities

In [Bergen](#), Norway, the public library plays a key role in the inclusion of refugees and has a strong cooperation with the introduction centre. Further, it has also designed services taking into account many barriers for interaction. It is a hub for cultural activities, provides books translated in several languages, as well as bilingual versions of famous Norwegian publications. Everyone can access and use the library without the need for papers or identity documents. The library has a learning centre and some learning activities including a reading group, an IT club for immigrants - run by a Somali refugee - and a “Norwegian language café”, in cooperation with the Joint Immigrant Council in Hordaland. Over the past five years, the library has become a meeting place for dialogue and has increased the number of activities aimed at multiplying the meeting opportunities between Norwegian residents and the newcomers. For instance, the library organises events during which the refugees can present their countries through an historical and socio-cultural lens and explain the reasons that made them feel unsafe in their homeland. A recent event on Eritrea had equal attendance of Eritreans and Norwegians.

The [Portuguese National Intercultural Cities Network RPCI](#) has developed a guide for welcoming migrants (available in English and in Portuguese) as a complement to the web app “Portugal Incoming”. The app and guide are a major practical contribution to the integration of migrants in Portugal, bringing all relevant insights and information on how to navigate through Portuguese services and bureaucracy to newcomers, as well as access to information about cultural and social events. In addition, they have developed a guide for practitioners on how to carry out welcoming sessions, together with a matrix for the creation of municipal integration plans and strategies.

Barcelona, Spain, has issued a guide, the Guia de comunicació inclusiva [inclusive communication guide], as a reference document for the public and for municipal staff to promote communication free of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, and which is respectful towards all others. Besides offering alternatives to colonial and discriminatory expressions, the guide also recommends avoiding generalisations such as ‘Arabs’, ‘Africans’ and ‘Latin Americans’, which reduce highly diverse cultural realities into simple stereotypes. Images and people’s attitudes also convey stereotypes, though very often not so evidently. People who appear in photographs and the images reflect the world we live in and so those images should seek that diversity. There are many types of families, skin colours and different bodies. In addition, the way we behave with others can also express disrespectful or discriminatory

attitudes. The guide covers some of these situations that can be avoided: when addressing people with disabilities, people should address the person directly and not the person accompanying them; On public transport we should sit in any available seat, regardless of the origin of the person sitting in the next seat; there is no need to shout when speaking to migrants, people with disabilities or the elderly.

[Geneva](#), Switzerland, organised the anti-racism week with the theme “hurtful words”. In order to identify, deconstruct and condemn them, of course. But also, and perhaps more importantly, to highlight, through poetry slam, storytelling, films, workshops and talks/lectures, positive use of language that promotes diversity and celebrates our plural identity. Young audiences are particularly vulnerable to verbal violence. The 2018 anti-racism week in the city of Geneva was therefore organised with the firm intention of encouraging young people to develop prevention tools. Another feature of the campaign was the active support shown by all the neighbourhoods, which put on a number of excellent local events. The Action Week against Racism in the city of Geneva is co-ordinated by Service Agenda 21 - Sustainable City, in the context of the city’s policy on diversity and is co-hosted by the Culture and Sport department and the Social Cohesion and Solidarity department of the city of Geneva, the Office for the Integration of Foreigners of the Canton of Geneva and the voluntary sector.

This is an extract from the guide “[How intercultural is your policy or project](#)”. For all indicators, checklists, and good practice, please see the full guide.